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The Awakening Coast

Karl Offen

Terry Rugeley

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THE AWAKENING COAST

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THE
AWAKENING
COAST

*An Anthology of Moravian Writings from
Mosquitia and Eastern Nicaragua, 1849–1899*

EDITED, TRANSLATED, AND ANNOTATED

BY *Karl Offen* AND *Terry Rugeley*

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Karl also received backing for this project from the retired Moravian reverends Warren Wenger and Kenneth Nowack. In addition to providing him with some unpublished manuscripts, both graciously allowed him to copy their slide collections covering the Mosquitia in the 1940s and 1950s; one of these photos is included here as figure 16.2.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

Terry Rugeley

SEVENTEEN OF THE entries of this text are direct reproductions of English-language sources. The remaining fourteen entries, constituting approximately two-thirds of the total material, are drawn directly from the original nineteenth-century German. While the actual prose translates readily enough into modern English, a few irregularities do crop up along the way. Sentences and paragraphs tended to be much longer in the authors' day, and I have taken the liberty of breaking up both in the interest of greater accessibility. Moreover, Moravian authors occasionally varied in the way that they spelled the names of people and places along Central America's Caribbean coast. When writing in German most missionaries used the term "Moskito," or in one case "Mosquito," to refer to the peoples who wrote their name "Miskito" until the 1980s, and "Miskitu" today. In this and similar cases (Sumu, Rama, and so forth) I have retained the authors' usage. In reference to place, the authors wrote either "Moskitoland" or, more commonly, "Moskito." I have left the former as is, but to distinguish the latter from either the people or language of the same name, this translation uses "Moskito [territory]." Again, I have followed the usage of each individual author, including the inconsistencies within individual entries. Finally, for their occasional biblical quotations I have borrowed the King James version. This decision might not have been to their theological liking, but the King James Bible still provides a standard for nineteenth-century English rhetoric. The rather inflexible nineteenth-century Moravians could occasionally say a good word about Catholics and Spaniards, and it is our hope that they would have extended the same spirit of indulgence to this translation.

THE AWAKENING COAST

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Introduction

THE AWAKENING COAST

Karl Offen

IN 1849 TWO Moravian missionaries disembarked at Bluefields, the capital of a British protectorate along the Mosquito Coast and today part of eastern Nicaragua, to establish a new mission among the sparsely settled black, Creole (Afro-descendant Mosquitians), and indigenous inhabitants. Baptizing heathens into the death of Jesus, as the Moravians put it, proceeded slowly until the so-called Great Awakening of 1881–82: “the most wonderful revival in the history of the Moravian Missions.”¹ In his first notice of the Awakening, in May 1881, mission superintendent Christian Martin described how “the Spirit [has] poured forth on all the people.”² By August, Martin wrote that the movement had swept across the entire Mosquito Reserve (fig. 1.1). During evening meetings at Bluefields, Martin reported, “the throng [was] so great that prayer on the knees [was] impossible.” At nearby Pearl Lagoon, wrote Brother Peper, a “peculiar time has dawned . . . [and] I have never seen the like before.” At “almost every hour,” Peper recounted, “people come to us who are concerned about their souls, asking for advice and to be admitted to the church.” The people trembled “in every limb [and] cry aloud for mercy. For the most part they are on their knees, sometimes they lie prostrate, unable to rise until they confess their sins . . . , and this sometimes lasts for days.”³ During such times the people “neither eat nor sleep. . . . When they have found peace, they seem to be indescribably happy, and sometimes make ecstatic addresses in which a very considerable Scriptural knowledge is perceptible.” Since many of those affected had not received formal instruction, the missionaries assumed that the Divine Spirit had at last reached the mission.

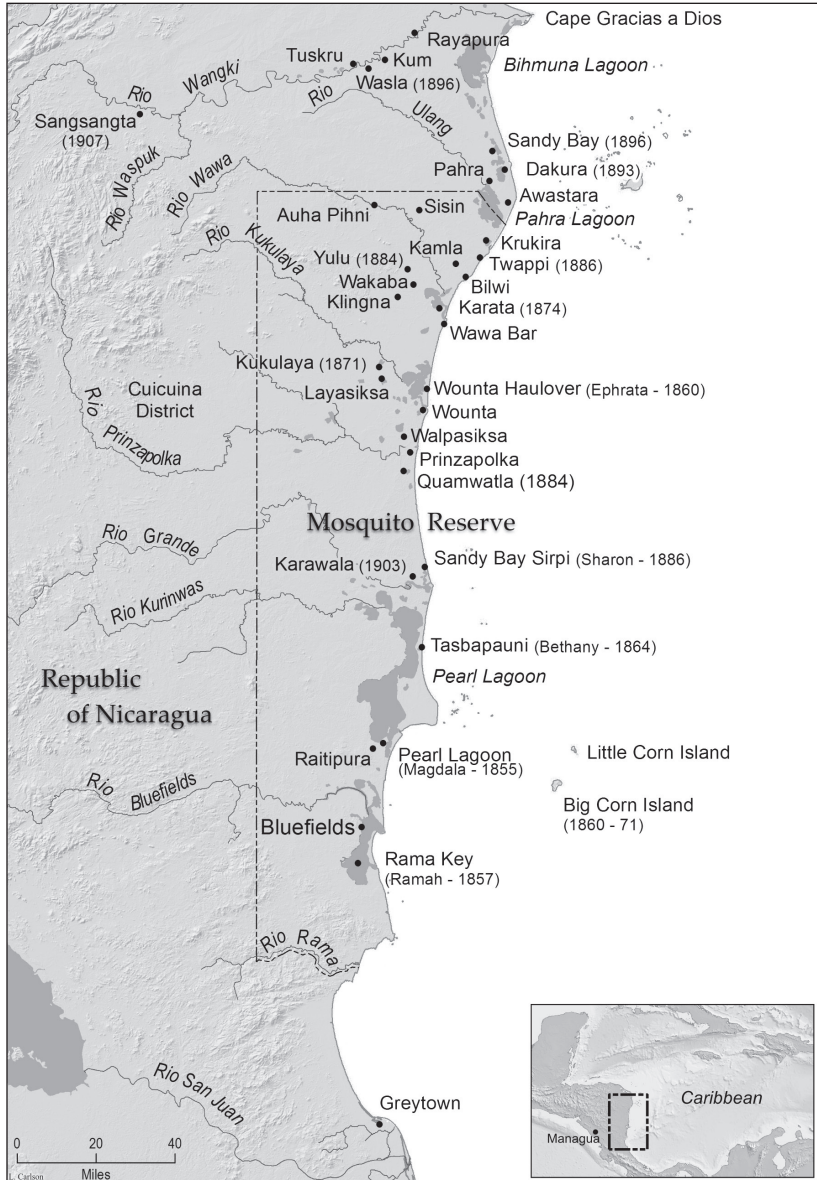


FIG. 1.1. Map of the Mosquito Reserve and eastern Nicaragua, showing major towns and villages in the late nineteenth century, and the dates of mission foundings and their Moravian-given names in parenthesis. Map designed by Karl Offen and drawn by Lynn Carlson.

Whatever may have caused the Awakening, its effects were real and lasting. The mission's membership totaled only 1,030 on the eve of the Awakening in 1880; this number more than doubled to 2,564 over the next two years.⁴ The majority of the early members were urban Creoles. By 1890 the membership was predominantly rural and Miskito Indian and had grown to 3,294, approximately one-half of the entire adult indigenous and Creole population of the Mosquito Reserve.⁵ A hundred years later, eastern Nicaragua had 118 Moravian congregations, more than any other country in the world except Tanzania, and Miskito Indian communities constituted the majority.⁶ By the mid-twentieth century the Moravian Church had become, in the words of Susan Hawley, "the medium through which a new identity for the Miskitu was constructed, and a heightened and politicised consciousness of what it meant to 'be Miskitu' was produced and maintained."⁷ For Reynaldo Reyes, a late-twentieth-century Miskito military leader, it was even more simple: "all Miskitos are born into the Moravian faith."⁸ This phenomenal change begs the question of how the indigenous and Afro-descendants of the Mosquitia came to identify with the teachings of a relatively obscure Protestant church within a few generations.

By taking up this question, *The Awakening Coast* reveals a key moment of transformation in Central American history, one that resulted from the intersection of religious, political, and economic forces coming from a wide range of geographical and cultural origins, including indigenous and Afro-Caribbean, European and North American, and from budding Central American nation-states. For specialists, the book challenges conventional wisdom about the timing and context surrounding the Awakening. It also contributes new information about Miskito responses to Nicaraguan governance, the cultural dimensions of indigenous religious realignment, and the role of Moravian missionaries in materially transforming village life. For the generalist, the book helps readers understand the important cultural diversity of Central America as well as the lead-up to significant involvement in the region by the United States. It highlights how international economic forces, regional political processes, and Protestant evangelism came together in a particular place to manifest dramatic social changes. The anthology also tells a compelling human story about devout foreigners and individuals who sought to make a difference. In short, the book illustrates

and explains how in fifty years a onetime beleaguered Moravian mission became the most important political and spiritual institution in eastern Nicaragua, as well as the significance of this development for indigenous and Creole populations as they adapted to North American imperialism and Nicaraguan rule.

Many scholars examining the Moravian mission in eastern Nicaragua have taken a Weberian and Marxist view when writing about this topic. Daniel Novack, for example, argues that the Moravians “sought to fashion Miskitus into good wage-laborers, churchgoers and citizens.”⁹ This view echoes the many Sandinista critiques of Anglo-Protestant influences in Caribbean Nicaragua that emerged in the 1970s and 1980s, and specifically those explaining why many Miskito and Afro-descendants resisted the Nicaraguan Revolution. In these analyses the Moravians strengthened an existing Anglo culture in the region and reinforced an ideological foundation for capitalist transformation. As such, missionaries served as the vanguard of colonialism by inoculating Indians with new structures of thought that united Protestantism with proletarianization.¹⁰ Other assessments have presented a more nuanced perspective. Charles Hale, for example, posits that the Miskito harbored hegemonic premises associated with the Anglo-American cultural world, what he calls an “Anglo-affinity,” but also contained a strong inclination toward resistance to oppression, what he called “ethnic militancy.” These two forces fused among the Miskito to produce a “contradictory consciousness.” Yet, because Hale focuses largely on the twentieth century, he privileges the role of the Nicaraguan state and the institutions of Anglo-American neocolonialism, of which the Moravians were an under-explored appendage.¹¹ *The Awakening Coast* builds upon but deviates from Hale’s perspective by seeking to historicize missionary activities and, to the extent possible, Miskito accommodation in the second half of the nineteenth century.¹² By and large the collection underscores the myriad ways the Moravians not only supported and subverted Anglo-affinity among the Miskito but also how they contributed to a shared Miskito identity and, hence, a Miskito ethnic militancy.

Most analyses of the Moravian mission in eastern Nicaragua overlook research conducted on other Protestant missions in the nineteenth-century colonial world. Recent works on the role of missions in the

British Empire — which includes the Mosquitia when the Moravians first arrived — find that missionaries just as often defended native interests against colonial demands and capitalist intrusions as they supported them, and their teachings just as often provided native populations with tools of resistance as they imparted an ideological framework for native subordination. Rather than seeking structural explanations for religious conversion, broader and comparative research tends to focus on the cultural dimensions of what missionaries imparted and how local peoples may have understood this information. Such scholarship has also asked how native peoples brought new ideas into their own worldviews and how conversion often created a context for cultural survival in a changing world.¹³ As Robert Hefner has argued, the most necessary feature of religious conversion “is not a deeply systematic reorganization of personal meanings but an adjustment in self-identification through at least nominal acceptance of religious actions or beliefs deemed more fitting, useful, or true.”¹⁴ Although conversion involves a commitment to a new kind of moral authority and a reconceptualized social identity, it does not necessarily reorganize other mental and social spheres of life. Thus, Hefner argues it is misleading to assume that formal truths embedded in religious doctrines directly reflect or inform believer’s notions about those ideas.¹⁵ These views are particularly relevant for understanding the Moravian mission in Mosquitia.

