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# Como el Hijo de Nadie: Internal Divisions and the Struggle for Attention in Bocana de Paiwas

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**Como el Hijo de Nadie: Internal Divisions and the Struggle for Attention in Bocana  
de Paiwas**

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## INTRODUCTION

Paiwas is a municipality located at the intersection of the *Región Autónoma de Atlántico del Sur* (RAAS),<sup>1</sup> the *Región Autónoma de Atlántico del Norte* (RAAN),<sup>2</sup> and the Pacific National half of Nicaragua. The autonomous regions are part of Nicaragua, but have their own regional government, control over their natural resources, and are dedicated to preserving indigenous culture, language, and traditions. Just as it is physically, Paiwas is an intersection between the regional autonomous government and the various levels of government on the Pacific side of the country: all governing entities in some way play a role in the development and administration of the region.

I developed my objectives for this project after speaking to many people in the community. I began to understand what aspects of Paiwas the people in the community thought were important to look at. My objectives for this project were to investigate the impact and role of the implementation and regulation of autonomy; attention from and tensions regarding departments; and attention from and conflicts relating to the municipal government.

Over the past 30 years, political conflicts, disorganization, and the allotment of responsibility to many different governmental entities has caused tension within Paiwas. The tensions manifest themselves in many different ways, but primarily as uneven development, conflict between communities within the municipality, and change in culture.

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<sup>1</sup> *Región Autónoma de Atlántico del Sur*: The Autonomous Region of the Atlantic South

<sup>2</sup> *Región Autónoma de Atlántico del Norte*: The Autonomous Region of the Atlantic North

## Methodology

### *Researcher's Lens*

As a researcher, it is important to identify my own perspective and how that view influences the way I approach my research. I am a white, female, Geography student from the United States, and my experiences very much shape the way I look at the world. I recognize that because I am not from Nicaragua and have a limited amount of time, I could never fully understand all of the intricacies of society and the problem at hand. I also recognize that my very presence influences the community I study, so it is important to remain as objective as possible.

### *Data Collection*

I collected the data for this project primarily through interviews with residents in Bocana de Paiwas over the course of two weeks. My advisor helped me identify members of the community who could offer various perspectives on my research topic. All eleven of the interviews were conducted formally in Bocana. The interviewees consisted of the local director of the *Ministerio de Educación* (MINED)<sup>3</sup>, the local director of the *Ministerio de Salud* (MINSAL)<sup>4</sup>, local government officials, farmers, and other residents in the community. Some names have been changed for purposes of anonymity.

Before each interview, I wrote up a list of questions and topics that I aimed to engage with the interviewee about. As I became more familiar with the research topic I used written questions less and less and instead tried to allow the interviews to flow more naturally. This allowed the interviewees to direct the conversation to what he or she

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<sup>3</sup> *Ministerio de Educación*: Department of Education

<sup>4</sup> *Ministerio de Salud*: Department of Health

thought was most relevant. I also found it opened up avenues of dialogue that I would not have necessarily known to pursue.

In addition to interviews, I used participant observations as a method of research. Participant observations allowed me to immerse myself in the community and the culture. I walked both directions out of town on the main road to observe differences in road maintenance, style and upkeep of houses, size of farms, amount of traffic, type of vehicle, and number of people. I spent time in public spaces such as the park, the health center, and the culture center, to observe the types of people who visited the spaces, the way people interacted with each other, and other general observations.

### ***Limitations of Research***

One of the limitations of this investigation was the inability to visit other communities in the municipality of Paiwas. Due to time and travel constraints, it was not possible to travel to Ubú Norte, the current *cabecera*<sup>5</sup> of the municipality, or San Pedro del Norte, another urban center. Because of this, I was unable to gain the perspective of other communities in the municipality, so the scope of the investigation is necessarily narrowed to only the perspective of the community in Bocana de Paiwas.

Although it is beneficial that the conflict over the seat of the municipal government is occurring right now, it also presents a limitation for this project. Because this project is only over the course of one month and the conflict is still very prevalent, I am unable to know the result of the conflict. There is a lot of research that could be

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<sup>5</sup> *cabecera*: the capital of the municipality

pursued in the future as the community of Bocana de Paiwas pursues various different solutions.

Another limitation to this project is that fact that my presence as a researcher can potentially change interactions within the community, especially during participant observations. The goal of participant observations is to immerse yourself in a situation or interaction as a way to gain insight into the origins of the culture. The presence of an outsider, however, can change interactions. I found it important to recognize how my role as a researcher could potentially impact the information I was receiving, and continually think critically and filter that information.

