



An overview of Carazo department from the regional studies

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ABSTRACT

Located in the recent Nicaraguan regional historiography, promoted by the National Autonomous University of Nicaragua, Managua (UNAN-Managua) since the 1980s, this article¹ aims to demonstrate that historical regions have dynamic integration and articulation that do not necessarily correspond to the administrative political divisions of the territory. To explain this dynamic, the method of cultural ecology of the anthropologist Julian Steward (1955) has been used, which proposes to understand the regions from its cultural nucleus, that is, the adaptation and interaction of man with environment; Of course, ethnographic work has been fundamental. The results reveal that Carazo has four internal historical regions. Therefore, it could be concluded, among other things that both the political and regional divisions coexist without opposing each other, but regional understanding stands out as a possibility of shortening the center-periphery gap.

1. This article arises from the dissertation "Identities in movement: coffee, culture and tourism in the Golden Triangle of coffee, in the late nineteenth and early twenty-first century", which is part of the line of research "The processes of regional conformation: history, current affairs and perspective". The PhD program in History with a mention in Regional and Local Transdisciplinary Studies (2014-2019) is under the direction of the Faculty of Humanities and Legal Sciences of the National Autonomous University of Nicaragua, Managua (UNAN-Managua). The dissertation has 50% financing of the Multidisciplinary Regional Faculty, FAREM- Carazo, UNAN-Managua.

INTRODUCTION

The Municipality is the base unit of the administrative political division of the country and must take into account the natural, socio-economic and cultural identity of the population that is part of it. This is established in the law of the municipalities in Nicaragua. However, populations have a very different dynamic in their interaction. Municipal governments, for their part, can only partially meet the needs of their inhabitants, generally prioritizing urban populations and marginalizing -often without the intentions of doing so- to peripheral populations. Municipalities become islands that must solve their production problems alone, access to resources or technologies relevant to specific realities, etc., when they could be more effective in their management if they address some problems together. The present study presents a regionalization of the departmental territory that attends to the particularities of the populations and not of the imaginary lines that cross the domains of the municipality. In this regard, two specific objectives have been proposed: a) identify the regional organization of the department of Carazo, and b) explain the interaction and articulation of these regions without prejudice to the internal borders that divide the department.

METHODOLOGY

It should be clear that there is no regional method of study, but there is a research strategy, and that is the regional approach. The method of this research is the *cultural ecology* developed and coined in 1955 by the American anthropologist and archaeologist Julián H. Steward (1902-1972) who denies the deterministic and single-line approach to evolution, to explain the cultural change from interactionism and multi-linearity. Its method comprises three fundamental procedures 1) Analyze the interrelation between exploitation technologies and the environment (environment), 2) Analyze the behavior patterns involved in exploitation and exploitation technology 3) Determine how behavior models affect another aspect of culture, understanding that the core of culture is identity. (Steward 1955: pp. 37-38). The ethnographic work was fundamental, because it gives life to the hard data of the statistics or the technical studies of the regions, especially because these are considered as living spaces. In this sense it was important to use the interview and the participant observation.

The region as a process

The concept of region has been much debated from different approaches and disciplines, without a consensus has been achieved so far. A review will be carried out, probably in an unfinished way, through other authors, of the main reflections that have been made on this concept from economic geography, regional history and social anthropology.

A look at the region from geography: The region of geographers in its deepest tradition, that is, the natural region, was not questioned; It was there. With the beginning of *regionalization*,

understood from the academy as the classification process that leads to a typology (Espejo, 2003: 71), the region had to take emphasis and there began the divergence in approaches. Mirror Martin identifies two streams of thought; that of the positivists, who defined it as a *real entity*, as opposed to the current of critical geography, which understands it as a *mental construct*. The former define the region as an observable reality on several scales, organized by human groups and classifiable based on criteria such as climate, relief, vegetation and cultivation, fauna, hydrography and soil. These elements determined the ways of life and occupation of the human groups that inhabited it. The latter consider the region as a mental construction; that is to say, a category of analysis that allows, from the perspective of the researcher, to choose the necessary criteria to define it based on its objectives, so that the region takes on a life of its own, in that sense, Molina (1986) says that the region with a unique entity, does not exist.