It is our hope that this anthology of Moravian missionary writings from 1849 to 1899 better contextualizes not only the Great Awakening but also how missionary activities were experienced by the people who came to identify with them. We can do this by reading against the grain and between the lines of missionary writings and by triangulating with what is known about Miskito culture from other sources. To this end *The Awakening Coast* contains a chronological presentation of thirty-one selections of varied length written mostly by the missionaries themselves. Fourteen of the thirty-one selections are known only in their original German and are available in English translation here for the first time. Much of the German material comes from the bimonthly periodical *Missions-Blatt aus der Brüdergemeine* (1838–1937), published in Herrnhut, Germany, by the Mission Administration Publisher. Other German works are longer booklets intended to highlight the Awakening and the good deeds of Mosquitia missionaries

to readers back home. The English-language entries come from relatively obscure Moravian publications, particularly the *Periodical Accounts Relating to the Missions of the Church of the United Brethren* (1790–1889) and the *Periodical Accounts Relating to the Foreign Missions of the Church of the United Brethren* (1890–1927), both of which were published in London by the Brethren’s Society for the Furtherance of the Gospel among the Heathen.¹⁶ On the whole the anthology contains a wealth of information for scholars and interested readers about a number of topics necessary to better understand the history of Caribbean Nicaragua in general and a fifty-year snapshot of Miskito Indian ethnohistory in particular, albeit filtered through the lens of Moravian perspectives.¹⁷

In deciding which documents to reprint we have chosen to focus on indigenous peoples, and especially the Miskito Indians—the largest ethnic group in Mosquitia, the main target of mission activity after 1860, and majority members of the Moravian Church after the Awakening of 1881–82. We have also selected documents that show the temporal and spatial progression of the mission from the south to the north along the Mosquito Coast, and we have provided a window upon the other indigenous peoples affected by Moravian evangelism. We also provide a cross-section of writings from different missionaries, including black Jamaicans and one native Creole. Unfortunately, all but one of the writers are men. Moravian missionaries were always male, and although many were married, in their writings they rarely dwelled on the activities of their wives. By the 1890s a few female Jamaican teachers had arrived in Mosquitia, but their writings have not risen to public view. A greater consideration of women or gender within the Mosquitia mission during the nineteenth century would require more extensive research at the Moravian Archives in Herrnhut, and perhaps in Jamaica.¹⁸

The documents in *The Awakening Coast* are diverse. They illustrate many dimensions of indigenous culture, especially those that clashed most strongly with Moravian and Christian norms. Missionary writings highlight the difficulties of working in a tropical environment susceptible to annual hurricanes, the challenges of traveling through rough seas and long, sinuous rivers in small open boats, and the personal sufferings of foreign men and women who endured sickness and, often, death. Documents frequently

deal with the evils of the *sukia*, shamans who divined and managed the supernatural world, especially mischievous and evil spirits called *lasas* (or *ulassas* by the missionaries) that many Miskito believed could affect human health. Mostly men, *sukias* were the main competitors of the missionaries, and our documents provide a window into how the Mosquitia peoples came to see the Moravian missionaries as *sukias* of “a superior order,” a foreign class of powerful diviners and medicine men who were well positioned to defend the people against the forces of modernity sweeping the region.

Indigenous *sukias* did not fade away but borrowed Christian rhetoric and symbolism. After the Awakening *sukias* often called themselves *prapits*, a Miskito corruption of the English “prophet,” and *spirit uplika*, or “spirit people.” These individuals appeared en masse with the Great Awakening and challenged the missionaries’ spiritual and cosmological authority, developments the missionaries took very seriously (see nos. 14 and 20). As missionary Christian Martin described the challenge in 1882, the Awakening “had been followed by a period of sifting, in which the Lord was winnowing the wheat and bringing many hidden sins to light.”¹⁹ Some Miskito *prapits* even had visions that native preachers would one day rise up and replace the foreign missionaries, a dream that in effect has come true—as the Moravian Church of Nicaragua became a native church in 1974.²⁰ Although the Moravians constantly battled the influence of spirit people and neo-*sukias*, their emergence ironically contributed to the spread of a culturally comprehensible and socially acceptable form of Moravian Christianity and helped strengthen a shared Miskito identity.

The Awakening Coast also includes documents that deal with Moravian and indigenous reactions to regional political developments. When the Moravians arrived in 1849 the region was under the jurisdiction of a British protectorate. In 1860 the Anglo-Nicaraguan Treaty of Managua carved out an autonomous coastal strip of eastern Nicaragua called the Mosquito Reserve (see fig. 1.1). The majority of Miskito people lived outside the Reserve, as did the majority of the less populous and more inland Mayangna, or Sumu, Indians, a situation that continually drew the Moravians toward Nicaraguan territory.²¹ In 1894 Nicaragua annexed the Mosquito Reserve and in 1900 required that all day-school instruction be conducted in Spanish. This development set the church back considerably and initiated a period

of retrenchment and limited growth—hence our decision to cover works only up to 1899. Nicaragua’s understandable but clumsy effort to impose Hispanic culture throughout the Mosquitia eventually created a stronger bond between the Moravians and the native Mosquitians, including the Afro-descendant Creoles. As a long-persecuted religious community, the Moravians likely infused their preaching with themes of triumph in the face of adversity, and ultimately helped native Mosquitians better relate to the church, its message, and its emissaries in a time of significant uncertainty.²²

THE MORAVIAN CHURCH

The Moravian Church, or *Unitas Fratrum* (the United Brethren), grew out of the failed Czech Reformation of 1457, but it traces its modern origins to the estate of Count Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf (1700–1760) in Saxony, Germany.²³ In 1722, dispersed and persecuted flocks from throughout Moravia came and settled at Zinzendorf’s estate and established a utopian community called Herrnhut, which sought to organize people into groups called choirs based on gender, age, and marital status. The purpose of these divisions was to foster a sense of community and to establish a spiritual experience appropriate to one’s stage in life. Communal commercial activities allowed the community to achieve self-sufficiency, a model that was replicated in other European Moravian settlements.²⁴

The eighteenth-century Brüdergemeine, or Herrnhutters (those from Herrnhut), saw themselves as part of a united body of Protestant churches that practiced variations of common doctrines. For the Herrnhutters, the Bible contained all truths, and the Moravian motto, “In essentials, Unity; in non-essentials, Liberty; in all things, Charity,” helped guide their interpretation and practice. Faith in God’s will was so strong that many church decisions taken between 1467 and 1836 were decided by a lot system whereby biblical passages were placed in a box and drawn at random, then construed as direction from God.²⁵

Christ’s life and actions, as told by the Apostles, especially the Book of Luke, exemplified moral and ethical behavior that was emulated and taught. Individual conduct and a sense of spirituality, but not excessive outward emotion, rated higher than questions of religious dogma. Thus,

the Moravians placed more emphasis on the application of Christ's word and his own examples than on the doctrine itself. Jesus' life, sufferings, and death on the cross provide the framework for Moravian Christianity; this is especially evident in liturgies, rituals, the Eucharist, and Sunday-school teachings.²⁶ Moravian missions distinguished themselves among evangelical churches, according to one church historian, "by simple presentation of the essentials of evangelical faith, by care of individual souls and by the administration of watchful and helpful scriptural church discipline."²⁷

A special feature of Moravian congregations was daily texts. The tradition can be traced to Count Zinzendorf providing the Herrnhut congregation with a "watchword" for the next day. With 365 watchwords compiled, the first edition of *Losungen*, or watchwords, was published in 1731. Today, biblical passages continue to be selected in Herrnhut, but hymns and prayers are selected by regional clergy. These are compiled and published in different global centers. In nineteenth-century Nicaragua such books came from Great Britain, but today the *Moravian Daily Texts* used in Nicaragua and Honduras come from Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. The daily texts are read at or before each morning meal. Their purpose is to strengthen households in daily work and also to provide topics for weekly lectures and prayer meetings. Their unstated power is generating unity among the brethren throughout the congregation and across the world.

From the beginning, Moravians placed special emphasis on evangelical and missionary activity, and they were among the first Protestant groups to send missionaries overseas. While attending a coronation in Denmark, Count Zinzendorf met an African slave named Anthony from the Danish colony of St. Thomas and asked him to come to Herrnhut to speak about the state of slavery in the West Indies. Shortly thereafter, in 1732, the first two Moravian missionaries arrived in St. Thomas. As Oliver Maynard explains, "Moravians firmly believed that the evangelization of the heathen was an imperative obligation for a living church. . . . It seemed as if God had sent them to Herrnhut to prepare them to meet this need in the West Indies."²⁸ Other overseas missions were quickly established in Greenland (1733), Lapland (1734), Suriname (1735), South Africa (1737), St. Johns (1740), Jamaica (1754), Labrador (1754), Antigua (1756), Barbados (1765), and St. Kitts (1765). The principal North American immigrant communities of Bethlehem and Winston-Salem were

established in 1740 and 1766, respectively, and missions to North American Indians followed shortly, especially among the Delawares and Cherokees.²⁹

Until the early twentieth century, a five-member Mission Board at Berthelsdorf, near Herrnhut, managed Moravian missions worldwide. Board members were elected, and delegates from Britain and the United States were included. The board was responsible to the General Synod of the Moravian Church, an international gathering that occurs every decade. By 1800 there were ninety Moravian missionaries (excluding spouses) working around the world, three times more than the thirty missionaries from all other Protestant churches combined.³⁰ By 1832, two hundred missionaries attended forty-five thousand members worldwide.³¹ Social revolution and reform in mid-nineteenth-century Europe convinced many Moravians that a “new epoch had arrived in the history of humanity” and that “Christ himself might now appear as Judge and call His servants to account.”³² As a result, the Modern Advance Synod in 1848 redoubled missionary work, approving the first day schools for children in the Caribbean and affirming a request to establish a new mission in Mosquitia, at the time a British protectorate (figs. 1.1 and 1.3).

Most missionaries sent to Mosquitia before 1900 were Germans who had been trained as artisans or craftsmen. Some grew up as children of missionaries in places such as Labrador, St. Kitts, and Jamaica. Most spoke English upon arrival, but not all. Some of the more successful Moravian missionaries in Mosquitia were black men from Jamaica. Three important Jamaicans collectively served the church for 115 years in the nineteenth century. The Jamaican Peter Blair, the mission’s preeminent translator and medical man, served forty-one years (from 1856 to 1897) in at least five mission stations. Frederic Smith worked twenty-six years while serving in at least four Miskito villages. He also made the first exploratory trips to the Wangki River between 1892 and 1895, introducing the mission to the most densely populated Miskito region of Nicaragua. For his part, Jacob Lewis served forty-four years and was responsible for establishing the first mission among a Mayangna Indian community at Karawala in 1892. Another black man, a Pearl Lagoon Creole, Benjamin Garth, served the mission at least forty years and was the first native Mosquitian to be ordained, in 1900. In short, the face of the Moravian Church in Mosquitia between 1849 and 1899 was neither strictly German nor white (fig. 1.2).³³



FIG. 1.2. Moravian missionaries at a conference in Bluefields, Nicaragua, 1904. Courtesy of the Moravian Archives, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. *Front row left to right:* Garth, Beck, Gebhardt, Berckenhagen, Lewis, Colditz, Schubert. *Back row left to right:* Grossman, Fischer, Heath, Martin, Zollhöfer, Vega, Schramm, Morris, Kahthöfer.