## **BACKGROUND**

### *Geographic Information*

Paiwas is a municipality in the center of Nicaragua. It is the most northeastern municipality in the *Región Autónoma de Atlántico del Sur* (RAAS). The municipality is 2374.9 kilometers squared, the largest municipality in the RAAS. It has a population of 42,354, concentrated in four urban nuclei. Bocana de Paiwas, located in the most southwestern corner of the municipality, has a population of 2,492. Ubú Norte, located in the center of the municipality, has a population of 2,338. San Pedro del Norte, located in the most northeastern corner of the municipality, has a population of 2,735. Mulukukú, located on the northern border of the RAAS and the *Región Autónoma de Atlántico del Norte* (RAAN), has a population of 5,469.<sup>6</sup> (*See Image 1*).

The urban nuclei of Paiwas are spread out, and each has only one road leading in and one road leading out. Traveling between the urban centers is not easy; it takes 2 bus

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<sup>6</sup> Gobierno Municipal de Paiwas. (2012). Ficha Municipal [Press release].

rides and at least 5 hours to get from Bocana to Ubú Norte. The road to Ubú Norte crosses the river Sincocina. Though there is a ferry that crosses regularly, when there has been a lot of rain the ferry is unable to function. San Pedro del Norte is an additional day's travel from Ubú Norte. The river Grande de Matagalpa and mountain ranges cut across the municipality, making it even more difficult to travel and have access to many of the outlying communities in the municipality.<sup>7</sup> (See Image 2).



Image 1

<sup>7</sup> Mendoza Guerrero, E. J. (2013, November 13). [Personal interview by the author].





### *Autonomy and Departments*

The autonomous region of Nicaragua was never colonized by Spain; instead, in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the British colonized the land on the Caribbean Coast of Nicaragua. The British built an alliance with the indigenous communities and established that section of land as a British protectorate. In the Spanish colony in the West, there was a great deal of mixing between the Spanish colonizers and the indigenous Miskito Indians, resulting in a *mestizo* population—a population of mixed race and culture. In the British protectorate, however, there was very little mixing between cultures, resulting in the maintenance of indigenous cultures in a way that did not occur in the west.<sup>8</sup>

The Pacific colony to the west gained independence from Spain in 1821, but the Caribbean colony remained a protectorate until 1860, when the British government signed an agreement with governments of Nicaragua and the United States giving up rights to the land. The agreement established a relationship between the Nicaraguan government and the region along the Caribbean Coast, but the coastal people never had any input on the decision.<sup>9</sup>

In 1881, the Nicaraguan government gave concessions in the Coastal region for foreign companies to extract resources. The Coast is rich in natural resources, including mahogany, fish and crab, coal, gold, ore, and other types of timber. The Nicaraguan government did not have legal right to give concessions, though the government claimed it was exercising sovereignty.

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<sup>8</sup> Hodgson, J. (Presenter). (2013, September 17). *History of the Caribbean Coast*. Lecture presented in Bluefields, Nicaragua.

<sup>9</sup> Hodgson, J. (Presenter). (2013, September 17).

In 1893, after a revolution in Nicaragua, General Zelaya, who led the liberals to overthrow the conservative government, established martial law in the Coast and forcibly established sovereignty over the land and the people. Over the next 86 years, until 1979, the Coastal territory and resources were incorporated into Nicaragua, but the indigenous communities remained marginalized in elections and were not able to teach their own heritage in schools.<sup>10</sup>

After the Sandinistas won the revolution and established a new democratic government in 1979, the indigenous communities in the Coast wrote a proposal for an autonomous region, a self-governed state with the goal of “recognition and effective exercise of the historical rights of the indigenous peoples and ethnic communities of the Caribbean Coast of Nicaragua in the context of national unity and constitutional principles.”<sup>11</sup> Autonomy and the right to local governance became part of the Nicaraguan Constitution in 1987.<sup>12</sup>

According to *Decreto A.N. 3484, Reglamento de la Ley 28, Estatuto de Autonomía de las Regiones de la Costa Atlántica de Nicaragua*,<sup>13</sup> the government of the RAAS is responsible for development plans, infrastructure, gaining outside investments, developing tourism and culture, and facilitating access to an economic market. One of the limitations of this, however, is that the region is quite large and there are limited

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<sup>10</sup> Hodgson, J. (Presenter). (2013, September 17).

<sup>11</sup> La Asamblea Nacional de la Republica de Nicaragua. (1987). *Estatuto de la Autonomía de las Regiones de la Costa Atlántica de Nicaragua* [Statute of Autonomy for the Regions of the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua]. (Decreto No. 28). Nicaragua: Gaceta No. 238.

<sup>12</sup> Hodgson, J. (Presenter). (2013, September 17).

<sup>13</sup> Decree A.N 3584: The Regulation of Law 28, Statute of Autonomy for the Region of the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua. The decree was passed in 2003, and outlines how the Autonomy Law, Law 28, should be implemented and regulated by the government.

resources. A lot of the attention for development and infrastructure is focused in the area directly around Bluefields, the capital, and where there are large indigenous communities. The government of the RAAS is currently building a road from the town of Rama to Pearl Lagoon, a project that was funded by the Japanese government. The government is also heavily investing in the tourism industry, hoping to build up the economy and develop sustainably without compromising culture.

