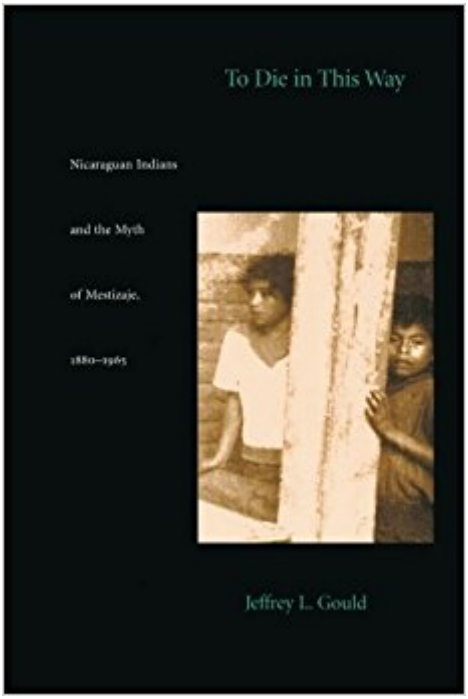
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To Die In This Way: Nicaraguan Indians And The Myth Of Mestizaje, 1880-1965 (Latin America Otherwise)



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Synopsis

Challenging the widely held belief that Nicaragua has been ethnically homogeneous since the nineteenth century, To Die in This Way reveals the continued existence and importance of an officially Ã¢â ¬Å“forgottenÃ¢â ¬Â• indigenous culture. Jeffrey L. Gould argues that mestizajeÃ¢â ¬â •a cultural homogeneity that has been hailed as a cornerstone of Nicaraguan national identityÃ¢â ¬â •involved a decades-long process of myth building.Through interviews with indigenous peoples and records of the elite discourse that suppressed the expression of cultural differences and rationalized the destruction of Indian communities, Gould tells a story of cultural loss. Land expropriation and coerced labor led to cultural alienation that shamed the indigenous population into shedding their language, religion, and dress. Beginning with the 1870s, Gould historicizes the forces that prompted a collective movement away from a strong identification with indigenous cultural heritage to an Ã¢â ¬Å“acceptanceÃ¢â ¬Â• of a national mixed-race identity.By recovering a significant part of Nicaraguan history that has been excised from the national memory, To Die in This Way critiques the enterprise of third world nation-building and thus marks an important step in the study of Latin American culture and history that will also interest anthropologists and students of social and cultural historians.

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highly accessible interpretation of identity as contingent and historically situated. Gould also provides a nuanced history of memory, demonstrating how rich and insightful ethnographic studies of memory would be if researchers were to situate them in long-range temporal processes while paying close attention to chronology.Ã¢â ¬Â• - Joanne Rappaport, American EthnologistÃ¢â ¬Å“To Die in This Way is a brilliant work of integrative scholarship. . . . [P]owerful political, economic, and cultural analysis. . . .Ã¢â ¬Â• - Greg Grandin, Hispanic American Historical ReviewÃ¢â ¬Å“For anthropologists there are at least two important aspects of this book written by an historian of Central America. First, and most obvious, it is clearly interdisciplinary. Even more important, Gould has used our beloved Ã¢â ¬Ëœfieldwork,Ã¢â ¬â„¢ our distinctive method of obtaining data.Ã¢â ¬Â• - Thomas Maloney, American AnthropologistÃ¢â ¬Å“The questions GouldÃ¢â ¬â„¢s admirable work raises should spur in-depth scholarship in Nicaragua and elsewhere. The book has appeal, too, for a broad audience. . . . Gould illustrates how discourses of homogeneity and equal rights can be used as weapons, and thus touches on issues of assimilation such as bilingual education, religious freedom and nationalism, and on the thorny issues concerning reparations for intergroup oppression, such as affirmative action and rectification of borders.Ã¢â ¬Â• - Times Literary SupplementÃ¢â ¬Å“To Die in This Way is an extraordinary achievement. The research required to sustain such an innovative and original argument is truly impressive, ranging from searches through political and legal archives to ethnography and oral history. In short, this is a pathbreaking major work in Latin American history."Ã¢â ¬â •John Coatsworth, Harvard University“Delving into Nicaragua’s myth of mestizaje, Gould provides a powerful analysis of the political and cultural mechanisms that eradicated indigenous identity throughout Latin America. His careful analysis of indigenous cultural loss, unlike that of others, does not require an essentialist reading of indigenous culture.”—Carol Smith, University of California at DavisÃ¢â ¬Å“Twenty years from now To Die in This Way will still be read as a classic work heralding (one can only hope) a wave of studies deconstructing ethnic identity and nationalism throughout modern Central America.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •Lowell Gudmundson, Mount Holyoke CollegeÃ¢â ¬Å“To Die in This Way is a brilliant work of integrative scholarship. . . . [P]owerful political, economic, and cultural analysis. . . .Ã¢â ¬Â• (Greg Grandin Hispanic American Historical Review)Ã¢â ¬Å“[A] remarkable example of where ethnographic history is moving. . . . [A] cogent, lively, and highly accessible interpretation of identity as contingent and historically situated. Gould also provides a nuanced history of memory, demonstrating how rich and insightful ethnographic studies of memory would be if researchers were to situate them in long-range temporal processes while paying close attention to chronology.Ã¢â ¬Â• (Joanne Rappaport American

