

Anthropology in a Revolutionary Moment: Miskitu Resistance, Anglo Affinity, and the Limits of Gramscian Theory

David Parker



Nicaragua's Mosquito Coast

Inside the University of León's student center for members of *El Movimiento Renovación Sandinista* (The Sandinista Renewal Movement) there is a larger than life painting of Che Guevara adorning an entire wall. Across the street, in memory of several Sandinista student leaders assassinated by Somoza's National Guard, is a mural which dominates one side of a four-story building. From the corpses of three young men rises a red, white and blue dragon, protected by (or protecting?) a hoard of green military helmets emblazoned with the letters G.N. (*Guardia Nacional* /National Guard). The dragon's aim appears to be to upset a ballot box into which a field-worn brown hand attempts to deposit a vote. In a photo above my desk taken in late 1995, Yader Sánchez (a *Renovación* militant) and I are smiling and embracing beneath the dragon's coiled tail; in my right hand is a red and black Sandinista bandanna.

Less than a month later, I arrived in Puerto Cabezas on the Atlantic coast of Nicaragua. During the flight from Managua, a Creole doctor I had met in the airport confided to me that I might want to remove the Sandinista bandanna from my backpack. She assured me that North Americans were quite welcome in Port; however, Sandinistas and their sympathizers were not. During the subsequent three weeks, as I came to know many Costeños in Puerto Cabezas and visited numerous Miskitu villages along the Río Coco, the sagacity of her advice became overwhelmingly clear. In conversation after conversation, positive appraisals of the United States, its people and institutions, seemed

to flow forth in equal proportion to the invective leveled against the Sandinistas; the doors and arms that opened to me as a U.S. citizen would likely have been closed had my support for the Sandinistas been known.

Nothing in my previous experience in Latin America had prepared me for an impoverished rural people who not only rejected a revolutionary path, but also embraced the very source of Latino anti-imperialist nationalism -- the United States. In retrospect I realize that at the time of this encounter with the Miskitu, my "bookish" and moral commitment to the "new Marxism" (Hodges 1986) of Che Guevara was predicated on the assumptions of class struggle to the virtual exclusion of ethnicity. Nonetheless, as the Miskitu shared with me the abuses they suffered during the 1980s, I experienced an intellectual and ideological crisis of faith which is clearly reflected in the following journal entry made in December 1995:

One does not need to speak with many people in Puerto Cabezas or along the Río Coco to realize that the Sandinistas entered the region with a static and uncompromising revolutionary methodology. Rather than acting with the people, they acted on the people. . . . Norman Bent [a Creole activist] today described for me the "problem" with many of the Internacionalistas [foreign supporters of the Sandinista Revolution]: "their mistake," he said, "is that they aligned themselves with a revolutionary movement rather than with a revolutionary people." My mistake was the same. Also, theory, be it socialism or capitalism, becomes a completely different animal in application. In the future I will be more careful about prematurely aligning myself with political movements.

I returned to the United States in early 1996 utterly confused. I had visited with rural campesinos, artisans and fishermen in Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. In every village poverty and memories of terror mingled with determination and resistance. And everywhere, with the exception of the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua, I was greeted with some degree of circumspection owing, I believe, to my slightly sun-reddened white skin. Why had the Miskitu received me with such generosity, friendliness and apparent candor?

Although the historical record details almost unceasing interaction between the Miskitu and the British (to be supplanted by the United States) dating from the late seventeenth century (Dozier 1985; Floyd 1967), these relations of trade, provisioning and resource extraction seem insufficient to have produced the present positive and "uncritical" stance of the Miskitu toward the United States. After all, one need only travel briefly through the Atlantic Coast to see how the predatory U.S. enclave economy has denuded the vast savannas of timber, befouled many rivers with chemicals used in mineral extraction and left behind no infrastructure of note. Was the Miskitu's eager acceptance of my presence a result of U.S. military aid during the counter-revolutionary effort? This seems unlikely if for no other reason than the aid to the Miskitu was always minuscule when compared to the Contra proper (Dickey 1985) and, during the 1980s,

reports abounded of under-provisioned Miskitu soldiers training with sticks rather than rifles.