While these programs are prevalent in Pearl Lagoon and Bluefields, they are noticeably absent from Paiwas. The distance and inability to travel in an efficient manner limits the involvement and presence of the regional government. In addition, many programs sponsored by the regional government are geared towards indigenous communities. There are health programs to promote natural and indigenous healing practices.<sup>14</sup> There are education initiatives to increase funding for classes about indigenous culture.<sup>15</sup> The government has fought for land demarcation of communal land for indigenous communities. In Paiwas, the population is *mestizo*; there are no indigenous communities. The majority of the programs sponsored by the regional government, which are aimed for the indigenous communities, are not implemented in the municipality.

The autonomous regions make up 60% of all of the land in Nicaragua, a combined 60,366 square kilometers. The autonomous regions are large, and are divided by mountain ranges and rivers that serve to make access and improving infrastructure difficult. RAAS is 27,260 square kilometers, furthering the difficulties the local government has with accessing and supporting all communities in the region. The capital

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<sup>14</sup> Antonio, J. (Presenter). (2013, September 20). *Health services on the Caribbean Coast*. Lecture presented at Acción Medica Cristiana, Pearl Lagoon, Nicaragua.

<sup>15</sup> Dixon, C. (Presenter). (2013, September 20). *Education on the Caribbean Coast*. Lecture presented at Ministerio de Educación, Pearl Lagoon, Nicaragua.

of the RAAS, Bluefields, is 449 kilometers by road and an additional two-hour boat ride from Paiwas.<sup>16</sup>

Paiwas was included in the autonomous region because in 1972, in the lead up to the *Decreto No. 343*, the law passed in 1974 that established many municipalities, a fight began between the departments of Boaco, Matagalpa, and Zelaya over who would take responsibility for Paiwas. Paiwas was very sought after because of its high productivity levels, fertile land, and river access. *Decreto No. 343* gave the municipality of Paiwas to the department of Zelaya, which later became the RAAS. In 1981, administration of the municipality of Paiwas was provisionally given to Boaco. In 1984, administration of Paiwas was provisionally given to Matagalpa.<sup>17</sup>

Because Bluefields, the capital of the RAAS, is so far removed from the municipality of Paiwas, an article was included in Law 59, *Ley de División Política Administrativa*,<sup>18</sup> which states that Paiwas is provisionally included in the department of Matagalpa.<sup>19</sup> This article was included because Matagalpa is in a better position to facilitate administration of government ministries than Bluefields. Not all ministries, however, are administered through the Matagalpa. The *Ministerio de Elecciones*<sup>20</sup> is still administered through the department of RAAS through Bluefields. MINSA was

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<sup>16</sup> Gobierno Municipal de Paiwas. (2012). Ficha Municipal [Press release].

<sup>17</sup> Gobierno Municipal de Paiwas. (2012). Ficha Municipal [Press release].

<sup>18</sup> Law of Political and Administrative Division

<sup>19</sup> La Asamblea Nacional de la Republica de Nicaragua. (2004). *Ley de División Política Administrativa* [Law of Political and Administrative Division]. (Decreto No. 59). Nicaragua: Gaceta No. 24.

<sup>20</sup> *Ministerio de Elecciones*: Department of Elections

administered through the department of Siuana in the RAAN until 2012. The *Ministerio de Justicia*<sup>21</sup> and *Ministerio de Educación* (MINED) are administered through Matagalpa.

There are many benefits that come with the provisional inclusion in the department of Matagalpa. First, there is much more access to the departmental government. The city of Matagalpa, the *cabecera* of the department, is less than half a day's travel away from Bocana de Paiwas. This increases access to the overarching branches of the ministries, especially for training of teachers. It also makes it easier to deal with problems that arise, such as inefficient distribution of paychecks and lack of access to technology, textbooks, and other resources that are beneficial to education.<sup>22</sup>

An additional benefit of being provisionally included in the department of Matagalpa is that, culturally, the people of Paiwas do not consider themselves *costeños*;<sup>23</sup> they identify much more closely with the culture and community in Matagalpa.<sup>24</sup> Schools that are part of the Department of Bluefields teach the curriculum that was developed by the RAAS and RAAN governments. The curriculum includes the history of the Coast and the indigenous communities. Students are taught in multiple languages so that each student has an opportunity to learn in his or her native tongue.<sup>25</sup> By being part of the Department of Matagalpa, the schools in Paiwas are able to teach the curriculum they think is most closely aligned with their culture and history—the curriculum from the national government.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> *Ministerio de Justicia*: Department of Justice

<sup>22</sup> Escobar, G. (2013, November 8). [Personal interview by the author].

<sup>23</sup> *costeños*: people from the RAAS/RAAN.

<sup>24</sup> Escobar, G. (2013, November 8). [Personal interview by the author].

<sup>25</sup> Dixon, C. (Presenter). (2013, September 20).

