

CONQUEST COLONIZATION AND THE CROSS:
RELIGIOUS ASPECTS OF THE CONQUEST
AND COLONIZATION OF HONDURAS
1524-1700

by

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ABSTRACT
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Religiosity pervades the conquest and colonization of Honduras. The secular church, the missionaries, and the colonial aristocracy all played vital roles in the process. The Hispanic social consciousness emerged out of the *Reconquista* which allowed a fusion of religiosity and conquest, and this psyche manifested in the New World. Spain became equally dependent on the sanctioning of the Catholic Church to justify their enterprises in the Americas. However, the extreme poverty in Honduras created a unique situation in which the ecclesiastics depended on the local mining economy to survive. Therefore the clergy in Honduras struggled to balance their economic pursuits and their spiritual causes. The crown depended on the clergy to protect the native populations, which in turn supplied the labor and later the tributes to maintain the colonies larger economic interests. The missions also became involved in the colonization process attempting to pacify and convert the natives on the peripheries, particularly in the locations where precious metals existed. What emerged was a codependency between the secular clergy, the missions, and the aristocracy which were all tied to the perpetually struggling economy.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The *Reconquista* had profound effects on the formation of the Spanish social consciousness, the effects of which manifested in the Early Modern era as the Spaniards searched the Americas for new frontiers. Religiosity, forged from the constant conflict with the Muslims in the Iberian Peninsula, played an instrumental role in the conquest and colonization of the new provinces. A delicate fusion was formed in which the Spanish monarchs attempted to balance the conversion of the natives with their emerging economic needs. Because of this balance, a synthesis occurred between the political, economic, and ecclesiastic elements of the conquest. This approach was multifaceted, and it often involved several clerical and secular components. The crown would implement the system of *encomiendas* in order to supplement the economy and provide for the proselytization of the indigenous populations there. The missions would serve a vital role in the peripheries as the *avant garde* of Hispanic acculturation. The church, constantly infused in local politics and frequently struggling to serve its own purposes, constantly found itself torn between its imperialistic and ecclesiastic role in the colonization and conquest of the New World.

Honduras was no exception. However, due to the experiences that the Spanish had already undergone in the Americas at the time of the conquest and colonization of the province, there were exceptional and distinct aspects of its subjugation and population. Yet Honduras has received very little scholarly research up to this point, especially in English. This is particularly true when comparing it to Mexico and Peru, or even Guatemala within the same *audencia*. Therefore the purpose of this research is to determine exactly what role religion played in the process of the conquest and the colonization, with particular focus on the various

mediums, namely the colonial aristocracy, the Honduran Church, and the Franciscan and Mercedarian missions, and in what ways they affected the overall course of events in the province.

Only two major works exist in English concerning colonial Honduras. The first to contribute to the research was Robert Chamberlain in his book *The Conquest and Colonization of Honduras 1524-1550*. By his own admission, he arrived at Honduras through his research of Montejo in his studies of the Yucatan. The main focus of the work deals with the various conquistadors and heads of state in the province, and their interaction with one another as well as the natives in the area. He does include a great deal about the contemporary Bishop of Honduras Cristóbal de Pedraza, but mostly focuses on his role in a political sense. The second major work, Linda Newson's *Cost of Conquest: Indian Decline in Honduras under the Spanish Rule* is a thorough anthropological perspective on the decline of the native population in Honduras during the Spanish colonial period. Newson devotes a great deal of her work to religion, discussing secular clergy, missionaries, and the religion that the indigenes practiced as well. However the primary focus of her research is on the religious impact of the natives, and not an analysis from the Spanish perspective. Another anthropologist, Nancy Johnson Black did a study in which she focused specifically on one area of missionary activity within the order of the Mercedarians in Western Honduras in a book entitled *The Frontier Mission and Social Transformation in Western Honduras: The Order of Our Lady of Mercy*. While the work does include some historical analysis of the Mercedarians, it is primarily involved with a specific convent in Tencoa.

From the Honduran historians the most influential book on religiosity came from José Reina Valenzuela in his *Historia Eclesiástica de Honduras*, of which *Tomo II* is the only one concerning this research. In this work he focuses primarily on the bishops and their interactions with the governors and the monarchy, but he does address the missions and their work to a

lesser extent. Three other works exist in dealing with the subject matter, two of which are focused on specific time periods or places, and the third being a very sparse and comprehensive overview of all of Honduran history. *Los Forjadores de la Honduras Colonial, La Conquista Pacífica de Honduras, Héroes y Mártires*, by Ernesto Garcia Alvarado focuses on the “peaceful” conquest of the natives through the work of missionaries. Treating the specific conquest of the area that would become Tegucigalpa is Mario Felipe Martinez’s work *Apuntamientos para una Historia Colonial de Tegucigalpa y su Alcaldía Mayor* in which his focus is on the conquest of the indigenes there and the workings of the town’s leadership that followed. Finally there is the comprehensive yet selective history of the country as a whole, Rómulo Durón’s *Bosquejo Histórico de Honduras*.

It is within this context that this research proposes to discover exactly how religion did affect conquest, and what role it assumed in the colonization process, answering certain relevant questions. What part specifically did the aristocracy, the secular church, and the missions play? Was this a cooperative process, or did each group position for power for their own gain? How did each group use the other for their own purposes? What was the main goal of each where religion was concerned, i.e. was indoctrination, colonization, or economic prosperity the real focus of each?

In order to analyze this process, this work is divided into three sections: the conquest proper, the colonization, and the close of colonization. The first section is devoted to the religious aspects of the conquest. The conquest, for the sake of this work, is considered from Olid’s intrusion in the area in 1524 until 1545. This date is a few years earlier than the date set by Chamberlain in his work on the conquest. The date was chosen due to its proximity to the defeat of the last major indigenous uprising, the passage of the *Leyes Nuevas*, and the repeal of the provision of perpetuity of the encomiendas. The primary focus is the religiosity of the conquistadors, along with the role of the church in the process. There is a distinction to the

conquest before the colony was established, and the conquest of the natives in the frontiers of the colony after the cities along the coast had been established. An attempt will be made as well to ascertain the motives, particularly religious, of the men who carried out these conquests, and the backgrounds that created the mindset that stirred them. Pedraza, the contemporary Bishop of Honduras during the conquest and his intervention into politics of the region is given special attention. The state of the early church in Honduras is also analyzed.

The second section deals with the colonization of the province. While clearly colonization was an inseparable part of the conquest, the term here is used to describe the migration into and population of the central and western areas of the province. This is particularly significant in that it is where the major populations are still concentrated today. The religious aspects of the Hispanic systems of colonization and acculturation, namely the *encomiendas* and the *reducciones*, are given specific analysis. The motivations of the colonizers to move into the interior are also discussed. An important ramification that developed in Honduras due to this shift was the amalgamation of the politics, economics, and religiosity of the province. Therefore there will be a great deal of focus on how this process evolved and to what extent it was beneficial, and to what extent it was detrimental to the church and the overall conversions of the native populations there. In order to understand these developments, an examination of the pre-Colombian indigenous populations is necessary. While cultural accuracy in regards to this is very important, within the scope of this research preference is given to the perception of the natives by the Spaniards. Also included, and equally important, is an analysis of the mining activities in Honduras and their importance on religion and colonization. The economy, much like religion, pervaded almost every aspect of the colonization process. Mining was extremely important to the local economy, yet never seemed to produce the wealth that it did in other provinces in Spanish America. Therefore due to the poverty of the country the church also became entangled in the mining industry, either

through grants of the royal taxes on mines, or through their dealings with the encomenderos and the natives under them.

The third section deals with the entrance of the missionary orders, the Franciscans and the Mercedarians, and the effect that they had on the cultural and religious landscape in Honduras. Each order is scrutinized separately in an attempt to understand the nature and intentions of each. It is also important to discern where each order had its strongest influence, and amongst which ethnic groups they were proselytizing. The geography of Honduras and the roles of the missions within these specific locations will be seen to have serious ramifications on the progression of the colonization by the Spanish in the area. Another very important characteristic in the colonization of the province was the clash for control between the ecclesiastical head of the province and the governor. With the rampant poverty over the area there were not enough spoils to go around and therefore the church and the state were bound to have conflict. However, it is an important distinction to make as to whether the governor was intervening for control of the church, or whether the bishop was vying for political power. The politicization of the church during this time period would also have varying consequences.

Due to the failure of the aforementioned missionaries to consistently reduce and pacify the natives, and the distractions of the secular church and the governors, the peripheries of the colonies were never colonized. This allowed for threats to emerge within the Province had that would have profound effects on the future of the colony, religiously or otherwise. These threats were the Zambos Mosquitos on the Mosquito Coast and the English, who began to threaten the colony initially through piracy, and later through colonization. It is important to analyze the nature of the threats and their implications to the Spanish and their religiopolitical intentions. Things had changed by the end of the eighteenth century and an analysis of the state of the church did show some improvement. However, probably more telling was what had not changed religiously in the province.

The close of the eighteenth century was chosen as a stopping point for this research due to the changing nature in colonization that the next century would bring. First of all, the population would really begin to increase in the cities to the interior, yet few new cities would spring up in previously uncolonized territories. While the population grew and the government was still colonial and subject to the king, the nature of their colonization was beginning to change. The eighteenth century would bring in the Bourbon reforms, and a gradual elimination of the encomienda system that had remained substantially longer in Honduras than in some other areas. While these changes were ongoing and by no means began on the first day of the new century, it is nevertheless a logical place to conclude the research.

One important aspect of Hispanic religiosity that is not analyzed in this work is the Inquisition. While the inquisition did exist in the Audencia of Guatemala, and therefore must have existed in Honduras, very few records were available for this study. While that is not to suggest that it had no influence in the province, there are some possibilities as to why the Inquisition was not as pervasive in Honduras as it was in Mexico and Peru. One possibility would be the small number of Jews who seemed to immigrate to Honduras. The only major population that seemed to inhabit Honduras that would concern the Inquisition would have been the "new" Christians. A second theory deals with the economics of the province. Since Honduras was an impoverished province there is the possibility that the Inquisition did not come to Honduras quite simply because there was no money in it. The strength of the Inquisition in Mexico and Peru would bolster this theory. Court cases that existed in Honduras of this nature would have been referred to the Audencia in Guatemala, who would more than likely have in turn forwarded them to the tribunal in Mexico. There are cases dealing with homosexuality and witchcraft, yet there was no clear link between them and the Inquisition. Therefore further research is required in order to determine the extent in which the Inquisition affected religious life in Honduras.

The sources used for this research are primarily correspondence between Honduras and the monarchs in Spain. This includes letters from the governors, bishops, and the various *cabildos*, or town councils that would express what was going on in their respective areas. For the accounts of the early conquest, the narratives of Bernal Diaz de Castillo and Antonio de Herrera y Tordesillas were used. Most of the documentary sources come from the Archivo General de Indias accessed through el Portal de los Archivos Españoles, with supplementary documents coming from el Archivo General de Centro América, el Archivo Nacional de Honduras, and the University of Texas at Arlington Special Collections.

Thus the intent of this research is to examine the role that religion played within the formative years of Honduran history. The presumption is that there existed a fusion of church and state in Spain from the *Reconquista* and that this carried over into the conquest in Honduras. This fusion was only strengthened in the new world with the Hispanic need to justify their existence there. That having been said, the church and the state, through religious and political means, coexisted as contributors to a larger imperial cause. Both equally became entangled in the local economy. This is particularly true within the context of poverty and underdevelopment where individual fame and fortune were difficult to come by.



Figure 1.1 Colonial Honduras

CHAPTER 2

THE DISCOVERY AND CONQUEST OF HONDURAS 1502-1545

The initial conquest of Honduras has all the intrigues of Spanish colonial lore; dueling conquistadors, insurrections, treachery, and the political maneuvering of a Machiavellian aristocracy have all been well documented. However, despite its profound influence on the conquest, religion has received very little scholarly attention from what has been done up to date. The *Reconquista* in Spain had fused religiosity and conquest, and therefore it was a fundamental aspect of the Hispanic policies in the Americas. Nonetheless, the role of religion was not subordinate, but rather was a catalyst in the development of colonial Honduras. The actions of the conquistadors, analyzed from a religious perspective, can shed new light on their motivations and actions. Also, important ecclesiastical positions, such as the Bishopric of Honduras and other clergy from neighboring provinces, and even now famous clerics such as Bartolomé de Las Casas played an integral role in the conquest. It is also important to understand how the monarchy intended to use, and did utilize religiosity and exactly what role it played. In this regard an analysis of the conquest with a specific focus on religiosity will shed new insight and understanding on the events that transpired in Honduras during the first half of the sixteenth century

2.1 Discovery and First Attempts at Conquest

From the very moment the Spanish laid eyes on Honduran soil in 1502, tradition holds that religiosity permeated the event. Columbus named the new coastline along the island of Guanaja after being adrift for a long period of time without anchoring. Upon seeing land he exclaimed “¡Bendito sea Dios que hemos salido de estas honduras! (Blessed be God that we have come out of those depths!)”¹ Another legend states that after a bad storm that subsided

upon rounding the cape, Columbus cried out, “¡Gracias a Dios! (Thanks be to God!)” and the cape is so named to this day.² While historians debate the validity of both accounts, the traditions do attest to the religious nature of the contemporary Hispanic mindset. Columbus did interact with natives on this trip when he came across a canoe loaded with goods, probably Maya merchants on their way to trade along the northern coastline.

The next time the Spaniards arrived amongst the natives in Honduras, it was neither to explore nor to conquer. Rather the swift decline in the indigenous populations in the Caribbean created an immediate need for a replenishment of the labor force. In 1516 Governor Diego Velázquez of Cuba, using a prior cedula describing the practice of cannibalism amongst the natives inhabiting the islands along coastal Honduras as justification³, raided the island of Guanaja enslaving the local populations. His first attempt did not succeed as the islanders freed themselves, overcame their Spanish captors and sailed back to their island. The second time they were not as fortunate, and the Spaniards intended to enforce their will. The “peaceful and industrious” inhabitants of the islands that resisted soon found their “bodies floating in the sea” and their “blood fertilizing the soil.”⁴ The initial raid proved fruitful for Spanish purposes because it enabled some 400 slaves to reach Cuba, and initiated a practice that would have a devastating effect on the area’s coastal populations. By the time Cortés arrived in the Bay Islands some nine years later, he complained of the scarcity of inhabitants there, clearly caused by the slave trade.⁵

The first attempts to claim and conquer the area occurred in 1524. The conquistadors had already established themselves to the north and to the south of Honduras, and it was only a matter of time before they converged on the area. The geography of the Honduran coastline provided the potential for more easily accessible ports to the rest of the Indies, particularly to the southern colonies that tended to populate along the Pacific side.⁶ The first to express interest in the area was Pedrarias Dávila, the governor of Panama, sending Francisco Hernández de

Córdoba into Nicaragua and Honduras to get the upper hand on the equally ambitious explorer Gonzáles Dávila, who had been granted royal authority to Nicaragua. However in a storm, he was blown off course and forced to drop several horses into the bay to decrease the weight of the ship, and thus Puerto de Caballos (horses) in Honduras received its name.⁷ This also helped legitimize Gonzáles Dávila's claim on Honduras. The forces of each would soon clash; Dávila defeated de Córdoba but it did little to resolve the larger issue of legitimacy in the area.⁸

Cortés, inspired by tales of rich mines to the south and natives who used fishnets weighted with gold and copper, as well as a rumored straight or passage to the Pacific there, also became intrigued about Honduras's potential and decided to send troops led by Cristóbal de Olid to conquer the area.⁹ His instructions were to inquire about the passage, search for gold and silver mines, and establish a town if possible. The expedition was not without religious purpose; Cortés demanded that his expedition was "not to neglect the interests of the church" and provided "two reverend friars, one who spoke the Mexican language."¹⁰ The original plan was for Olid to be outfitted at Cuba before continuing on to Honduras. However, Governor Velázquez, probably motivated by his disdain for Cortés, convinced Olid that he should declare his independence and strike out on his own.¹¹ The newly appointed governor of New Spain did not take this insurrection lightly. Cortés sent his relative Francisco de las Casas with five ships and 100 "veteran" men to quell the insurrection. After some initial skirmishes, both sides momentarily opted for peace. Olid became preoccupied already with the aforementioned Dávila, and Las Casas sought a better place to embark as well as encouraged by favorable correspondence from men in Olid's camp that remained loyal to Cortés. However, unfavorable weather blew the ships off the shore and forced the survivors, including Las Casas, to surrender. Olid's soldiers also captured Dávila¹², and Olid's position could not have seemed more promising. However, fate was not on the side of Olid. Cortés soon arrived in Honduras to settle the power struggle where he was taken to the church and given the account by a local

clergyman.¹³ The man described a revolt by Las Casas, Dávila, and the other captives falling on him with “penknives”, even grasping his beard and slicing at his throat, thus causing Olid to flee. Upon Las Casas threatening punishment by death to any still loyal to Olid with knowledge of his location, his whereabouts were discovered and he was tried and decapitated.¹⁴

Cortés’s arrival did bring stability to the area. However, the manner in which he arrived deserves some attention. Rather than sailing, Cortés opted to travel overland through Mexico and Guatemala. While his specific reasons are unclear, religion seems to have been part of his decision. He informed the king that it would be best to travel by land in order to “carry out my plans and bring the natives of the land to the knowledge of our Holy Catholic Faith, and your Majesty’s service – certain as I was that on so long a journey I would have to traverse many different provinces, and meet people of various races.”¹⁵ Mentioned amongst the great fanfare, including jugglers, puppeteers, stage dancers, and falconers, were “two reverend fathers...and good theologians, to preach the faith.”¹⁶ Upon arrival in the newly founded port town of Trujillo, he and his clergy summoned the local chiefs and priests of the local tribes and “told them of the object of his coming thither, which was, to induce them to quit the unnatural and cruel practices of their false religion, and to embrace the true one.”¹⁷ It is also fitting that while these same groups of natives were being converted they were laboring to clear the woods to the sea, and building houses, one a “very good habitation” for Cortés himself.