MOSQUITIA HISTORY AND CHRISTIAN EVANGELISM

What of the people the Moravians hoped to evangelize? A clearer understanding necessarily begins with a look at their geographical setting. The Mosquitia denotes a triangular region that runs east from Trujillo, Honduras, to Cape Gracias a Dios, and then south along the Caribbean coast of Nicaragua to the Río San Juan (fig. 1.3). A figurative hypotenuse runs south and east from Trujillo until the lower reaches of the Río San Juan. In the eighteenth century the Spaniards called this region the Province of Taguzgalpa, but this changed when the Miskito began to attack Spanish frontier settlements in the isthmus's Cordillera Central, and henceforth the area was called the Costa de los Mosquitos, or the Mosquitia.³⁴ Throughout the colonial period the isthmus's mountainous interior helped isolate the Hispanic and Catholic west coast from the Anglo-influenced, Afro-Caribbean, and Miskito-dominated east coast.



FIG. 1.3. Map of Central America in the eighteenth century, showing approximate Indian locations in the foothills and highlands of the Cordillera Central. Map by Karl Offen.

Contrary to what the Moravians assumed, the peoples of Mosquitia, and especially the Miskito, had had significant interactions with both Catholic and Protestant Christianity well before 1849. Indeed, Columbus celebrated his first mass on the American continent in what is today the Honduran Mosquitia in 1502.³⁵ Between 1616 and 1623, itinerant Franciscan priests allegedly baptized hundreds of Indians near Cape Gracias a Dios, yet no permanent Spanish settlement ever formed in Mosquitia, and Nicaraguans only managed to establish a token presence in a few places during the second half of the nineteenth century (see nos. 4, 16, and 22).³⁶ In contrast, English Puritans in the 1630s settled Providence Island, 150 miles from the Mosquitia, and between 1633 and 1635 the Puritan minister Samuel Key evangelized among the Miskito on the mainland. Puritan officials commended him for his “desire to propagate the knowledge of Christ among those poor heathens . . . and [they] approved [his] intention to lay a foundation thereof in the education of the children.”³⁷ Key’s efforts apparently had some effect, because fifty years later Hans Sloane reported that the Miskito leaders he met on Jamaica “have learned the Lords Prayer, the Creed and Ten Commandments, which they repeat with great devotion.”³⁸

Although the Spaniards forcibly removed the English Puritans from Providence Island in 1641, the settlers had already set in motion at least three important processes that would have a profound impact on future Mosquitia developments. First, they took the son of a local Miskito chief to London in 1633. He stayed three years, and when he returned he was known as the Miskito king, a hereditary title as much as a political concept that informs Miskito identity to this day.³⁹ Second, following a failed Spanish attack on Providence Island in 1635, the settlers won the right to recoup their losses through legal acts of piracy. Shortly thereafter, and through successful capture of Portuguese slave ships, Providence Island became one of the first African-majority colonies in the nascent English Empire.⁴⁰ In the process, some of these Africans made their way to the Mosquitia, where they mixed with some Miskito Indians.⁴¹ As a result, by the early eighteenth century two Miskito peoples emerged, the so-called Sambo Miskito in the north and the Tawira Miskito in the south.⁴² While the terms imply racial differences, contemporary observers emphasize distinct territorial control and regional alliances. As some of the Moravian documents presented here

demonstrate, divergent Sambo and Tawira identities continued to shape Miskito activities at the end of the nineteenth century (see especially no. 21).⁴³ Indeed, a region-wide and singular Miskito identity only solidified after the Awakening of 1881–82 and after the Moravians helped suppress Sambo-Tawira differences and unite the people around a shared Moravian Christian and Miskito Indian identity.

Third, the English settlers of Providence Island established amiable and deferential relations with the Miskito Indians but not with other indigenous groups.⁴⁴ This led to a long-lasting friendship between the Miskito and English pirates and privateers, and, by the eighteenth century, between the Miskito and British settlers and Jamaican officials. Preferential access to European markets, technologies, and esoteric knowledge—such as the English language and Christianity—as well as African knowledge and relative immunities to Old World diseases helped the Miskito dominate the surrounding Pech Indians of eastern Honduras, the Rama Indians of southeastern Nicaragua, and the various Mayangna (or Sumu) Indians living on the eastern slopes of the Cordillera Central (fig. 1.3).

Periodic enslavement of surrounding Indians, as well as intercourse with Europeans, augmented Miskito populations. Yet, it was not until the nineteenth century that the Miskito outnumbered adjacent peoples. Estimates vary, but in 1768 the Sambo and Tawira Miskito population was around three thousand.⁴⁵ When the Moravians arrived in the mid-nineteenth century, longtime Mosquitia resident Charles Bell estimated the Miskito population to be seven to ten thousand, and at the same time he stated the entire indigenous population of the Mosquitia was ten to fifteen thousand.⁴⁶ These numbers are likely accurate appraisals, because in 1897 the entire population of eastern Nicaragua, including Creoles, mestizos, foreign blacks, and whites, was estimated to be 25,500.⁴⁷

By the early eighteenth century, the Miskito king Jeremy was corresponding with the British governor of Jamaica. The British had established treaties with the Miskito king in exchange for payments of cloth, weapons, rum, and other goods. British recognition of Sambo-Tawira regional differences required that they also bestow titles and gifts upon other Miskito leaders. In addition to the king (always Sambo Miskito between 1729 and 1842), the British recognized a Sambo general, a Tawira governor, and a Tawira

admiral. Each of these commissions recognized on-the-ground authority in a specific “district.” The Sambo general ruled over what is today north-eastern Honduras, while the Sambo king held power from the eastern shore of the Caratasca Lagoon to Sandy Bay and along the lower Wangki River. Meanwhile, the Tawira governor exercised authority from Twappi to the Río Grande, and the Tawira admiral held power from the Río Grande to Pearl Lagoon (see fig. 1.1). By the early eighteenth century these districts constituted what the Miskito and others called a Miskito Kingdom.⁴⁸

In 1748 the British established a superintendency for the Mosquito Shore. Over the next forty-years some six hundred free settlers—half of whom were of mixed race—and their twenty-two hundred African and Amerindian slaves procured natural resources, raised cattle, traded illegally with adjacent Spaniards, and grew some crops at select points between Black River and Punta Gorda (just south of Bluefields) in present-day Honduras and Nicaragua, respectively.⁴⁹ British settlement in Mosquitia came to an abrupt albeit temporary end in 1787, after the Convention of London upheld Spanish interpretation of the 1783 Treaty of Versailles.

Between 1742 and 1785, five missionaries from the London-based Society for Propagating the Gospel (SPG) evangelized in Mosquitia, particularly in the northern portion in what is today Honduras. One of these missionaries, coincidentally a German-born Moravian named Frederic Post, lived in the northern Mosquitia for eighteen years and built a church at the mouth of the Patuca River.⁵⁰ The historical record shows that SPG evangelism had a greater impact on the Sambo Miskito, particularly King George I (r. 1755–76) and his son King George II (r. 1777–1801), as well as on Sambo general Tempest (r. ca. 1764–85) and his grandson Sambo general Lowry Robinson (r. ca. 1800–ca. 1816). General Robinson, who had probably been a student of Post, showed “particular zeal in the cause [of spreading Christianity].”⁵¹ In contrast, the SPG missionaries did not interact with the Tawira on the Nicaraguan savannas and coast. As an expression of their growing attachment to the British, especially during the reigns of Miskito kings George I and II, the Sambo attempted to grant concessions to settlers in Tawira lands. The Tawira responded by seeking a closer alliance with the Spaniards, who introduced Tawira leaders to the teachings and power of the Catholic Church in places such as Cartago, Costa Rica; León, Nicaragua; and

Cartagena, New Granada (now Colombia). In the 1780s, Tawira governor Colville Briton invited two Catholic priests to live at Twappi, and from there they visited several other Tawira villages (fig. 1.1).⁵²

After the British left Mosquitia in 1787, the Sambo militarily subordinated the Tawira in a “civil war” that took place in 1790 and 1791 (see no. 21).⁵³ The next few decades initiated a crisis in the Miskito Kingdom, especially after Spanish immigrants attempted to settle at Cape Gracias a Dios and Miskito king George II was killed by his own people in 1801.⁵⁴ Political power and British favors gradually shifted away from the Sambo as British citizens in Belize began to covet resources in Mosquitia. The successions of rule by Miskito king George Frederic III (r. 1816–24) and his half brother Robert Charles Frederic (r. 1824–42) were followed by the crowning, in 1845, of young George Augustus Frederic, a Tawira of “pure Indian blood.”⁵⁵ In short, when the Moravians arrived in 1849, a Tawira leader had taken the reigns of the crumbling Miskito Kingdom with full Anglo support.

Nicaraguan independence from the United Provinces of Central America in 1838 coincided with renewed maneuverings of British mahogany cutters at Belize and global interest in an interoceanic canal across the isthmus along the Río San Juan (fig. 1.3). These developments again directed British attention to the Mosquitia. In 1837 the new superintendent of Belize, Colonel Alexander MacDonald, sought to resurrect legitimacy for the Miskito king by announcing that the Mosquito Shore extended from Cape Honduras to Bocas del Toro, Panama, and that the land of the “Mosquito nation” now formed a protectorate of Great Britain.⁵⁶ In 1840 Belize began to assert greater political and economic control over Mosquitia by creating the Commissioners of the Mosquito Nation, a five-member governing body that included the Miskito king, Belizean officials, and an Anglican clergyman. Following the British Slavery Abolition Act of 1833 some West Indian blacks began to move to Mosquitia, joining the freed blacks and native Creoles (Afro-Mosquitians) already there. With this influx of nominal Christians, a new breed of Christian missionaries found the Mosquitia ripe for evangelism. The Wesleyan James Pilley, for example, spent three years working at Cape Gracias, Bluefields, and elsewhere, mostly among Creoles and blacks, and Anglican clergy visited Bluefields and Greytown from time to time.⁵⁷

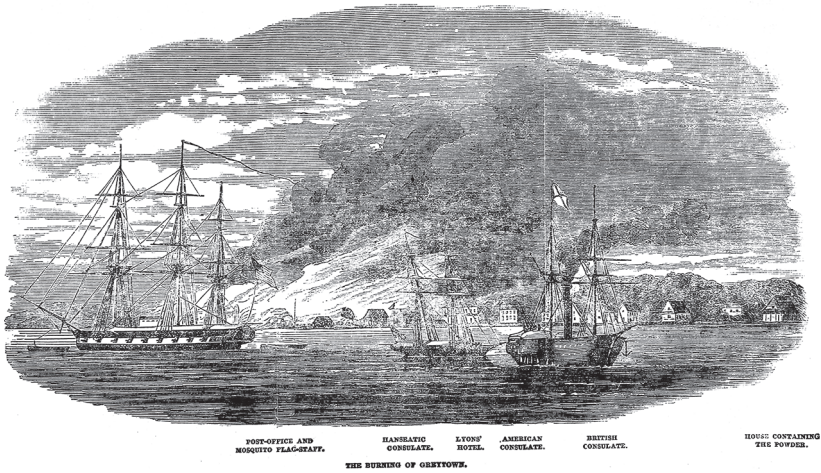


FIG. 1.4. The burning of Greytown by the USS *Cyane*, July 13, 1854. *Illustrated London News*, August 19, 1854, 151. Courtesy of Peter Dana.