In this paper it is my intention to undertake what Vincent Crapanzano has referred to as the "anguished search for comprehension in the theoretical explanation" (1980:8). On another and intertwined level, this essay will also examine a particular theoretical construction by a particular anthropologist, Charles Hale, as he grappled with the dilemma of representing the Miskitu whom he deemed to be suffering from contradictory consciousness. Though Hale's work is central to the following discussion, the "anguish" is all mine. The intent of this paper can best be described as exploratory. I am particularly interested in how Hale's political commitment to the revolutionary process influenced his representation of the Miskitu and informed his interpretation of Gramscian theory. Also, as I am writing this on the eve of my return to the Atlantic Coast, I hope to further clarify the research questions which will animate my summer's work.

As coincidence would have it, during my first visit to the Atlantic Coast I was immersed in Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Freire suggests a dialogical method for teaching the poor and illiterate to read and write. More importantly, however, Freire envisions literacy among the impoverished as a powerful instrument for social change: "[O]n the basis of a new apprehension of the world, it [will] be possible to acquire the disposition to change it" (1996:145). Freire describes this dialectic of thought and action as the process of "conscientização" (1970: 17). Implicit and explicit in Freire's call to "consciencization" is an assumption that the impact of the oppressor's hegemony has been so thorough as to render the oppressed servile.

During those late December 1995 days, as I wrestled with my commitment to Che's voluntarist Marxism and the reality of Sandinista blunders on the Coast, Freire's insights allowed me to escape a burgeoning snag in my thinking that would only later come to the fore: While I was prepared to admit that the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) had made strategic errors on the Coast, I was altogether unwilling to concede that the association between the United States and the Miskitu might be the result of calculated, conscious and practical consideration on the part of the Miskitu. Thus I found intellectual solace in much of Freire's work and I liberally applied his theory as in the following excerpts from *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* in my rudimentary analysis of Miskitu consciousness:

". . . because of their [the oppressed] identification with the oppressor, they have no consciousness of themselves as persons or as members of an oppressed class" (1970:28).

". . . at a certain point in their existential experience the oppressed feel an irresistible attraction toward the oppressors and their way of life. Sharing this way of life becomes an overpowering aspiration. In their alienation, the oppressed want at any cost to resemble the oppressors, to imitate them, to follow them" (1970:44).

Having read my explanation of Miskitu-U.S. relations, the late anthropologist Martin Diskin asserted that Freire and I had, perhaps, overemphasized the passivity of the peasantry and the Miskitu. As a result, I became increasingly aware that a proper discussion of Miskitu consciousness mandated a thorough reading of Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* in order that I might appreciate Hale's theoretical discourse, which focused simultaneous attention on Miskitu agency and the impact of U.S. hegemony.

Before presenting my commentary on Charles Hale's analysis of Miskitu consciousness, I must clarify my understanding of Gramsci's use of hegemony and contradictory consciousness. As anyone who has read the *Notebooks* knows, this is no small task. I am particularly concerned with two factors which often seem to be overlooked: First, many important concepts put forward by Gramsci can have several meanings depending on context. For example, hegemony is alternately used in relation to the dominant bloc and the subordinate. Additionally, Gramsci uses hegemony to describe the preeminence of a particular historical-economic epoch over another. Second, and extrinsic to the text, I think it wise that we constantly ask, as does the intellectual historian Walter Adamson, ". . . in what ways [is] Gramsci's theory bound by the intellectual horizons of his age, and in what ways [does] it speak to ours[?]" (1980:4).

Gramsci's conceptualization of hegemony was linked both practically to the "failure" of western capitalism to "degenerate" into revolution, and philosophically to his reading of the young Karl Marx. An early and ardent socialist, Gramsci matured as a journalist and political activist during the ironic days of the Second International when theorists such as Nikolai Bukharin were continuing to expound a scientific Marxism which deviated little from the schema of historical evolution proposed by Marx. The irony of this position, however, was the example of the successful Bolshevik Revolution which had occurred in an industrially under-developed, largely rural country -- an event antithetical to the postulates of what would later be termed mechanistic Marxism.

In the years immediately following World War I, many Italian Marxists believed their country was prime for revolution (Adamson 1980; Femia 1981). What set Gramsci apart was his insistence that the party take an active role in catalyzing the will to insurrection among the proletariat rather than simply waiting for history to unfold. These were the hopeful years of the *biennio rosso* in which Gramsci's Turin Worker's Councils were projected as the coming source of proletarian political (Adamson 1980). In the end, party divisiveness precluded the communists from taking an active role and Italy experienced neither revolution nor reform; the door was left open for Mussolini and the fascists (Femia 1981). Gramsci responded by developing a theoretical response to classical Marxism inflected by voluntarism and guided by the role of the human will in waging a "war of position" (Gramsci 1971) to unseat the forces of a dominant hegemony.