<sup>26</sup> Escobar, G. (2013, November 8). [Personal interview by the author].

The *Ministerio de Salud* (MINSa) in Paiwas has also benefited from being part of its own *Sistema Local de Atención Integral de Salud*<sup>27</sup> (SILAIS).<sup>28</sup> MINSa is that nationalized health service in Nicaragua. It is a separate entity from both the municipal government and the departmental government. Municipalities are grouped together to form SILAIS, an organizational grouping much like how municipalities are organized into departments. Each SILAIS has a director, and each municipality within the SILAIS has its own director as well. Historically, Paiwas has been part of the SILAIS that was run out of Buacos and later out of Matagalpa. In 2012, however, MINSa created an additional SILAIS that includes Paiwas, Mulukukú, and others. This change has allowed MINSa to have more access to the communities, as the SILAIS is responsible for fewer municipalities. Because some of the municipalities in the SILAIS are part of the RAAN, the SILAIS follows the RAAN health and development plan as opposed to the RAAS plan.

There are limitations to the structure of MINSa as well. The local municipal director of MINSa in Paiwas, Eleazar J. Mendoza Guerrero, says that because the municipality is so large, there are problems with accessing all of the communities. The municipality is spread out, and there are only 7 health centers. There is one health center in Bocana de Paiwas, two in Ubú Norte, one in San Pedro del Norte, and three health outposts in rural communities.<sup>29</sup> Many people have to travel long distances to receive health care, and MINSa relies heavily on volunteer health brigades to provide basic health services and information to rural communities. There are only two ambulances for

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<sup>27</sup> *Sistema Local de Atención Integral de Salud*: Local System of Comprehensive Health

<sup>28</sup> Mendoza Guerrero, E. J. (2013, November 13). [Personal interview by the author].

<sup>29</sup> Mendoza Guerrero, E. J. (2013, November 13). [Personal interview by the author].

the entire municipality, so if there are emergencies at the same time in two different parts of the municipality, a lot of coordination is necessary.

There are also limitations to being provisionally included in various departments. Because different departments or entities manage the health, education, justice, and elections ministries, it is difficult to coordinate projects and programs between ministries that could be beneficial to the community.<sup>30</sup> Paiwas is the largest municipality in the RAAS; it is difficult for the department of Matagalpa to efficiently and consistently access and support the entire municipality. In addition, Matagalpa is already responsible for 13 other municipalities, the largest number of municipalities any one department is responsible for.<sup>31</sup> Because Matagalpa has so many municipalities to administer and Paiwas has only been included provisionally, it is sometimes overlooked.

Additionally, citizens of Paiwas vote in elections for the RAAS, not in Matagalpa. The regional government they get to vote for does not actually administer any of the programs that are implemented in the municipality. As a result, the people of Paiwas do not actually get a say in who implements and which programs are implemented in the region.<sup>32</sup>

### ***Municipality***

Bocana de Paiwas was the *cabecera* of the municipality unofficially throughout the 1980's until Law 59, *Ley de División Política Administrativa*, written in 1989, officially

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<sup>30</sup> Mendoza Guerrero, E. J. (2013, November 13). [Personal interview by the author].

<sup>31</sup> La Asamblea Nacional de la Republica de Nicaragua. (2004). *Ley de División Política Administrativa*.

<sup>32</sup> Taleno Hernandez, J. A. (2013, November 16). [Personal interview by the author].



established Bocana de Paiwas as the *cabecera* of the municipality of Paiwas.<sup>33</sup> Bocana de Paiwas was the largest urban nucleus in the municipality. Other urban communities in the municipality did not begin to develop until after the Contra War.<sup>34</sup>

During the Contra War that took place from 1980-1989, Paiwas the center of the conflict. After the revolution, which lasted from 1978-1979 and resulted in the expulsion of the dictator Somoza and the disintegration of the National Guard, many people who were members of the National Guard and were opposed to the new Sandinista government, took up arms and launched attacks on the newly formed agricultural cooperative communities. The members of the Contra were supported financially and were provided with weapons by the government of the United States. The goal of the Contras was to undermine the Sandinista government, which they viewed as too socialist and communist. The agricultural cooperatives were one of the Sandinista government's largest projects.

Paiwas, especially Bocana de Paiwas, was a hub of Sandinista activity and a recipient of national funding for agricultural cooperatives, and was therefore targeted heavily by the Contras. The Contras systematically raided communities, setting houses and other buildings on fire, assaulting women, and drafting or killing men. There was also a heavy National Army presence, which also resulted in civilian deaths and men being drafted into the army.<sup>35</sup>

After the war, Bocana de Paiwas remained heavily Sandinista. The other urban centers that began to grow in the early 1990's, however, were predominantly

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<sup>33</sup> La Asamblea Nacional de la Republica de Nicaragua. (2004). *Ley de División Política Administrativa*.

<sup>34</sup> Taleno, A. (2013, November 11). [Personal interview by the author].

