

These complaints aside, Officer has written an important book that no student of Arizona and borderlands history can afford to ignore. It will be the basic reference for some time to come.

Indian Survival in Colonial Nicaragua. By Linda A. Newson. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987. xiv + 466 pp., maps, illustrations, tables, glossary, notes, bibliography, index. \$36.50 cloth.)

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Less than twenty years ago, what was known about colonial Central America might charitably be described as scant, patchy, and indistinct. Things changed, much for the better, with the appearance of Murdo MacLeod's landmark tome *Spanish Central America* (1973). Books by William Sherman (*Forced Native Labor in Sixteenth-Century Central America*, 1979) and Miles Wortman (*Government and Society in Central America*, 1982) also helped to push back the historiographic unknown. English-language scholarship was thus considerably improved, but all three of these works raised as many questions as they answered. While MacLeod's contribution, far more than that of Sherman or Wortman, reflects an awareness of the role of environment as a historical determinant, it cannot be said that any of these scholars directly equates the explanation of colonial experience with the scrutiny of its regional variation. This decidedly geographical approach is one that Linda Newson has championed for some time, as in her *Aboriginal and Spanish Colonial Trinidad* (1976) and *Cost of Conquest* (1986), on colonial Honduras. Here it has enabled her to isolate "factors that may have been responsible for differences in the level of survival of Indian populations" (xiii).

A tight introduction identifies and evaluates the key variables behind Amerindian survival throughout Spanish America. In part 2, a reconstruction of life in Nicaragua on the eve of conquest, Newson distinguishes between cultural patterns in a "zone of Mesoamerican tradition" to the west and those that prevailed in a "zone of South American tradition" to the east (335). Newson reckons that at contact some 800,000 people inhabited Nicaragua, 75 percent of whom lived in the Mesoamerican zone. Catastrophic depopulation between 1522 and 1555, examined in detail in part 3, reduced these numbers to around 190,000. Guarded but speculative, of the same scholarly bent that distinguished fellow geographer Carl Sauer, Newson suggests that "the general impression is that the Indian slave trade and disease were of equal importance [over this period of time], perhaps accounting for one-third each of the total decline. The remaining one-third can be attributed to the ill-treatment and overwork of the Indi-

ans and to the disruption of Indian communities brought about by Spanish conquest and colonization" (123–24).

Parts 4 and 5, the core of the book, document a colonial experience of Spanish consolidation and Indian deculturation (1550–1720) followed by one of Spanish reorganization and Indian acculturation (1720–1821). The native population continued to fall well into the seventeenth century, reaching its colonial nadir of sixty thousand. Thereafter, native population began slowly to recover, numbering some eighty-five thousand by the nineteenth century. In her conclusion, Newson characterizes the degree of Indian survival in both culture zones of Nicaragua as "moderate" but stresses that "the processes that contributed to these levels of survival were quite different" (342). A demographic collapse of 90 percent between contact and independence may not, on first reflection, seem to warrant a description of levels of Indian survival as "moderate," but the schema laid out in Figure 10, after the empirical data have been duly processed, is persuasive.

Linda Newson has labored to produce a book that will endure and that will inform the study of colonial Central America for decades. Her volume on Nicaragua invites comparison with her work on Honduras, not least because both are structured, intellectually, in a similar, novel fashion, and it is my opinion that the former is more polished and has a more authoritative tone than the latter. But publishing two excellent monographs only one year apart is an impressive achievement for any scholar. In the context of how colonial Central America can now be investigated, it is an achievement worthy of widespread recognition.

Symbol and Meaning beyond the Closed Community: Essays in Mesoamerican Ideas. Edited by Gary H. Gossen. (Albany: State University of New York, Institute for Mesoamerican Studies, 1986; distributed by the University of Texas Press, Austin. Studies on Culture and Society, Vol. 1. x + 267 pp., illustrations, tables, notes, references. N.p.)

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The volume consists of sixteen articles divided into two sections, "Central Valley of Mexico and Oaxaca" and "The Maya Area," and opens with a substantial introduction by Gary Gossen entitled "Mesoamerican Ideas as a Foundation for Regional Synthesis." The five articles on Central Mexico and Oaxaca by T. D. Sullivan, B. Gardner, D. Heyden, T. J. Knab, and G. L. Furst deal with an analysis of classic Aztec metaphorical language and myths as well as symbols of authority and the dynastic succession of the Mixtec lords in the Codex Nuttall. The Maya are represented by