For his part, notes Bataillón in 1979 quoted by Boehm (1997: 22) that “there are two issues that geographers deal with; the regional conformation of the earth’s surface and the footprint of man on it”. This material vision of the region, for Brigitte Boehm (2007), gives preference to the economy for its explanation, and evokes Bataillon (1979) and Bassol Battle (1986) to explain the *regional construction* from the economic geography. The first opts for *historical articulation*, which defines it for its polarization and diffusion around cities, instead the second prefers the model of *historical integration*, which conceives the region as the scene of class struggles from The Marxist vision, despite this divergence, both recognize the central role of the State in integrative processes.

In sum, from positivist geographers to humanists, as Molina (1986) has proposed, the region is conceived as an external entity, which we can distribute, plan, intervene, in short, modify and even live, for economic geography, on the other hand the region is built by processes of diffusion and use (appropriation). In both cases, a passive vision of the region persists.

The *region of regional historians*: the understanding of the construction and transformation of the space of geographers is diluted when we approach it from regional history. In the paper presented in 2000 by Dr. Ivette García González in the IV international workshop “theoretical and practical problems of regional and local history” referred to the regional space as “a way of organizing multiple social relations, so that being a social totality, it takes on a subordinating-subordinate structure character” (2000a: 7). In the words of Boehm (1997: 26) they begin to see *in space*, not only the landscape and the human, but “social networks, political relations, economic flows, cultural traits, visual and effective reach of inhabitants (...) the region is crowded and its limits are diluted.”

As is evident, space has also been a concern of regional history, however, time constitutes its main interest, since they do not share with the traditional history the vision of “the facts

frozen in time”, but rather reinterpret them in their evolutionary movements. The problem of periodization in regional studies is one of the most important, because according to the Cuban doctor Ivette García, the time of the region “does not have to coincide - necessarily - with that of national history, it has its own rhythm, its duality of character (objective-subjective) and is more finished to the extent that the researcher has greater mastery of his object of study”(2001:9). Regional time, confirms Viales (2010: 6) is differentiated from national time, because there is an in (dependence) on regional realities and subjectivities and localities.

In this geohistoric encounter with economic and regional emphasis, space and time are diluted, they lose the precision they traditionally had. Now its limits are built based on its articulation or integration in the social space - with an approximate initial geographical base. The precision of time in terms of regional construction ends up consolidating itself from regionality -sense of belonging- or regionalism -hegemonic homogenizing policy of the center of power-. Although these lines are inaccurate, it is important that they can be observed with the eyes ajar, because if they are lost, the region also vanishes. A concept that synthesizes very well the contributions that have been discussed about the historical region is done by Dr. Iveth García González:

The historical region is a social geographical space -in this subnational case-, in which economic, social, political, cultural and ideological characteristics converge that reveal a sameness that distinguishes it, without ceasing to belong to the external, national and international of which it is part. The city, in this context, acts as a hierarchical center, to and from which civilization flows. (2000b: 106)

Geography and history, were convinced throughout their evolution that from their conventional frameworks they could only capture very hermetic fragments of reality, so they take the region as a heuristic instrument to study the complexity of reality. However, it is anthropology who seems to have understood this dilemma soon.

Anthropology and region: The most important precursor of regional studies since anthropology in Mexico -our closest reference- was Manuel Gamio, who designed in 1919 the Anthropology Program for the improvement of the regional populations of the republic (Fabregas, 2010: 43). For Gamio, the region is “the territory of a culturally and socially homogeneous population, with a shared history that can be distinguished from others”, seen thus, the study of the region is not the study of physical space, but of the people, in such a way that “a border is created when societies with different cultural ecologies come into contact and begin an interrelation that, in turn, will result in a particular society” Fabregas (2010: 160).

The recognition of these regional complex structures can only be distinguished according to Stewart (1955) cited by Boehm (1997) from the simultaneous *integration and articulation*

processes -previously proposed by geographers Bassol Battle and Bataillon respectively-. Boehm mentions as horizontal elements the classes or the state, ecclesiastical, financial, mercantile agencies, etc., and by vertical elements the kinship, the loyalties, the clientele, the market, the sanctuaries and others; the latter, as typical of regional being, that is, of regionality.