The failure of the revolutionary option in Italy led Gramsci to analyze the manner in which the western capitalist state and its social institutions (schools, churches, media, voluntary associations) manufactured and maintained the consent of the citizenry. That this analysis should take as its foundation the prevailing mode of production has its genesis in the early writings of Marx:

The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the material means of production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it. (1970:64)

Although Gramsci may have accepted this fundamental premise of Marx's base-superstructure argument, he in no way viewed the economic base as determining the ideological superstructure and he consistently argued that the relationship between the two was, as Louis Althusser has described it, "overdetermined" (Ricoeur 1994). It follows then, that Gramsci did not view the dominant hegemony as monolithic, static or impenetrable:

Undoubtedly the fact of hegemony presupposes that account be taken of the interests and the tendencies of the groups over which hegemony is to be exercised, and that a certain compromise equilibrium should be formed -- in other words, that the leading group should make sacrifices of an economic-corporate kind (Gramsci 1971:161).

It is, nonetheless, Gramsci's position that these concessions "cannot touch the essential" (Gramsci 1971:161) and, therefore, the conformity that arises to the prevailing hegemony is to some degree tenuous. A space, however small, will exist in which a struggle between "political hegemonies" (Gramsci 1971:333) can be waged.

A ruling hegemony represents the capitalist state's ability, through the institutions of civil society and their attendant intellectuals, to conflate economic, political and cultural practices into a specific world view or ideology (Green 1993). Further, according to Gramsci, this world view, although manifestly not in keeping with the lived experience of the proletariat, is often uncritically accepted and ensures the worker's consent. During a period such as the *biennio rosso*, when the communists believed that revolution was a possibility, Gramsci, upon reflection, realized that the atomization produced among the proletariat by the ruling hegemony, precluded any such eventuality (Adamson 1980).

Much of the *Prison Notebooks* is concerned with describing, diagnosing and undoing the discontinuity between the objective situation of the "active man-in-the-mass" (Gramsci 1971:333) and the dominant interpretation of reality which "he" professes; this existential dilemma is the substance of contradictory consciousness. Gramsci describes the "man-in-the-mass" and "his" dilemma as follows:

His theoretical consciousness can indeed be historically in opposition to his activity. One might almost say that he has two theoretical consciousnesses (or one contradictory consciousness): one which is implicit in his activity and which in reality unites him with all his fellow-workers in the practical transformation of the real world; and one,

superficially explicit or verbal, which he has inherited from the past and uncritically absorbed. (ibid.)

To Gramsci, the struggle is engaged by those members of the proletariat -- led by intellectuals (Green 1993) -- who have transcended that element of their consciousness which was "uncritically absorbed" as "common sense" in favor of their "practical activity" or "good sense"(Gramsci 1971:323). Thus Gramsci states: "some part of even a subaltern mass is always directive and responsible, and the philosophy of the part always precedes the philosophy of the whole, not only as its theoretical anticipation but as a necessity of real life" (1971:337). The duty of the revolutionary party and its intellectuals then, as Gramsci would have it, is to aid the proletariat in the elevation of that part of their consciousness which is characterized as good sense by challenging the ideology of the dominant hegemony.

Hegemony is the product of the capitalist state's need to rule by consent rather than coercion. It is transmitted through the institutions of civil society such as schools, churches, the media and voluntary organizations in the form of a relatively homogeneous view of the state and the extant social order in keeping with the wishes of the economically advantaged more than the needs of the working class. A particular strength of the developed western capitalist states has been their ability to produce an hegemony which has demobilized the potentially revolutionary masses. Although workers are subject to the ideology of the dominant hegemony, they nonetheless, in their quotidian, practical activity, often embody an alternative hegemony. The result is a contradictory consciousness in which the proletariat simultaneously demonstrates good sense and common sense in their relations with the dominant elite and the state apparatus. The revolutionary party must, therefore, wage a protracted "war of position" in civil society until a good number of the proletariat has overcome their contradictory consciousness sufficiently to initiate a "war of movement." This, in brief, represents the historically specific nexus of Gramsci's thought. But before beginning a discussion of Miskitu consciousness, we must consider the colonial specificity of Miskitu history and Hale's position concerning the Sandinista-Miskitu divide.