Sambo Miskito disenchantment with British neglect finally materialized in 1843 when Sambo general Thomas Lowry Robinson ceded his district to the Republic of Honduras.⁵⁸ In response, the British appointed Patrick Walker as the British agent and consul general to the Mosquito Shore in 1844. Walker moved the seat of government from Cape Gracias to Bluefields and created a new governing body termed the Mosquito Council, which again included the Miskito king and leading Bluefields Creoles, literate and propertied men who had risen to power by expanding commercial ties with Jamaican and American traders after the earlier British evacuation.⁵⁹ These political actions and some presumed offenses against American citizens helped raise the ire of the United States, which responded by destroying British-occupied Greytown in 1854 (fig. 1.4).⁶⁰

British and American rivalry in Mosquitia cooled with the signing of the Anglo-Nicaraguan Treaty of Managua in 1860. Drafted without Miskito consultation, the treaty created the so-called Mosquito Reserve, a geopolitical entity that straddled the central portion of Nicaragua's Caribbean coast (see fig. 1.1). Terms of the agreement allowed for an independent Mosquito Reserve government headed by the "hereditary Miskito chief"—the title

“king” was disallowed—but also specified Nicaraguan sovereignty over the Reserve, a contradiction that created many turbulent years and raised anxiety levels among residents precipitously. When Nicaragua militarily annexed the Reserve in 1894 it contained some ten thousand people and most of the Tawira Miskito communities but only a handful of Sambo Miskito communities. As our documents testify, the Moravians initially worked among the Creoles in Bluefields, the Creoles and Sambo Miskito at Pearl Lagoon, the Rama Indians just south of Bluefields, and the newly formed Sambo Miskito communities at Wounta Haulover (which the missionaries renamed Ephrata) and Tasbapauni (Bethany) before reaching out to Tawira communities in 1870s. Tawira acceptance of church teachings lagged due to past Sambo-Tawira animosities, closer Sambo-Protestant relations in the past, and a more reclusive and inland village life that made them less accessible to Moravian evangelism. Interestingly, the revival that swept the coast in 1881–82 likely started among the Tawira at Karata (see no. 12), not at Pearl Lagoon and then Bluefields, as Moravian writers and subsequent commentators have assumed. The Awakening not only helped weaken Sambo-Tawira enmity but strengthened a common Miskito Indian identity.

ESTABLISHING A MORAVIAN MISSION IN MOSQUITIA

The Moravian mission in Mosquitia originated as part of broader European designs on Central America following independence in 1823.⁶¹ European interest in settlement, trade, and an interoceanic canal spawned several Central American colonization schemes that duped thousands.⁶² To investigate one such proposal at Cape Gracias a Dios, Prince Karl of Prussia and Georg, Duke of Schönburg-Waldenburg—a patron of the Moravian Church—sent a three-member team to visit the location. A favorable report was published in 1845, but Prussian king Frederick William IV (r. 1840–64) rejected the plan, so Duke Schönburg-Waldenburg asked the Moravians to consider the region for a new mission.⁶³ In response the Mission Board sent two emissaries from Jamaica in 1847. The General Synod read and approved their report in 1848, and on March 14, 1849, two German missionaries, Heinrich Pfeiffer and Johann Lundberg, their wives, and an assistant and carpenter, Ernst Kandler, arrived at Bluefields.⁶⁴

Once ensconced at Bluefields the missionaries became involved in at least five areas of social change—education, health, cultural landscape change, economics, and politics—that they eventually replicated in villages throughout the coast. In the early days, however, the missionaries were content to work exclusively in Bluefields and Greytown among urban blacks and Creoles. Although many blacks and Creoles had received nominal Christian instruction, the missionaries felt that “superstition, credulity and ignorance prevailed,” and thus they set out “the work of regeneration in the usual methodical German way.”⁶⁵ But they were tested. Letters home after their first Christmas told how “the dancing and rolling of drums went on day and night. The drunkenness was simply awful and the whole town was in a condition beyond description. We hardly thought it possible that people could degrade themselves so deeply.”⁶⁶

Learning the Miskito language and founding new missions were not initial priorities, but this changed when Mission Board director H. R. Wullschlägel visited Bluefields and the mission preaching site at English Bank, a Sambo Miskito and Creole community at the southern end of Pearl Lagoon, in 1855.⁶⁷ Wullschlägel decided that the missionaries needed to preach in an indigenous language and to settle in indigenous communities.⁶⁸ Since many Mayangna understood Miskito and the Rama understood English, efforts were directed toward acquiring the Miskito language. And learn they did. The Jamaican Peter Blair and the German missionaries Friedrich Edward Grunewald, Wilhelm Siebörger, and Heinrich Ziock played an especially important role in translating scripture, hymns, and school materials into Miskito (see table 1.1).

While these translations helped the missionaries to standardize their preaching, when the first publication of *Dawan Bila* (literally: the Word of God) reached the Mosquitia in 1888 the Miskito roundly rejected it. As missionary Martin put it, when the book was introduced into mission schools, Miskito parents became “very upset,” preferring instead that their children learn English. Many already owned an English-language New Testament, and they wished for their children to be better able to read it, not a book in their own language.⁶⁹ As is discussed more fully below, the importance the Miskito attributed to English-language books was substantial and helped imbue the Moravians—as decoders and explainers of God’s will—with

TABLE 1.1. Moravian translations into the Miskito language

YEAR	WORK	TRANSLATOR
1860	word list (dictionary), some scripture, school primer	Blair and Grunewald
1860s	the Gospels (unpublished)	Blair and Grunewald
1863	Bible stories in Miskito from Old and New Testaments	Grunewald
1888	the Gospels and Acts (known in Miskito as <i>Dawan Bila</i>)	Blair and Siebörger
1893	hymnal and liturgies in Miskito	Blair and others
1894	Miskito grammar booklet (for day schools)	Berckenhagen and Ziock
1894	Miskito–English Dictionary	Ziock
1903	Miskito–English–Spanish Dictionary	Berckenhagen
1905	New Testament	Heath and Blair

special powers. It also highlights that the Miskito desired to acquire this power rather than passively accept its ownership by Europeans.

In the decade following the 1855 founding of the Pearl Lagoon station, the Moravians established five more mission sites in rapid succession, including at Cape Gracias a Dios and upon the bigger of the Corn Islands some eighty miles off the coast (table 1.2). Following the 1860 Treaty of Managua, however, Nicaraguan officials revoked permission to remain at Cape Gracias (see no. 4). Meanwhile, missionaries abandoned the Corn Island station in 1871 because the Creoles there only “welcomed medical assistance from the missionaries but remained indifferent to [the missionary’s] message.”⁷⁰ From their more durable and northernmost site at Wounta Haulover, the Moravians founded the first of several Tawira Miskito missions in the 1870s, first at Kukalaya and then at Karata. Curiously, missionaries often distinguished the

Tawira from the Miskito (see nos. 7, 11, and 13).⁷¹ Although the missionaries had “real misgivings” about setting up a station at the Tawira community of Karata, the earliest signs of the Awakening started there (see no. 12). After the revival spread north, Karata was flooded with Miskito visitors seeking instruction, and in the single year of 1887 the missionaries baptized 940 in this village.⁷² Such enthusiasm led to the Tawira mission foundings of Yulu and Twappi in 1884 and 1886, respectively (table I.2).

TABLE I.2. Founding dates of Moravian missions, including founders and predominant ethnic group (in parenthesis), 1849–1899

DATE	MORAVIAN MISSION	FOUNDER	COMMENTS
1849	Bluefields	Pfeiffer & Lundberg	
1855	Pearl Lagoon [Magdala] (Creole, Sambo)	Jürgensen	site was formerly called English Bank
1857	Rama Key (Rama)	Jürgensen	preaching and education conducted in English
1859–61	Cape Gracias (Sambo Miskito, Creole)	Kandler	forced removal with Mosquito Reserve creation in 1860
1860	Wounta Haulover [Ephrata] (Sambo Miskito)	Lundberg	founded circa 1840 by people from Dakura
1860–71	Corn Island [Joppa] (Creole)	Hoch	short-lived because Creoles rejected missionary message
1864	Tasbapauni [Bethany] (Sambo Miskito)	Blair	Tasbapauni founded by people from Sandy Bay at time Mosquito Reserve was created
1871	Kukalaya (Tawira Miskito)	Blair	first Tawira mission at village of 300 along eponymous river
1874	Karata (Tawira Miskito)	Smith	evidence that first Awakening manifestations occurred here

DATE	MORAVIAN MISSION	FOUNDER	COMMENTS
1884	Quamwatla (Tungla)	Garth	re-founded in wake of the revival after the abortive start in 1871
1884	Yulu (Tawira Miskito)	Garth	base for other savanna communities and Wangki River mission trips
1886	Twappi (Tawira Miskito)	Ellis	accommodating Tawira demands for missionaries on savanna
1886	Sandy Bay Sirpi [Sharon] (Sambo Miskito)	Lewis	founded by Sambo Miskito migrants from Sandy Bay in northeastern Nicaragua
1893	Dakura (Sambo Miskito)	Fischer & Gebhardt	first Moravian mission founded outside the Mosquito Reserve
1896	Sandy Bay (Sambo Miskito)	Fischer	first Moravian mission founded after Nicaraguan annexation of the Mosquito Reserve in 1894
1896	Wasla (Sambo Miskito)	Smith & Garth	first Moravian mission founded along the Wangki River

After the Awakening, missionaries made several visits to Sambo Miskito villages outside the Reserve (see nos. 15 and 16). Moravian requests to Nicaraguan officials to establish missions north of the Hueso or Hueson River—the treaty-defined northern border of the Mosquito Reserve that was subject to confusion and different interpretations—went unheeded until 1890, when Dr. Modesto Barrios, the Nicaraguan minister of foreign affairs, gave his permission to establish stations in Dakura, Sandy Bay, and along the Wangki River (see nos. 25–27). According to Moravian writers, the Nicaraguans finally consented to their requests because they expected “the Christian teaching of the missionaries to have such influence that the Indians will become obedient subjects of the Republic.”⁷³ This was exactly the same strategy then employed in Guatemala, where President Justo Rufino Barrios’s Liberal reforms of the 1880s allowed Protestant missionaries to serve as “civilizing agents” among remote Mayan communities.⁷⁴

Moravian missionaries always brought important landscape changes to

indigenous villages (fig. 1.5). From the earliest stations at Bluefields, Pearl Lagoon, and Rama Key, missionaries always created fenced-off compounds consisting of a church, the missionary's house and a detached kitchen, and, as missions grew, a day school and a residence for a schoolteacher. The Karata mission compound was photographed in 1892 by William Hoffmann of Dresden; the photograph was published by F. Feldballe, perhaps in Dresden, but without commentary.⁷⁵ This particular photograph was, however, also published in *Periodical Accounts* in 1894, and therein a description is provided:

the church and the missionary's dwelling in the middle, and in the foreground a couple of Indian huts to right and left with their indispensable cocoa [coconut] palms. The church is the building to the right of the dark mango-tree occupying the centre of our picture. It is a simple structure of wood, with no architectural pretensions, and distinguished by no tower or cupola. The bell . . . hangs on the scaffolding, which may be seen just in front of it. . . . To the left of the church and a little behind it is the new mission-house.⁷⁶ (See fig. 1.5, next page.)