<sup>35</sup> Moreno Perez, J. R. (2013, November 7). [Personal interview by the author].

conservative and anti-Sandinista. In 1992, Ubú Norte was only a small town with a vegetable market. But former Contras began to buy up the land and establish large farms in the area of Ubú Norte, establishing a strong *Partido Liberal Constitucionalista* (PLC),<sup>36</sup> the largest conservative political party in Nicaragua, presence.<sup>37</sup>

From 1980 to 1993, the *acalde*<sup>38</sup> of Paiwas was Anselmo Taleno, a member of the Sandinista political party. In 1990, he ran unopposed in the race for *acalde*. At the same time, the *Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional* (FSLN)<sup>39</sup> lost the national election, and the PLC took over. By 1993, there were a lot of problems in the municipality stemming from political conflict and the remnants of war that impeded on economic development. Taleno resigned in 1993, and a woman named Susanna Castro took over as interim *acalde*. Castro was PLC and did not want to govern from Bocana de Paiwas, a Sandinista stronghold. Under pressure from the rich PLC farmers who lived in Ubú Norte, she moved the *cabecera* of the municipality to Ubú Norte.<sup>40</sup>

In 1997, Abelardo Oporto, also a candidate from the PLC, was elected to be *acalde* of the municipality. When he was elected, he said he would split his time between Ubú Norte and Bocana de Paiwas, which remained the legal *cabecera* of the municipality according to the *Ley de División Política Administrativa*. Despite pressure from both the citizens of Bocana de Paiwas and Humberto Campbell, the vice- minister of the Instituto

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<sup>36</sup> *Partido Liberal Constitucionalista*: Constitutional Liberal Party

<sup>37</sup> Taleno Hernandez, J. A. (2013, November 16). [Personal interview by the author].

<sup>38</sup> *acalde*: mayor

<sup>39</sup> *Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional*: Sandinista National Liberation Front

<sup>40</sup> Taleno, A. (2013, November 11). [Personal interview by the author].

Nicaragüense de la Costa Atlántica (INNICA)<sup>41</sup>, Oporto did not move the *cabecera* of the municipality, nor did he split his time between the two towns.<sup>42</sup>

According to the *Ley de División Política Administrativa*, the *cabecera* of the municipal government should be in Bocana de Paiwas, not in Ubú Norte.<sup>43</sup> Article 14 of the law, however, outlines stipulations for the movement of the seat of the government,<sup>44</sup> none of which were met at the initial time of the change in 1993. The first potential reason for moving the *cabecera* is the disappearance or diminishment of the original urban center, which was not the case in Bocana de Paiwas. The second reason is if the new urban center has better communication facilities, which was not the case in 1993. The third reason is if the new urban center has greater historic character and importance, which was not the case, as Ubú Norte did not begin to develop as an urban center until 1992. The fourth reason is a greater number of residents, which was also not the case in 1993. The fifth reason is perceived economic benefit, of which there was no evidence. The sixth reason is situations of emergency, war, and natural disaster, none of which occurred in 1993 when the *cabecera* was moved to Ubú Norte from Bocana de Paiwas.<sup>45</sup>

The PLC of Ubú Norte had the support of the citizens of San Pedro del Norte, an urban community in the northeast of the municipality, which is predominantly *Partido*

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<sup>41</sup> *Instituto Nicaragüense de la Costa Atlántica (INNICA)*: Nicaraguan Institute of the Atlantic Coast

<sup>42</sup> Taleno Hernandez, J. A. (2013, November 16). [Personal interview by the author].

<sup>43</sup> La Asamblea Nacional de la Republica de Nicaragua. (2004). *Ley de División Política Administrativa*.

<sup>44</sup> La Asamblea Nacional de la Republica de Nicaragua. (2004). *Ley de División Política Administrativa*.

<sup>45</sup> Movimiento Multisectoral Para el Desarrollo de Paiwas. (n.d.). *Conflicto por la Cabecera Municipal de Paiwas*.

*Liberal Independiente*<sup>46</sup> (PLI).<sup>47</sup> The PLI was fully behind allying against the FSLN.

Now, in 2013, however, there are conflicts between the PLI and the PLC, leading to an alliance between the PLI in San Pedro del Norte and the FSLN in Bocana de Paiwas.

The conflict over the *cabecera* of the municipality began as a political conflict: members of the PLC wanted the municipal government to be in Ubú Norte so they could have more control over economic policy within the municipality. There were also remnant Contra/ Sandinista sentimentalities. Now, however, the discourse within the community has evolved to be about more than just the politics. Now, the focus within the community is much more on the way the move of the seat of the government has affected Bocana de Paiwas and the entire municipality, especially in terms of development, attention, and representation.

## **IMPACT OF AUTONOMY, DEPARTMENTAL ATTENTION, AND MUNICIPAL CONFLICT**

The amount of attention and access to the regional autonomous government, the departmental government, and the municipal government has manifested itself in different ways in Bocana de Paiwas. All three levels of government are interconnected, as are the problems and benefits that come with each.