Perhaps the most salient feature in the terrain of Miskitu history is conflict. From their distinctive colonial origin as a people wrought from the meeting of British buccaneers, Sumu Indians and escaped slaves (Dozier 1985; Floyd 1969; Newson 1987), the Miskitu came to dominate the eastern coast of Nicaragua. The earliest references to the Miskitu date to the mid-seventeenth century and recount the beginnings of their involvement with British traders and colonialists (Bell 1898). Through ever increasing trade and interaction, the British found in the Miskitu a trusted ally in their battles with the Spanish; the Miskitu, in turn, procured muskets and steel weaponry which allowed them to subdue rival indigenous peoples as far south as Costa Rica and, more importantly, to also effectively repel all Spanish attempts to colonize Nicaragua east of the cordilleras which divide the country.

Although Nicaragua gained its independence in 1821, the Caribbean coast remained effectively within the British orbit. A Miskitu king, appointed the English monarch,

"ruled" the Coast with the aid of a British magistrate who oversaw England's growing economic concerns. Increasing U.S. investment dollars and international interest in a transoceanic canal led to a late nineteenth century treaty in which the British agreed to evacuate the coast and cede all governmental authority to the Nicaraguan state. In 1894 the Mosquito Reserve was formally "reincorporated" into the nation of Nicaragua despite protest from the breadth of Atlantic Coast society. A letter to the British government, signed by leading Creoles and Miskitu, pleaded:

We will be in the hands of a government and people who have not the slightest interests, sympathy, or good feelings for the inhabitants of the Mosquito Reservation; and as our manners, customs, religion, laws and language are not in accord, there can never be a unity. We most respectfully beg . . . your Majesty . . . to take back under your protection the Mosquito nation and people, so that we may become a people of your Majesty's Empire. (quoted in Hale 1994:37)

Although the Miskitu's entreaties were to no avail, the burgeoning U.S. enclave economy in the region offered significant wage labor and opportunities to acquire Western consumer goods. In addition, Protestant Moravian missionaries, especially after the turn of the century, expanded their presence through the construction of schools, medical clinics and churches, thus upholding the traditional Miskitu-Anglo alliance and ensuring the continuation of Anglo hegemony. In the wake of the Great Depression, and Augusto Sandino's anti-imperialist struggle against the occupying U.S. Marines, the Miskitu found themselves largely neglected by the government in Managua and subject to economic uncertainty due to the changeable demands of U.S.-based companies. Thus, dating from the inception of the Somoza dictatorship in 1936, a period of state disregard and economic volatility obtained on the Coast, only to be interrupted by the Sandinista Revolution in 1979.

The triumph of the Sandinistas, which was well received in western Nicaragua, registered a very different response among the Miskitu who rejected the FSLN's symbols and rhetoric of anti-imperialist, Mestizo nationalism. The clash between the Sandinistas and the Miskitu must be viewed in a broader historical context in which first the Spanish and then the Nicaraguan state stood as the opposition against which the Miskitu forged their relationship with the Anglo interlopers. It mattered little that British and U.S. companies had exploited Miskitu labor since the Anglos had, after all, provided the material support and cultural model which the Miskitu relied on to resist "Spanish" incursions and maintain a way of life embedded in its colonial origins. Miskitu ethnogenesis, so inextricably tied to the British colonial experience in Central America, ensured that contemporary self-expression among the Miskitu would continue to recall past interaction with Anglos in a positive or instrumental light. The FSLN, not comprehending this historical specificity and intent on "bringing development to the sleeping giant" (Vilas 1989) via a class-based program of national integration, instead met with the intransigence of a people they deemed to be

suffering a very large ideological backwardness. We [Comandante Luis Cruz and his staff] found communities that live in a very primitive state of development, that have not divided except in small degree into social classes, that have communal property forms, and that do not identify with the rest of the nation. (Luis Cruz quoted in Christian 1999:302)

Such was the divide that confronted Charles Hale on his first visit to the Atlantic coast in 1981 -- a divide that was only beginning to appear negotiable in 1985 when he returned to begin dissertation research.

Hale undertook field research in the Miskitu community of Sandy Bay Sirpi while maintaining a position with the Center for Research and Documentation on the Atlantic Coast (CIDCA). This was an expressly political decision because, as Hale notes, "CIDCA occupied a complex political space that combined firm support for the revolution's guiding principles with sharp criticism of government policies on the Coast" (1994:2); the "sharp criticism" was intended to explain the Miskitu's rejection of the Sandinistas.

