

Honduras: Historical Profiles of Major Cities

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(Chapter 13, *Latin American Urbanization. Historical Profiles of Major Cities*, edited by Gerald Michael Greenfield, 313-30. Westport, Connecticut and London: Greenwood Press, 1994)

Introduction

The process of urbanization in Honduras is, for the most part, a tale of two cities. Tegucigalpa, the capital, and San Pedro Sula, the industrial center, are the only truly urban places. These cities currently dominate the urban scene of the country, and they are expected to continue in that role. However, a few other places were important during the colonial period, and as population concentrations increase throughout the country, some of those early centers have become regional foci; in the future they might rival the two major centers.

According to the latest census, taken during spring 1988, about 4.5 million people lived within the country's 112,000 square kilometers. Generally, they live in the central and western upland valleys and along the north coast. Population decreases as one proceeds to the south and east. Perhaps 93 percent of the population can be classified as Ladinos or mestizos (Spanish speaking persons of Indian-Spanish heritage). Another five percent comes from six Indian groups: Chortí, Lenca, Miskito, Pech (Paya), Tawahka (Sumu), and Tol (Jicaque). Afro- and Anglo-Antilleans occupy the north coast and the Bay Islands. The largest component of this community is the Garífuna, or black Caribs, who live in forty-four coastal villages. Small groups of German and Middle Eastern ancestry are also prominent in business activities on the north coast. The country is regarded as one of the poorest countries in the Americas, but the figure for annual per capita income does not reflect the large amount of foodstuffs produced for immediate consumption by the farmers and their families. During the first half of the twentieth century, bananas by far dominated the export economy. Over the last twenty-five years, however, agriculture has become more diversified. Coffee, sugarcane, tobacco, seafood, cattle, and lumber are significant contributors to regional economies.

Emerging from Spanish domination in 1821 and withstanding the internal wars of the 1800s, Honduras has become one of those Latin American countries that are only now escaping the cycle of frequent disruptive changes in national government. Since 1821, the country has averaged almost one presidential change per year. The recent political stability has been a critical factor in the completion of important development projects, including the El Cajon hydroelectric dam in central Honduras, the opening of new agricultural lands in the lower Aguán Valley, a widespread road-building program, and the construction of schools in almost all rural communities.

Some reports have named Honduras as the least urbanized of the Central American countries (Fox and Huguet 1977; Diaz-Briquets 1986), but determining exactly how many "catrachos," as Hondurans affectionately call themselves, are urban and how many are classified as rural is not easy. Honduran statisticians employ two definitions of

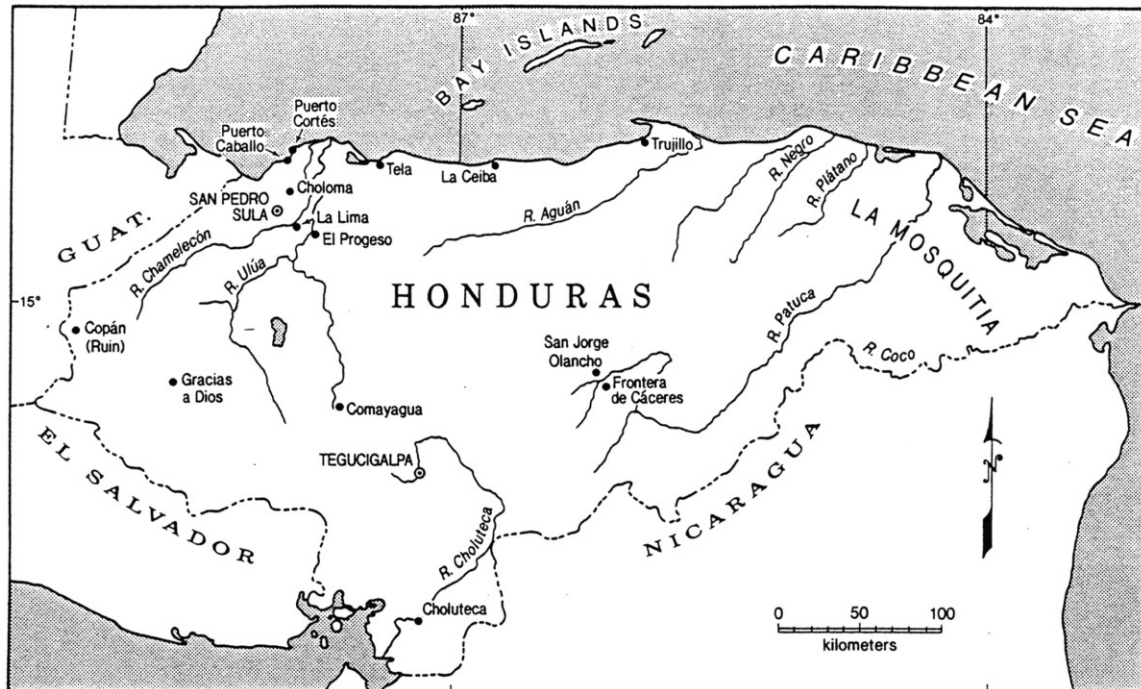
urban: (1) central places of over 1,000 population and (2) any *cabecera municipal*, or capital of the third-order, county-sized political subdivision (*municipio*). The 2,500 population figure used in many countries to define urban is normally not employed in Honduras, and for international comparisons few studies on Honduran urbanization are available (see Funes and Láinez 1986; Gibson 1970; Halliburton and Flores 1978; Yeager 1972).