There have not been any projects administered by the municipal government in Bocana de Paiwas this year. While there were previously government sponsored social programs in Bocana de Paiwas, the programs stopped functioning and providing services. Salvadora Moreno, a resident of Bocana de Paiwas, claims that the programs, such as a

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<sup>46</sup> *Partido Liberal Independiente*: Independent Liberal Party

<sup>47</sup> Taleno Hernandez, J. A. (2013, November 16). [Personal interview by the author].

program that provides a selection of food every month to single mothers, ceased to exist because “there was no supervision for the programs.”<sup>48</sup> The municipal government in Ubú Norte, Moreno argues, “does not pay attention to Bocana de Paiwas,”<sup>49</sup> and it is for this reason that the social program that provides food is no longer running. The social programs, particularly the programs that provide food, cannot function without supervision and a government official implementing them. Because the municipal government is in Ubú Norte and does not make the effort to send the officials or the funding to implement the program, the program can no longer exist. Additionally, Ubú Norte is a full day’s travel from Bocana de Paiwas, so it is difficult for someone from Bocana to advocate for the community to get the program up and running again.

Another effect of lack of supervision of government programs is that there is no way for the government to know which programs are helping and which ones are not. There is one program called *El Programa Hambre Cero*<sup>50</sup> that provides families with pigs, chickens, and a cow.<sup>51</sup> While the theory behind the program is well planned out, in reality the program does not work. The idea is that if the government provides pigs, chickens, and a cow for a family, that family will be able to be more self-sufficient in the future. The family can breed pigs, produce milk, and have access to fresh eggs and meat. The problem is that most families, particularly in Bocana de Paiwas do not own land to keep the animals on.<sup>52</sup> It is not uncommon to see pigs roaming the streets of the town or

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<sup>48</sup> Moreno, S. (2013, November 11). [Personal interview by the author]. “No hay supervisión por los programas.”

<sup>49</sup> Moreno, S. (2013, November 11). [Personal interview by the author]. “El gobierno municipal no presta atención a Bocana de Paiwas.”

<sup>50</sup> Program Zero Hunger

<sup>51</sup> Taleno Hernandez, J. A. (2013, November 16). [Personal interview by the author].

<sup>52</sup> Moreno, S. (2013, November 11). [Personal interview by the author].

tied up in front of houses. Most families also cannot afford to feed the animals on a regular basis and often have to sell the cow to large landowners, thereby losing the potential long-term benefits of the program and increasing the concentration of wealth in the region.<sup>53</sup> It is difficult for the government to assess *El Programa Hambre Cero* and others like it when there is little to no governmental presence or supervision of the programs.

Roads are an integral part of infrastructure that enable economic and social connections to other communities and encourage economic development within a community. In the municipality of Paiwas, local roads are administered and looked after by the municipal government. In Bocana de Paiwas, there are 100 square meters of road. It costs 8 thousand cordobas to pave every 1 square meter of road. This year, the municipal government gave Bocana de Paiwas 8 million cordobas to help with roads, most of which needs to be invested the road connecting Bocana de Paiwas to Rio Blanco.<sup>54</sup> Rio Blanco is the closest economic market with a supermarket, cheaper food, and vegetables. It is also necessary to travel to Rio Blanco in order to get to Ubú Norte, making investment in the road to Rio Blanco a priority. This does not leave much money left to fix or build roads within the town of Bocana de Paiwas. Currently, there are only 3 paved roads in the town; the other roads are dirt and stone. Many of the roads are suffering from severe erosion and turn into mud when it rains, which, during the rainy season, is every day.

While I was in Bocana de Paiwas, I took the time to walk out of town towards Rio Blanco and towards El Pueblito to observe the differences in road quality and upkeep.

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<sup>53</sup> Taleno Hernandez, J. A. (2013, November 16). [Personal interview by the author].

<sup>54</sup> Taleno, A. (2013, November 11). [Personal interview by the author].

The road towards El Pueblito is the responsibility of the municipality of Matagalpa. In three kilometers, there was only one huge hole. There was little to no mud, and the road seemed well looked after. The road towards Rio Blanco is the responsibility of Paiwas. It is riddled with huge potholes, sections of mud, and sections affected by erosion. Trucks have drive more slowly going towards Rio Blanco than the road going towards El Pueblito.

Roads and infrastructure are important for the development of the economy, “reducing poverty, and providing essential services.”<sup>55</sup> Roads increase access to economic markets, making it easier to import and export goods. The road from Bocana de Paiwas to Rio Blanco in particular facilitates access to a larger market for the dairy farms. Roads and infrastructure are even more important in large municipalities with many rural and geographically isolated communities. There are not many roads connecting communities within the municipality, which limits the amount of access outlying communities have to economic markets and services, such as health care.