However, it is not intended to add the three proposed approaches (geography, history and anthropology), but to understand from each one's perspective, their contributions and limitations, but to make clear above all, of the interdisciplinary and interdisciplinary need of science to approach us to the region, its social and cultural complexity. The region then becomes a heuristic element for each of the disciplines that alone are insufficient to decipher the totality and regional complexity.

The regions of the caraceña plateau

In the southern Pacific of Nicaragua, the department of Carazo is located with an area of 1,032 km², and distributed politically and administratively in eight municipalities: Jinotepe, Diriamba, San Marcos, Dolores, El Rosario, Santa Teresa, La Paz de Carazo and La Conquista, being Jinotepe, the departmental head and therefore, the political center or mayor's office, where the most important state and financial institutions of the department are located. However, the Caraceña plateau seen with a regional focus is reconfigured in a geographical, ecological and cultural framework, which gives rise to four historical regions: 1) Golden coffee triangle, 2) The fishing communities of the plain, 3) The region of rural communities and 4) The region of the southern villages.

Golden Coffee Triangle Region

The Caraceña plateau² as a region rises between 620 and 500 meters above sea level, its upper part is a plain that slopes gently from northeast to southeast, with a slope of 0 to 2%, although in some places it reaches up to 8%. This region was called the Golden Coffee Triangle during the coffee boom in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The northeastern part begins with the end of the Serranías del Crucero south of the department of Managua -the capital of the country-, from La Danta community, and continues in two directions; in the southeast, it runs until reaching the municipalities of Santa Teresa and La Paz de Carazo, where it is slightly lost until it reaches the department of Rivas; and from the west, it reaches Las Esquinas community and is routed to the department of Masaya, bordering the entire municipality of San Marcos.

2. The Caraceña plateau is a geological formation (Plateau), on which the Carazo department is based. This comprises three levels of height: high part (500 to 620 meters above sea level), middle part (200 to 500 meters above sea level) and low part (0 to 200 meters above sea level). About it, speaking from the political-administrative point of view, eight municipalities are located, three of them cover the three levels of altitude (Jinotepe, Diriamba and Santa Teresa), the rest are distributed between a high part and the middle part of the plateau.

The Golden Triangle of coffee on the Caraceña plateau is the most densely inhabited region, with 61% of the departmental population (AMUC, 2002), as it comprises the urban centers of the largest municipalities: Jinotepe, Diriamba and San Marcos, as well as the municipality of Dolores, which is the smallest and the most densely populated. These cities draw the perimeter of a green center, inhabited by semi-rural internal communities, where shade coffee cultivation, subsistence farming by landless or cooperated farmers, in addition to small industry, which contrasts with textile industrial parks that are found among the cities, channeling the workforce -mostly female- but also, exploiting the aquifer that owns the region, which supplies 80% of the population of the department.

The urbanization of the Golden Triangle could only take off with the coffee boom, when the region of eastern Nicaragua³ had as a hierarchical center to the city of Granada that gradually lost its hegemony over the towns of Jinotepe and Diriamba, when they change category by its own socio-economic, urban and political characteristics. Thus, on February 11, 1883, the Senate and Chamber of the Republic of Nicaragua agree to elevate the town of Jinotepe to the category of city and the town of Diriamba to the rank of Villa, which until 1894 reaches the rank of city under the presidency of General José Santos Zelaya, who created the department of Carazo in 1891. It is not, until February 18, 1916 by the efforts of the Caraceño senator Anastasio Somoza Reyes the town of San Marcos rises the category of city, becoming the third most important city in the region⁴. San Marcos, unlike the first two is not an original town, on the contrary, its first settlers, apparently Guerrero and Soriano (1964: 69) were neighbors of the city of Jinotepe and Nindirí who populated the territory, initially locating in the immediate vicinity of the Sapasmapa water supply or in the current location of La Cruz neighborhood, for the ease of obtaining drinking water.