It is important to note that during the time before Olid’s demise, there were as many as five potential claims to Honduras. Pedrarias Dávila, Gonzáles Dávila, Hernán Cortés, Cristóbal de Olid, and the Audencia of Santo Domingo, all had legitimate claims either through royal authority or previous exploration.¹⁸ It is easy on the surface to consider this as no more than avarice and self-aggrandizement. Undoubtedly the stereotypical fame and fortune that the conquistadors sought was valid individual motivation. However, it is just as important to understand the context in which these motivations existed. Religiosity was equally a factor and

is evident in the analysis of the Hispanic social identity in the Early Modern Era, which existed as a direct result of what occurred in the *Reconquista*.

2.2 Spanish Background of the Individual Motivation for Conquest

The *Reconquista* created a situation unique to Spain which allowed for a distinctive religious culture to emerge. While the rest of Europe became occupied with the Crusades, Iberia had the infidel in its own back yard and therefore could battle Islam in its own lands. Hence the fusion of religiosity and conquest became an important philosophy manifested in the *Reconquista*. Although the initial push to regain the lands lost to the Muslims probably lacked religious fervor, the advent of Crusader idealism provided any religious ideology that was lacking. Therefore the conquering of lands and the subjugation of those who were not Christian was no longer understood solely as a territorial acquisition, but as a religious obligation. The king's responsibility was not merely to govern the territories under his control, but to expand those territories. In so doing, the king was not only strengthening his own kingdom, but was advancing the true Christian faith at the expense of the infidels. Even the saintly king Fernando III judged his own greatness, and that of his son Alfonso on their ability to conquer, as is evident in his advice: "If you can keep what I have left you, you are as good a king as I; and if you gain more, then you are better than I; and if this diminishes, you are not as good a king as I."¹⁹ However, the kings of the Iberian kingdoms needed men in order to carry out their conquests. Therefore a new sense of individualism arose out of religious responsibility as well as the potential for social betterment along the frontiers of the *Reconquista*.

This can best be contrasted by examining Castile's rise, which was in stark dissimilarity with the Kingdom of Aragón and Catalonia, where the feudal system remained an inseparable aspect of the social consciousness; the monarchy had very limited power, and the political interests still centered on the Mediterranean and became constantly entangled in both European and papal affairs. In contrast, Castile's feudal structures would develop somewhat in

the latter part of the *Reconquista*, when a new sense of individualism emerged. For example, the idea of individual freedom is manifested in the laws of Alfonso X, "El Sabio". This, as J.N. Hillgarth pointed out, is evident in its language. In Castile *injuria* or personal injury could be committed against a man, in which he had a reason to retaliate. In Catalonia, it was *bausia*, or treason committed by a vassal against a lord. Similar words of *desafiar* meant to defy another man, whereas *des-fidare* meant to break faith by a vassal sworn to his lord. Even *Honrra* referred to the fief given a vassal, not his individual honor.²⁰ This individualism is uniquely Castilian, and stems from the frontier idealism which came from the *Reconquista*, and resonated in such Christian heroes as that of El Cid, famous for his conquering, but even more for his individualism, which served as a model for others. This is also why his dissatisfaction with the crown at times, as well as his service with Muslims, is often overlooked.

El Cid also taught any Spaniard who was brave enough the potential for social mobility. Repopulation was as important and formidable a part of the *Reconquista* as the military victories themselves, a concept that would prove to be equally true in the New World as well. The territories conquered were often larger than the population could sustain, and the dangers of living on a frontier were clearly deterrents. The monarchs had to give large concessions to the populace in these areas. This egalitarianism trickled down to the lower classes as well. The nobility could hardly expect the feudal relationship of a landlocked peasantry when there was more land than people to work it. A seigniorial relationship often developed in which dues or rents replaced the vows of vassalage. The idea of upward mobility, like that of El Cid, became more than a romantic notion and was alive and well. The idea that many positions of traditionally noble birth were decided and replaced at the king's whim allowed those fortunate enough to acquire higher rank regardless of birth.

This rank usually entailed more responsibility and a stronger pledge of military service. Raiding in the frontier could remit wealth and lands to anyone, which created a strong sense of

individual freedom. This was not only a peripheral result of the *Reconquista*, but rather proved beneficial in that it often provided a large military class that now had an increased motivation much more so than the feudal nobility often had in Aragón.

The *Partidas* also demonstrate the distinction of a knight in the traditional feudal sense, labeled a *fiosdalgo* literally sons of quality, or as it would become in Spanish, the *hidalgo* and the *caballero*. The latter *caballero* fit the description of the ancient knight, of a man who could endure great hardships, but perhaps had no sense of shame.²¹ Therefore with a horse (“gentleman” or *caballero* from *caballo* or horse) a man could accomplish a great deal. In the *Partidas* a knight was only allowed to ride a horse, “as those on horseback travel in a more honorable way,”²² and, quite tellingly of its importance, the price of a horse exceeded that of several slaves.²³

It is within this context that the various conquistadors in Honduras began to operate. For their bravery and their military service for the crown, they expected lucrative awards. Thus it was not duplicitous nor against obvious religious sensibilities that each man would seek personal glory, as their glory was Spanish glory and Spanish glory was the advancement of the Catholic faith. Olid was only doing to Cortés what he had done to Velázquez in Mexico, and Velázquez had acted similarly in Cuba with Diego Colón. More central to the issue was the effrontery to Cortés’s individual honor. Olid also lacked Cortés’s leadership abilities. For this reason Olid is remembered by his contemporaries as a “very brave man but without foresight.”²⁴

2.3 The Second Phase of the Conquest of Honduras

The arrival of Cortés in Trujillo did stabilize things for a while in Honduras, but it in no way signified the end of the conquest, or even the end of conflicts between competing conquistadors. No lasting progress was achieved in the pacification of the indigenous population, and no governor seemed to have the leadership or the required skills to keep the fledgling colony moving forward. Alvaro de Saavedra was the last remnant of Cortés’s power in

Honduras, and he was soon replaced by Diego Lopez de Salcedo, who renewed the rivalry with Nicaragua and Pedrarias. Upon his passing the responsibility is left to Andres de Cereceda. The situation grew so dire under Cereceda that it seemed that the colony would fail completely. The religious situation was no better if not worse, as Fray Alonso de Guzman renounced his bishopric at Trujillo (as well as the governorship at one point) as did Fray Juan de Talavera, leaving the position vacant.²⁵ Ironically, Cortés's religious plan for Honduras probably would not have included a bishop at all. In the same letter to Carlos V in which Cortés described his affairs in Honduras, he outlined what he felt would be the best approach to proselytize the inhabitants of the New World and bring them into the Catholic fold. He beseeched the king to send more Christians over for this purpose, and requested that more churches and monasteries be built in New Spain. Although his original request seems to have been for laying the structural foundation for the church through bishops and prelates, his experiences soon changed his mind. He predicted...:

“...for if bishops and other prelates are sent, they will follow the custom practiced by them for our sins at the present day, by disposing of the estates of the church, and expending them on foolish matters; and bestowing rights of inheritance on their sons and relatives. A still greater evil would result from this state of things; the natives of this country formerly had their priests, who were engaged in conducting the rites and ceremonies of their religion; and so strict were they in the practice of honesty and chastity, that any deviation therefrom was punished with death; now if they saw that the affairs of the church and what related to the service of God were entrusted to canons and other dignitaries, and if they understood that these were the ministers of God, whom they beheld indulging in vicious habits and profaneness, as is the case in these days in Spain, it would lead them to undervalue our faith and treat it with derision, and all the preaching in the world would not be able to counteract the mischief arising from this source.”²⁶

However, Cortés did not get his wish, and Cristobal de Pedraza was named Protector of the Indians and Bishop of Honduras. Yet, Cortés's negative outlook on bishops did not apply to Pedraza personally. Upon having the earlier opportunity to meet with him in Nueva España, Cortés lauded to the crown his “notable service” suggesting that “not one person of his

profession has passed by these parts...that has had the order or care that he has had in this case."²⁷

After attempting and failing to establish a new colony outside of the already struggling colony of Trujillo in Buena Esperanza, Cereceda finally beseeched the help of the infamous conquistador and Governor of Guatemala, Pedro de Alvarado, to come and establish order. In exchange Cereceda was very willing to renounce his authority over the area.²⁸ Alvarado was accepted for several reasons. First of all, he considered (somewhat correctly) that Honduras and Guatemala would eventually be one province, and that strengthening Honduras would equally strengthen his own interests in Guatemala. He was also very interested in the mines as well as the potential for a port in the North Sea.²⁹ Possibly motivated by insatiable greed, he was not sufficiently satisfied solely with what he had gained in Guatemala.³⁰

He could not have come at a better time. The settlers in the area had voted on abandoning the colony, and not necessarily to return to Trujillo.³¹ Alvarado's presence was immediately felt by both the colonists and the natives. He founded several towns, including Gracias a Dios, which would eventually become the location of the audiencia for a short period, and San Pedro Sula which would be an important population center economically. He was also successful in discovering several successful gold mines through the use of *cuadrillas*, a mixture of indigenous and African slaves. He not only was able to conquer the area, but became interested in populating it. The discovery of mines in addition to their confidence in his military reputation gave the colonists a new sense of faith in the economic potential of the area. It also created a precedent for Alvarado which helped to legitimize his claim to the territory.³²

However, the transition of power did not go as planned, and the intervention of the crown would have serious ramifications on the conquest of Honduras. Francisco de Montejo, after failing for all intents and purposes in Yucatán, desperately attempted to avoid another epic failure in Honduras. He was already deeply in debt, and gambling with any of his remaining

resources during his last push in Yucatán. His fears stemmed from his knowledge of the vast amount of work needed to save Honduras, and he was already stretched financially and physically from his previous endeavors. Therefore he had worked out an exchange with Alvarado in which he would renounce his position as potential governor of Honduras and recommend Alvarado for the position in exchange for his holdings in Chiapas, which kept Montejo closer to his enterprises in Yucatán.³³

The problem arose when, as was often the case, the correspondence to and from Spain moved much slower than events in Honduras. As Alvarado finished his conquest of the interior, Montejo arrived to assume his position as governor, forced into the position by royal decree. Alvarado had already assumed he was the central authority in the area, and had issued several encomiendas to reward his conquistadors and entice others to populate the area. The crown forced Montejo to renounce some of Alvarado's provisions, at which point he received notification that Carlos V had relented and allowed the original exchange to take place. Thus it came to be that Alvarado felt betrayed by Montejo, feeling as if he had accomplished the necessary tasks at great difficulty while Montejo reaped all the spoils. Furthermore, based on the second correspondence from the crown coupled with his recent conquests, Alvarado now had a legitimate claim to the territory; Montejo's claim was now weakened. To make matters worse, Alvarado did not take his perceived betrayal lightly, and the stage was set for civil war in the area.³⁴ Fortunately for the young province, the crown had sent Pedraza who would intervene in the political turmoil, and he quite possibly helped the territory evade a power struggle from which it might not have recovered.

Pedraza had served as a bishop in Mexico, and developed a good reputation as Protector of the Indians there.³⁵ He had maintained good contact with Spain, and arose to the position of Bishop of Honduras, for the first time as an independent office. Until this time the authority over religious matters in the province had been deferred to Guatemala under

Francisco de Marroquín, Bishop of Guatemala. Montejo, as the political authority and Pedraza as ecclesiastical leader, got along well before the governorship became contested. Both considered it as beneficial for their own interests to work together. Montejo and Pedraza each advocated the use of African slaves and a proposed a careful use of native labor. Pedraza seemed sincerely interested in their wellbeing, taking his job title seriously. In a letter to the crown, he stated a desire to “help these natives to their salvation and search for the fastest way for them to come to the knowledge of God, and that they may be instructed in the Holy Christian Doctrine.”³⁶ Montejo, having learned from his experiences in Yucatán, understood the importance of maintaining the native population levels in order to develop the mining economy, which required a healthy labor pool. Either way their interests coincided until Alvarado beseeched Pedraza to intervene as an intermediary in their feud.³⁷ Pedraza sided with Alvarado, which would create the first of several feuds between the bishops and the governors in the province. But in this case it did not seem to be personal, at least as far as Pedraza was concerned. The general consensus was that the crown had decided on Alvarado, who had done a great deal for the advancement of the colony both financially and politically, and Montejo became defiant. Furthermore, the colonists probably pushed for Alvarado in the hopes that the disregard he had for the natives in his conquests would translate into laxity in his enforcement of the protective policies put into place by Montejo and Pedraza for the wellbeing of the native populations. Pedraza, regardless of personal inclination, understood the need for peace. He also realized that Alvarado enjoyed the backing of the crown, and hence he acted accordingly.³⁸ Montejo would attempt to have his revenge. Through political and legal maneuvering, he trumped up enough charges against Pedraza that the bishop had to eventually return to Spain to defend his actions.

There is some irony in the fact that Alvarado and Pedraza would end up on the same side of the issue, given Pedraza’s social and religious philosophy. Pedraza was shrewd enough

to have the foresight to know that the interest of the natives was far from a priority for Alvarado. Pedraza shared the same contemporary school of thought as Bartolomé de Las Casas, particularly regarding the treatment of the natives, and he had even attended the consecration for Las Casas in Sevilla when he was ordained as Bishop of Chiapas.³⁹ Las Casas himself became extremely critical of the conquest of Honduras, first attacking Olid, and then condemning Alvarado with particular disdain. In his *Destruction of the Indies* Las Casas first described the conquest of Honduras as composed of “cruel and bloodthirsty tyrants who laid waste to those provinces and the kingdom of Naco and Honduras, which had before seemed a true paradise of delights and were more populous than the most frequented and populous land on earth.”⁴⁰ He estimated the loss in the millions, which seems high given the pre-Columbian population estimates,⁴¹ but it does attest to his perception of the extremity of violence, though his political motives must also be considered.

However, Las Casas was even more appalled by the actions of Alvarado in Guatemala (and later in Honduras as well) and reserved his most vicious comments for the conquistador:

“Turning my quill now to speak of the great tyrant of a captain who, as I have said, exceeded all those in the past and is like unto all those who live today, he went to the kingdom of Guatemala...and he made his way committing slaughters and acts of robbery, burning and stealing and destroying wheresoe'er he came, all the land, ...telling the Indians that they should bow their knees to them, to those men so inhumane, unjust and cruel, in the name of the king of Spain, who is unknown to the Indians and never heard of, and whom they no doubt deem to be much more unjust and cruel than his subjects, these unjust and cruel Spaniard conquerors. And without letting them deliberate on it for one moment, but rather almost as soon as the message had been read out, they began to kill and burn and wreak their havoc on them.”⁴²

It is no doubt a testament to Pedraza's civic responsibility for the Protector of Indians to fall on the same side of any conflict as Alvarado. Yet Pedraza would eventually find himself at odds with Las Casas himself in the coming years in Honduras.

The aforementioned cruelty at the hands of Alvarado may have been the cause of one of the most difficult aspects of the conquest of Honduras. Alvarado, after entering Honduras

and pacifying the natives and founding various towns, considered his job considerably close to finished, and decided to go to Spain to beseech the favor of the crown to try to work out his affairs with Montejo and other issues still lingering in Guatemala. Nonetheless, while he had considerable military success including ridding the countryside of the determined cacique Ciqumba, who had had considerable success against the various Spanish conquistadors who attempted to colonize the area despite the fact that most of the towns survived or were rebuilt, Alvarado's conquests were not nearly as thorough or complete as he had imagined them to be.⁴³ His cruel nature, while earning the fear if not respect of the natives, probably caused enough resentment in the area to give rise to one of the most famous names in Honduran history, the Lenca cacique Lempira.