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This second book by Jeffrey Gould is a remarkable investigation of the fate of Western Nicaragua’s indigenous communities within the ladino national state. This history begins in the 1880’s as scientific positivist liberalism and booming export agricultural production embolden and enrich Nicaragua’s ladinos. The era opens a second Conquest against Nicaragua’s indigenous communities under the banner of Progress, Civilization and Modernity. To Die in This Way follows this story well into the 20th century. On the eve of the Sandinista Revolution, many of these indigenous communities are broken, their children scattered through the countryside and the city. Their descendants share with their ladino neighbors a disdain for "lo indio," but they share with these ladinos also their "memories of mestizaje,"-their idealized memories (centered in episodes of

"primitive accumulation") of the destruction of their communities. These historical grievances augment shared experiences of oppression in the agro-export economy, and contribute to the popular antipathy toward the Somoza regime. Although the Sandinistas incorporate these historical grievances into their revolutionary discourse, after the Revolution, the Sandinistas fail to come to terms with the hidden history of the indigenous communities. 'You were destroyed by the imperialist terratenientes,' they said, 'and we will avenge you.' As the reawakened Comunidades Indigenas demand their land, however, the Sandinistas insist that, indeed, the Comunidades had been destroyed. In 1990, the Sandinistas pay for their "participation in the reproduction of the myth of mestizaje" with losses in the north by margins of 4 to 1 and 5 to 1 in the areas of the Comunidades IndÃƒÂ-genas. Today still, the hidden time bomb of the mestizaje project threatens to blow a hole in Nicaraguan politics. To Die in This Way proposes to bring this repressed history into the open. "This study shows," Gould states, "that the Nicaraguan Indians played such a vital economic and political role from 1880-1925 that their absence from the standard historical portrait leaves a seriously distorted image of Nicaragua's social and political development. Without understanding this prolonged, multi-front assault against the Comunidades Indigenas it would be impossible to recognize a submerged cornerstone of elite hegemony." To Die in This Way is a study of discourse in the Foucaultian sense. It approaches the myth of mestizaje as a set of mutually justifying rhetorical and coercive strategies which create the mestizo nation as a natural condition. " The `myth of Nicaragua mestiza,' the common sense notion that Nicaragua had long been an ethnically homogenous society," Gould writes, "is one of the elite's most enduring hegemonic achievements." To Die in This Way adopts two senses of hegemony as it undertakes to describe both the moment when a "Nicaragua mestiza" becomes common sense, and how the mestizaje project colors resistance to it. The first, following Jean and John Comaroff, defines hegemony as a naturalized ideology. William Roseberry proposes, however, that "we use the concept not to understand consent but to understand struggle, the ways in which the words, images, symbols. . .used by subordinate populations to talk about. . .or resist their domination are shaped by the process of domination itself." Roseberry's comment on hegemony addresses also the difficult concept of ethnic identity so central to To Die in This Way. Precisely because indÃƒÂ-gena becomes mestizo with the triumph of mestizaje, the heirs of the discredited Comunidades IndÃƒÂ-genas claim no separate identity. "Who was I then," Gould writes, "to devise ethnic identities around people's stories who rejected those identities as irrelevant." Kay Warren argues, though, that indigenous identity is not a fixed set of attributes but is the outcome of the type of struggle Roseberry describes, that is, it is the product of resistance to a unifying state. Gould recounts the demise of Nicaragua's Comunidades