Moving between Sandy Bay and the CIDCA headquarters in Bluefields required more than the crossing of a spatial divide; it also mandated the negotiation of a conceptual and ideological divide in which both the Miskitu and the anthropologist were subject to certain perceptual criteria understood by one another and other local actors. Sandinista cadres engaged Hale as another Internacionalista, with the expectation that he would act in accord with their assessments of the revolution's needs (Hale 1994). The Miskitu welcomed Hale as they did all other Mirikis (U.S. citizens), regardless of his support for the revolution. As the anthropologist recalls: "Even before developing personal ties, I reaped the benefits of their glowing associations with all white North Americans who had preceded me" (1994:11). How then was Hale to operate in this divide? Critical support for the revolution precluded complete subservience to FSLN cadre. Opposition to U.S. intervention in Nicaragua mandated a skeptical stance towards Miskitu' appraisals of white North Americans.

The problematic facing Hale was one of allegiance to a revolution that found its impetus in a region culturally and ethnically distant from the Coast. In addition, his negative evaluation of U.S. support for the Contras made it extremely difficult for him to read the text of Miskitu-Anglo alliance outside the bright light of the politically charged moment of his fieldwork. Before presenting Hale's theoretical explanation for the Miskitu's repudiation of the revolutionary project, I will examine a key assumption that permeates Hale's work that flows from his commitment to the revolutionary project and that ultimately problematizes his analysis of Miskitu consciousness.

The outstanding feature of Miskitu history and contemporary cultural expression is an absolute rejection of governance and intervention from the mestizo west of the country. The FSLN, when confronted with the growing specter of a counter-revolutionary war, established itself *en masse* along the Atlantic Coast. Much of this intervention reflected a sincere desire to integrate the Coast in development planning, but it also followed from Sandinista assessments of the region as a likely focal point of opposition

(Vilas 1989). That the Sandinistas would and should exert this kind of centralizing authority, along with efforts to integrate the Coast into the revolution, is largely accepted by Hale as consistent with the needs of the revolutionary state (Hale 1987). Following this logic, when local Miskitu organizations became more aggressive in their demands for territorial sovereignty (to the point of taking up arms), they were labeled by Hale as being riven by "contradiction . . . between waging a struggle for ethnic demands and participating in a thoroughly reactionary effort to overthrow the Nicaraguan government" (1987:115). As Brackette Williams notes, this line of thinking is consistent with the prerequisites of state formation:

By definition, a state cannot allow the formation of groupings or the institutionalization of ways of valuing heterogeneity that contravene state control over groupings and over institutions in a single politically defined territory. Groupings of Native Americans encapsulated by such states, regardless of the state's capitalist or socialist economic policies, cannot be allowed to construct freely ideologies of sovereignty that obviate the state's control over the groupings and their relation to the territory that the state also claims. (1991:266-67)

The revolutionary state's claim to sovereignty and its need to create and protect secure boundaries is a fundamental and essential premise that resonates throughout Hale's treatment of the Miskitu-Sandinista conflict. This is not meant to suggest that Hale was insensitive to the Miskitu's desire for political and territorial autonomy. Rather, Hale supported regional autonomy, but only if it was to be carried out in a manner consistent with the goals of the Sandinista revolution (Hale 1991). As overarching principles, commitment to the revolution and opposition to the United States government's actions in Nicaragua seemed to have created several impossibilities for Hale: Absolute sovereignty for the Miskitu and the Coast's other ethnic groups was inconceivable, and the relationship between the Miskitu and North Americans, even if of instrumental value to the Miskitu, needed to be exposed as an instance of U.S. hegemony. Hale, in fact, goes so far as to suggest that "if the U.S. role in this conflict were fully revealed to the actors involved [the Miskitu and the Sandinistas], . . . [they] might point [their] . . . guns toward a common enemy" (1991:142). Thus, I contend, Hale's theoretical construction represents an effort to reconcile the Miskitu's and the FSLN's competing claims to territorial control during a deeply politicized moment in which his allegiance to the FSLN proved decisive.