El Empira, or Lempira, whose name means "Lord of the Mountain", was one of the few Lenca leaders who managed to integrate the various indigenous populations in a unified stance against the Spaniards. He felt that it was a disgrace that "so many brave men could be held in miserable servitude by so few strangers."⁴⁴ This was no small uprising; Spanish estimates stated that he potentially had 30,000 natives under him.⁴⁵ The charismatic cacique inspired the others to fight, and Lempira chose an excellent spot for his resistance. Tales spread amongst the local indigenous populations of how he had killed 120 men with his own hand in battle, and it was accepted as a proven fact that he was spiritually enchanted due to the fact that in all his military experiences he had never been wounded.⁴⁶ At the stronghold Peñol de Cerquin Lempira strengthened his defenses. Pedraza himself commented on the strength of the nearly impenetrable location and described how the natives "resisted and fought bravely and defended everything possible" that the Spaniards attempted.⁴⁷ Since assaults had failed repeatedly, the Spaniards opted for siege. The problem was that the natives were much more comfortable in their environment than were their counterparts, and supplies were hardly plentiful in the colony. The siege dragged on for six months and the Spaniards became weary. When they attempted

to send emissaries petitioning for peace and an honorable treatment of the natives if they relented, Lempira killed them, stating he “would own no superior, nor admit any new religion or customs than those he had already.”⁴⁸ Feeling out of options, the Spaniards opted for treachery. Luring the warrior out of his stronghold under the guise of peace negotiations, and placing a hidden arquebus within range, the Spaniards ended their problems in one shot, the hero falling dramatically from the rocks in front of the bewildered natives. After seeing their deific hero fall, the others, despite their strength, fell apart and dispersed. Militarily the natives would never again mount a major uprising that would cause any serious problems for the Spanish colonizers in Honduras.

This version of Lempira’s resistance from Herrera y Tordesillas has been accepted by many for years, and is taught today in Honduran schools. However, recent research by the Honduran historian, Mario Felipe Matínez Castillo, has uncovered another possibility, one that actually corresponds with Lenca oral tradition and suggests that Lempira died in battle. Rodrigo Ruiz, a conquistador in Honduras at the time of the uprising testified to the crown that that he had been the one to kill Lempira during a battle. His version attests that Lempira was taunting the Spanish and charging his warriors by stating that he was going to kill the Spaniards. He suggests that Lempira was dressed in the Spanish armaments of conquistadors he had already killed, and this is confirmed in Herrera’s version. Upon killing Lempira, Ruiz cuts off his head and managed to return it to Montejo despite being heavily wounded. After Lempira’s warriors were subjugated, they consented to Spanish authority in the region.⁴⁹ There are other witnesses in the document that attest to its truth. Regardless of which story is true, it does corroborate the existence of Lempira, and confirms the religiosity of his death of in that both documents affirm the idea that Lempira and his followers believed that he was enchanted.

2.4 The Close of Conquest and the Precursors to Colonization of Honduras

With Lempira out of the way, the central highlands of Honduras were now in a much more favorable position for colonization efforts. The crown was clarifying jurisdictional problems in the area as well with the creation of the Audencia de los Confines, and it chose Gracias a Dios in Honduras as its political center. The Honduran location does attest to the potential that the crown still believed Honduras to possess. But more persuasive is the geographical location of the small village. Gracias a Dios is centrally located in the center of all of the provinces involved, namely Chiapas, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, and Costa Rica. Hardly developed, and among the town's first prominent guests intervening in Honduran affairs for the second time was Bartolomé de las Casas.

Las Casas arrived in Gracias a Dios in 1544 and was not impressed with the fledgling city as a capital. Just a few years earlier the town was reported as having very few citizens.⁵⁰ He was there for the consecration of a new bishop within the audencia, Antonio de Valdivieso, from the diocese of Nicaragua. However, he also intended to push his political agenda and hoped that the other "protectors" would help strengthen his cause. Pedraza, however, did not arrive at the meeting for several months, possibly attempting to get his affairs in order after having to return to Spain to settle the charges raised by Montejó due to their earlier conflict. While waiting for the local bishop, Las Casas and Bishop Marroquín of Guatemala, who had previously presided over Honduras as ecclesiastical leader until the official naming of Bishop Pedraza in Spain, began openly feuding, probably over the actions Las Casas had taken in Guatemala with his efforts in Verapaz which had also garnered conflict with its governor. Remarkably, Pedraza, who was also known by the crown and by his own subjects as being very protective of the natives, joined sides with Marroquín, and equally began to criticize Las Casas.⁵¹ He would later state that Las Casas was "violently biased, blind with covetousness and ambition for worldly honors."⁵² The not yet consecrated bishop from Nicaragua apparently

remained neutral because he needed the support of Pedraza and Marroquín in order to gain his position.

While on the surface it is difficult to explain why Pedraza would seemingly shift from a fellow bishop like Las Casas with goals similar to his own, and further research is needed to determine the actual reason of his animosity, there are some plausible explanations. First of all, Pedraza had proven to be wise politically in his previous mitigation between Alvarado and Montejo, in which case he opted to support what he sensed as the wishes of the crown despite his own personal feelings for Montejo. Similarly, Pedraza probably knew that Las Casas drew disdain in the province, as in all of Spanish America, as he was blamed for the so called *Leyes Nuevas* from a few years earlier in which the encomiendas were weakened and ordained eventually to cease. Moreover, the local populations perceived that Las Casas motivated the ban on the enslavement of the indigenous populations, which the crown again enforced. By opposing Las Casas, he could have been gesturing politically. By the same token Pedraza could have sided with Marroquín by having the foresight to understand that Guatemala, whose leaders had already enjoyed political power gifted by the crown over matters in Honduras, was much more likely to have an effect on the daily affairs in his province than the distant Chiapas. Marroquín had taken a serious interest in religious affairs in Honduras once appointed in Pedraza's absence, and became equally concerned with the decline of the natives there. Perhaps the two bishops considered their understanding of the situation to be more realistic and focused and less aggrandized than their new rival Las Casas.

Second, it is also possible that Pedraza, while equally sincere, envisioned a different approach to the protection of the natives. As mentioned previously, Montejo and Pedraza saw eye to eye on how to govern the province, and Montejo is on record as wanting to use native labor cautiously and protectively so that the labor force could thrive and perpetuate in the interest of the long term economy. In a cedula addressed to both Montejo and Pedraza from

the Spanish crown, the right to inherit the encomiendas was granted in Honduras, and there is no evidence that Pedraza opposed this.⁵³ While on the surface it seems unlikely that he supported the system of encomiendas in general, as the encomenderos pointed out themselves in their protests to the crown, perpetuity offered some benefits. If the encomiendas were passed from generation to generation, then it is more likely that the encomenderos would protect their investment, and therefore treat the natives better than if they remained a temporary possession. The bishop's main concern, one which he followed with much voracity⁵⁴, was to protect the indigenes within the confines of the royal decrees as the monarchy saw fit, and therefore it is possible that he and Marroquín saw the posturing and rhetoric of Las Casas as personally "ambitious".

The *Leyes Nuevas* in 1542 did cause great unrest in Honduras, but not nearly to the same extent as in Nicaragua and Peru. The political unrest in Honduras had raised the perception that encomiendas were fleeting due to the constant issuing, revoking, and reallocating that had occurred. For example, as has been addressed previously, Alvarado had issued encomiendas immediately following his conquest in Honduras which Montejo had revoked and reassigned when he assumed the governorship. This was common practice in all of Spanish America, but in a place as politically unstable as Honduras it became magnified. The rapid initial decline of the populations along the coast also created a competition for those populations that could be placed under encomenderos, and therefore they were also likely to change hands.

2.5 The State of the Church in Honduras at the Close of Conquest

The state of the church at the close of conquest depends on the context in which it is analyzed. On one hand, the church played an instrumental role in almost every aspect of the conquest. On the other hand, if the proselytization of the indigenous populations is the primary function, then the Church was hardly a factor at all. The value the crown put on the role of the

church in Honduras is evident in the process in which it initially chose its governors and bishops. At the early stage of the conquest Fray Alonzo de Guzmán was named as both the bishop and the governor which he turned down.⁵⁵ The same dual position had been offered to Alfonso de Talavera who equally declined.⁵⁶ It is interesting to note that Pedraza, who obviously had a profound impact on the conquest, was offered the position of Protector of the Indians in 1538, which was a secular position, with the understanding that he would become Bishop of Honduras at a later date. This was not officially achieved until the Audiencia of los Confines was formed and Marroquín no longer formally presided over the religious affairs of Honduras. It is an important duplicity that the secular position of protector always went to a member of the clergy, and equally intriguing how the crown felt the vacancy of this position more pressing in Honduras than the vacancy of the ecclesiastic head of the province. It is clear that the native populations served a multifaceted purpose in the eyes of the crown, in which it needed their bodies for the Hispanic economy and their souls for Hispanic legitimacy.

Regardless, Pedraza saw no conflict of interest as bishop or protector, and acted according to the laws put forth by the crown as well as what was in the best ecclesiastical interests of the natives. However, it was as a protector that Pedraza had the most problems with the aristocracy. An example of this took place when the cabildo of Gracias a Dios complained about Pedraza in a letter to the monarchy stating that he “often interfered” in matters that were “outside” of his jurisdiction. In the same letter they revealed their motivation when they beseeched the king to allow them to overrule his policies that he had put into place. In this particular case it was to allow the natives to again work in the mines.⁵⁷ Pedraza had a different perspective, declaring to the king that the people of Gracias were “angry with me because they did not want Your Majesty to know the dirtiness and stinginess that happens there.”⁵⁸ He also complained that the inhabitants of Gracias think that his decisions are his own, and that he is not acting in accordance with the “royal conscience”.

After taking a trip to see the state of his bishopric shortly after the consecration of Valdivieso, Pedraza described its condition.⁵⁹ One major issue, one which would seriously affect the economy as well, was the infrastructure of the colony. The towns were spread out and there were few to no roads. The diverse topography in Honduras included swamps, mountains, large rivers, jungles, forests, etc., and just to travel from town to town was dangerous and difficult. Pedraza remarked that he “could travel from Spain to Jerusalem” in the same time it took him to travel around his diocese. Of course this contrasted sharply with the bishops in Spain, who could sleep on comfortable beds and travel on foot easily without facing “lizards of 20 feet or more” or mud so deep that the horses traveled belly deep.

The indigenous populations responded to the conquest by dispersing and fleeing into the mountains, and their depopulation due to enslavement and treachery not only made conversion physically demanding but, according to Pedraza, it also taught them to fear Christians. For this reason they inhabited the mountains and the swamps, and other difficult areas of the countryside in order to remain “hidden” from the Christians. However, even when the natives were Christianized, most were nomadic or seminomadic, and would move away and go long periods of time without any further religious instruction. Pedraza kept the seat of his bishopric at Trujillo along the northern coastline, in an area of Honduras that was inhabited by nomadic tribes. Those in the interior, where the ecclesiastical seat would be moved after Pedraza’s death, were more sedentary.

Other major issues that would become all too common for the Spanish Church in Honduras throughout the colonial period were finances and manpower. Pedraza complained to the crown about the lack of people to serve the needs of the natives as well as the other Christians, and argued that the current financial situation was not enough to entice good clergyman to come to Honduras. It is not difficult to imagine the impediment faced by Pedraza after describing the difficulty that the clergy faced in Honduras. Just moving from town to town,

would discourage the clergy from leaving the comfort of Spain to face these travails. Therefore two types of men would consider the task, those who could fare no better and were probably barely qualified in the first place, or those who truly felt the calling. Obviously the latter became a rarity. Even if the ecclesiastics in Spain did have the desire to come to Honduras, it was not an easy process. Pedraza complained about the trickery, bribery, and false pretenses under which the Casa de Contración allowed many to travel to the Spanish Americas, men who would never show up in Honduras as ordained. He then proposed to the king that the faith might better be served by allowing the bishops to make such decisions locally in Honduras as they might be better prepared to determine the veracity of the individual's credentials and potential to convert the natives or serve the Church in the province in some other capacity.

Pedraza, as Bishop of Honduras, was expected to be the protector of the Indians, as was now the expectation of all the bishops in the audiencia. However, he lamented the inefficacy of his ecclesiastical position when dealing with the encomenderos. Despite the *Leyes Nuevas* that had been in effect for a few years now, the abuses of the encomienda system still continued in Honduras. The bishop complained to the crown that he could not preach to the natives because they were always being rented out to others or were too busy performing slave labor for their encomenderos. He petitioned the crown for royal authority to punish those creating the offenses, and he hoped that the indigenous populations would see the bishopric as a potential source to rectify and redress the injustices which they regularly received. However, due to the abuses of the encomienda system coupled with the other responsibilities of the office, in addition to the aforementioned difficulty in getting around the province, Pedraza felt helpless to administer any relief to the indigenous populations and felt ineffective for their lack of conversion. The system of *corregidores*, those intended by the crown to serve as intermediaries between Spanish authorities and the indigenous populations and oversee that the repartimientos were rightfully administered became extremely corrupt in Pedraza's

estimation. He emphatically lamented that they were “not reformers [as their name implies] but rather thieves and robbers” and he “resigned to God to see them all burned.”

Finally, Pedraza discussed the need for more churches, and requested the financing and the manpower for their construction. He requested the use of African slaves in order to build the churches because the indigenous populations were busy and unable to do the work. In addition, the Christian workers charged too much for their labor. This is not the first time that the bishop had requested slaves. This appeal was not uncommon for Spanish clergy as the indigenous populations did not yet know the word of God, whereas the Spanish believed that Africans had heard and rejected it. Therefore it was not problematic for the clergy to support African slaves in the same letter that they admonished indigenous slavery.

Thus the Spanish Church in Honduras found itself undermanned, underfunded, and virtually ineffective in its ability to convert the native populations. Pedraza also found himself powerless to right the wrongs that resulted from the encomienda system. However, he had been an instrumental part in the conquest, and religiosity pervaded the process. Honduras, whose Hispanic focus was now shifted to the interior, now prepared to begin colonization in earnest as the emphasis shifted from conquest to populating the interior and maintaining the lucrative mining industry.

CHAPTER 3

COLONIZATION: THE PUSH TO THE INTERIOR

By 1545 the military controlled the indigenous population in Honduras to the point that native uprisings could be quelled. The fledgling towns in the interior enjoyed sufficient stability to establish footholds in their respective areas. But as the Spanish learned all too well during the *Reconquista*, gaining military stability or superiority in the area was only one phase of conquest; the real problem became populating the area. Where Honduras is concerned, the problem of colonization carried unique challenges. By this time the Spanish crown had already learned some valuable lessons in the Americas and had hoped to reconcile them. The Laws of Burgos as well as the *Leyes Nuevas* were already in existence, and the crown as well as the colonists had come to believe that the indigenes were exceptionally vital to the survival and progress of the provinces. However, this understanding was not solely economic. Prelates such as Las Casas had put pressure on Carlos V to improve the treatment of the natives, and the crown understood its role within the overall legitimacy of royal interests in the Americas. Therefore the monarchy needed to strike a delicate balance between the economic needs of the colony and spiritual needs of the Catholic faith, a task that would prove extremely demanding and problematic throughout the colonization process. Once again the roots of Honduran colonization can be found in Spanish medieval history. Yet the colonization of Honduras took place in the interior highlands of the province, far away from the much sought after coastline along the North Sea. Important towns during the conquest, such as Trujillo and Puerto de Caballos began to wane in importance as the *pobladores* pushed inwards. The reason for this shift in population is complex, involving a mixture of socioeconomic as well as religiopolitical factors that deserve analysis. It is first necessary to understand the geography and culture of

the indigenous populations in the area, especially as they were perceived by the Spanish colonists.

3.1 Spanish Perceptions of the Early Colonial Indigenous Population

Religiosity and the cultural consciousness in pre-Columbian Honduras are much more difficult to ascertain. Due to its central location, the indigenous populations from both Mexico and South America had migrated to the area creating a diverse population in terms of cultural practice as well as political development. These major population groups were composed of many smaller subpopulations that interacted with one another and often spoke each other's language, which made classification extremely difficult for the arriving Spanish. The Mesoamerican and South American influences created a cultural amalgamation that was impressive and confusing, particularly when the Spanish tried preaching to them. The networks and interactions that ranged from Mexico as far south as Panama were so profound that Cortés, before his aforementioned trek across Guatemala into Honduras had spoken with local Mexican natives to determine the best route, and they created a route for him that led all the way to "the residence of Pedrarias Dávila." Cortés also learned of Olid's death from natives to the north of Honduras.⁶⁰ It has not been an easy task for modern anthropologists as well. By the time that the Spaniards arrived, the major indigenous populations inhabiting Honduras were the Maya, Lenca, Jicaque, Paya, and the Sumu. The earliest and most powerful group to emerge in Honduras were the Mayans.

Upon exploring western Honduras in 1576, Diego de Palacios noted a "great power, and a great population, civilized, and considerably advance in the arts, as is shown in the various figures and buildings."⁶¹ He quickly tried to learn from the local populations who had built the great city, and he could only discover that "a great lord from Yucatán" had built it but had "returned and left them deserted."⁶² The site he was describing for the first time through European eyes was that of the ruins at Copán. The Mayans reached their cultural peak in

Honduras in the mid eighth century though they continued to populate the area for years to come. They would prove to have a profound cultural impact on the tribes that would follow. The nitrogen rich, fertile soils still used today to cultivate tobacco were a primary factor that drew the Maya to valley around the Copán River, with evidence of inhabitants as early as 1200 B.C.E.⁶³ Much like the Nile the predictable flooding of the river (which no longer occurs) allowed for sustainable agriculture better than anywhere else in the region. There was also a steady supply of jade and obsidian within a short distance of the area. Anthropologist William Fash applies the circumscription theory to Copán; he argues that the inability to expand outside of the alluvial floodplain forced the Mayan society to become rapidly complex.⁶⁴ It is this swift cultural acceleration that best defines the Mayan influence in Honduras.