These compounds were generally laid out along new paths, or roads, on the outskirts of existing village centers (see also fig. 29.1). This encouraged a rectilinear settlement pattern among church followers who congregated around the church. The Moravians also introduced several new architectural designs to Miskito houses that today are the norm. They specifically mandated that Christian houses include internal walls for privacy and to encourage improved sexual mores (see nos. 3 and 11) and that the kitchen hearth be moved into a separate structure.⁷⁷ The Moravians also advocated the planting of fruit trees and often had seedling nurseries in their compounds, especially for mango and coconut.⁷⁸ Overall, the Moravians believed that an ordered, fruitful landscape and a neat, tidy home were necessary to promote a Christian lifestyle. As Bishop Romig put it during a visit to all the mission stations in 1891–92: “One can usually tell what progress the Gospel has made in a village, or a family, by the appearance of the houses.”⁷⁹

Associated with many Moravian compounds were small provision stores run by the missionaries themselves (see nos. 3, 7, and 10). By selling clothing, sewing materials, and candles, missionary stores served multiple functions.

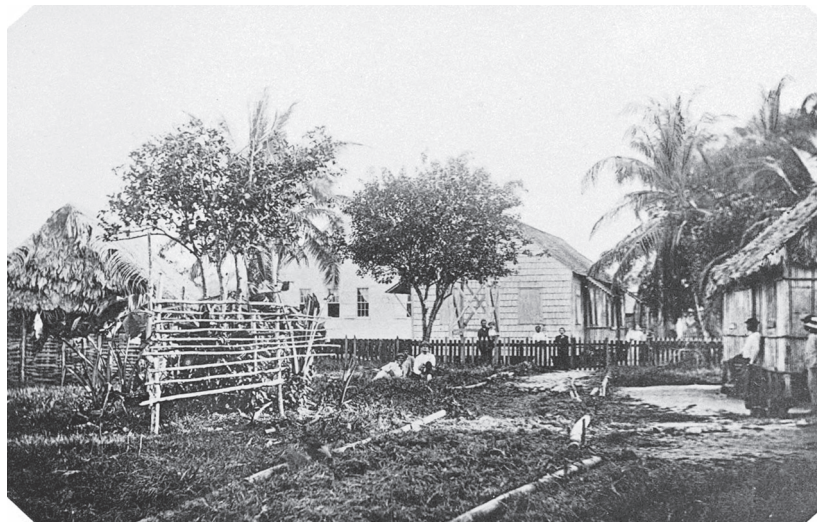


FIG. 1.5. “View of Karata with Missionary Station,” 1892. From Feldballe, *Views from the Mosquito Reservation*, n.p. Courtesy of the California Digital Archive.

On the one hand, they were a secular business that financed church operations: Moravian missionaries had to earn their keep. On the other hand, by providing needed items the missionaries isolated Mosquitians from nefarious traders who exchanged rum for natural resources—a lament heard frequently in the documents presented here. Stores also gave the missionaries a chance to speak with people passing through, especially Mayangna Indians who came annually to the coast to trade (see nos. 7, 10, 18, and 31).⁸⁰ In 1890 six of the fourteen mission stations had stores, but in the early twentieth century, missionaries ceased their economic activities because they felt that mission businesses had increasingly “become a liability in Nicaragua, for it defeated the spiritual influence of the missionaries.”⁸¹

As Moravian authority grew at the village level, mission compounds became the center of village life. The Moravians are well known for hosting love feasts, or sober celebrations in which members gathered to talk, pray, and eat simple cakes and drink coffee—these were probably the first sober merriments of their kind in Mosquitia (see nos. 16, 18, 28, and 31). Besides conducting special services and love feasts on Easter and Christmas, as

well as a Children's Festival, the Moravians hosted love feasts particular to their own faith, including those on August 13 in celebration of the first love feast convened in Herrnhut in 1727 and a Watchnight service held on New Year's Eve. Conducted at Moravian compounds, these spiritual gatherings unified church members and linked village life to the church (see no. 27).⁸² Church compounds also accommodated visiting dignitaries. Indeed, when guests arrived in Miskito villages they would often seek out the missionary house straightaway. In short, the missionaries made several alterations to village landscapes, and these served to reinforce and legitimate their growing cultural and political authority.

The missionaries became involved with British governance of the protectorate from their first arrival by caring for the Miskito royal family. When British consul Dr. James Green relocated to Greytown, he rented his house in Bluefields to the Pfeiffers on condition that they care for and educate the four royal children, especially the young Miskito king George Augustus Frederic, who had recently taken the reins of the Mosquito Council in 1845 (r. 1845–64).⁸³ George's three sisters—Agnes, Victoria, and Mathilde—were all older than the young king, and each would play an interesting role in Mosquitia history and politics (see no. 2). And so began an important development that forever linked the missionaries to all subsequent Mosquitia governments, making them among the most important and powerful political forces in the protectorate, in the Mosquito Reserve, and eventually in eastern Nicaragua.⁸⁴

When Gustav R. S. Feurig arrived in Bluefields in 1854 to become the new mission superintendent, he also became the “Advisor of the king” and had the “virtual authority of a prime minister.”⁸⁵ Miskito king George often traveled with the missionaries when they sought out new station sites, and it was he who bequeathed plots of land at Pearl Lagoon, Rama Key, and, later, at Tasbapauni to establish church and mission compounds. When the missionaries moved to these sites they, in effect, played the role of government spokesperson and magistrate. When missionary Lundberg replaced missionary Jürgensen at Magdala in 1857, for example, he was appointed judge and policeman by the Mosquito government.⁸⁶ Brother Martin tells us that when he went to Wounta Haulover in 1864 he collected taxes from traders and a head tax from the indigenous population in the form of rubber. Furthermore, he acted as a “sort of supervisor in charge of safety and

order, and oversaw land and state laws.” Passing out local judgment and punishment, however, remained the work of Wounta Haulover *wita*, or traditional Miskito chief. It is difficult to judge how Martin’s authority was interpreted vis-à-vis that of the *wita* by village residents, but in 1866 Martin recalled how he became furious with the people for drinking *mishla*, a mildly alcoholic beverage usually made from cassava, and told them he would no longer be their “Über-Wita,” or senior chief.⁸⁷ Meanwhile at Rama Key, missionary Jürgensen had unchecked political power to determine all aspects of island life (see no. 3).

The political role of the missionaries was equally dominating at the level of the Reserve government. Following the Anglo-Nicaraguan Treaty of Managua in 1860, a “Public Convention of the Headmen of the Mosquitos and of the mixed population” met in Bluefields on October 12 and 13, 1861. Elected representatives from several communities totaling fifty-one men drafted a constitution for “The Municipal Authority for the Government of the Mosquito Reservation” and to elect General and Executive Councils from among the representatives to govern in conjunction with the Miskito chief. Moravians Grunewald, Jürgensen, Ingram and Feurig, and Lundberg were among those who represented Pearl Lagoon, Rama Key, Bluefields, and Wounta Haulover, respectively.⁸⁸ Elected to the Executive Council from the General Council were King George Augustus Frederic under the title hereditary chief, Vice President Henry Patterson, Secretary John Herbert Hooker, Dr. Green, Mr. Booth (see no. 2), and Moravian mission superintendent Feurig.⁸⁹

Chief George Augustus Frederic died in 1864 without leaving an heir. His nephew William Henry Clarence (r. 1874–89) was next in the line of succession, but he was only eleven years old and could not be sworn in until he reached twenty-one. Missionary Lundberg and his wife raised young William and had an important influence on him over the next decade. In his 1874 acceptance speech — delivered in English and translated into Miskito by missionary Martin — the new Miskito chief stated that it was his “desire that the government should protect and assist the Moravian Missionaries in the furtherance of the Gospel.” He also urged that a law be passed that would compel parents to send their children to the Moravian day schools regularly, “for without education they will ever bear the reproach which still



FIG. 1.6. Executive Council of the Mosquito Reserve, 1892. *Seated left to right:* Charles Patterson, vice president and guardian; Robert Henry Clarence, Miskito chief; J. W. Cuthbert, attorney general and secretary to the chief. *Standing left to right:* J. W. Cuthbert Jr., government secretary; George Haymond, councilman and headman; Edward McCrea, councilman and headman. From Feldballe, *Views from the Mosquito Reservation*, n.p. Courtesy of the California Digital Archive.

hangs over them.”⁹⁰ At this 1874 event, Charles Patterson, son of the late Henry Patterson, was likewise unanimously elected as vice president. Charles Patterson retained his post during the reign of the next four Miskito chiefs until Nicaraguan annexation of the Mosquito Reserve in 1894 (fig. 1.6).⁹¹

Other members of the Executive Council were directly connected with the Moravian Church. When Robert Henry Clarence was inaugurated chief in 1892 at age twenty-one, he was described by U.S. consul Brown as “entirely under the control of the Attorney General, Hon. J. Cuthbert, a very shrewd Jamaican of 64 years” (figs. 1.6 and 1.7). Cuthbert was self-taught and had served the Reserve government in his current position since 1862. He was a close friend of the mission and had originally been brought from Jamaica by Superintendent Pfeiffer to work as a carpenter. Indeed, Pfeiffer had baptized him in Jamaica as a young man.⁹² It was Cuthbert who in 1892

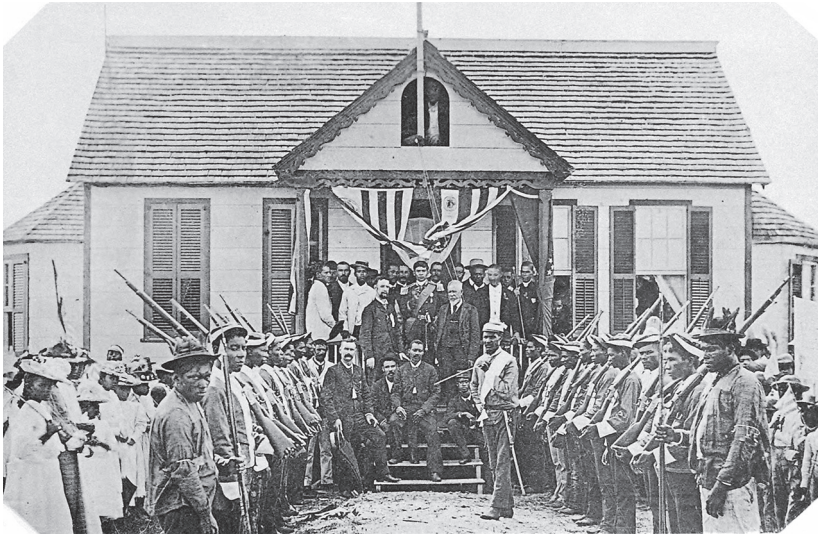


FIG. 1.7. Celebration of the twenty-first birthday of Hereditary Chief Robert Henry Clarence at his house in Pearl Lagoon, 1892, showing Hon. J. Cuthbert to the chief's left and several Moravians on the porch. From Feldballe, *Views from the Mosquito Reservation*, n.p. Courtesy of the California Digital Archive.

arranged things so that the Reserve government gave the Moravian mission a thousand dollars annually to support education—which was always free for Indian members of the church.⁹³ Martin tells us Cuthbert was a true Christian and highly respected by all Mosquitia peoples.⁹⁴

When Martin became mission superintendent and moved to Bluefields in 1881, he, like his predecessors, became the treasurer of the Miskito Reserve government. When Martin tried to refuse a second term in this position he was rebuffed, “because the Indians felt that the state income would only be safe and secure with the mission.” In his role as treasurer Martin sold licenses to ships, collected import duties from traders, and paid out state salaries. He also served as the official chaplain of the General Council meetings, where he opened sessions with a prayer. Although his native language was German and he spoke limited English when he arrived in Mosquitia, Martin was also the council’s official translator between English and Miskito, as thirty Indian delegates spoke no English and thirteen non-Indians spoke no Miskito. As

a way of an apology for his role in government, Martin notes that he “never participated with even a single word” in council meetings—truly an amazing claim for a translator.⁹⁵ In short, the Moravian mission in Mosquitia did more than save souls: it was intimately entangled with every political, economic, and cultural force sweeping over the region during the second half of the nineteenth century.