Resistance and Contradiction, Hale's monograph which seeks to explain the Miskitu's counter-revolutionary mobilization, rests on a too liberal interpretation of Gramsci which presents a series of theoretical/practical problems. Difficulties arise not only from the manner in which Gramsci's theory is employed, but also from sometimes contradictory statements within Hale's text which reflect, I believe, Hale's desire to negotiate between the effects of structural determinants (U.S. hegemony) and the agency laden response of human action (Miskitu resistance toward the Sandinistas). Indeed, Hale suggests that Gramscian theory offers a bridge "toward an approach that devotes simultaneous analytical attention to ethnic consciousness and to the constraining, constitutive impact of structure" (1994:24). Given that Hale's primary explanatory device is contradictory

consciousness, itself the result of an hegemonic discourse, I will focus on the structural impact of U.S. hegemony and Miskitu consciousness in light of the latter. I will attempt to demonstrate where they may falter in explicating the Miskitu mobilization.

Central to Hale's argument is the premise that U.S.-based institutions on the Coast have been integral in promoting Anglo affinity among the Miskitu. Consider this observation from the opening pages of *Resistance and Contradiction*: "[T]he more time I spent with the Miskitu the more convinced I became of the Sandinista's principal critical insight. Miskitu consciousness did include hegemonic premises associated with the Anglo-American cultural world" (1994:15). Thus, Miskitu contact with hegemonic U.S. institutions and agents, Hale seems to suggest, has produced a form of uncritical consciousness (Anglo affinity) which resonates with Gramsci's observation concerning the "'spontaneous' consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the fundamental group; this consent is 'historically' caused by the prestige ... which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production" (Gramsci 1971:12).

This conflation of Hale's observation and Gramsci's theory can be substantiated by innumerable references in *Resistance and Contradiction* to the Miskitu's failure to "critically examine the North American role in the system that ... oppressed them" (Hale 1994:85). However, in an effort to recognize Miskitu agency in the give and take process of constructing hegemony Hale notes:

Anglo affinity is part of the cultural form that Miskitu people *themselves created* through a complex historical process of resistance and accommodation in response to multiple axes of inequity. It consists of ideas, values and notions of common sense that entail understandings of past and present life conditions, which correspond closely to understandings immanent in the discourse of North American institutions that have surrounded them. (1994:83 my emphasis)

By posing Anglo affinity as a willful response on the part of the Miskitu as they have confronted "multiple axes of inequity," the term becomes laden with agency but rather devoid of the content which would allow us to understand it as hegemonically constituted, at least in a Gramscian sense. The negotiation between agency and structure in the construction of hegemony can be likened to a weighted scale tipped in favor of the powerful; our representations must reflect this unequal negotiation if we are to employ Gramsci's conceptual framework. If not, and we view the subaltern's actions in instrumental terms, then we are in the realm of clandestine and opportunistic behavior; what James Scott has called the subaltern's "hidden transcript" (1990). Consider Hale's further comment on the instrumental nature of Miskitu-Anglo relations: "By drawing nearer to the institutions and practices of the North American-dominated civil society, they [the Miskitu] strengthened their distinct identity and acquired tangible political resources to advance their struggle [against the post-reincorporation Nicaraguan state]" (1994:58). Thus, Anglo affinity has proven to be an historically useful adaptive strategy in resisting the Spanish, the post-independence Nicaraguan state and the FSLN.

It seems logical at this point to ask if Anglo affinity might not be less the product of British/U.S. hegemony and principally a useful referent for Miskitu opposition. In order to properly engage this question one would need to assess the extent to which British and U.S. political and social institutions constructed the Miskitu's world view. I suspect this would be difficult because, as I noted earlier, the Miskitu, as a distinct ethnic group, are the result of colonial processes in the Caribbean and Latin America. How would we distinguish what is unambiguously the result of the Miskitu's pre-colonial inheritance, Anglo inheritance or African inheritance? Additionally, to what extent has a history of conflict been operative in determining the degree of continued interaction with Anglo cultural institutions? Was the interaction determined by the needs of hidden transcripts unknown to the Anglos and long since forgotten by the contemporary Miskitu? This is clearly fertile ground for further research.