Palacio's analysis of the ruins caused him to believe that the inhabitants of Copán were idolatrous, describing some of the statues as "idols, for in front of each of them is a large stone, in which is carved a small reservoir, with its groove, in which the blood was collected from the sacrifices. We find also the little altars where the perfumes were burned before them."⁶⁵ Although the Mayans at Copán were not idolatrous, Palacios recognized the religious importance of the statues. The rulers in Copán, who were instrumental in the fusion of their sociopolitical beliefs with their religious ideologies, would commission the construction of the various statues and buildings in order to conduct their religious rites or convey religious messages through secular activities. For example, the sun and its role within agricultural production became intertwined with fertility. The concept is manifested in the great ball court, commissioned at the height of Copán culture, in that the religious symbolism decorating the court is full of religious symbolism suggesting the victory of light (the sun) over darkness (underworld and death). It is also suggested that the games themselves were played in order to enact this metaphysical process.⁶⁶

Palacio also hit the mark in regards to sacrifice. While debated by modern anthropologists,⁶⁷ evidence exists that bloodletting (especially by those in power), and both animal and human sacrifice became common practice amongst the inhabitants of Copán.⁶⁸ Social stratification, an important cultural concept to the Maya, manifested in the autosacrificial concept of bloodletting and human sacrifice. Religious identity seemed hinged upon social status, which grew in importance as the political culture became more sophisticated. This is not only evident in the sacrificial ceremonies, but also in an analysis of the burial practices at the archeological site.⁶⁹ The decorations and the contents within the tombs describe not only the hierarchy during life, but the possibility of exclusivity in the afterlife as well.

Ironically, it was Copán's success that led to its demise. The growing population put excessive demands on its food supply, and society overran the fields best used for vegetation. Archeological evidence suggests that Copán was basically abandoned. The Maya presence remained in western Honduras after the Spanish arrived. Their cultural boundaries receded westward and their political structure declined from the state level to that of chiefdoms.⁷⁰ However, their presence became felt as well as considered very influential on other cultures that emerged. The presence of a major, sophisticated cultural center also had to have served to whet the appetites of the Spanish in the area, hoping for the promise of material gain similar to other such centers to the north and south of Honduras.

In the wake of Mayan decline, other tribal groups could emerge. The Lenca, inhabiting the heart of Honduras, are probably the group most identified with today as "Honduran"⁷¹. Some early Honduran historians even referred to Lempira, the great Lencan warrior as the first revolutionary against Spanish tyranny. The Lenca were more organized politically than the other tribes in Honduras, and achieved a level of sophistication similar to the Maya (after the classic period and decline). In her *Cost of Conquest*, Linda Newson classifies the indigenous populations by cultural and linguistic families, and distinguishes the Lenca groups as

chiefdoms.⁷² This level of sophistication became important in Spanish perception in that it was more easily understood by the Spanish, because they encountered a hierarchy that could be worked with, and leaders who could be held accountable. The Lenca inhabited a large area of the southwestern and central portions of Honduras, including the future sites of the important Spanish population centers of Comayagua and Tegucigalpa. It is important to note that these sites would also become extremely important economic locales with the discovery of silver veins in these areas.

There is still debate amongst anthropologists whether certain groups were Lenca or Maya. Also, many prominent Honduran historians in the past did not bother to make such a distinction.⁷³ Economically both cultures were more sedentary, and agriculture was the primary feature of the economy. Maize, beans, manioc, and sweet potatoes were the most important crops. Hunting and fishing took on secondary roles, but did occur regularly.⁷⁴ The sedentary nature of the Lenca also became attractive for the Spanish colonists in that it aided the localization, proselytization, and overall control of the natives. Trade was also widespread in Lencan culture, and they traded freely with the tribes in eastern Honduras.⁷⁵ Mining, which would become extremely prevalent for the Lenca under Spanish rule whether they embraced it or not, carried little importance in their culture. The eventual capital city, Tegucigalpa, was considered to mean “city of silver” in the Lencan language, but this has since been dismissed due to the lack of value placed on the metal in Lencan culture.⁷⁶ Social stratification was very similar to Mayan culture, and the role of Chief was hereditary within the tribes. They also placed a great deal of importance on various advisory positions. Priests enjoyed a revered position within the societal structure.⁷⁷

Ideologically the Lenca differed greatly from their Maya counterparts. The Spanish considered the Lenca to be idolatrous, and sacrifice seemed to be less frequent than some of the other ethnic groups, although it did occur for isolated and specific circumstances.⁷⁸ Dreams

and omens carried great importance, and as Newson points out “fatalism seems to have pervaded beliefs...little was done to help the sick or dying.”⁷⁹ This acceptance of fate would help put into perspective the Lenca surrender after the death of Lempira despite their maintaining an overwhelmingly favorable situation. The Lenca were much less ceremonious as well. Newson states that there were three or fewer ceremonies a year and that they may have carried little or no religious significance.⁸⁰ Wars occurred but were not to procure sacrifices to the gods, but rather to procure slaves.⁸¹

In eastern Honduras the indigenous populations were extremely different. The tribes were much less structured socially and politically, and were loosely organized into tribes. They were semi-nomadic, and relied to varying degrees on subsistence through hunting, fishing, and agriculture. By most anthropological accounts, the Paya who inhabited the northeastern portion of modern Honduras, and the Sumu to the southeast were transplants from South America which is evident by their linguistic roots.⁸² Anthropologist Herbert Spinden stated:

Indeed all these tribes (Sumu, Paya, and he argues Jicaque) appear to have been intruders into Central America from some forested portion of South America (Colombia) as is evidenced by their material arts and social institutions. They are fine canoe men, expert hunters and fishers, but poor farmers. Their marriage is of the inbreeding South American type with the cross cousin as the normal mate. Their ceremonies involve drunkenness in which beers made from very starchy materials are consumed in great quantity. Fermentation is hastened by pre-mastication of manioc roots etc., after the South American fashion.”⁸³

The fact that the eastern tribes were cultural transplants explains a great deal of their sociopolitical differences. Ideologically the differences are even greater, though sources for pre-Columbian religious practices are sparse. The Spanish accounts range from their being a “wild idolatrous people” to there being “a general absence of idols, priests, and forms of public worship.” There is evidence that they shared a similar “ill-defined” deity according to the Spanish with small differences in name or natural identification from tribe to tribe.⁸⁴ Based on their burial practices, it also appears that they did have some concept of the afterlife. Newson

suggests that they practiced cannibalism to some extent, but more as a militaristic ritual than a religious one.⁸⁵ The fact that cannibalism, nomadic tendencies, and their other cultural practices were viewed as animalistic qualities only led to a justification for their harsh treatment and enslavement. During colonization, these population groups received the least favorable impression for several reasons. They were extremely fractionalized, making them very difficult to reduce and to convert. When they were moved to central locations they often resumed their nomadic ways, and simply took to the hills. When it came to instructing them in the faith it was even more problematic. The Jicaque in the northern part of Honduras were probably not converted until well after Honduran independence.⁸⁶ Hence regardless of their accuracy when classifying the indigenes, it is important to note that in the eyes of the Spanish the natives in central and western Honduras were more suited for the *encomiendas* and the instruction of the Catholic faith, which made them more viable within the Spanish economic and social systems than their eastern counterparts. When it came time to colonize the areas populated by the natives, or left vacant due to conquest, the Spanish turned to their experience.

3.2 The Historical and Sociological Context for Honduran Colonization

The *Reconquista* would be much more accurately termed were it named the *Conquista*. It was hardly a Gothic reemergence, and the manner in which Spain forged its identity through conquest would have profound effects in Spanish America and therefore Honduras. Various perspectives and methodologies acquired through experience in their conflict with the Muslims would evolve into institutions central to the colonization efforts in the early modern era. Aspects such as the *encomiendas*, the taxation techniques to finance military and colonization efforts, the means in which population and settling were encouraged, as well as the religious instruction and conversion of the conquered infidels, all emanated from medieval Spain.

One of the most important lessons learned by the Spanish was that colonization was an integral component of conquest. Once an enemy was defeated and had retreated they left

behind a frontier that had to be established, and the only means to truly control it was to populate it. It is in this regard that the governors became rapidly concerned about the depopulation of Honduras before Alvarado's arrival.⁸⁷ This is also the reason Alvarado carried *pobladores* (literally translating as "populators") with him in his conquest of the Honduran interior, and founded several cities immediately after defeating the natives. He even went so far as to carry natives from other provinces with him "to settle among the inhabitants of Higueras as allies of the Spanish".⁸⁸ The crown perceived early *pobladores* in Spanish America as being equally important to the conquistadors themselves. The crown often rewarded them with tax incentives in addition to any *encomiendas* they might receive from an appreciative conquistador.⁸⁹ However, in order to populate the area there had to be motivation, and therefore the terrain had to be economically viable. The individual motivation has been previously addressed; however the crown had to develop systematic approaches in order to succeed. Populating an area was a slow process, and the Spanish had learned from their Muslim counterparts how to exploit the conquered population.

Under Muslim rule the Christians had been living as a conquered people in *dhimmitude* and were forced to pay a tax known as the *jizya*. *Dhimmi* translates as "protection, or pact of protection;" it is important to note that *encomienda* translates as similarly as entrustment. A Christian might expect to pay anywhere from a fifth to four fifths of his produce under Islamic rule depending on his status and where he was located.⁹⁰ The newly formed Spanish monarchs took note of this and similarly exploited the Mudejars living under Christian rule after regaining their lands. The *parias*, or tribute payments made to the Christians resemble the *jizya* and became an important financial asset. For example, one local Muslim ruler pledged vassalage to his Christian conqueror and paid in tribute 150,000 *maravedís* over 20 years.⁹¹ The profit was so great that Granada could have been taken years earlier, but the tributes were too financially lucrative to trade for religiosity.

This dichotomy would resonate well into the early modern era for Spain. As Robert Burns points out in regard to medieval Spain:

“At the ideological level, the subordination of Islam was the main preoccupation of the crusaders. At the more immediate human or social level the theme of chivalric function was repeatedly sounded. In terms of abiding advantage, however, the permanent acquisition of tax sources moved crusaders deeply.”⁹²

While religiosity was an integral philosophical aspect of the actions and institutions in early modern Spain, at the local level, due to greed or economic necessity, it often digressed. This is particularly true in a province such as Honduras, where the rich financial rewards were few and far between.

Jaime Vicens Vives, a famous economic historian of Spanish history, argues for an almost entirely economic interpretation of the *Reconquista*. To Vives it was nothing more than an economic enterprise stemming from the necessity for more land and resources; it was “the economic reality of being trapped between Muslims and mountains that prevailed.”⁹³ He too felt that the population and settling of the frontier was the most difficult aspect, and referred to it as the “slow” *Reconquista*, which he argued created favorable circumstances for those willing to populate it. However, the lucrative situations did not exist solely on the individual level. The monarchy, particularly in Castile, became powerful, even mightier than the pope in some respects. These new acquisitions enabled the kings to utilize a variety of resources necessary to defeat the Muslims and repopulate Iberia. Yet the effects would be even more far reaching than during the *Reconquista*.

One example of these consequences would be the role of the church in Castile. As the kingdom became powerful, the monarchy began to wrest various powers away from the papacy. The most significant was the grant of the *tercias*, which were religious tithes which the Vatican granted to the monarchy in order to help their crusading efforts, and the king had no intention of relinquishing them.⁹⁴ Such income soon came to be considered part of the royal treasury.

Furthermore, Castile was seen as a distant kingdom to some of the popes involved in other “more European” affairs (with which Aragon and Catalonia found themselves often all too heavily involved), and Urban IV even referred to Lisbon as “the back of beyond.”⁹⁵ This allowed independence for both the bishops and the monarchs, and soon they became more steadfast to each other than to Rome. The importance of this, particularly in within the religious context of medieval Europe and continuing into the early modern era, cannot be overstated. The Spanish monarchy had almost total religious autonomy, and therefore the sovereigns could use the church to their own moral or political devices.

Nevertheless, the political dynamic of the world had changed by the time of the conquest of Honduras in the early sixteenth century. Protestant powers such as England were competing heavily for possessions in the New World, and the successes as well as the costly failures of Spain’s colonial ventures were quite well understood by their enemies. While psychologically Spain might have still considered itself religiously independent and had fused both secular and ecclesiastical concepts into conquest, it became increasingly difficult to maintain separation from the Pope. Thus an interesting dichotomy in its relationship with Rome soon developed. On the one hand the Spanish crown had seized an enormous amount of control over the church, and their power and legitimacy was strengthened by the fact that “they [had] ripped their kingdoms out of the jaws of the enemy.”⁹⁶ With the threat of Protestantism looming over Europe, Spain enjoyed a favorable position. The Pope needed this world power as an ally to protect its Catholic interests in the face of emerging Protestant powers. Yet Spain soon found itself in need of the papacy as well. With the aforementioned missionaries such as Bartolomé de Las Casas putting a great deal of pressure on the crown due to the treatment of the indigenous populations, the monarchs needed the religious backing of the papacy to justify its actions in the New World. The Spanish economy could not function without its newfound labor force, yet it needed religious validation for its economic systems of *encomiendas* and

repartimientos. It seemed that “the Spanish claim to the New World rested on the papal responsibility for the souls of men.”⁹⁷

3.3 Historical Context of the Encomienda in Honduras

The first factor for colonization, as learned in the *Reconquista*, had already been accomplished. By the mid sixteenth century, the Spanish had military control over the province. The question then remained as to how to populate it. The towns in the Honduran highlands in Central and Western Honduras, namely Gracias a Dios, Comayagua, and soon Tegucigalpa began growing in importance. Gracias a Dios was even the governmental head of the province until 1549 when it was moved to Guatemala. Pedraza had been instrumental in keeping up tradition and maintaining Trujillo as the head of the church in the Honduras, but upon his death in 1553 that changed as well. The bishop that replaced him, Jerónimo de Corella, also noticed the shift in power towards the interior and in 1568 moved the seat of the church to Comayagua “as it is in the middle of all the villages that are populated and where there is more of an abundance of natives and the land is [rich] and there.” In Trujillo he felt he was too far away from where he was needed, which suggests that Trujillo was declining in importance.⁹⁸ Pedraza had a differing opinion though, suggesting the port town was growing every day.⁹⁹ The crown and the government must have still considered Trujillo important as they continually defended it against constant pirate attacks. However, the population would not increase, as Pedraza contended, but rather would decline in comparison to the interior villages.

The move to the interior concerned more than geography. By mid-century the province was hardly overpopulated, and pressures along the northern and eastern coasts emerged, such as England, piracy, or the Zambos Mosquitos. They would later play their roles and pose as serious threats. Pedraza mentioned that there were only about seven Christian towns in the province (the most important being Trujillo, Puerto de Caballos, San Pedro, Comayagua, Gracias a Dios, and within a few years Tegucigalpa) and the population of each varied between

twenty five and thirty *vecinos* with the exception of Trujillo with fifty or more, and growing every day.¹⁰⁰ Rather the motivation for the population shift was a complex combination of political and religious concepts that found its roots in the *encomienda* system.

The balance between religious idealism and economic need manifested itself early in the Spanish Americas because the crown was never going to hurt its economic potential. The answer was the *encomienda*, a system in which the crown (or sometimes governors or conquistadors with royal authority as has been seen already in Honduras) grants a set number of natives from whom the *encomendero* can obtain labor or tributes. In return the *encomendero* was to manage the wellbeing of the native, and to his or her conversion to the Catholic faith. Naturally this was much more symbiotic on paper than it ever was in practice. After the utter devastation of the Caribbean, the crown learned quickly that reform was in order. The Laws of Burgos passed in 1512 and attempted to limit the abuses that could be dealt to the natives. While much of the rhetoric is specifically religious, its economic intent is clear as well. It does nothing to disparage the *encomienda* system itself, nor does it outlaw indigenous slavery. The crown knew that part of the colonists complaints had valid points, but the economy in the New World relied on Indian labor. The laws did provide processes that would be employed concerning the *reducciones*, or the concentrating of the natives to specific and localized areas, as well as a specific set of religious guidelines in which to ensure the ecclesiastical administration over the newly formed villages. It is always easier to start anew than it is to change old habits, and from the onset the crown wanted to establish these laws in Honduras. Therefore, upon the consecration of the short termed Bishop Guzman in Trujillo, he was obligated to sign and confirm his intention to follow the relatively new Laws of Burgos where his bishopric was operated.¹⁰¹

By mid-century the failures of the Laws of Burgos became clear, and the validity of the *encomienda* system came directly under fire. The *Leyes Nuevas* attempted to eradicate the

encomiendas within a generation, and outlawed native slavery outright. It disallowed any government or church official to maintain encomiendas, and it placed greater emphasis on the audiencias to monitor the existing encomiendas and punish any of those who abused the system. The main clause to draw the most ire from the colonists was the loss of perpetuity; the encomienda was to die with last encomendero. While wildly unpopular in Honduras, it did not incite the rebellions such as in Mexico or Peru, probably due to the fact that encomiendas had been ephemeral up to this point in Honduras due to the political instability. Nevertheless the crown relented and the encomienda was safe for now in the New World. It is within this context that the colonization of the interior began in earnest.