“‘POISON MASTERS’ OF A SUPERIOR ORDER!”

Some of the documents included here suggest that native Mosquitians came to accept the authority of Moravian missionaries not because the latter were associated with government but because they became more effective than *sukias* at managing the supernatural worlds that influenced Miskito lives. Traditionally, many Miskito populated their landscape and cosmos with four semi-hierarchical classes of spirit-beings: great spirits (benevolent powers of the higher world), *lasa nani* (“owners” of the forests, waters, winds, and swamps), *yumuh nani* (spirits or “shadows” of animals), and *isingni nani* (souls of the recently departed).⁹⁶ Despite strong efforts, Christianity has only significantly modified Miskito interpretations of the great spirits and the *isingnis*, equating the former with God and the Kingdom of Heaven and the latter with the souls of the departed. On the other hand, *lasas* and *yumuhs* permeate much of the Miskito world to this day.⁹⁷

To better understand Miskito conversion to Moravian Christianity, it is important to summarize the traditional cosmological realm with which the missionaries interacted and which they sought to transform on a daily basis. In the past there may have been four great spirits: *wan aisa* (great father), *dama alwani* (grandfather thunder), *kuka tara* (great grandmother), and *yapti misri* (great mother scorpion).⁹⁸ Today, however, *wan aisa* and *dama alwani* denote the Christian God. The Miskito now associate the great mother scorpion (*yapti misri*) with *pura yapti*, or heaven, the place of the great mother (see no. 8). Spirits termed *lasas*—written “*ulassa*” by the Moravians and typically “woolesaw” in early English sources—only do harm and in some cases are greatly feared. There are four main *lasas*: *unta dukia* (the owner of the forest), *liwa* (the owner of water), *prahaku* or *waihwan* (the owner of the wind), and *uhra* (the owner of swamps).⁹⁹ *Yumuhs*, or

animal spirits, are the most commonly encountered spirits in everyday life. They often appear to hunters to foretell success or warn against excessive bounty. Crossing the “shadow” of a yumuh can cause sickness, with certain animals causing specific ailments. Animal yumuhs generally pertain to the domain of the lasa who “owns” their habitat. Yumuhs can also be good, and one could ask a sukia to invoke a certain yumuh to achieve a goal, such as winning the heart of a lover, or to have a good harvest. The isingni, that is, the soul or ghost of the deceased, accounts for the final spirit inhabiting the Miskito landscape. Nine days after death, a person’s spirit must be “caught” by a sukia and sent to pura yapti. If this fails, the soul of the departed can haunt its former dwelling place. This is why, in the past, the presence of mischievous isingni often forced both the Miskito and the Mayangna to abandon their villages. Traditionally, great drinking festivals of fermented cassava, maize, plantains, and pineapples, called *mishla*, accompanied isingni death rites and one-year wakes called *sibkru*.¹⁰⁰

Spirits dwelling in the landscapes govern Miskito well-being. According to the Mosquitia intellectual Ana Rosa Fagoth, the Miskito traditionally had no word for sickness, but now they use *siknis*. To be in bad health would be *sarra taka*, that is, to be out of balance with nature (*wan kaina kulkaia*). Revealing one’s affliction implies noting a possessing spirit: *lasa prukan* (seized by a lasa), *yumuh alkan* (held by a yumuh). These spirits take a person’s *lilka*, literally figure, but used in this sense as vigor or drive.¹⁰¹ In addition to having one’s *lilka* taken, a person can become ill by encountering buried “poison” in the landscape that was set there to afflict a specific person. A belief in poison was especially pronounced among the Sambo Miskito north of the Mosquito Reserve and was particularly common among the Miskito of the Wangki River. The pattern of this cultural belief, along with the fact that the Miskito language does not have a separate word for the phenomenon, suggests the tradition has African and Afro-Caribbean roots. The Moravians wrote a great deal about buried poison and how the Miskito were terrified of its powers (see nos. 23, 25, and 27).

In order to have an illness (lasa or yumuh) driven out or the effect of a poison removed, sukias had to deal with the occupying spirit or the specific poison. Healing ceremonies typically evoke the possessing spirit through incantation and massage. The sukia assesses the affected body parts and,

in the case a yumuh is suspected, would call or sing to the yumuhs in their own language until one provides a sign. Specific animal yumuhs reflect certain symptoms: the snake affects the stomach, the deer the kidney, and so on. Other healers such as the *yapi kakaira* (dreamer) or *yumuh yabakra* (whistler) or herbalists can also be consulted instead of a sukia, but these individuals have restricted capabilities, and in any case, the Moravians rarely distinguished among them.¹⁰²

The Moravian missionaries may have appeared like foreign sukias to the indigenous population when they started to heal people through rituals of prayer, consulting the Bible, and the application or distribution of powerful medicines, what came to be called good poisons. Just as Christ was presented to the Miskito as the “Good Physician,” a healer of body and soul, the missionaries became his medical interns in the field by performing all aspects of corporeal salvation. The link the Miskito made between the missionaries and their medical poison was made explicitly clear when missionary Heath stated, “That buried or wafted poison cannot hurt a missionary is always conceded [by the Indians, because,] . . . in the first place, the missionary is under God’s special protection; in the second place, poisons never hurt their masters, and the fact that most missionaries in this country . . . have a fairly good knowledge of drugs, constitutes them ‘poison masters’ of a superior order!”¹⁰³

From the very beginning missionaries practiced medicine and challenged the authority of sukias as mediators of the supernatural realm. Although Pfeiffer had no formal medical training, he used a “textbook” to make diagnoses and dispense medicine, and he “became physician to all Bluefields.”¹⁰⁴ A wider association between missionaries and medicinal practice was cemented at Pearl Lagoon when missionary Jürgensen arrived in 1855 to establish a new mission. Three days after his arrival a cholera epidemic broke out, but “Jürgensen rendered such splendid medical service, boldly visiting all the patients and serving out useful drugs, that in less than a month the people adored him, attended his services in crowds, and even began conducting family prayers.”¹⁰⁵ The role drugs played in earning the trust of indigenous people cannot be overstated. As missionary Blair put it in 1872, “when I am without medicines the people go to the sorcerers, otherwise these latter are without patients.”¹⁰⁶ But Blair also learned how to use traditional herbal

medicines of the Miskito, and he even “purchased” medicinal knowledge from sukias.¹⁰⁷ It was the famed medical skills of the Jamaican missionary Lewis, for example, that allowed him to settle Twahka and Ulwa Sumu at Karawala in 1903.¹⁰⁸ By the end of the nineteenth century, missionary Hamilton noted that most Mosquitians appear “to think that every Moravian missionary is *ipso facto* a medical man.”¹⁰⁹ Stated another way, Mosquitians viewed the missionaries as foreign sukias (“‘poison masters’ of a superior order”) and expected them to remove possessing spirits with their medicines, prayers, and appeals to the power of God as encoded in biblical scripture.

To most Miskito the Bible was more than just a book with God’s laws; it was also, in the words of Susan Hawley, a “handbook for cosmology” and an object providing “talismanic protection.”¹¹⁰ Brother Smith, for example, recounted a sukia who went around with a Bible blessing children, telling parents that they would no longer get sick.¹¹¹ At Sangsangta on the Wangki River, missionary Grossman met a native prophet claiming to sell holy water from wan aisa. When Grossman argued with him about his deception, the prapit replied “that he [the prapit] had direct revelations from the Father, whilst [Grossman] had everything only out of a big book, and that if this book were thrown into the water [Grossman] could do nothing.” The prapit explained that “God has opened my eyes, so that I can help the people by means of the water which I have bought from him.” Grossman replied that “[God] wishes to free us through the good Physician; and it is this physician, Christ, who can alone heal us.”¹¹² This link between the Moravian command of book and medical knowledge is similarly interpreted by Reynaldo Reyes, the Miskito Contra war veteran who recorded a memoir replete with Moravian references. In the past, Reyes stated, the Miskito had many gods, but then the Moravians came and taught them about the one true God. “Never before had we seen evidence for a God like this.” For the Moravians “treated us well and gave us medicine superior to our old ways. This is why many [Miskito] left their old ways of thinking and believed in what the Moravians taught us with their books and documents.”¹¹³

Indigenous experiences with “books and documents” in Mosquitia, of course, predate the arrival of the Moravians, but even then they were imbued with special powers.¹¹⁴ We know, for example, that the Miskito

greatly valued letters “which spoke,” in addition to documents and treaties given to them by foreigners.¹¹⁵ In the 1850s, Twahka Indians wished to verify the truth of a sukia’s pronouncement and sought clarification from mahogany cutter Charles Bell by telling him, “you English know all things from your books; tell us, then, if this is true.”¹¹⁶ The Bible was one of these truth-telling books, and we know the Moravians carried it and consulted it regularly, often praying with it at the bedside of the sick, telling patients that “God has blessed our medicine.”¹¹⁷ Missionary Hamilton stated that in the past “it was [the] common belief of the Indians that ‘the English have a book which tells about God, so that they know more about Him than we do; [and therefore that] God only loves the English anyhow and doesn’t care about us.’”¹¹⁸ Indeed, the nature of books was often “misunderstood” by the Miskito, as one man offered to pay “the missionary for teaching his boys the ‘secret wisdom’ of books.”¹¹⁹ Missionary Wilson located Miskito “jealousy to be able to ‘know paper’ as do other people” on par with missionary problems dealing with sukias and polygamy.¹²⁰ In another instance, a Miskito man tried “to eat the pages of the Bible in order to acquire its hidden power.”¹²¹ Many sukias nominally converted to Christianity so that they could command the power of the Bible and master “the new ‘medicine.’”¹²²

The Miskito apparently understood the Bible as something akin to an oracle containing God’s laws. The concept of law, or *la* in Miskito, can be equated with the notion of rules or conventions (see no. 19). When biblical scripture was translated and preached in Miskito by the 1850s, the Miskito heard God’s laws in their own language for the first time. The way scripture was translated into Miskito is important in this regard. Missionary Hamilton relates that the missionaries had to translate unfamiliar concepts by paraphrasing their meaning in the Miskito language. For example, Hamilton stated that “hope” was translated into Miskito as “the law of our waiting for the things before us.”¹²³ When missionary Heath translated the New Testament in 1905 he made sure that it “adhered very closely to the original Miskito ideas and forms of speech.”¹²⁴ The personal experiences of Offen in Mosquitia in the 1990s suggest that many Miskito now believe the Bible was originally written in the Miskito language. This is, in part, because many things native to Mosquitia or assumed to be unique to Miskito culture

are found in the *Dawan Bila* and the New Testament in the metaphorical language of the Miskito. Today the Miskito locate themselves and their history seamlessly into the events and places described in the Bible, and much of this has to do with how the Moravians translated Christian concepts beginning in the 1870s.¹²⁵