Today the region is dominated by commerce, whose main poles are the markets⁵ of Jinotepe and Diriamba, being the first of a regional nature, where producers, merchants and consumers from the departments of Managua, Granada, Rivas and Masaya converge, especially the latter. Buses, trucks, heads, unload merchandise to supply the jinotepino market, where the prices of imported products such as new or used clothes, appliances and others, are the most competitive, not the basic grains, groceries or vegetables that are more favorable in Diriamba, as local producers in the region and surrounding rural communities sell their production in this market, because the internal roads of the region reach the shopping center directly. When

3. This is how the South Pacific of Nicaragua was called during the 19th century, until in the 20th century it was divided into two regions; the one of the South Pacific, conformed by the departments of Granada, Masaya and Carazo and the region of the South Pacific that includes the department of Rivas.

4. Inference constructed from the data taken from the gazette compendium presented in his studies by the local journalist and historian, Manuel Meza Fernández (2002), the marriage of historians Guerrero and Soriano (1964), and from the data provided by the Ingrand and Esteban (2013) thesis writers who carry out a study of the urban evolution of the municipality of Jinotepe.

5. Understood in this case as a public site intended to sell, buy or exchange goods and services.

walking the streets of urban centers in the region, it is common to observe local business signs or international brands, especially fast food, for example a TIP-TOP sign, which obstructs the view of Mombacho volcano (Granada) from the Jinotepe entrance when coming from Diriamba. The houses are used as private businesses, of people who rent them and modified them in modules to display the products⁶.

Region of the fishing communities of the caraceña plateau

This region has its base in the coastal area of the Caraceña plateau, it extends along fifty kilometers of the Pacific coast from northeast to southeast. It begins in the estuary of Tecolapa -which serves as a border with Managua- to the mouth of Escalante or Chorotega sea⁷ -boundary with the department of Rivas-. The region is divided between the municipalities of Diriamba, Jinotepe and Santa Teresa, this includes the coastal strip and the outer plain that goes up to 10 km inland, reaching approximately 200 meters above sea level. The climate is warm and very dry, between 800 and 1200 mm of water fall annually with prolonged cannular periods (CENAGRO 2013; AMUC, 2002). In the western part of this region of the fishing communities are, among others, the mostly populated communities: La Boquita, Casares, Huehuate and Tupilapa, which are part of the municipalities of Diriamba and Jinotepe. In the eastern part that corresponds to Santa Teresa.

Fishing is the economic activity par excellence of this region. About 80% of the population lives from it, directly or indirectly; they not only go to the sea to fish, they also assemble or untangle the nets, make up the boats, clean and sell fish, etc. The fishermen have the sea for them, but they do not own the means of production, but they are financed by the fishing stocks in the region, says Erling (personal communication, 2008) -community leader of Huehuate- that the latter provide to each group of fishermen of inputs with a value of approximately one hundred dollars and after the working day, they have to pay in product the value of the input or what they have consumed from it, the rest of the product is paid to the fishermen for the preparations at prices they set. In each boat (of the collection or private owners) between five and six fishermen are equipped with a battery of twelve volts, twelve gallons of gasoline, a GPS, a quintal of ice, two boxes of horses⁸, a trammel, nets and hooks, as well as a gallon of water, food, cigarettes and bonnet in case it rains. After the day, investors must be paid. The profit is distributed between the fishermen who go and the owner of the boat, for example if five fishermen enter the sea, the profit is divided by six, and the sixth is the boat or the owner of the

6. According to the Urban Economic Census of Carazo (2010: 15), there are 4,290 homes with economic activity, well above the buildings for business that add up to 1, 146 and further from the markets, which despite high concentration especially in Jinotepe and Diriamba add 921.

7. Named after Dávila Bolaños, when referring to the ceremonies and rites that los mangués performed between April 9 and 28 on the coast of the sea, between Masachapa and the mouth of the Escalante river.

8. It is an import fish, not suitable for human consumption. They are covered with a special oil that attracts prey. Each box has an approximate value of 18 dollars.

boat. When there is no income, fishermen are recorded as debt according to what they have used from the inputs. In losses the owner of the boat is not noted.