The republic of Honduras is centrally located in the isthmus that connects Mexico and South America. Most of the country is rugged, covered with sloping uplands of moderate elevations that reach 2,750 meters and numerous intervening valleys. Only in the eastern one-fifth of the territory, in the zone known as La Mosquitia, is there a large area of flat lowlands.

Almost all of the major rivers flow into the Caribbean Sea, reflecting the location of the highest mountains in western Honduras and the eastern origins of the moisture-laden winds. The significant rivers in length, volume, and alluvial deposition are from west to east: Ulúa, Aguán, Negro, Plátano, and Patuca, and on the Nicaraguan border, the Rio Coco, which is the largest in Central America (see Map 1).

In spite of serious deforestation over the last two decades, Honduras remains a wooded land. The central and western highlands are pine-covered; the eastern lowlands and the north coast grow tropical hardwoods. However, a vibrant forest products industry and the desire to clear lands for pasture often produce conflicts over the best policy for forestry developments.

Map 1.



Urban History

Colonial Patterns

The first large, agglomerated center of population in what is now the republic of Honduras was Copán, the famous site of the classic period Maya. The monumental center of Copán and the residential areas of the nearby elongated valley housed perhaps 20,000 people at some time during the period of most dense settlement, A.D. 300-780 (IHAH 1983). Of course, at Spanish conquest that Mayan city was an overgrown ruin.

After the Spaniards became established in Mexico under Cortés and in Panamá under Pedrarias, the lands between became a battleground for Spaniards fighting among themselves for New World property. Pedro Alvarado eventually took Guatemala for Cortés, and Hernando Cordova overwhelmed Costa Rica and organized Nicaragua for Pedrarias, but Honduras remained, and here the fraternal battles ranged (see Chamberlain 1966 for the most exhaustive historical account). Eventually the followers of Cortés won Honduras, but in their rush to claim the land by right of settlement, the earliest attempts to build towns generally failed. Two early centers that had the most success and can be put forward as examples of the early models of Spanish settlements in Honduras were Trujillo and San Jorge de Olancho.

Trujillo, a coastal site first explored by the Spaniards during Columbus's fourth voyage, was settled under the orders of Cortés by his cousin and captain, Francisco de las Casas, in May 1525 (Saldaña 1525). The locale selected was an obvious choice—emphasizing the importance of the physical world in historical activities. For the same reason that Columbus had first stepped ashore in the place, the Spanish colonizers were guided to the site—because it lies inside the largest protected bay on the Caribbean shore of Central America. For sailing vessels, such a site has overwhelming importance. The enormous enclosure, some thirteen kilometers wide across its mouth, was formed as a giant sand spit built westward. Sediments from the Río Aguán, whose mouth is just upwind, are pushed westward with the long shore drift by the trade winds. Inside the harbor, winds and waves are relatively calm, except in the rare cases of winter nortes that infrequently blow in from the northwest. Without a doubt, the presence of a large, protected bay was the single most important physical factor that influenced Spanish settlements on the north coast of Honduras. Puerto Caballos and Tela, both to the west of Trujillo, were other examples of Spanish towns in this area.

Cortés himself visited the new villa in 1526 and assisted in cutting the forest from the site and in erecting the first houses. After dividing the pacified local Indians among the conquerors (Salcedo 1526:322, 328), he returned to Mexico in the same year. The initial site of Trujillo was a swampy area at the foot of the mountain, but under Governor Diego Lopez Salcedo the town was moved upslope, "where the setting sun could be seen" (Salcedo 1526:324).