The shift of the *cabecera* has also impacted the culture in Bocana de Paiwas. The seat of the parish of the Catholic Church followed the *cabecera* from Bocana de Paiwas to Ubú Norte in 1996. There is only one priest for the entire municipality. Before the move, he was based in Bocana de Paiwas and was able to be present for most masses. Now, he is only able to visit each community, including Bocana de Paiwas, two or three times per month. In the Catholic Church, the priest is both the connection between the congregation and God and the source of spiritual guidance. After the priest was not in

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<sup>55</sup> Schmitt, K. M. (2009). *Road development, increasing market access, and natural resource use on Nicaragua's Atlantic Coast* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Michigan Statue Universtiy, MI.

Bocana de Paiwas as often, members of the congregation left the Catholic Church to start churches of other denominations and to have more consistent access to a spiritual guide. Now, there are six evangelical churches and only one Catholic Church in Bocana de Paiwas, which has changed the culture of religion and the culture within the community.<sup>56</sup>

Since 1993, economic development in the municipality has been uneven and the economy in Bocana de Paiwas has diminished. Since the shift of the *cabecera*, four neighborhoods worth of people in Bocana de Paiwas have moved to Rio Blanco because of lack work. When Bocana de Paiwas was the *cabecera*, many people had to visit for meetings. There were many hostels and guesthouses that catered to people who worked for the government or had meetings. Now, however, all of the guesthouses have gone out of business. Ubú Norte has grown exponentially since the *cabecera* moved. There are many guesthouses and the economy has flourished due to more traffic moving through, both for government business and to get to other towns.<sup>57</sup>

In addition, economic policies in the municipality have favored large landowners. Rich farmers have expanded by buying a lot of land and increasing both the amount of production and the number of cattle they are able to own. This has a negative effect on smaller farms, which are struggling financially. Production in the smaller family farms is more for subsistence than for selling in the market. In addition, there are many difficulties in receiving titles for land from the national government. There are currently 36 families in Bocana de Paiwas that have been waiting for 5 years for the titles to the land they received from the government. The lack of title means that the small family farms have

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<sup>56</sup> Perez Castro, E. (2013, November 11). [Personal interview by the author].

<sup>57</sup> Taleno, A. (2013, November 11). [Personal interview by the author].



no security of land tenure.<sup>58</sup> The 36 families are waiting on the national government to issue the land titles, but they are having trouble finding advocates.

Many of the large landowners put down the incorrect number of acres on their tax forms, drastically reducing the number of acres they pay taxes for. This greatly decreases the amount of tax revenue the municipal government has access to for social programs and infrastructure development. Some people in Bocana de Paiwas argue that the municipal government does not stop the tax fraud in part because under-reporting the amount of land owned, and thereby decreasing property taxes, is beneficial for business.<sup>59</sup>

Paiwas is the most productive municipality in the RAAS, mostly because of the large number of dairy farms,<sup>60</sup> but it also has an 80% extreme poverty rate (people living on less than 1.25\$ per day),<sup>61</sup> with an additional 16% living in just above the extreme poverty line.<sup>62</sup> The programs that help the people who do not have large farms or who are struggling to get by are not getting the amount of funding they should be because there is not sufficient tax revenue. The economic policies of the government continually affect the lives of the citizens of Paiwas, some in positive ways, and some in negative ways.

### **COMO EL HIJO DE NADIE<sup>63</sup>**

The intersection between the government of the autonomous region, the multiple departments, and an absent municipal government has resulted in Bocana de Paiwas

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<sup>58</sup> Peralta, P. (2013, November 18). [Personal interview by the author].

<sup>59</sup> Peralta, P. (2013, November 18). [Personal interview by the author].

<sup>60</sup> Taleno, A. (2013, November 11). [Personal interview by the author].

<sup>61</sup> Extreme poverty rates continue to fall. (n.d.). Retrieved December 3, 2013, from The World Bank website.

<sup>62</sup> Gobierno Municipal de Paiwas. (2012). Ficha Municipal [Press release].

<sup>63</sup> *Como el hijo de nadie*: Like the child of no one.

being, as Esther Perez calls it, “*como el hijo de nadie*: like the child of no one.”<sup>64</sup>

Governmental responsibility for both the municipality and for Bocana de Paiwas has been spread out between multiple governmental entities, which means that there is no one level of government that takes full responsibility for what occurs. There is no government entity looking into problems or helping the community grow or develop. It is difficult for the people of Bocana de Paiwas to advocate for themselves because it is difficult and expensive to travel and they are relatively geographically isolated. In addition, the municipal government does not agree politically with the community, so it is unlikely to support or advocate for the community.