IndÃƒÂ-genas, then, as the history of indÃƒÂ-genas robbed of the means to articulate their identity by an expanding ladino economy and state. Moreover, the outcome of the struggle against the mestizaje project is not a neutral reinterpreted indigenous ethnicity, but is one characterized by loss. "But that loss," Gould argues, "has far less to do with essentialist markers of ethnicity crucial to cultural survivalism and far more to do with the destruction of communities, communal organizations and identities." The Comunidades IndÃƒÂ-genas are the history of To Die in This Way. Gould describes these organizations as something of "a trade union, a powerful local government cum political party and a church rolled into one," and thus, they are the principal vehicle for conserving autonomous identities. Each of the first three chapters highlights the struggle of specific Comunidades. In 1881, the Matagalpa indÃƒÂ-genas rise in revolt against the ladino municipal government over a mix of grievances, and attempt to create an independent "Indian nation." Over the next two decades, local elites broker a solution to the "Indian problem" with the national government that silences the Comunidad. In Boaco, the Comunidad IndÃƒÂ-gena confronts expanding cattle ranchers armed with a discourse of equal citizenship that denies its very existence. Unlike Subtiaba, the Comunidad continguous with Le/n, where artisan and ethnic politics overlapped to form a flexible and intense resistance to ladino politics, these two Comunidades succumbed to the mestizaje project and largely ceased to operate several decades before the Sandinista Revolution. However, in all three cases, the events of primitive accumulation which mark watersheds in these struggles enter collective memory and be come important rallying cries for the rural union movements of the 1960's and 1970's. To Die in This Way is an empirically rich study of a fundamental and poorly understood element of Nicaragua's modern history. While documenting the history of western Nicaragua's silenced indigenous communities, it constructs also a meaningful dialogue with other scholars engaging similar problems. Thus, the book makes a significant theoretical and empirical contribution to Latin American historiography.

This book includes many essays that Gould has published elsewhere, though sometimes in Spanish. It is nice to have them collected in this volume, but I wish this volume included some of his other essays. Some of Gould's essays [like one in Radical History Review] indicate that the fall of the first Sandinista government was NOT merely due to FSLN espousal of a monolithic mestizo identity.Why is mestizaje villified by Gould and his colleague Charles Hale? Mestizaje could be a good thing. For Mexican laborers in the U.S., the discourses of mestizaje are a source of solidarity against an "Anglo" [white] oppressor. The term LA RAZA unites recent illegal and legal immigrants with U.S.-born Latinos, giving them a common identity against the anglo-white mainstream.Similarly,

in a lesser known essay by Gould about the Monimbo riots of the 1920s, Gould argues that Monimbosenos led by the cacique Vital Noriongue were able to establish feelings of solidarity with the local mestizos of Masaya. Together, they rioted against the Anglo-U.S. railroad company and its policies. In that essay, Gould argued that the Monimbosenos were inspired by the original Sandinismo of Augusto C. Sandino, who preached an ideology of "indo-hispanic" pan-Latin American solidarity.I REALLY WISH that essay had been included in this anthology because I no longer own a photocopy of the Arturo Taracena, et al. volume Identidades Nacionales en Centroamerica. Besides, isn't it time for that article to appear in English? Anyway, why was it excluded from this volume? Probably because Gould didn't want it to disrupt his monolithic rant against the supposed evils of mestizaje.

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