The Bishop of Honduras, Alfonso de la Cerda, wrote of his frustration in the late sixteenth century stating that “the Indians have a great lack of indoctrination due to the variety of languages and [the fact that] they are spread out and distanced from one village to another...so that when we return to visit them they have already forgotten what we have read and taught them before.” He suggests that the indigenous populations be reduced to centralized locations “where they can be comfortably indoctrinated” and learn to live “like people of reason and not spread about the countryside like savages and beasts.”¹⁰² These *reducciones* were not just intended to benefit the ecclesiastics, but rather became an essential part of population and colonization. Around 1562 when silver was discovered in the area that would later become Tegucigalpa, the crown ordered the *población y reducción* of the location. The settlers were to pick a location suitable to sustain the native populations and move the natives there. If the natives resisted authorities had to emphasize to the Indians that they did not wish to populate the location “to do them any harm, nor to take their lands, but rather to become friends with them and teach them to live politically and to know God and to show them the law of Jesus Christ so that they may be saved.”¹⁰³ Despite the religious rhetoric that

pervades the mandate, it is very important to note the economic rewards that the king decided to relinquish.

The *población* in Honduras was twofold: the natives to provide the labor force (or to be indoctrinated as the language of the letter would state), and the *pobladores* who would organize, build, and maintain the city. The crown offered financial rewards to both. For those natives who came peacefully and voluntarily into the Catholic faith, they were to be relieved of any tribute payment for the period of ten years. For any Spaniard willing to populate a remote area, they were granted the “*veinteno y no mas*” (a twentieth and no more) on any gold, silver, or precious stones that they removed from the mines. For an additional four years thereafter, they would only pay a *diezmo* (tenth).¹⁰⁴ This is less than the *quinto* (fifth) that was the earlier standard taxation rate for the crown on any precious metals. This relinquishment by the crown would be requested repeatedly throughout the colonial period by the *cabildos* in the mining areas. The crown would often grant these taxes directly to the church, so they often became an important part of the church’s finance as well. The results were not always positive as this often tied the success of the church to the local economy, as will be addressed.

The religious aspects of the *reducciones*, as exemplified in the previous edict, served several purposes. First of all, colonization of an area is repeatedly explained as an intention to proselytize the natives. This religious rhetoric is clearly used as a justification for the Spanish entering the location and claiming it. The economic aspects such as the discovery of silver mines in the area, aside from the rewards for the colonizers and natives, are barely mentioned. Nevertheless, some specific religious commands were given, such as including the ecclesiastics in the process, and mandating that they attempt to convert the populations. While this serves their goal of increasing the Catholic faith, it also helps acculturate and pacify the native populations, which aids in colonization and provides concrete evidence of the virtue of the Hispanic cause.

The encomienda had already been used as a reward for conquest, but it also became a means of survival. The populations of the towns were relatively small and therefore to sustain an economy that could be lucrative to the colony and the crown required more manpower than was available, particularly in the mines. For this reason, the larger villages maintained a ratio of encomenderos to encomendados that exceeded fifty to one, as is demonstrated in table 2.1 below.

However, part of the rationale for the encomiendas was to Christianize the natives, not just to subject them to labor and tributes. Obviously based on the sheer numbers of Indians alone it would be difficult, and even more so when considering that these natives were reduced in different indigenous villages with their encomenderos devising other intentions. Therefore it is worthwhile to examine the organization of the church in these locales, as demonstrated in the table below. Obviously there were insufficient numbers of clergymen to fulfill the spiritual needs of the native populations. Though they did have some assistance from the missionary efforts in the area, the religious instruction of the natives in Honduras proved a very difficult task. However, it is not sufficient to just examine where ecclesiastics existed, it is also important to understand the nature of the clerics. In his letter to the crown, Bishop Andrada describes the secular church's presence in the villages around the province. With the exception of Comayagua, whose priest came from Toledo in Spain, all of the other priests in the villages were from the areas in which they were working.¹⁰⁵ While not explicitly stated, it is more than likely that these prelates were creoles, as the bishop mentioned that some of them speak the language. While at first glance this seems like it would be an advantage, especially where conversion of the natives is concerned, it often proved problematic. First of all, the creole priests lacked the religious training received by their counterparts in Spain. These localized ecclesiastics received basic and undeveloped training, especially considering that the first seminary school was not developed in Honduras for several more decades. The clerics were

often using their language skills to barter with the natives rather than convert them.¹⁰⁶ In addition it is very important to note that everywhere else in Spain there existed an abundance of priests whether *doctrineros* to convert the natives or *curas* to administer to the Spanish population. The extreme lack of priests seems to be a Honduran anomaly.¹⁰⁷

Table 3.1 Encomiendas in Population Centers¹⁰⁸

Location and Population	Number of Encomenderos	Number of Natives in Encomiendas
Comayagua Vecinos: 70	The Crown 22 encomenderos (only 20 listed by name in letter)	201 1522 Total : 1,723
Gracias a Dios Vecinos: 30	The Crown 22 or 23 encomenderos	450 1,319 Total : 1,769
Trujillo Vecinos: 20	The Crown 8 encomenderos	40 373 Total : 413
San Pedro Sula Vecinos: 20	The Crown 11 encomenderos	56 359 Total : 415
Puerto de Caballos Vecinos: 8	1 encomendero	60 Total : 60
Valle de Olancho Vecinos: 25	18 encomenderos	726 Total : 726

Regardless, it seems that the primary means of early ecclesiastic teaching rested within the encomienda system. This was very problematic in that to the encomenderos, religion was not the priority by any means. The inherent lack of the large material gains that had defined great success in Mexico and Peru eluded the Spaniards in Honduras to the adverse effect of the indigenous populations.

Table 3.2 Ecclesiastic Organization of Honduras in Population Centers 1591¹⁰⁹

Location	Ecclesiastics	Salary
Comayagua	Bishop of Honduras	Not Mentioned
	Treasurer Archdeacon Ecclesiastic	¼ diezmo
	Priest	350 pesos from the mines
	(3 vacant positions)	Not Mentioned
Gracias a Dios	2 priests	300 pesos from the mines (each)
Trujillo	2 priests	400 pesos from the mines (each)
San Pedro Sula	Priest	400 pesos from the mines (each)
Puerto de Caballos	Vacant (priest)	400 pesos from the mines
Valle de Olancho	2 priests	300 pesos from thee mines
		225 pesos from the mines (each)

The problem with such a system in Honduras was that the church became entangled in the economic affairs out of necessity more than politics. A cycle emerged in which the church intended to convert the natives but needed money to finance their operations, build churches, etc. On the other hand, their money came from the mines, usually in the form of grants of the *diezmo* or *quinto* from the king on mining taxes. In rural mining areas not yet established enough to be considered within the fold of the church, the inhabitants would pay an ecclesiastic to administer to their religious needs out of their own profits from the mines. The mining economy depended on native labor, and thus the church was torn between protecting the souls of the indigenous population and protecting the economic systems which provided the means to

do just that. Therefore it is impossible to understate the economic situation in Honduras during the colonization process.

3.4 The Colonial Economy in Honduras

Like so many other facets of colonial Honduras, an analysis of the economy yields contradictory results. As in most parts of Spanish America, mining became the chief economic interest in Honduras. The quality of the gold and silver equaled that in other parts of the empire. However, despite its profound influence on the local economy, it never accounted for more than five percent of the precious metals produced by Spain in the New World.¹¹⁰ Gold mining, while originally lucrative, was exhausted by mid-sixteenth century. The locations in which gold was discovered, mainly in areas around Trujillo, lacked the native populations to sustain gold mining, due both to the decline in population and the nomadic culture of the existing natives that lived there. The discovery of silver deposits around the area that would become Tegucigalpa shifted the focus to silver. There seemed to be a boom in the late sixteenth century and again in the mid seventeenth century.¹¹¹ Denser population centers also existed there which allowed for a labor supply. Yet previous prelates, such as Pedraza, had been successful in enforcing the laws by limiting the indigenous labor in the mines.¹¹² Although the crown previously ignored the plight of the Indians, it eventually sided with the prelates against the earlier abuses of the *encomenderos*.

There were also shortages of other needed materials, most specifically quicksilver. A new process in mercury amalgamation had been discovered, in which the ground ore was mixed with mercury, then put through a washing and distilling process in which the mercury vaporizes leaving the pure silver.¹¹³ Mining itself was also a very complex and difficult process. Gunpowder blasting was not available until several years later, and the ground had to be burned to ash and the then pounded with crowbars and hammers just to be able to excavate the minerals.¹¹⁴ Newsom contends in her essay "Silver Mining in Colonial Honduras" that mercury

was in plentiful supply to the colonies, the only issue being its price.¹¹⁵ While this may have been the case over the entire colonial period as a whole, it seems that initially supply, or lack thereof, was a key issue. Labor in the mines was another initial concern for the early colonists. They advocated the use of slaves and repeatedly beseeched the king to send African slaves for use in the mines. Between 1574 and 1581, the colonists beseeched the crown for mercury at least six times, asking for as much as 400 *quintones* of the liquid.¹¹⁶ In many of the same letters, the colonists also requested a large quantity of African slaves. One *cabildo* requested 400 slaves from the crown because most of the “people who own the land that have the mines are poor...[and] the perpetuation of the land depends on the mines.”¹¹⁷ The clergy in Honduras had little problem with the idea of using African slaves for the most part. It solved the problem of native labor in the mines without harming any economic interests of the colonists or the church.

Despite the lucrative nature of the mines, it proved more difficult to mine silver than gold, and few colonists who undertook the task actually had the necessary skills and resources to do it well. The fact that the colonists continually requested the *diezmos*, and because they were continually granted by the monarchy, attest to both the poverty of the colony and the desire of the crown to encourage its improvement.¹¹⁸ It also seems that very few African slaves arrived in Honduras to work the mines. Newson suggests that the bulk of the slaves arrived before 1550, and only a few more than 500 slaves arrived during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, and not all of those were necessarily sent to the mines.¹¹⁹ By 1631 the labor supply had apparently reached such a low point that the colonists requested the king to release the natives from their *repartimientos* in Nicaragua in order to toil in the mines in Honduras. But the king replied negatively due to the “great importance of the conservation of the Indians.”¹²⁰

Despite the dominance of mining in the Honduran economy, there is some evidence that a shift was occurring rather early and that cattle ranching was becoming increasingly important, which was a very logical pattern for several reasons. First of all, the Spanish had learned that ranching was a viable frontier profession, in that it was mobile and often more predictable than farming. The Mesta wool monopoly in Castile had created an extremely lucrative wool trade, and it had enjoyed success in cattle ranching as well. Another important aspect of ranching, probably the most important factor in contrast to the mining economy, was the fact that few laborers were required to produce economically fruitful results. When Herrera described Honduras in his *Historia General* he wrote that the “country was rich with gold mines, and produced Spanish wheat, vines and other fruits, besides an abundance of cattle, the climate being temperate and well watered.”¹²¹ In the same letter in which a local cabildo requested mercury and slaves for the mines, it also suggested that success in the mines would create the possibility for populating the area where the “land is fertile” and is well suited “for growing cattle.”¹²² The importance of cattle is also reflected in the local legislation. An alcalde mayor eventually passed an ordinance disallowing the burning of any fields, woodlands, or savannas due to the detrimental effect it was having on the cattle.¹²³ Native labor remained an issue, and due to the mobility of the cattle profession, natives were not allowed to travel on cattle drives without permission. The cattle herds were more than likely driven to Guatemala for sale.¹²⁴ Cattle ranching did not exist under the exact circumstances as it had in Spain. Cattle also became important to the native populations, and many documents refer to the need for the *reducciones* to provide suitable land for the natives to protect themselves and their cattle. With the relatively low numbers of Spaniards, as well as the favorable environment for cattle, the cattle population grew and became feral. Therefore the colonists would periodically perform round ups and utilize the cattle for their meat and hides.¹²⁵

3.5 Religious Aspects and Analysis of the Colonization of the Interior

Therefore it is easy to understand the variety of factors that led to a relatively quick migration into the central highlands of western Honduras. The port towns of Puerto de Caballos and Trujillo were still important footholds to the Caribbean and maintained their contact with Spain and the rest of Spanish America. On the other hand it is quite evident that the villages in the interior such as Comayagua, Tegucigalpa, Gracias a Dios, etc. were growing in importance and destined to be the future cultural and economic centers of the province. It would be simplistic to suggest that any one factor was the sole reason for the transition, and it would be too undiscerning to merely argue that all were factors. Of course each element did play a role, but the cause is more complex, and religiosity was a major factor.

If the encomiendas administered are analyzed from an economic perspective, then undoubtedly the connection is made between the mines and the encomiendas (see figure 3.1). The areas where gold mines developed near Trujillo, as well as the silver mines in the western and central parts of Honduras, all benefited from encomiendas. However, if the same analysis is made from a cultural perspective, another plausible outcome is discovered (see figure 3.2). The more sedentary tribes, namely the Maya, the Lenca, and the Chorotega inhabited the same areas where encomiendas operated. The tribes in the eastern portion and along the coast were hardly affected by the encomienda system at all. While this can partly be explained by the fact that the populations along the coast and in the eastern regions were depopulated by the early slave trade and initial conquest, this does not fully describe the situation.

Furthermore, neither of the previous reasons explain the role of the church. The religious seat was moved by the Bishop of Honduras into the interior along with the population. While the Bishop upheld that his reason was to maintain contact with his constituency, the same could have been accomplished through the local churches in the area. After all, Trujillo would have kept the bishopric closer to the monarch in Spain, who was in charge of the Spanish

Church. The church would continue in these urban centers while the missions would address the religious conversion in the rural areas to the east. However, the missions played a vastly significant role in the interior as well.

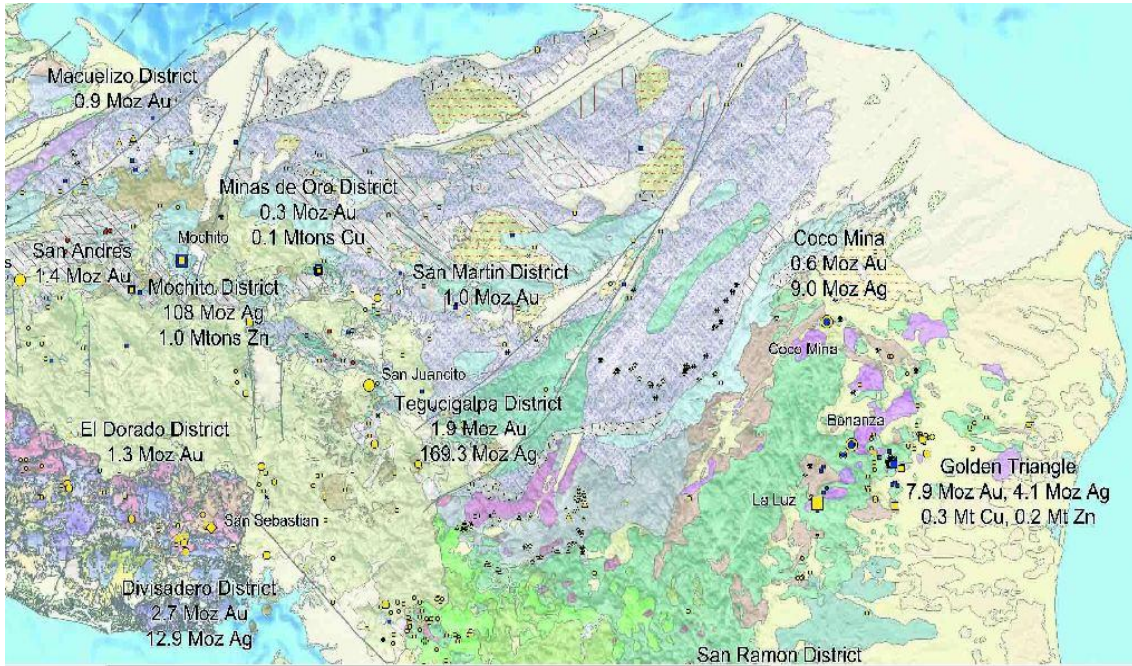


Figure 3.1 Modern Mineral Deposits of Precious Metals in Honduras¹²⁶



Figure 3.2 Linda Newson's Map Demonstrating Major Indigenous Groups in Honduras¹²⁷

The reality is all of these reasons are manifestations of the Spanish social and religious consciousness. Religiosity was pervasive in all aspects of Spanish culture, in one form or another. Religion became dependent on the local economy to finance its goals. This is not only true in the granting of *diezmos* and other royal benefits, but also the *limosna*, or charity that the ecclesiastics relied on to construct churches, carry services, etc. Religion was also an integral part of colonialism. The proselytization of the natives allowed for more control over the indigenous populations, as well as to acculturate them. The bishops offered a different approach when financial rewards or force were not coercive. If the sole purpose of the church in Honduras was to convert the natives then there would have been no necessity to move to the interior. They could have converted the natives where they were, who were proving to be quite a challenge, and more resembled “beasts” to Spanish eyes than their counterparts. The more socially sophisticated and sedentary indigenous groups were not only preferred because they were more easily utilized as labor. Their tributes were more germane to Spanish needs than what the nomadic tribes, who could not farm, had to offer, but also for the reason that sedentary groups were perceived as being easier to convert. Conversions in the New World only strengthened their justification and hence their claim in the Americas. The *encomiendas*, while undoubtedly an economic system, did carry with it religious ideology; the *encomenderos* were responsible for the religious instruction of their population as well as their protection.