If Anglo affinity is the result of U.S. hegemony, as Hale suggests, then in light of Gramscian theory it must be viewed as that part of Miskitu consciousness which has been uncritically absorbed -- common sense. If, however, Anglo affinity is an instrumental adaptation, as Hale also seems to suggest, it implies agency and points to the creation of a counter-hegemony useful in repulsing the Sandinistas -- good sense. In Hale's estimation the Miskitu were subjected to two poles of domination: the mestizo, class-based Sandinista revolution which misapprehended the salience of ethnicity as a local constituting force and U.S. hegemony and its institutions, e.g., the Moravian church, U.S.-owned extractive businesses and U.S.-sponsored development projects. However, rather than challenging the hegemonic premises of both sources of power, the Miskitu resisted the Sandinistas while accepting the postulates of U.S. hegemony (Hale, 1994:27). Hale hopes to explain this seeming discontinuity by recourse to Gramsci's theory of contradictory consciousness. Nevertheless, in order to do so, Hale has to engage in some theoretical creativity which necessitates a "liberal application" (Hale 1994: 24) of Gramsci's work. This need arises from the introduction of two spheres of domination, a situation not discussed in the *Prison Notebooks*, which leads Hale to comment:

Each sphere may generate a combination of resistance and accommodation, but it is also common for a people to focus their resistance on one sphere while largely accepting the premises on which the other is based. Thus subordinate members of an ethnic-based movement may neglect intraethnic class differentiation while resisting cultural oppression; women participants in movements of resistance to class oppression may unwittingly endorse and reproduce premises of gender inequality. (1994:26-27)

The strength of this argument rests with two hypothetical examples that appear reasonable, although they too neatly (in my opinion) bifurcate people's ability to resist, accommodate, struggle and negotiate. Unfortunately, for the task at hand, Gramsci's discussion was focused on the relations between those who control the means of production and those who are subject to that control. Still, as William Roseberry notes, "Gramsci does not assume that subaltern groups are immobilized by some sort of ideological consensus" (1994:360). Hale's example of women contributing to gender

inequality while engaging in class-based struggles runs counter to many recent examples. Female Zapatistas have engaged issues of gender while confronting the widely shared problems of poverty and land dislocation. Former female combatants with the Farabundo Martí Front for National Liberation in El Salvador have consistently promoted gender-based concerns in the party's political platform. It is not my intention to argue that gendered issues have not been subordinated in class-based movements, but rather to suggest that party intransigence or strategic pragmatism on the part of female participants may be more useful in explicating the dilemma than is a bifurcated consciousness.

By so neatly dichotomizing Miskitu consciousness, Hale facilitates his political-academic agenda, yet at the same time confounds not only Gramscian theory but also his own efforts to present the Miskitu as simultaneously resistant, self-constituting actors and hegemonized patrons of U.S. interests. Hale's representation of the Miskitu encounters problems not because he has incorrectly categorized the U.S. presence in the region as predatory, but because he wavers between acknowledging the instrumental significance of Anglo affinity and viewing it as the result of a pervasive U.S. hegemony. This follows from, I believe, Hale's firm political commitment to the Sandinistas which he carried into the field; a commitment that required the elimination of the U.S. as a constitutive force on the Atlantic Coast. Hale may have critically commented on the FSLN's policies towards the Miskitu, but he never could accept an Atlantic Coast without a Sandinista presence, even in the event of regional autonomy.

Miskitu/U.S. relations, in order to be more effectively theorized, should be considered outside the matrix which engendered the Sandinista revolution. The crushing oppression of the Somoza dictatorship experienced in western Nicaragua was only evanescently felt by the Miskitu. The British and U.S. presence in eastern Nicaragua, while clearly exploitative, was, nonetheless, welcomed by the Miskitu as they forged a colonially determined identity in opposition to the "Spanish."

The Miskitu were not subject to plantation slavery, bustling Anglo colonial settlements or forced religious conversion. Instead they capitalized on a clearly unequal relationship with first the British and then the United States to acquire the means necessary to flourish in an earlier time and fight in a more recent one. That the Miskitu accepted U.S. aid in their war with the Sandinistas was not the cause but the consequence of their resistance.

Although a discussion of Miskitu resistance was central to this paper, the larger theoretical concern of structure's impact (hegemony) on a subaltern people and the manner in which their resistance is represented remains my larger preoccupation. By examining the politically centered research of Charles Hale it was my intent to demonstrate that political predilections and intellectual biases are integral to understanding how we appropriate theory -- in this case Gramscian theory. Having problematized Miskitu resistance to the Sandinista state and the manner in which it can be understood, I will return to the field with a renewed curiosity and a continuing commitment to understanding the Miskitu perspective; however my Sandinista bandanna will remain at home.

References

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