The large flat valley to the interior of Trujillo, over two difficult mountain ranges to the south, was known first as Uilancho and then as Huilancho, before being finally

corrupted into Olancho. The valley, one of the largest in all of Honduras, approximately 20 by 130 kilometers, quickly attracted the attention of rival Spaniards, who had a liking for the flat uplands, which reminded them of their Castille homeland. Into this land the Spaniards from Nicaragua traveled and thereby provoked a response by the allies of Cortes in Trujillo.

By late April 1526, Francisco Saavedra, left in Trujillo as Cortes's representative, had determined that a Spanish settlement should be established far to the interior near the heart of Indian populations—in the Olancho Valley. He therefore ordered Bartolome de Celada to proceed inland in search of the best site for the proposed Spanish villa (Cepero 1526:57-59). The new settlement, named Villa de la Frontera de Cáceres, was erected "in a savanna near some Indian towns called Telica chequita and Escamilpachequita" (Cepero 1526:61). The internal layout of the villa followed a widely known model of new settlement by Spaniards in the New World, the grid pattern focusing on a central square or plaza. Celada and his men, with aid from the local Indians, laid out the first plots in the following order: (1) the church, (2) the plaza, (3) the hospital, (4) the governor's house, (5) the jail, (6) the cabildo, and (7) other houses.

Within only two years of Spanish colonization, the two dominant models of colonial settlement had been placed on the Honduran landscape. One model, represented by Trujillo, focused on the coast and had a port as a node of transshipment. It was connected to the interior by a camino real, which had in turn a few tributary roads that reached into a hinterland. In those lands behind the port, products were gathered for use in the port or sent on to the mother country. The second pattern of settlement was oriented to the interior and focused on a Spanish town built along the upper piedmont of an upland valley. Frontera de Cáceres was designed as this type, but San Jorge de Olancho was the permanent example for the Olancho Valley.

For at least half a century, the Spanish settlers in Honduras did not deviate from this pattern of settlement site selection. All of the major Spanish centers (Lunardi 1946:67-90) fitted one of the two models: the ports were Puerto de Caballos (near modern Puerto Cortés), Triunfo de la Cruz (near modern Tela), and Trujillo; the interior piedmont sites were Villa de la Frontera de Cáceres, San Jorge Olancho, Choluteca, San Pedro, Gracias a Dios, and Comayagua. Not until the attraction of mining in irregular upslope areas, such as at the silver mines near Tegucigalpa in the 1580s (West 1959), did the colonists abandon their propensity for coastal ports and upland interior piedmonts.

Independent Honduras

Honduras gained independence as part of the United Provinces of Central America, but that union proved short-lived due to rivalries among its constituent members. Honduras formally declared itself an independent nation in 1839, but the new nation, weak and unstable, fell prey to outside intervention, especially from the strongest regional nation, Guatemala. As a result, "the first half century of independence was a period filled with turbulence, regional disunity, and the absence of national perceptions" (Morris 1984:2). Given this pattern, the nation experienced very little in the

way of development and remained overwhelmingly a poor, agrarian nation with a weak urban sector.

The 1870s and 1880s were a time of Liberal dominance, which saw the emergence of a stronger state and a variety of reforms. This period witnessed favorable concessions to mining and banana plantation interests (Morris 1984:2). United States-based companies, the most prominent being Minor Keith's United Fruit Company, developed Honduras's banana industry. By the 1920s, these companies owned the best agricultural land and had developed transportation and shipping infrastructure designed to facilitate their operations. Their actions remained largely confined to Honduras's north coast, oriented toward the ports of Trujillo, La Ceiba, Tela, and Puerto Cortés. This produced an enclave economy in the region and sparked the development of new towns, as well as the growth of older ones, fed by workers brought in from the Caribbean and from internal migration (Morris 1984:5-6) (see Table 1). Processing industries arose, especially in San Pedro Sula, but apart from the north coast area and Tegucigalpa, neither urban development nor the economy showed much dynamism. Honduras enjoyed one of its longest periods of stability during the age of Tiburcio Carias Andino, who first gained the presidency in 1932 and remained a key factor in national politics until the early 1960s (Morris 1984:8-9). Ruling in an authoritarian fashion, the Carias regime did yield some positive results, including completion of the Pan-American Highway, the expansion of paved roads, and construction of an airport in Tegucigalpa (Morris 1984:9).

Table 1.