CHAPTER 4

CHURCH, GOVERNMENT, AND THE MISSIONS

The secular church in Honduras was not the only institution concerned with the conversion and colonization of the province. The missions, while surprisingly almost completely absent during the conquest, began to appear in the area and had a profound impact on the colonization process. The Franciscans and the Mercedarians established several monasteries in the area with mixed results. Some even gave their lives in an attempt to spread the Catholic faith and bring the natives into the Catholic fold. Their relationship with the Honduran church was fickle; the nature of their association usually depended on the extent that the work of the missionaries coincided with the desires and goals of the secular church. Each order had its own approaches and styles in the areas in which they worked, to varying degrees of success.

While the missionaries were in the peripheries attempting to do their part, the Honduran Church found itself in a power struggle at the turn of the century to determine who had real control of the colony, the church or the governor. This struggle would drag on for several years, eventually involving the head of the *audencia* and even the king himself. The financial situation of the colony proved to have a deleterious effect on the church, and both the bishop and the governor would present their perceptions of the state of the church to the crown. Ultimately neither side could consider itself the victor, and to what extent it carried any tangible value or reward is difficult to determine. Regardless, the inclusion of the missions and the power plays by the secular church had a decisive effect on the colonization process.

During this same time, other pressures emerged that would threaten not only the colonial administration, but also carry serious religious implications in the province. The failures of both the church and the local officials would become evident, and the potential consequences

for their shortcomings would prove all too concrete during this time. By the close of the century it would be clear where Honduras stood politically and ecclesiastically within the context of the larger Spanish Empire.

4.1 The Missions in Honduras

Unlike many other parts of Spanish America, the missions barely existed in Honduras during the conquest proper. This is mainly due to the fact that the conquest was so dissipated and true control was not established in the area for several years. While some local populations had been militarily defeated, it took several more years for the Spanish to consider them pacified enough so that any real religious work could be done in the interior. As was normally the case, the ecclesiastics associated with the secular church preferred to handle the religious needs within the more heavily colonized areas, and chose to let the missionaries handle the more remote areas in the peripheries.

The Bishop of Honduras had a unique advantage in that any missionaries wishing to enter the province had to procure special permission from him first.¹²⁸ In essence, this allowed the bishop to decide how and where he wished to use the missions for his own purposes. It did not create a situation free from conflict. The orders were first allowed in the area by the bishop in the mid sixteenth century, and he immediately put them to work in the location considered to have the most financial potential, Tegucigalpa. Productive mining in Comayagua produced the discovery of more mines further south and at higher elevation in the mountains. Therefore colonization of Tegucigalpa became imperative. Since the secular resources were tied up, and therefore those of the church as well, the bishop was willing to allow the orders into the area. After all, this was not a relinquishment of the secular church's authority in that the understanding was that the missionaries would begin proselytization and acculturation of the natives for a period of ten years, or until colonization in the area caught up to them, at which point they were to move further into the frontier and begin anew with the populations there.

The crown sent sixty Franciscans and Dominicans to Guatemala for which the treasury in Honduras paid the freight in 1575 with the purpose of establishing missions in the area.¹²⁹ However, it appears that a true missionary presence was not felt in Tegucigalpa until after the turn of the century. In the meantime, the Mercedarians were working in Honduras, eventually attempting to convert the indigenes in Santa Lucia, a small mining village not far from Tegucigalpa. The ethnic groups in the area, though majority Lenca, were diverse enough linguistically and culturally to make conversion difficult on the early missionaries. Most missionaries lacked the language skills necessary and attempted to communicate with them through "Mexican" which only a minority of the natives could understand. Being forced into localized villages, the natives were less than thrilled with their new situation and began to fight with one another. The missionaries, lacking the ability to quell the disturbances, required the assistance of the Spanish military who were able to force the natives into peace. Although this did little to settle the resistance if it did not actually augment it, it made them even more cynical of the Spanish presence in the area.¹³⁰ The willingness to use force on the part of the missionaries demonstrates the seriousness with which these orders took their jobs and the importance they placed on the *reducciones*.

The missions brought with them not only the cross, but also Hispanic civilization, making their role in the colonization process a vital one. The natives were instructed in farming techniques, raising livestock, domestic activities, and other traits that were conducive to a sedentary lifestyle. This acculturation helped the religious orders in their conversion of the natives, but it also helped the colonists economically in that it reinforced their tribute system and provided a sedentary labor pool. The methods used by the missionaries, although much more passive than the conquistadores, proved devastating on the culture of the natives. It was not only due to the direct changes forced by the missionaries for lifestyle choices that the orders

deemed sinful, but also the consequences that the *reducciones* and drastic shift in culture created.

4.1.1 *The Franciscans*

The Franciscans played a very vital and influential role in the attempted evangelization of Honduras. While establishing monasteries in almost every village in the province, their major contribution came in the eastern periphery of the colony, particularly in the area of Tegucigalpa, which would become the most important economic center in colonial Honduras, and eventually its capital. The methods of the Franciscans in Honduras were not all that contrary to their secular counterparts. They were proponents of the *reducciones*, and they began creating small Indian villages. However, they quickly learned of the vast variety of cultures within the indigenous populations and began to segregate them within the communities along linguistic lines.¹³¹ This was not always productive and conflict within the villages became rife. Further divisiveness and animosity emerged between those who converted and those who held on to their indigenous beliefs.¹³² Due to their perceived difficult nature and the reluctance exhibited by the various natives in the villages, the Franciscans did not oppose the use of military force to pacify them. This too had contrary results as the soldiers were often ruthless in their administration of punishment. Also, the natives became more resolved in their opposition, or regressed to their nomadic lifestyle and left the missions. The natives who did escape to the countryside would spread admonitions and warnings to the other tribes making the localization of the indigenous populations even more trying.

On the other hand, the Franciscans were not entirely inflexible, and did try to change their approach when necessary. Realizing the negative effect that the *reducciones* were having on the political structure of the natives, they attempted to assuage this by allowing them to elect *cabildos*, or councils within the villages. This allowed for some hierarchy and in turn made them easier to control.¹³³ When their initial attempts at conversion proved unsuccessful,

they attempted to convert other populations in the area, namely the Paya, due to the perception that they were a more passive ethnic group. They would often try to convert small numbers of natives and acculturate them so that they in turn could proselytize to the other members of their culture. It seems evident that the efforts of the Franciscans were sincere, regardless of the methods they employed. Several Franciscans would achieve martyrdom during their early attempts in Honduras. The perfect example of the nature of the Franciscan approach to conversion and the challenges they faced can be found in the history of Fray Esteban Verdelete.¹³⁴

The native of Valencia chose the Franciscan order at an early age. Eventually he was named guardian of the Franciscan convent in Comayagua. Upon traveling to the area in 1604, he toured the countryside and found several of the natives in the area who had not been converted. He felt he had found his calling and returned to Spain to procure permission to begin to proselytize in the area around Tegucigalpa. In 1609, Verdelete began his mission with a few other missionaries and twenty-five soldiers led by Alonso de Daza. Daza, who had fought with various native groups before, felt the conditions were ominous when he found the natives painted in black with many piercings and other adornments. He felt that if the padres did make a good impression that they would be "killed and eaten in one of their idolatrous feasts."¹³⁵ Initially things seemed to go very well. The Spanish helped the natives establish a village with several houses, and a primitive church. The natives seemed to accept the doctrine and many were baptized; they also made crosses to place in their huts to ward off the demons, and even wore necklaces with little crosses on them.

However, the natives induced to the mission were not culturally homogenous, and began to fight amongst each other, the Taguacas being particularly hostile to the others. Therefore the missionaries decided to divide the natives into linguistic groups. Verdelete chose to preach to the Mexicanos (probably Jicaque natives who were called Mexicanos due to their

use of Pipil or Nahuatl), the Taguacas (likely of Sumu culture) went to Fray Monteagudo, and the Lenca went to Fray Marcuellos. This hardly helped to diminish the ill will that was increasing, and soon the natives, especially the Lenca and the Taguacas began to flee to the mountains. Only the old and the really young remained behind. However, leaving was not enough as the resentment for those natives that stayed behind, mainly Mexicanos, spread. Upon being warned of the impending disaster Fray Verdelete chose to stay. The natives returned and burned the church down, capturing the remaining inhabitants and enslaving them. Verdelete, with cross in hand, stood firm and admonished their behavior, but managed to escape with his life when the fire caused something to explode and the natives fled. Monteagudo remained equally stoic, reportedly stating, "Do not think that we are afraid of death, we have come to look for it. Only God is the owner of life not you slaves of Satan."¹³⁶

The church was burned to ashes, but it did not stop the missionaries from returning to the area. This time, the soldiers became more involved, and Daza punished an insurgent native in a brutal way. Tying one hand to his waist, Daza nailed the other hand to a tree with a horseshoe, eventually causing the warrior to die. It was only a matter of time before the natives exacted their revenge. Once again, Verdelete, seeing the warriors on the riverbank while canoeing to the village, decided to face them with his cross in hand, rebuking their behavior. However he was not as lucky on this day, and they killed him and cut off a portion of his head with a machete.

While the account of Verdelete's demise was obviously not the case for every mission in the area, it does paint an accurate picture of the problems faced by all the Franciscans, and he would not be the last Franciscan to achieve martyrdom in Honduras. The problem of using force for indoctrination was a difficult and complex one. But due to their lack of numbers, the missions often had no choice. The pressure to convert the natives would be greater on the Franciscans as the years progressed and native uprisings continued in less populated areas in

the eastern portion of the province. Here the lack of control would later prove to be an obvious limitation upon religious and political authority.

Initially the Franciscans did not draw much ire from the secular clergy, for several possible reasons. The church lacked the manpower to convert the natives, as it could barely serve its constituency in the villages. In any event, the early conversions were only supposed to last for ten years until the friars would turn over control to the secular church. In addition, the Bishop of Honduras, Gaspar de Andrada was a Franciscan, and may not have minded his brethren's intrusion into the territory; even if he did he became entangled in his own conflict with the governor that would preoccupy most of his time. Regardless of the reason, the Franciscans would not enjoy this relative peace for long. By the second half of the seventeenth century, the secular church strongly criticized the work of the Franciscans, particularly when they began to preach among the Paya. One ecclesiastic wrote that even after twenty years of missionary activity amongst these natives, they "didn't know God and couldn't make the sign of the cross."¹³⁷ Writing to the king around the same time, Bishop Alonso de Vargas y Abarca expressed his disapproval of their work as well. He complained that they were not converting the natives properly, and that many were "dying without baptism, nor confession, nor sacraments." He also felt that the "forty years" that they had was ample time, and that they had little to show for it. "While [the missionaries] leave Spain with great spirit, later they [spend their time] in the convents, where there is much opulence and comfort, and they do not want to live with savages, nor do they want to learn other languages...and the remedy is to add it to this bishopric."¹³⁸

While there is some truth to the bishop's notion that the Franciscans had failed in proselytizing the natives of eastern Honduras, it was probably an unfair criticism. Their sheer lack of numbers alone made it very difficult, aside from the cultural problems they faced in the variety of languages, the nomadic lifestyle of the Paya and the Sumu, and the necessity of the

reducciones, which the natives would come to resent. It seems likely that the majority of the Franciscan missionaries that did come to Honduras were altruistic, as they stood much less of a chance of gaining wealth from their services as their counterparts in the secular clergy, not that they were enjoying a lucrative lifestyle themselves. For better or for worse, the Franciscans played an instrumental role in the colonization process.

4.1.2 *The Mercedarians*

The Mercedarians had somewhat of a different experience in Honduras. While the Franciscans were toiling in the eastern periphery, the Mercedarians took to the valleys and countryside in western Honduras. The major difference was not so much geographical as it was cultural. The major distribution of native populations in western Honduras was Mayan and Lenca, and therefore they were more sedentary by nature and more socio-politically advanced. That is not to say that the Mercedarians had an easy time converting the natives. On the contrary they too were shorthanded in number. The poverty of the province affected them as well because it was difficult to sustain themselves in the villages to which they were administering the faith. For example, in 1582 only two Mercedarian missionaries covered an area stretching well over 200 miles with around 700 natives inhabiting twenty different villages.¹³⁹

The methods of the Mercedarians did not completely differ from those of their Franciscan counterparts, but the manner and style in which they manifested differed greatly. For example, the *reducciones* were very much an element of their conversion procedures; however, upon learning through experience that the Lenca had a tendency to return to their altitudinous lifestyle, the Mercedarians began to construct their villages deep in the mountains making it somewhat less likely for them to flee.¹⁴⁰ There was also more pomp and circumstance associated with this order. They would build churches that were more ornate with audible bells and beautiful Christian images. The festivals and ceremonies celebrating religious

holidays or events would be grand and majestic as well.¹⁴¹ These celebrations seemed to please the Lenca, perhaps due to their own penchant for festivals. While the Lenca had only one major festival a year with religious connotations, they did have a festival each month which involved much revelry.¹⁴² The missionaries would use a variety of novel approaches, even including music and mystery plays.¹⁴³

However, the extent of splendor probably depended heavily on the location. The Mercedarians in Honduras cannot be considered affluent. In Comayagua they were able to acquire land and develop nice haciendas through which they were able to creatively drum up profits. But in scarcely populated regions in the western areas of Honduras with little concentration of Spanish, the missionaries were reported as being near starvation.¹⁴⁴ The usual policy was to have a minimum population that they would preach to in order to ensure that they could sustain themselves, but with an overall lack of ecclesiastics this was not always feasible.

The acculturation process that took place along with the religious instruction was more conducive with the lifestyles of the Lenca groups. Being more sedentary and agriculturally based to begin with, the improvements that the Mercedarians generated amongst them could be understood, appreciated, and immediately applied with tangible results. For example, they improved their methods of growing corn and beans, but also introduced sugar cane, tobacco (which would later become a major industry in the area), indigo, wheat, major scale cotton and cocoa. The introduction of cattle and other livestock seemed to be popular amongst the Lenca, which led to them to become adept in related trades such as meat curing and tannery.

The Mercedarian missionaries attempted to use the preexisting customs of the natives to their advantage, and tried to assimilate to their culture for proselytization purposes. They always administered the faith in the native language to the consternation of the Spanish crown, which felt that it undermined the acculturation processes of the natives.¹⁴⁵ They continued the

notion that little should obstruct the path to the gods and therefore made the roofs of the church out of lightweight material, such as leaves or thatch. The friars also cared for the sick and looked after their other social needs while they administered to them, which allowed them to replace the roles of their religious leaders.

This is not to suggest that the Mercedarians did not experience great hardship in their attempts to proselytize the natives. The Lenca, despite the best efforts of the missionaries, were notorious for leaving the missionaries and returning to their previous lives. The Mercedarians, like the Franciscans, did not oppose the use of the military to accomplish their work, and almost always traveled with at least a few soldiers.¹⁴⁶ This did help establish an air of authority, but it probably caused a proportionate amount of distrust and contempt too. Fortunately for the Mercedarians, force was usually not needed, and the largest problem they faced were the Lenca simply abandoning their cause.

4.1.3 *Analysis of Missionary Activity in Honduras*

It is very difficult to ascertain the success rate of the missionaries in Honduras. While baptism records were kept, they do not necessarily translate into true conversions. Many who were baptized would leave the missions shortly and return to their previous lifestyles, religion included. The religiosity of the natives after the attempt at proselytization by the Spanish does not appear to be syncretic, as it was in other parts of Spanish America. On the contrary the lack of manpower, language skills, success in *reducciones*, etc. caused a lack of depth and pervasiveness in the conversion process. Even when those who were considered converts reverted to their previous religion, it was never described in the literature as being quasi-Christian, but rather as complete apostasy.

Therefore with conversion not being a viable approach then it becomes necessary to consider acculturation. By analyzing it from this perspective it would appear that the Mercedarians were far more successful than the Franciscans given that the western portions of

Honduras were very much under Spanish control, and the populations in that area of the province during the eighteenth century would begin to grow steadily. However, with the exception of Tegucigalpa, which enjoyed similar growth, the eastern portions of the province were never colonized during the colonial period. This would prove to have dire consequences in the years to come since the major threats would manifest on Honduras's eastern shores (piracy, England, the Zambos-Mosquitos, etc.). But to make this comparison would be unfair to the Franciscans. The western portion of Honduras was the most populated, and with population comes control, as has been discussed. The lifestyle of the Lenca and the Maya were also much more conducive to the Spanish ideologies of conversion, whereas the Paya and Sumu were more combative, more nomadic, and much less open to acculturation which was not understood by them to be an enhancement to their culture, but rather extremely detrimental to its existence.