The collectors are responsible for selling the product to companies in the capital. Some years ago they distributed them, now the companies' trucks arrive with their containers because the demand for the product has grown. Merchants also arrive from the markets of Jinotepe and Diriamba or settlers who go down in their private vehicles to buy fresh seafood, especially on Saturday mornings. But not everyone lives from fishing. You can see small businesses: dining rooms, bars, billiards, cookies and grocery stores. There are those who work as waiters or cooks in some restaurants and hotels, or as maids in private country houses. The raising of pigs, poultry, handicrafts production such as garments or ornaments with environmental resources (shells, sand, splinters), which they sell to visitors who arrive at the few restaurants that have been installed in the region, mainly in the tourist center La Boquita that is owned by INTUR (Nicaraguan Tourism Institute).

The region of rural communities

This region includes the north-high part of the municipality of San Marcos, the middle zone of Diriamba and Jinotepe, the south of Santa Teresa and the entire municipality of La Conquista⁹. Although the other municipalities - Dolores, El Rosario and La Paz have areas for cultivation (basic grains and sugar cane), they are not included due to their territorial dimension, their location in the upper part of the plateau and the social relations that are built around these villages.

Rural communities sometimes have the shape of scattered hamlets and other concentrated villages. In both cases, they constitute social nuclei with very similar characteristics; low percentages of literacy¹⁰, high levels of poverty and unemployment. Although the 2005 census shows a strong tendency to work in the same locality¹¹, it is not the reality of rural communities today, since its inhabitants, generally young people in the city are looking for other employment alternatives, other than work in field. The most popular destinations for young people are Diriamba or the capital, Managua, where they undergo any work. Some also stay in nearby communities and from there move towards some textiles of the region.

9. According to the socioeconomic characterization of the municipality, 90% of its population is rural, as well as its territory.

10. In 2005, the illiteracy rate, according to the census of that year, was, in the rural area of Carazo 20.2%, higher than the rural national average, which was 18.5%. However, it should be remembered that by 2005, 15 years of neoliberal government in Nicaragua had passed, which promoted "Autonomy" (especially administrative) policies, leaving the responsibility of national education in private enterprise that limited access to education, violating a fundamental human right, which increased the numbers of illiteracy that had been lowered with the revolution of the 80s, when the Great National Literacy Crusade took place. Currently, the Sandinista government has remained since 2007 -as a continuity of the Sandinista Popular Revolution- has declared Carazo as a territory free of illiteracy, a goal achieved through literacy as a graduation modality for high school students, however, the current struggle is the battle for sixth grade and enrollment in initial education.

11. The range of people working in the same municipality is between 60% and 75%, with the exception of Dolores.

Daily life in these communities usually begins at five or four in the morning, the roles are very marked between women and men: the woman rises to burn the fire to prepare coffee, sweeps the patio and orders the house. On the other hand, the man gets up to see and feed the animals and in the case of having cows, they milk them and then take them to graze, go down to the river to bathe and take water¹² for domestic work. Regarding religion, it is in these rural communities where Protestantism has developed most in its different denominations¹³. In each community there is one or up to three cells of Protestants, who meet every evening or night to worship or to make vigils.

To conclude on this region of rural communities it should be mentioned that although they have many common features they are also different in themselves and two types of communities can be identified; depressed communities, which are located on soils with little or no fertility, areas of difficult access and therefore lack most of the basic services, for example Aguas Calientes and La Pita and intermediate communities, which serve as a bridge between depressed communities and municipal cities or headwaters; in these communities there is usually commercial movement and intermediary positions, clear examples are; the urban area of the municipality La Conquista or other communities such as La Trinidad in Diriamba.

The region of the southern villages

This region is located in the eastern part of La Caraceña plateau, with an approximate territorial extension of 42Km², if we take into account that it is formed by the urban and peripheral centers of the municipalities of El Rosario, La Paz de Carazo and only the upper part or urban Santa Teresa, since its rurality was encompassed in the region of rural communities. The topography of this region is completely flat especially for the municipality of El Rosario with a 15% decline, some moderate undulations are found in La Paz de Carazo and the periphery of Santa Teresa that go from 4% to 50%, forming small gullies the redoubts of primary or secondary forest (medium-high, broad-leaved-evergreen). However, there are no important orographic or hydrographic accidents, even for Santa Teresa in the upper part.