Galtung argues that violence is anything that prevents us from realizing achievable social goals deemed by most to be desirable. He continues on to argue, “violence is present when humans are being influenced so that their actual somatic and mental realizations are below potential realizations.”<sup>65</sup> Structural violence is the social manifestations of violence that cause undue harm and challenge the goals of society that most deem to be desirable, often consisting of poverty or alienation or exclusion of a group from higher needs, like education or participation in the larger society.<sup>66</sup> In Paiwas, the lack of access to government programs and funding and the absence of a constant, attentive governing body have impeded on Bocana de Paiwas’s ability to develop, both socially and economically. Bocana de Paiwas, then, is caught in a structure of violence, a social force formed by uneven power dynamics. In this case, there are

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<sup>64</sup> Perez Castro, E. (2013, November 11). [Personal interview by the author].

<sup>65</sup> Galtung, J. (1969). Violence, peace, and peace research. *Journal of Peace Research*, 6(3), 167-191.

<sup>66</sup> Uvin, P. (1998). *Aiding violence: The development enterprise in Rwanda*. West Hartford, CT: Kumarian Press (103).

many uneven power dynamics between the community of Bocana de Paiwas and the various governmental entities that are supposed to be in charge. The actions, or lack thereof, of the autonomous government, the departmental governments, and the municipal government, have negatively impacted Bocana de Paiwas without allowing the community to exert any change.

There is a movement within the municipality, in both Bocana de Paiwas and San Pedro del Norte, to split the municipality into three separate municipalities. The *Movimiento Multisectoral Para el Desarrollo de Paiwas*,<sup>67</sup> a organization of teachers, farmers, men and women, Sandinistas and Liberals, who are all working to “solve the municipality issue.”<sup>68</sup> The organization is working on a proposal in which Bocana de Paiwas, San Pedro del Norte, and Ubú Norte would each become the *cabeceras* of their own regions. This would solve a number of access and attention problems. Each municipality would be significantly smaller, allowing the local governments to have more access and give more attention to all issues. The government would also be in a better position to implement programs, as there would fewer people in a smaller geographic location to serve.

Though the proposal of three separate municipalities is logical and would benefit the municipality in the long run, it is important to recognize that development and access issues are not the only driving force behind this decision; political differences play a large role as well. Most of the people I spoke to in Bocana de Paiwas did not talk about political differences; their focus and knowledge was on the impact of different economic policies. The current municipal government is PLC, which believes in conservative

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<sup>67</sup> The Multi-sector Movement for the Development of Paiwas

<sup>68</sup> Taleno Hernandez, J. A. (2013, November 16). [Personal interview by the author].

economics, fewer social programs, and the growth of private business. These economic policies, especially less investment in social programs, have greatly impacted Bocana de Paiwas, a community that is more than 80% FSLN and believes strongly in social programs.<sup>69</sup> By separating the municipality into three according to political affiliation, each separate municipality will be able to implement their preferred economic and governing strategy.

Splitting the municipality into three would make it more possible for the Bocana de Paiwas municipality to be officially added to the department of Matagalpa, instead of only being provisionally part of the department. Paiwas is the most productive municipality in the RAAS, so it is unlikely that the autonomous government would agree to the succession of the entire municipality. It is more likely that the regional government of the RAAS would allow for part of the municipality to completely join the department of Matagalpa, thereby no longer being a part of the autonomous region.<sup>70</sup>

In order for the proposal to progress, the community of Bocana de Paiwas needs the support of the national FSLN party. Separating the municipality and changing departments requires a vote in the national assembly.<sup>71</sup> What is currently a localized, relatively isolated conflict between the FSLN, PLC, and PLI political parties has necessarily manifested itself as a conflict about attention and development. Hardly anyone in the community talks about the politics of the situation; the focus is completely on the affects of the PLC government. It would be difficult to gain support from the

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<sup>69</sup> Taleno Hernandez, J. A. (2013, November 16). [Personal interview by the author].

<sup>70</sup> Taleno Hernandez, J. A. (2013, November 16). [Personal interview by the author].

<sup>71</sup> Taleno Hernandez, J. A. (2013, November 16). [Personal interview by the author].

FSLN members of the national assembly if the conflict was only portrayed as political and not as an issue that is greatly impacting the community.

## **CONCLUSION**

There are many factors impeding on Bocana de Paiwas's ability to develop and succeed. Lack of physical connection to other communities and economic markets, lack of infrastructure, lack of access to social programs, and lack of attention from all governing bodies have impacted the lives and livelihoods of the people in Bocana de Paiwas. The infrastructure in the region has suffered, social programs that families depend on have disappeared due to mismanagement, and the economy in the community has shrunk and slowed. The community has not had any strong advocates to help change the situation since 1993, but now the citizens of the community are working together to advocate for themselves and for their futures.

Structural violence is not always easy to recognize. It is a part of society and culture and is imbedded in the way people interact with each other and the way countries are organized. To dismantle violence, it is necessary to actively work to prevent and eradicate the structures in society that are causing the violence. The people of Bocana de Paiwas have recognized that there is a force standing in the way of development and growth in the community. By advocating for themselves and coming up with plans to change their situation in the municipality, they are working to dismantle a structure of violence and improve their community as well.

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