Adversely, the acculturation of the natives in western Honduras also recorded interesting effects. The described methods by the Mercedarians seemed to have brought about the *cofradías*, or religious brotherhoods. These brotherhoods were able to gain land and cattle, with which the latter became closely associated with these *cofradías*,¹⁴⁷ and use the profits for drunkenness and debauchery in the name of the saints. They also worked their own land that they were able to acquire hurting the economic tribute system and therefore the economy.¹⁴⁸

Conversion was not the only role the missions intended to emphasize. They were also to work in conjunction with the church and oversee the religious behavior of the natives, particularly looking for religious atrocities, such as witchcraft and other serious crimes against nature. Whether discovered by the missions or the secular clergy, Indians committed such crimes in Honduras. When many of the natives left the missionaries to return to their previous lifestyles they were often considered by the missionaries to have been called back by witches. There are several cases in which the natives were accused of witchcraft, and in one village

(Texiguat) the alcalde was even burned for being a witch, a charge which was refuted by his son and investigated.¹⁴⁹ There is also a case in which two natives were accused of “*el pecado nefando*”, which has various ambiguous connotations in Spanish law but in this case probably refers to homosexuality.¹⁵⁰ The secular ecclesiastics and the missions shared this responsibility. Thus regardless of successes or failures, the Mercedarians and the Franciscans became a significant facet in the colonization of Honduras.

4.2 Church and Government in Honduras

In 1587 a Franciscan received ecclesiastic control of the province with the naming of Gaspar de Andrada as the Bishop of Honduras. Andrada, who would serve in this position for over twenty years, would have great influence on the religious and political affairs of Honduras. He would also be in almost constant conflict with the governors in the region. Andrada, like so many others before and after him, inherited a province that was grossly undermanned and impoverished, with little means to improve it. This was hardly a deterrent for the bishop, who would constantly wrangle for power and control in the area.

Just a few years into his position, Andrada petitioned the monarchy for more ecclesiastics. He told the king that “the lack of priests is greatly felt, due to their being very important to the divine worship, and so I request from Your Majesty that [some ecclesiastics] come from Spain, in that if we cannot sustain all of them, they can serve others in this bishopric.”¹⁵¹ Andrada wanted the ecclesiastics to come from Spain in that they were usually the most formally trained. With the seminary school still years away the local clergy that were trained in Honduras lacked both the skill and the refinement of the Spanish clergy. The lack of prelates within the secular clergy was more severe than in the missionaries because by the nature of their profession they required more specialized services. A missionary could convert as well as administer the ecclesiastical rites and functions to the natives. For the most part there were very few Spaniards colonizing in the areas of the missionaries. However within the

secular clergy, two types of priests were distinguished, and there was a shortage of each. The *cura* would administer to the Spanish in the area, were as a *doctrinero* would perform the same functions to the converted natives. They were both hard to come by in Honduras for several reasons. The *cura* was a position that was considered more prestigious and therefore usually made more money than the *doctrinero*. However, money was something that the province greatly lacked in even the most densely populated areas. Thus, getting the clergy to come from Spain proved to be quite trying. The *doctrinero*, like the missionaries, had to administer to a large population of natives away from the comforts of the towns. With the consideration of smaller salaries and the given hardships of the job itself, the reason for their shortage is transparent.

Despite the lack of finances and clergymen, the crown would increase the pressure on Andrada. The monarch was clearly unhappy with the progress of the Christianization of the indigenous populations, and the way in which it was being carried out. In 1601 he discussed “the great desire I have always had for the conversion of the natives of my West Indies and for their instruction in the aspects of our Catholic faith and for their conservation and good treatment,” and yet the “vexations and the poor treatment servitude and oppression from the Spaniards [have continued]”. He also told the bishop how his ordinances had been ignored, and he charged the bishop to help enforce them, so that the “Indians can live in complete liberty as my vassals as the others that I have in those and these realms without any note of slavery or even any other form of subjection or servitude than that as natural vassals should – as God made them free.” Yet the conversion and particularly the conservation of the natives not only involved religion, but also money. The king pointed out that he did not wish to see Honduras become “like those lands where the provinces or islands of the Indians are lacking have fallen into much poverty and decline.”¹⁵²

It seems that despite the attempt by Andrada to spread the word amongst his bishopric, that the decree was largely ignored.¹⁵³ A local *cabildo* even suggested that the natives should be allowed to govern themselves as the Spaniards were too hard on them and the royal decrees were being ignored. They described the difficult and unfavorable state of the natives, being forced to work large tracks of land without pay in order to help the encomenderos, and continued to describe the utter lack of indoctrination they were receiving.¹⁵⁴ Not everyone felt the same. In the mines of Tegucigalpa and Comayagua, the inhabitants “insist on asking for more Indians more regional to the mines to augment the labor there” as the poorer miners could not afford to buy slaves.”¹⁵⁵

Perhaps it was a similar issue over which the first clash between Andrada and the governor of the province took place. At this time this was Jerónimo Sanchez de Carranza. What the issue was that drove the two apart and caused “great disconformity and affliction” requires further research, but it is clear that the disagreement between the two men grew more intense because Andrada would speak ill of the governor in public orations and various sermons. Despite attempts to keep the peace in the area, and according to the local *cabildo* Carranza was more willing to try. But the feud continued due to the “hardness” and stubbornness of Andrada.¹⁵⁶ The *cabildo* was also concerned with Andrada’s refusal to recognize other archbishops and his unjust excommunications. This would pale in comparison with the next clash he had with the governor, this time several years later with Governor Juan Guerra de Ayala.

The years in between were filled with idleness and apparent apathy from the governors of Honduras, who always found out very quickly that what they perceived in Spain was not always what they received in Honduras. The poverty of the province was very debilitating to whatever remedies and rectifications that the local leaders had in mind. The prevailing attitude of the governors in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries seemed to be one of

incredible indifference, and when they got the chance to leave for any reason they often took it. For example, Ayala complained that his predecessor Jorge de Alvarado, coincidentally a relative of the previous governor-conquistador, had stayed in Guatemala for two years, without residing in Honduras yet “eating the salary” of the province.¹⁵⁷ In their absence, the people needed an authoritative figure to whom they could look for to address their needs, and the religious authority in the area was a logical choice. Andrada was apparently all too happy to accommodate. Therefore Andrada, during his ecclesiastical reign over the province assumed a great deal of power, and his preferred method of control was the aforementioned excommunications, which seemed to have stemmed more from opposition to his authority than to any offense against God or the Church.

The problem arose when the eager Ayala came to Honduras with serious intentions. He found the place in disarray, without police nor justice, the villages depopulated, the natives mistreated like slaves, and most importantly a bishop who was allowed to act as he pleased under the previous governors, who excommunicated all who disobeyed him.¹⁵⁸ Ayala had a penchant for order, and was quite clear about his intentions to clean the province up. He would “strive at any cost to set authority and place order to all the outrages of those in this government who do not respect anyone.”¹⁵⁹ However Andrada, now almost twenty years into his regime, had no intentions of cowering to the new governor and his authoritarian idealism. After all, as was pointed out by the *cabildo* of Comayagua, in recent years he had caused “grave affliction with other governors and none of them had remained.” His continued excommunications had become so rampant that they stated he “had excommunicated the majority of the town.”¹⁶⁰ Andrada had his supporters as well. When the rift between the two became problematic enough for the *audencia* to get involved, a judge was sent to investigate, who was good friends with Ayala, and who of course took his side in the disagreement. The governor of the *audencia* in Guatemala also became concerned for the bishop, blamed the quarrel on the rigidity of Ayala,

and determined that nothing could be done, and forwarded the matter to the Council of the Indies.

Honduran historian José Reina Valenzuela stated that the source of the great rift between the two started over a small bureaucratic formality.¹⁶¹ However, the matter is more complex. While the church and the government clashing over authoritative matters in Latin America was not unique to Honduras, the context in which it was occurring was somewhat distinctive. Due to the poverty of the area, the economy was not allocating sufficient wealth for the crown, which often caused greater royal disinterest in the province. However, due to these economic pressures and the lack of serious royal authority in the area, the decrees involving the treatment of the natives were ignored at a greater rate. This responsibility usually fell on the church. Another issue with the impoverishment of the area was the emerging pressures in the area, which will be addressed. Since Honduras was a weaker province, it was at a greater risk of intrusion from these outside sources. The control and population of the province, as well as the economy, was determined at this point by the *reducciones* and acculturation of the natives, which would allow for population increase as well as more stable labor supplies for the mines. This too now became the responsibility of the church. With so much responsibility resting on the shoulders of the ecclesiastics, it is likely that Andrada felt that a great deal of authority should go along with it. However, as he became enthralled in political affairs, it clearly took him away from many of the spiritual matters, which may be why the influx of the missionaries was favorable to the church during this time, and why there was little pressure for the church to take over the work done by missionaries well after their ten year “deadlines” had passed.

One of the ironies of Andrada's power is the lack of power that the secular church actually wielded. The state of the church at the turn the seventeenth century had changed little, and many of the problems experienced by Pedraza over a half century earlier were still problematic to the contemporary Honduran Church. Andrada lamented to the crown the familiar

cry echoed by many prelates before him. "In this province there are no seminaries, nor study, nor cathedral, and due to the land being really poor, few clerics come from outside to preach here, and other bishops have been compelled, and I with them, due to the great lack of ministers, to order those who lack the proficiency that were necessary... For this reason, I request Your Majesty that the dignitaries provide us with people from those realms, as they will be more apt."

It was not just the missing clergy, but the great need for altars and missals for performing mass that demonstrated the extreme poverty of the church and the lack of "painters and carpenters" in the area.¹⁶² According to Ayala, the missionaries were not faring any better. He argued that both the Franciscans and Mercedarians were spreading themselves too thin, and that neither was successfully converting the natives, some even setting a very bad example for them. Often the missions were abandoned because of the lack of manpower, as a few would be attending to the business of the missions elsewhere while the others were off petitioning for charity in order to sustain themselves. Ayala responded to the crown's inquest as to "whether or not the missions are necessary where they are, or if it would be better to reduce them so that our father could be served, the clerics comforted, and the Indians well indoctrinated."¹⁶³ The governor felt that their interests could be much better served if they were reduced to two convents each, in more centralized locations. Andrada would use this to his advantage and attempted to gain support from the missionaries in his feud.

Neither the *audencia*, nor even later the king himself could stop the quarreling. Both sides reached the peak of their anger and each used the most injurious deterrent at their disposal; the bishop excommunicated the governor, and the governor placed the bishop under house arrest. Fortunately for the province, nature would intervene and with the death of Andrada in 1612 the dispute finally ended. He was replaced with the Dominican friar, Alfonso del Galdo, perhaps due to the regrettable situation of the natives in the province. Ayala was

also replaced that year with Garcia Garavito de León. What followed was an era of relative cooperation between church and state, although the economic and religious situation in Honduras experienced little improvement. On the contrary, the failures of both the royal officials and the ecclesiastics would come to the forefront, and the weakness of the colony would be exposed.

4.3 Emerging Religiopolitical Threats to Honduras

With the population influx into the interior of the province, less emphasis was placed in the formerly important towns on the coast such as Puerto de Caballos and Trujillo. The eastern part of the province and its coastline never really became populated during the colonial period in Honduras. However, the crown soon began to realize the importance of protecting the coastal areas of the Caribbean, and charged the missionaries with pacifying the natives in the eastern regions in order to open the way for colonization. On the northern coast, the local officials and the crown continually made provisions to defend the cities of Trujillo and Puerto de Caballos. The two greatest threats that would emerge along the coasts of Honduras were the English, and the Zambos-Mosquitos. While on the surface it seems like both these threats occupied opposite sides of the spectrum, their respective histories would converge repeatedly at the expense of the Spanish in Honduras.

4.3.1 The Zambos-Mosquitos

In 1641 a ship carrying slaves wrecked off the Mosquito Coast in Nicaragua. The slaves that survived would mix with the natives living of the coast, most likely of Sumu culture. They created a culture of their own that would be referred to by the Spaniards as the Zambos Mosquitos. The Bishop of Nicaragua described their wreck and the events that followed. Despite their eventual cultural amalgamation, the natives along the coast became hostile out of fear of these new intruders. After battling with the natives there, and defeating them, the bishop stated that they took the women with them as the spoils of war and multiplied with them.¹⁶⁴

From their group emerged the Zambos Mosquitos, called such by the Spanish due to their African and Native descent, and the location of the natives with whom they multiplied. Though a relatively small group, they would range all along the eastern coast of Honduras, and even as far north as a few leagues from Trujillo. They were an extremely aggressive group, and they not only caused problems for the Spanish themselves, but they undermined the proselytization of other ethnic groups in the area due to their constant attacks. They also caused populations to shift, especially the Paya, whom the Franciscans were desperately trying to proselytize as has been noted. As other European powers began to undermine the Spanish efforts, most notably the English, they took note of the aggressive Zambos Mosquitos and began to employ them to raid the Spanish. This soon became a way of life for the Zambos, which continued throughout the century with or without English encouragement.¹⁶⁵ According to Newson, the English also inadvertently augmented the population of the Zambos Mosquitos by bringing slaves into their fledgling colonies along the coast. This, she explains, is why there is more African racial concentration in these areas than in other places along the Mosquito-Coast.¹⁶⁶ The English involvement with the Zambos Mosquitos became so pervasive that for a long time anthropologists thought that the kings of the ethnic group were merely “puppets” placed in power by the English. This has since been disproven.¹⁶⁷ Yet a deep connection emerged along with a shared hatred of the Spanish. The English would bestow ranks upon the kings of the Zambos Mosquitos dependent on their continual conflict with the Spanish¹⁶⁸ It is hard to imagine any other reason that a hatred of the Spanish would become so ingrained in their culture other than the constant rewards and support of the English. Regardless, the Zambos posed such a threat that it would be almost a century and a half after their shipwreck that the Spanish would begin to settle the Mosquito Coast in Honduras.

4.3.2 *The English*

The idea that the Spanish had the right to colonize the Western Hemisphere did not sit well with the other European nations, and by the seventeenth century there were even larger issues at play. On an economic level, the English and other Europeans wanted to reap the spoils of the raw goods and materials that came from the new world. They also realized the extent to which Spain had become dependent on the precious metals and other goods from the New World, and any disruption of this trade would only serve to weaken Spanish power. On a more ideological level, England was becoming the largest Protestant power in the world, but the basis of the Spanish claim in the Americas being the conversion of the natives into the Catholic fold mattered little to the English. Given that Spain's claim rested heavily on this purpose, it became imperative to keep other nations from colonizing in the areas of Spanish control.

It is no surprise then that the English would intervene in the areas where the Spanish were the weakest, and so naturally Honduras became a prime target. As early as 1576 there were warnings to the crown sent from Honduras about the presence of English corsairs along the coast.¹⁶⁹ The Spanish understood this vulnerability, and had already built a fort in Trujillo a year before. The fort did little to deter the constant attacks on Trujillo which pirates sacked several times throughout the colonial period. The English and the other powers were relentless in their raids along the coast of Honduras, especially when Spain and England went to war. These raids greatly affected the Honduran church as well, and not just ideologically. The pirates would usually burn the churches when they sacked the towns. In a description of the church of Puerto de Caballos, Andrada complained that it "is like the other buildings there, that are made of sticks and straw, because corsairs have burned it, due to this the village is deserted except when a fleet is there. And until we get a presidio and a fort there, we cannot build it any other way, nor decorate it, because since I have come here, they have robbed the items there three times, and carried off three bells."¹⁷⁰

It was not just through piracy that the English threatened the province of Honduras. The British first colonized the islands off of the northern coast of Honduras, namely Roatán and Guanaja, although they were unable to hold them.¹⁷¹ Around this same time they established and maintained colonies along the Mosquito Coast and around Cape Gracias a Dios where they came into contact with the aforementioned Zambos Mosquitos. They also captured Jamaica, which gave them a local place in the Caribbean from which to launch their attacks. Within a century the Mosquito coast would be inhabited by over a thousand whites, mixed race, and black and Indian slaves (with the majority being slaves) associated with the English colonies along the coast.¹⁷²

4.3.3 Reasons for the Emerging Threats

The reasons which enabled the English and the Zambos Mosquitos to have such success stem directly from the failure of the Spanish to colonize the area. The fusion of religion with politics and economy created a situation in which Honduras remained perpetually weak. Populating the province depended upon the success of conquering it, and by the seventeenth century this conquest was a passive endeavor left to the missionaries and the secular clergy. However, the church was undermanned for such a massive undertaking due to the local economy, and therefore failed in its endeavor to proselytize the natives, which in turn had detrimental effects on the economy. This is most evident in the fact that where the population centers were the strongest they were directly tied to the potential for economic growth. There was little effort to colonize the eastern portion of Honduras because it carried sparse economic value. The same thing could be said of the port towns of Trujillo and Puerto de Caballos. However, they were the contacts to Spain and the ports through which Honduras would export its commodities overseas. Puerto de Caballos was even a stopping point for Spanish goods being carried between the northern and southern provinces within the Spanish empire. The fact

that the crown merely changed the location of its route rather than defend the city can be a reflection of the low estimation it had for the province.