The 2005 census data indicate that it is men who are in charge of the field and industry, while the majority of women in this region are engaged in service activities with the exception of El Rosario. A clear example of this are the trapiches (activity that dates from the colonial

12. This practice of carrying water has decreased with the installation of wells, for example in La Conquista - which is essentially rural - by 2005 the water supply per well was 39.5%, when the national average was 16.4 according to the last national census accomplished.

13. According to the last national census, by 1995 the population of the department of Carazo, a believer in the Catholic faith represented 74%, a percentage that fell to 56.8% for 2005, while those who declared belonging to the evangelical religion increased in the same period from 17.5% to 25.2%. Although this information refers to the department in general, it should be remembered that this region of rural communities represents the majority of the department and although it is not the most populated, if it is the least attended by the Catholic Church because of the number of priests it has the department, which is usually one or two per municipality, while the evangelical church has up to three pastors in each rural community.

era in Nicaragua), which are also the greatest link between this region and the region of rural communities, for the purchase of its raw material, but at the same time, this activity links them with other regions, not only in Carazo, but also in Nicaragua. In this region there are about 50 trapiches and they are moved with stationary engine in each campus and not with oxen as they were previously [personal communication with Roberto Conrado, 2018].

DISCUSSION

From the point of view of the traditional geography described by Espejo Marín (2003), Carazo is located on a plateau that has three levels of height with particular characteristics: climate, humidity, soils, etc. The forms of exploitation of their resources depend on the same resources, that is, on human adaptation to their environment. However, this adaptation is not irrational or simply intuitive as it would be for other living species. Man, intervenes with a cultural factor (Steward, 1955), that is, with a knowledge of techniques, instruments, procedures, etc., that he shares with other human beings from other places, but also with a set of relationships, which are not limited to the territorial space but it is inserted in a broader social and economic framework that links each region with the others. If the basis of its production stems from the adaptation of its environment, the commercialization of its products exceeds the region, that is, it comprises an articulation system, such as the complex networks proposed by Boehm (2007).

The other point is that the geographical region does not determine the activity of man on the environment, which is evident in the upper part of the plateau, on which we have distinguished two regions; The golden triangle and the southern villages. Both have similar environmental conditions and therefore, would have to have similar production systems. However, its difference lies in its history and culture; while, the cities of the golden triangle were born from native towns, the others were created in the colony as a process of redistribution of the populations. Consequently, their cultural practices of consumption and relationships will have to be different. In other words, it was not the environmental conditions that defined the culture of these regions, but their history, their regional time that does not necessarily coincide with the national time as proposed by García González (2000b) and Viales (2010).

The borders between each one of the regions, does not agree with the political limits, but neither are they as distinguishable as these because they are social boundaries, as Fabregas (2010: 160) puts it from social anthropology “a border is created when they are put in contact societies with different cultural ecologies and begin an interrelation that, in turn, will result in a particular society”.

CONCLUSIONS

From the conceptual point of view, we can conclude with an approximation of the historical region concept as a dialectical and dynamic social space, lived according to certain needs and built according to certain interests, the elasticity of its boundaries (intra, inter and transnational) it does not necessarily correspond to administrative political divisions, and although its historical development obeys its own dynamics, it is still linked and influenced by one or more centers of regional power, which in turn obey a central power: The State. Socio-economic, political, cultural and even ecological changes, due to their anthropocentric nature, happen faster and faster, forging a kind of identity in movement due to the interrelation between culture and the surrounding environment, having man (subject political) as an integral part of the process. The most important thing in the historical region is that it is a lived space and that this life in common is in the consciousness of those who have lived it.

From the empirical point of view we assume that the four regions identified in Carazo, have an internal dynamic, associated with their ecological and productive characteristics, which shape their working relationships and therefore their culture. However, there is a dynamic relationship between regions that are governed by trade, social relations and cultural dynamics. Regional boundaries (which are social constructions) do not coincide with political and administrative boundaries, but neither do they deny them nor are they an obstacle to regional dynamics. However, it would be interesting for municipal governments to consider this way of seeing and managing the territory because they could give joint and integral solutions to regional populations, reducing the gap between the city and the periphery.

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