The missionary's ability to reorient the Miskito understanding of the cosmological realm was enhanced by the use of biblical illustrations (fig. 1.8). Without exception, the missionaries noted that abstract biblical concepts could be more easily communicated to native and illiterate parishioners with images (see nos. 10 and 18).¹²⁶ Pictures particularly reinforced the image of Christ as the "Good Physician," uniting spiritual and corporeal health at the same time it communicated the role of the missionaries as Christ's medical understudies on earth. Biblical illustrations had an especially strong impact upon the less worldly Mayangna Indians. Missionary Martin tells us that Twahka Indians from the upper Prinzapolka, Bambana, and Wawa Rivers would come to Wounta Haulover to hear the news of the Mosquito Reserve, make purchases at his mission store, and pay their taxes in rubber. Mayangna chief Gerry, who Martin says developed confidence in Martin's ability to tell the truth through store dealings, applied for baptism and became the first Mayangna baptized in 1864. Over the years, many groups of Mayangna Indians would come to the mission store to buy things and, according to Martin, "examine biblical pictures." After receiving an explanation of their meaning, one Mayangna man announced to Martin, "now you be quiet, I want to speak and you tell me if I got it right." Martin informs us that the picture stories would be repeated in the forest to other people and, in this way, the Gospel would be spread.¹²⁷

By consulting the Bible to announce God's laws and by confronting spirit possession with their healing practices, the Moravian missionaries appeared as formidable, if foreign, *sukias* to native Mosquitians. The Bible and the literacy needed to interpret it were the sources of Moravian supremacy and the keys to the fount of their new medicine. Such spiritual authority combined with genuine political and economic influence to set the stage for the Awakening and the long-term success of the Moravian mission in Mosquitia.



FIG. 1.8. Popular nineteenth-century Bible illustrations that missionaries might have used. *Left*: The Dumb Man Possessed, Matthew 9:32–34. *Right*: Jesus Healing the Sick, Matthew 4:23–24. From *The Doré Gallery of Bible Illustrations*, illustrated by Gustave Doré (Chicago: Belford-Clarke Co., 1891). The Project Gutenberg EBook #8710, <http://www.gutenberg.net>.

THE GREAT AWAKENING REVISITED

If we combine the specific details of how the Awakening started with knowledge of a “culture-bound syndrome” known as *grisi siknis* (crazy sickness) among the Miskito, we derive an alternative understanding of the Awakening than the one of divine intervention offered by Moravian writers. The Awakening is said to have started when a young Creole woman named Mary Downs “was attacked” with a traumatic condition during the burial of a Pearl Lagoon elder named Rigby. It took her three days to recover, but before she did the “same episodes attacked other girls and women,” and then eventually men and boys. As the condition spread, missionaries Blair and Martin noted vaguely that many unwanted elements crept in that “could damage the mission.”¹²⁸ When the movement took hold in Bluefields, missionaries said, its origins were distinct but it had the same “cataleptic manifestations.”¹²⁹ By August and September things were getting out of hand in Bluefields and

“there was constant danger of a degeneration into fanaticism,” whereby “the boundary between healthy and sick individuals was no wider than a knife’s edge.” In church, Martin noted, women often fell to the floor shrieking and were unable to move. He and missionary Peper often had to carry the women home. At one point, Martin noted, there was not a single house in Bluefields “where at least one person was not beset by spirits and terrified of sin.”¹³⁰ The Awakening eventually spread in some form or another to most Miskito villages to the north. Curiously, the Awakening or religious outpouring had no noticeable impact on the Rama Indians.¹³¹

Several manifestations of spirit possession described by the Moravians fit the description of *grisi siknis* studied by the anthropologist Philip Dennis in the 1970s. In his seminal study of the phenomenon, Dennis describes *grisi siknis* as a “culture-bound sickness” unique to the Miskito. According to Dennis, young women are most susceptible to attacks and they typically exhibit irrational and hysterical behavior; they often lose consciousness and are later unaware of what they did or said. The attacks are often bound up with sexualized experiences and interactions with evil spirits (*lasas*) or *seitan* (Satan). The attacks are often highly contagious, especially among girls and women into their thirties, but do not spread to older people.¹³² Such behavioral manifestations closely resemble the common wailing laments and survivor’s grief reactions that the Moravians fought hard to eradicate (see nos. 16 and 31). For the Miskito, “*grisi siknis* attacks, especially in epidemic form, are major social problems that disrupt family and community life and seriously threaten those affected.”¹³³

The exact cause of *grisi siknis* is unknown, but anxiety figures high on the list of contributing factors. Perhaps the early manifestations of the Awakening that missionary Smith observed in Karata in 1879 (see no. 12) were outbreaks of *grisi siknis*, or the other way around. Smith wrote that some villagers “work out their own salvation with fear and trembling,” but he also noted that the Tawira Miskito were experiencing much sickness, economic hardship, and the declining abilities of *sukias* to set things right. Diverse sorts of social anxieties were prevalent across Mosquitia by the late 1870s.

The genuine spiritual movement that swept the Mosquito Reserve and eastern Nicaragua in 1881, if not earlier, and for many years thereafter needs to

be placed into a broader context that seeks to identify the cause of widespread social anxieties. The period spanning the 1840s to the 1890s introduced some of the most sweeping political, economic, and social changes the region had ever experienced. Nicaraguan officials were constantly challenging British rule before 1860 and then the legitimacy of the Mosquito Reserve government after 1860. Ever-present rumors of an imminent Nicaraguan takeover of the Reserve generated a great deal of consternation among ordinary Mosquitians.¹³⁴ The region also experienced a profound boom in rubber extraction and mahogany cutting in heretofore remote forested regions of Mosquitia, and both brought an influx of new migrants to the region (see nos. 10, 25, and 30). In 1889 gold was discovered in the Cuicuina region of eastern Nicaragua and the western Mosquito Reserve, sparking a gold rush, a wave of foreign immigrants, and the emergence of several spontaneous river-mouth boom towns such as Prinzapolka, Great River, and Wawa (see nos. 17 and 30 and fig. 1.9).¹³⁵ As U.S. consul A. C. Braida put it in 1892, “The export of gold dust has considerably increased . . . [and with the influx of American miners] the Reservation is rapidly becoming an only English-speaking country.”¹³⁶ New technologies from steamships and rail lines to repeating rifles, cameras, and lithographic reproductions were likewise introduced during this period. The economic and demographic changes seizing the region are vividly illustrated in an 1894 map that frames natural resource locations with business cards of merchant houses from New Orleans and Bluefields and points in between (fig. 1.9).¹³⁷

Economic changes, along with the political rumors and uncertainties that accompany them, swirled around the Mosquito Reserve during its short existence. Immediately following the Treaty of Managua in 1860, Nicaraguan officials challenged Miskito interpretation of infinite autonomy by making periodic visits to different places throughout the Reserve. By 1867 there was a widespread rumor that Nicaraguans might forcibly take the Reserve.¹³⁸ During a visit to Wounta Haulover in 1870, Nicaraguan officials threatened to replace the missionaries with Catholic priests and to collect their own taxes, while the Nicaraguan inspector general at Cape Gracias sent written orders to traders at Wawa River to purchase licenses directly from him. News of these acts generated “a feeling of considerable irritation against [Nicaragua]” by the Indians, according to British official

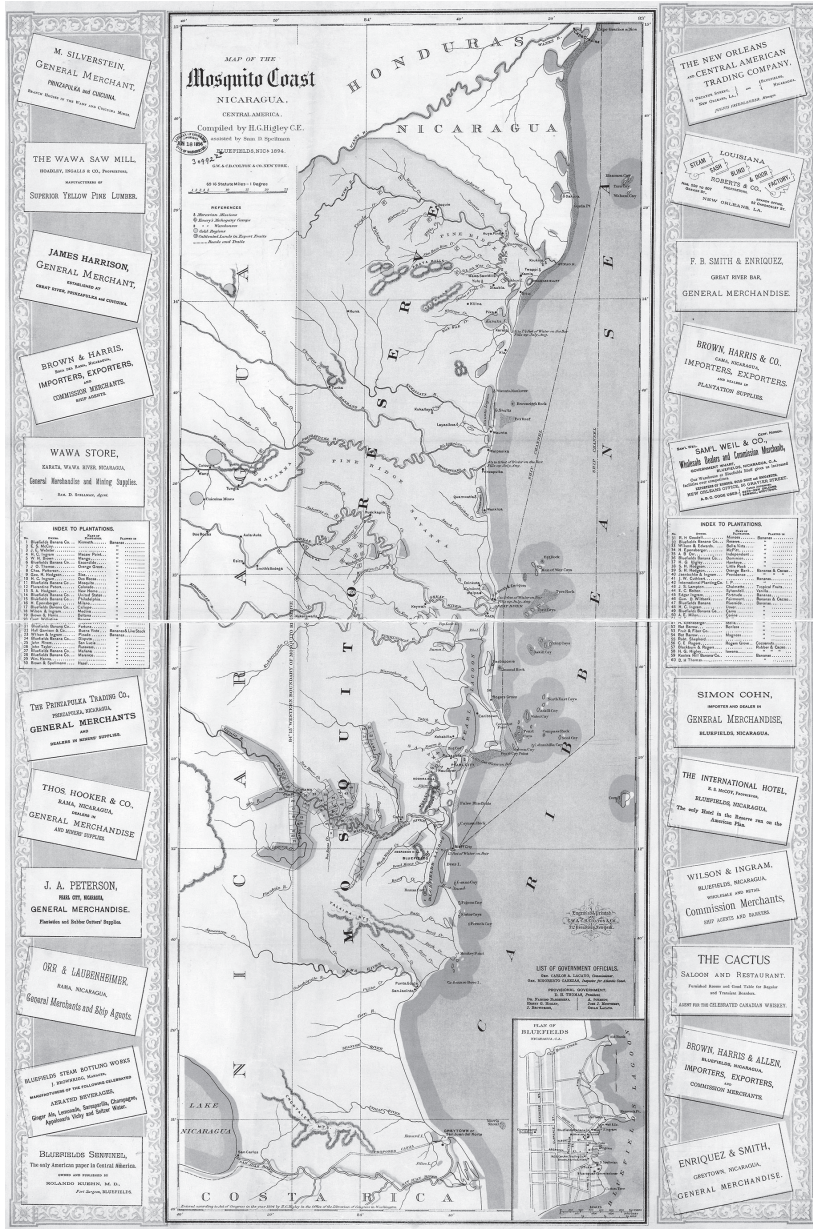


FIG. 1.9. Map of the Mosquito Shore, Nicaragua, Central America, compiled by H. G. Higley, C.E., assisted by Sam D. Spellman (New York: G. W. and C. B. Colton & Co., 1894). Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division, American Memory Digital Collection.

Allan Wallis.¹³⁹ Long-simmering conflicts came to a head in the early summer of 1879 when Chief William Henry Clarence (1874–79) was poisoned to death. “Turmoil ensued and it seemed likely that Nicaragua would occupy the coast,” according to missionary Hamilton; however, “a new chief, Albert Hendy, a [Moravian] convert of the coast,” successfully succeeded Chief Clarence.¹⁴⁰ In this same year the Reserve government and Nicaragua agreed to have the emperor of Austria, Franz Joseph I, arbitrate their disagreements. Fears about the implications of a negative decision swirled around the coast in early 1881—the very moment the Awakening started at Pearl Lagoon and Bluefields. When the emperor’s decision was published in July 1881, five months after the Awakening started, it was largely favorable to the Miskito.¹⁴¹ Meanwhile, the emperor’s decision probably influenced an attempted coup d’état in the Mosquito Reserve, one that appeared to have Nicaraguan support (see no. 13).