The Honduran Church never threw itself into the proselytization of those natives outside of the population centers, and the missions were used at the discretion of the Bishop primarily in the areas on the periphery of the central populations. The irony of the Honduran situation is that a large part of the Spanish claim rested on their conversion of the natives. In many places the missions were used in the peripheries to establish loose claims or to create buffer zones from their population centers. Conversely, due to inability to successfully proselytize the natives in the eastern areas, or even conquer them militarily, there was little they could do to keep the English out or to control the wrath of the Zambos Mosquitos.

4.4 The State of the Church at the Close of the Seventeenth Century

Despite its inherent lack of finances, the situation of the Honduran Church at the end of the seventeenth century had recorded some improvement. Bishop Alonzo Vargas y Abarca had undertaken some organizational and fiscal improvements in his twenty year span as bishop ranging from 1677 to 1697. Most notably, in 1680 the bishop converted the college that had started as a grammar school years before into a full seminary. Therefore clerics who were not from Spain could now receive a formal training in ecclesiastical procedures. This conversion apparently paid off, because in his description of his diocese in 1688 he was much more in favor of the types of clergy that were administering in the villages. The number of secular ecclesiastics in the area had grown substantially. There were seven future ecclesiastics in the province who were studying at the seminary college alone. The nomenclature describing the roles of each was also much more specific. This indicates not only an influx in quantity, suggesting that more people could hold particular positions, but also an increase in the organization of the church as a whole. For example, one prelate was a military chaplain who

was assigned to assist in the conquest of natives. There was also a distinction in the titles of preacher, confessor, those who spoke Latin and could read the mass, etc.¹⁷³

Unfortunately this improvement in the organization and professionalization of the church did not automatically bear fruit where the natives are concerned. Several years later the alcalde mayor, while visiting the native villages around Tegucigalpa, was appalled by the living conditions of the natives.¹⁷⁴ There were some attempts at bettering the situation, although as usual, ulterior motives existed. The king had mandated that the young natives receive an education, specifically for the purpose that they would be able to read and write in Castilian. However, this depended on the charity of the crown, as “there is not one town in this province that can sustain a teacher.”¹⁷⁵

The missionaries fared no better after they had begun. The Franciscans were failing amongst the Paya, and had begun to draw the ire of the secular church. They also had no success in the eastern provinces, and were being held at bay by the growing presence of the Zambos Mosquitos. In western Honduras, the Lenca were still apt to desert the missions, which is evident in the population decline at the missions from almost 2000 at the beginning of the sixteenth century to less than 600 at the close of the eighteenth century. Furthermore, the contrast in the treatment of the natives is also evident during this same time period. The number of tributary natives rose from around 15,000 doubling to over 30,000.¹⁷⁶ There would not be significant changes in the church and its successes as the economy changed very little. Nonetheless, the initial phase of the colonization was complete, the boundaries and population centers solidified, and the roles of the church in Honduras clearly defined.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

It is very difficult to estimate the overall success of the ecclesiastics in Honduras during the conquest and colonization. If the sole purpose of the secular church and the missions was to convert the natives, then it was clearly a failure. By 1700 the natives could hardly be considered Christianized, and it is difficult to even regard them as acculturated. Despite the variety of approaches attempted by the church, the Franciscans, and the Mercedarians, the natives were barely more than pacified. It proved to be an incredibly difficult task to get the indigenous populations to maintain their new found religion. While baptism looked good for the record books and provided some tangible date for the missionaries and the secular clergy to report their success to the crown, the numbers in the missions continually dwindled as the natives preferred their previous existences.

If then the role of religion in Honduras was to acculturate, it is even more difficult to assess their achievement. While the *reducciones* seemed to be the only plausible way to proselytize the natives, there is little indication that the natives preferred the European culture to that of their own. Even amongst the Mercedarians and their "improvement" of the sedentary culture of the Lenca, it did little to diminish their desire to return to their native highlands. The fact that they only preached in the native tongue indicates that the Lenca were wary to learn Spanish. On the other hand, the fact the crown disapproved of this only confirms the idea that at least to some degree, the intention was acculturation.

To a larger degree the system of the *encomiendas* failed in Honduras as well, particularly where the conversion of the *encomendados* were concerned. Obviously a large portion failed because their purpose for the natives was never more than production of materials

or receipts of tributes. Still others failed in this regard due to the same reason the churches and the missions failed, which was a lack of money. Some of the encomenderos were so poor they were forced to live and work aside their encomendados. Others depended on their tributes, and could ill afford any extra services or privileges for themselves, much less the natives under their control.

With the unbelievable confines on the successes of the religious in Honduras, it is difficult to understand how it made such a huge contribution. The answer lies in the Hispanic conceptualization of their role in the world within the context of their background during the *Reconquista*. While to modern eyes it seems very duplicitous to consider indoctrination an instrument at the disposal of the state, it was not only utilized by the Spanish as such but was done so with sincerity. By conquering the natives, they were bringing them enlightenment and civilization, and even more to the essence, salvation. By the time of the conquest of Honduras, this perception was not a separate philosophy, but was so ingrained in Hispanic thought that concepts such church and state, or even colonization and evangelization, could hardly be considered two entities. As has been demonstrated, this is evident in the fact that originally the Bishop of Honduras was to be the governor as well. In addition the conquistadors brought *doctrineros* with them as they conquered, and the missionaries brought military personnel while establishing their missions in the peripheries.

By creating this amalgamation, an interesting cycle emerges that is brought to light in Honduras due to its extreme poverty. The local economy in Honduras was undoubtedly based on the mines. Yet the mines needed labor in order to succeed. With the lack of money to buy slaves or pay for labor, the natives were necessary regardless of any legislation. The role of the ecclesiastics in Honduras was to convert the natives both for the purpose of increasing the Catholic faith, but also in order to acculturate them and pacify them for their use within the economy. It is for this reason that schools were always started by the ecclesiastics. The

aristocracy therefore becomes dependent on the prelates to generate a viable and containable labor force. For this reason the missions were sent into the areas where mines were discovered. On the other hand, the church needed men, buildings, and supplies to accomplish the goal of conversion. Due to the structure of the taxes, the church was often funded directly from the economy in the mines. Hence the church now became dependent on the economy, and thus dependent on the aristocracy.

As this is the case, especially in Honduras, the blame for failure of the religious to indoctrinate the natives cannot solely be blamed on the ecclesiastics. The most important factor where Honduras is concerned seemed to be the economy. Also ingrained in the Hispanic social consciousness was the desire for prosperity, as the concepts of conquest, religiosity, social mobility, and wealth were also united during the *Reconquista*. Therefore when the initial ventures in Honduras did not bare economic fruit, it caused a lack of manpower in the area, even amongst the ecclesiastics. The best of the Spanish clergy did not want to come to an impoverished Honduras to toil and labor just to starve in utter anonymity. Therefore those who did come were usually of lower quality. Even the Franciscans who prided themselves on their poverty and simplicity did not want to continue in the extreme hardships they endured, resigning themselves to the comforts of their convents according to the bishop. Consequently, the threats that emerged in Honduras had as much to do with economic failure as religious failure.

Therefore it is important to understand that religion in colonial Honduras was not an aspect of the colonization, but it pervaded throughout. The various groups, namely the aristocracy, the missions, and the secular clergy all had their own motivations, methodologies, and personal aspirations, yet in one form or another, religion was part of their process. The clashes that took place between all three were inevitable as they would cross each other's social boundaries as the lines between them were unclear. However, they were all part of the

larger picture, which was the complex philosophy of Spanish Imperialism, which itself was completely entangled in the Catholic Faith.

NOTES

Abbreviations

AGCA Archivo General de Centro América, Guatemala City, Guatemala

ANH Archivo Nacional de Honduras, Tegucigalpa, Honduras

PARES Portal de Archivos Españoles - <http://pares.mcu.es/>

UTASC – University of Texas at Arlington Special Collections, Arlington, TX

¹ Romulo Duron, *Busquejo Historico de Honduras* (Tegucigalpa: Ministerio de Educacion Publica, 1956),32

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., 35

⁴ Ernesto Garcia Alvarado, *Los Frojadores de la Honduras Colonial, la Conquista Pacifica de Honduras, Heroes y Martires* (Tegucigalpa: Talleres Tipograficos, 1938), 8-9

⁵ Linda Newson, *The Cost of Conquest* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1986), 108

⁶ Robert Chamberlain, *The Conquest and Colonization of Honduras* (New York: Octagon Books, 1953), 11

⁷ Ibid., 11 and Duron, *Busquejo Historico de Honduras*, 35

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Díaz del Castillo, Bernal. *Historia verdadera de la conquista de la Nueva España*. Madrid, 1632. 530pp. *Sabin Americana*. Gale, Cengage Learning. University of Texas at Arlington. 17 March 2011

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¹⁰ Diaz Del Castillo, Bernal, *The True History of the Conquest of Mexico*, trans. Maurice Keatinge (London, 1800), 356

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid., 391. See also Cortés, Hernán. *The fifth letter of Hernan Cortes to the Emperor Charles V : containing an account of his expedition to Honduras*. London, 1868. 175pp. *Sabin Americana*. Gale, Cengage Learning. University of Texas at Arlington. 20 March 2011

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¹³ Cortés, Hernán. *The fifth letter of Hernan Cortes to the Emperor Charles V : containing an account of his expedition to Honduras*. London, 1868. 175pp. *Sabin Americana*. Gale, Cengage Learning. University of Texas at Arlington. 20 March 2011

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¹⁴ Díaz del Castillo, Bernal, *The True History of the Conquest of Mexico*, 392

¹⁵ Cortés, Hernán. *The fifth letter of Hernan Cortes to the Emperor Charles V : containing an account of his expedition to Honduras*. London, 1868. 175pp. *Sabin Americana*. Gale, Cengage Learning. University of Texas at Arlington. 20 March 2011

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- ¹⁶ Díaz del Castillo, *The True History of the Conquest of Mexico*, 393
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 418.
- ¹⁸ Chamberlain, *The Conquest and Colonization of Honduras*, 11
- ¹⁹ Ramon Menendez Pidal, ed. *Primera Cronica General de Espana* (Madrid: Editorial Gredos, 1955), 772-773
- ²⁰ J.N. Hilgarth, *Spain and the Mediterranean in the Later Middle Ages* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2003), 242
- ²¹ *Siete Partidas* II-XXI-II found in Robert I. Burns, ed. *Las Siete Partidas* Volumes 1-5 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001)
- ²² *Siete Partidas* II-XXI-I found in Robert I. Burns, ed. *Las Siete Partidas* Volumes 1-5 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001)
- ²³ Hillgarth, *The Spanish Kingdoms 1250-1516*, 49
- ²⁴ Díaz del Castillo, *The True History of the Conquest of Mexico*, 397
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, 42.
- ²⁶ Cortés, Hernán. *The Dispatches of Hernando Cortés, the Conqueror of Mexico : Addressed to the Emperor Charles V, Written During the Conquest, and Containing a ...* New-York; ([New York]), 1843. 439pp. *Sabin Americana*. Gale, Cengage Learning. University of Texas at Arlington. 05 January 2011
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- ²⁷ PARES - ES.41091.AGI/16416.2.14.2//PATRONATO,16,N.1,R.16
- ²⁸ Duron, *Busquejo Historico de Honduras*, 39-43
- ²⁹ Chamberlain, *Conquest and Colonization of Honduras*, 50
- ³⁰ Kirkpatrick, F.A., *The Spanish Conquistadors* (Cleveland: The World Publishing Company, 1946), 113
- ³¹ Chamberlain, *Conquest and Colonization of Honduras*, 55
- ³² PARES - ES.41091.AGI/16403.8.5.20.5//GUATEMALA,44B,N.39
- ³³ *Ibid.*
- ³⁴ *Ibid.*, 51-53. See Also Duron, *Busquejo Historia de Honduras*, 44
- ³⁵ See note 27
- ³⁶ AGI Guatemala 164 found in Hector M. Leyva, comp. *Documentos Coloniales de Honduras* (Tegucigalpa: Centro de Publicaciones Obispado de Choluteca , 1991), 11
- ³⁷ PARES - ES.41091.AGI/16403.8.5.20.5//GUATEMALA,44B,N.39
- ³⁸ *Ibid*
- ³⁹ PARES - ES.41091.AGI/16416.1.2//PATRONATO,2,N.3,R.8
- ⁴⁰ Bartolome de Las Casas, *An Account, Much Abbreviated, of the Destruction of the Indies*, ed. Franklin W. Knight, trans. Andrew Hurley (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2003), 38
- ⁴¹ Newson, *The Cost of Conquest*, 87-91
- ⁴² Las Casas, *The Destruction of the Indies*, 38
- ⁴³ Chamberlain, *Conquest and Colonization of Honduras*, 57
- ⁴⁴ Herrera y Tordesillas, Antonio de. *The general history of the vast continent and islands of America, commonly call'd, the West-Indies : from the first discovery thereof, with the ...* Volume 5. London, 1725-1726. 435pp. 6 vols. *Sabin Americana*. Gale, Cengage Learning. University of Texas at Arlington. 24 March 2011
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- ⁴⁵ Chamberlain, *Conquest and Colonization of Honduras*, 57

- ⁴⁶ Herrera y Tordesillas, Antonio de. *The general history of the vast continent and islands of America, commonly call'd, the West-Indies : from the first discovery thereof, with the ...* Volume 5. London, 1725-1726. 435pp. 6 vols. *Sabin Americana*. Gale, Cengage Learning. University of Texas at Arlington. 24 March 2011
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- ⁵⁰ Chamberlain, *Conquest and Colonization of Honduras*, 244
- ⁵¹ For Pedraza's record on good treatment of the natives see PARES ES.41091.AGI/16416.5.15.1//PATRONATO,180,R.75. For Pedraza's animosity towards Las Casas see Henry Raup Wagner and Helen Rand Parish, *The Life and Writings of Bartolome de las Casas* (Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico Press, 1967), 144
- ⁵² Wagner and Parish, *The Life and Writings of Bartolome de Las Casas*, 152
- ⁵³ PARES ES.41091.AGI/16416.7.3//PATRONATO,277,N.4,R.56
- ⁵⁴ For a variety of policies implemented by Pedraza see Chamberlain, *Conquest and Colonization of Honduras*, 237-238
- ⁵⁵ Duron, *Busquejo Historico de Honduras*, 41
- ⁵⁶ PARES - ES.41091.AGI/16403.15.742//INDIFERENTE,737,N.18
- ⁵⁷ PARES ES.41091.AGI/16403.8.5.20.5//GUATEMALA,44B,N.51
- ⁵⁸ AGI Guatemala 64 found in Hector M. Leyva, comp. *Documentos Coloniales de Honduras*, 13
- ⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 11-50 – All the following information on the state of the church will come from Pedraza to the Crown 5/1/1547 unless otherwise noted
- ⁶⁰ Henderson, John S. "The Valley de Naco: Ethnohistory and Archaeology in Northwestern Honduras Ethnohistory". Vol. 24, No. 4 (Autumn, 1977), pp. 363-377. Published by: Duke University Press
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- ⁶² *Ibid.*
- ⁶³ William F. Fash, *Scribes, Warriors, and Kings: The City of Copan and the Ancient Maya* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1991), See Table 6 on p. 16.
- ⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 47
- ⁶⁵ *Collection of rare and original documents and relations, concerning the discovery and conquest of America, chiefly from the Spanish archives*. Albany, 1860. 130pp. *Sabin Americana*. Gale, Cengage Learning. University of Texas at Arlington. 06 March 2011
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- ⁶⁶ Fash, *Scribes, Warriors, and Kings*, 125-126.
- ⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 124

- ⁶⁸ Ibid.
- ⁶⁹ E. Wyllys Andrews and William L. Fash, eds. *Copan: The History of the Ancient Maya Kingdom* (Santa Fe: School of American Research, 2005), 76-101
- ⁷⁰ Newson, *The Cost of Conquest*, 26-28
- ⁷¹ The currency is named after the famous Lencan warrior Lempira and many nationalistic historians even refer to his rebellion as the first movement of independence.
- ⁷² Newson, *The Cost of Conquest*, 23-25
- ⁷³ For an example look in Medardo Mejia, *Historia de Honduras* (Honduras: Editorial Andrade, 1969) he dedicates his entire analysis of pre-Columbian Honduras to the Maya and the Toltecs
- ⁷⁴ Newson, *The Cost of Conquest*, 55 - 62
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- ⁷⁶ Mario Felipe Martínez Castillo, *Apuntamientos Para una Historia Colonial de Tegucigalpa y su Alcaldía Mayor* (Tegucigalpa: Editorial Universitaria, 1982), 13
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- ¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 149
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