With the discovery of gold and the influx of people and goods, Nicaraguan officials surrounding the Reserve increasingly pushed the limits of their authority and frequently clashed with Miskito villagers north of the Reserve (see no. 22). With the Nicaraguan presidential election of the Liberal José Santos Zelaya in 1893, the government of Nicaragua viewed military annexation of the Reserve as the most viable option to take charge of what Nicaraguans increasingly and rhetorically considered an integral part of their country. Vehement rejection of Nicaraguan annexation of the Reserve on the part of the Moravians probably both shaped and reflected concerns held by native Mosquitians (see no. 24). In retrospect, Nicaraguan annexation of the Reserve helped the Moravian Church consolidate gains made during and after the Great Awakening by making the missionaries appear to be the defenders of Mosquitian interests.

* * *

The Awakening Coast takes readers on a journey through the second half of the nineteenth century in a part of the world that formed a key site for modern intersections of religious, political, and economic transformation involving a wide mix of native, Afro-descended, European, Central American, and Anglo-American peoples. During this period a global economy ravenous for tropical commodities—and always desirous for gold—was pulling the Mosquitia more tightly into its orbit. Although it was a coincidence that the

Moravians arrived in Mosquitia in the same year that gold was discovered in California, the latter greatly influenced the former as trans-Isthmian travelers, southern merchants, and U.S. diplomats began to take notice of the Mosquitia for more or less the first time. Accustomed primarily to laboring for foreigners on their own terms, indigenous peoples now began to work seasonally in extractive enterprises that they had little ability to influence. The arrival of the Moravians to the Mosquitia was part and parcel of this transformative process.

The timing of the Moravian appearance in Mosquitia is important. When the missionaries arrived, the officials of the British protectorate had little or no influence outside of Bluefields. The extractive economies had not yet started in earnest, and the mahogany industry was much like it had been for the last century: individuals hiring crews to cut and transport timber to the coast for shipment overseas. With the creation of the Mosquito Reserve (1860–94), the modest influence of the Moravians in the region expanded significantly. By the time Nicaragua forcibly annexed the region in 1894, no social or political institution was more influential at the regional or village level than the Moravian Church. This put the missionaries in a prominent position to speak out for what they perceived to be Mosquitian interests, aligning the missionaries with their flocks against an imposing Nicaraguan state. By 1900 the Moravians lowered their public profile to comply with Nicaraguan restrictions, yet by this point native Mosquitians were already busy nativizing the Moravian Church and reinterpreting its teachings to suit local needs—in this sense both the church and its subjects were responding and adapting to externally imposed circumstances. By the early twentieth century a hybridized form of Moravian Christianity provided both a foundation for retaining indigenous and Creole identities at the same time that it helped blunt the forces seeking Nicaraguan and Hispanic assimilation. This view does not invalidate Hale’s thesis that the Miskito held a contradictory consciousness constituted by an “Anglo-affinity” and an “ethnic militancy,” but it gives greater emphasis to Miskito agency and cultural appropriation on the one hand, and demonstrates an enhanced role for the Moravian Church and its teachings on the other.

1

Extract of a Letter from H. G. Pfeiffer, 1849

“Extract of a Letter from Br. H. G. Pfeiffer,” *Periodical Accounts Relating to the Missions of the Church of the United Brethren Established among the Heathen* 19 (1849): 201–3.

This short letter “comes from the first superintendent of the Moravian mission in Mosquitia, H. G. Pfeiffer. Born in 1798 in Magdeburg, Germany, Pfeiffer was trained as a cobbler and had been a missionary in Jamaica for twenty-two years before coming to Bluefields. Moravian Church historians and later missionaries are surprisingly critical of Pfeiffer because he was content to stay in Bluefields, preach to Creoles in English, and wait for Indians to come and settle. When mission director Heinrich Rudolf Wullschlägel visited the Mosquitia in 1855 he stressed the need to preach where the Indians lived and in the Miskito language. In effect his report led to Pfeiffer’s forced retirement in 1856.¹ Pfeiffer’s letter illustrates the slow start of the Moravian mission and reminds us that the church began as an urban institution that catered principally to Creoles, blacks, and foreign whites. The letter, written at Bluefields on April 23, 1849, also helps us understand how the Miskito royal family became so closely associated with the Moravian missionaries. Of the three sisters of the Miskito king George Augustus Frederic (r. 1845–64), Victoria was the mother of two future Miskito “hereditary chiefs”—as the kings were called after 1860—William Henry Clarence (r. 1866–79) and Robert Henry Clarence (r. 1893–94), and Matilda was the mother of hereditary chief Jonathan Charles Frederic (r. 1888–89).

WE [THE *PERIODICAL ACCOUNTS* EDITORS] continue our extracts from Brother Pfeiffer's correspondence, detailing the progress of the work in which himself and his fellow-servants are engaged; a work on which our gracious Lord has thus far evidently smiled. The cordial reception and the kind assistance they have experienced from her Majesty's Consul-General, Mr. Christie, and the Vice-Consul, Dr. Green, deserve very grateful acknowledgment.²

Dear Brother,

Though my time is very limited today, and I find myself frequently interrupted by matters of business, I feel it to be a duty, which I owe to the good and blessed cause in which we have the privilege to be engaged, to give you some account of our proceedings, the more so as I well remember the warm-hearted sympathy, zeal, and disinterested benevolence which so many of our dear Christian friends in England manifest towards this infant Mission.³ Though but recently commenced, our Mission on this coast presents to the devout Christian, who prays that "the forces of the Gentiles may come unto the Lord," some pleasing and interesting features; while, on the other hand, the extreme degradation of these benighted Indians will not only excite sympathy and earnest prayer, but will prove a new call to all who love the Lord Jesus Christ "not to be weary in well-doing."

Oh! could but our dear Christian friends at home see with their own eyes God's creatures, once formal in His own image, and redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, but now — Oh, what a mournful sight! what a heart-rending spectacle to a reflecting mind! — debased by carnal lusts, living without God, without hope, without even the idea of a life hereafter, it could not fail to pierce their hearts.

I will now proceed to give you a few additional particulars respecting our proceedings on this coast. Finding it needful to see the British Consul General, Mr. Christie, and to converse with him on various subjects relating to our Mission, I accompanied the king and Dr. Green, on the twenty-third ult[imate], to St. Juan, now called Grey-town, after Sir Charles Grey, the Governor of Jamaica. On the twenty-fifth, while Brother Lundberg preached at Bluefields, I proclaimed the Gospel at

Grey-town to a pretty numerous congregation, of which a number of Americans formed part, who, having been infected by the Californian gold-fever, were on their way to those parts.⁴ Mr. Christie arrived in the steamer on the twenty-seventh.⁵ He was very friendly, and promised to do all in his power for the promotion of our object. For the liberal aid afforded us towards the construction of a saw-mill, we feel particularly grateful, for we are becoming daily more convinced of the absolute necessity of having such a machine, by the use of which many a pound will be saved to the Mission. I have again been under the unpleasant necessity of writing to Jamaica for a fresh supply of boards for our building. We have mahogany, cedar, and other valuable species of wood lying here, but there is no sawyer to prepare it for our use.⁶

Mr. Christie having requested us to take the king's three sisters, Agnes, Victoria, and Matilda, into our house for board and education, they became inmates of our family on the ninth inst[ant]. At the request of Mr. Christie and Dr. Green, the king also receives instructions from Brother Lundberg, who bestows two hours each day on his very hopeful pupil. It is not very long since the two younger sisters of the king, Victoria and Matilda, left their native place, Cape Gracias-a-Dios. They are not yet baptized, are just beginning to learn English, and make rapid progress. The eldest, Agnes, reads and writes English very fairly, and is one of our monitors in the Sunday-school.⁷ Our day-school numbers at present twelve children, to whom we are expecting there will be a considerable increase when the men return from the turtle-fishery on the south coast.⁸ We opened our Sunday-school on April 8, with fifty-two children, and have now the pleasure of seeing it frequented by between seventy and eighty [Creole pupils]. While we were engaged in the Sunday-school on the eighth, three Indians passed by the Court-house, stood still at the doorway, and gazed with apparent astonishment into the school. I requested one of the Creoles, who is conversant with the Mosquito language, to tell them to clothe themselves, and to settle near Bluefields, promising that we would instruct them. At this, they seemed much pleased, and nodded their heads.

The Passion-week proved a season of rich blessing to our souls. We had meetings every evening, which were numerously attended by

all colours and classes of our mixed population. Our auditories [*sic*] presented an interesting sight, being composed of Whites, Mulattoes, Sambos, Indians, and Negroes. Deep silence and devout attention prevailed throughout. Last week several Indians of the Mosquito and Woolwa [Ulwa] tribes attended our meetings in the morning and evening. I had a long conversation with them, the king acting as our interpreter. They expressed their utter ignorance of the truth of a future life, but at the same time, an anxious desire to hear the Gospel, and to have their children instructed. The king, who is a regular attendant at our Sunday-school and our evening meetings, is exceedingly anxious that the Indians should live nearer to Bluefields, in order to attend the school and the preaching of the Gospel. He has given us a boy of the Woolwa tribe as a servant. This boy had once been seized by a Mosquito Indian, who claimed him as his slave in payment for a gun, which his father or one of his relations owed him. While at Cape Gracias-a-Dios, he had to suffer much cruelty from his new master, till the influence of the king's sister, Agnes, rescued the young victim from his misery.⁹

On Saturday, the twentieth instant, the king was so kind as to send us four Indians to clear the land on which the first Chapel and Mission-house are to be erected. It appeared to us a rather remarkable incident, that *heathen Indians* should thus be employed to clear the ground for the first house of God on this coast.

On Easter-morning we had an early meeting. Many of our people had assembled at a little after three o'clock, in our yard; and no sooner had the doors been thrown open, than our spacious hall was immediately filled, so that many were obliged to remain outside. The presence of the Lord was felt, in a powerful manner, during the praying of the Easter-morning Litany, and the reading of the history of the Resurrection of our adorable Saviour.

On Monday, the sixteenth, we felled the first tree on our land, near the spot where the Mission-house and Chapel are to be erected. Before Brother Kandler struck his axe into the tree, we had a solemn meeting on the spot, which was attended by a number of those who ordinarily come to our evening-meetings. It was indeed a solemn moment. The thought of the erection of the first House of God on this coast filled our hearts

with holy fervour and with ardent prayer to the God of all grace, that He would be pleased to lay an abundant blessing on our feeble undertaking. During the whole of last week, Brother Kandler and myself were chiefly in the woods, seeking, felling, and squaring trees; and though we often returned home from our day's labour faint and weary, we could rejoice in the progress of the work.

Last Friday, I kept a meeting on the texts appointed for that day; and though I had no intention of calling upon my hearers for aid so soon, the subject of both texts being of such a nature as to make them alive to it, the effect was, that they felt it to be their duty to offer us some assistance. Early the next morning, I received *8s.* from a person of colour, as the first donation towards our Chapel; this evening I have received an additional sum of *8s.*, and several have intimated their intention of contributing their mites on some future occasion. In conclusion, let me entreat our Brethren and friends to remember us in their prayers.