PLACE	1887	1930	1945	1950	1961	1974	1988
Tegucigalpa* FM	7,032	27,573	55,775	72,385	134,075	273,894	576,661
San Pedro Sula* COR	1,714	13,130	22,116	21,139	58,632	150,991	287,350
La Ceiba* ATL	445	10,237	12,185	16,645	24,863	38,788	68,764
El Progreso YORO	n.d.	3,396	6,921	4,506	13,797	28,105	60,058
Choluteca* CHOL	1,884	3,716	5,275	7,075	11,483	26,152	54,481
Choloma COR	446	n.d.	2,491	2,738	4,600	9,161	39,054
Comayagua* COM	2,743	3,676	4,848	5,192	8,473	15,941	37,226
Puerto Cortés COR	595	6,014	7,955	12,228	17,048	25,817	31,586
Danlí EL PAR	1,546	2,593	3,759	4,207	6,325	10,825	29,025
La Lima COR	57	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	9,873	n.d.	28,703
Siguatopeque COM	750	2,706	2,618	4,599	5,993	12,456	27,293
Tela ATL	619	6,041	10,954	12,614	13,619	19,055	23,303
Santa Rosa de Copán* COP	2,285	5,196	7,972	6,417	7,946	12,413	19,690
Juticalpa* OLAN	2,853	2,897	3,372	3,205	7,210	10,075	19,622
Catacamas OLAN	1,075	1,529	2,039	2,412	3,873	9,134	19,622
San Lorenzo VAL	n.d.	1,367	2,723	1,272	4,395	9,467	15,602
Tocoa COL	227	668	582	1,226	1,203	2,805	14,079
Olanchito YOR	1,451	1,715	2,785	1,507	4,362	7,411	13,969
El Paraíso EL PAR	850	1,149	1,617	2,805	4,159	6,709	13,069
Villanueva COR	242	1,061	2,078	2,199	3,956	6,342	11,981
La Paz* L PAZ	2,572	2,962	3,681	1,763	4,705	6,811	11,238
Santa Bárbara* S B	1,589	2,326	2,684	1,562	4,915	5,883	10,503
Nacaome* VAL	791	1,773	2,630	1,740	3,724	6,159	9,801
Yoro* YOR	2,608	3,637	2,622	4,120	4,120	4,724	6,979
Ocotepeque* OCOT	2,608	3,637	2,622	4,170	4,120	4,724	6,979
Trujillo* COL	1,926	5,989	2,957	3,016	3,491	3,961	5,783
La Esperanza* INT	948	1,318	1,327	1,959	1,764	2,146	4,017
Roatán* I B	302	913	1,094	870	1,629	1,943	3,901
Yuscarán* EL PAR	2,023	1,225	1,189	1,158	1,608	1,835	2,091
Puerto Lempira* G A D	25	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	104	727	2,033

Note: List for 1988 includes all places over 10,000 population and all departamento (state) capitals (*)

In 1955, a National Superior Planning Council was created, headed by the minister of economy, and engaged in development planning. The government also began a policy of investing heavily in economic growth. Comparatively little progress in industrialization resulted. A government industrial census carried out in 1967, which classified establishments with five or more employees as "factories," counted only 634 such establishments throughout the entire country. About that time, San Pedro Sula concentrated approximately 75 percent of all Honduran factories, with food processing as the most important branch (Blustein 1971:151).

In the years between 1950 and 1980, the number of medium-sized towns in Honduras increased from four to thirteen; however, the total percentage of urban population represented by such towns decreased. At the same time, however, Tegucigalpa grew very rapidly, from 72,000 to over 400,000. In 1980, then, Tegucigalpa accounted for 43 percent of the nation's urban population. Its share was not larger because of the even more rapid expansion of San Pedro Sula, which had only 12 percent of the nation's urban population in 1950 but fully 26 percent in 1980 (Helms 1984:66-67) (see Table 2). San Pedro Sula was the only major secondary city in Central America (Helms 1984:66-67).

Table 2.

Selected Urban Statistics for Honduras, 1950-1988				
	1950	1961	1974	1988
Tegucigalpa Population	72,385	134,075	273,894	576,661
San Pedro Sula Population	21,139	58,632	150,991	287,350
Total Honduran Population	1,368,605	1,884,765	2,656,948	4,443,721
National Growth for Period		67.2%	41.0%	37.7%
Urban Growth for Period		91.3%	72.5%	35.1%
San Pedro Sula, % of Total	1.4	3.11	5.7	6.5
Tegucigalpa % of Total	5.29	7.11	10.3	1.3
Tegucigalpa, Primacy Index	1.44	1.34	1.26	1.39
Urban (a) Proportion	31.0%	30.4%	37.2%	42.6%
Urban (b) Proportion	16.3%	20.5%	29.1%	38.9%
No. of Places 2,500+	28	32	46	81
Total Population of Above	223,648	382,859	774,143	1,730,385
Proportion of Above in Tegucigalpa + S P Sula	41.8%	50.3%	54.9%	49.9%
(a) Urban, defined as <u>cabeceras municipales</u> (municipal capitals)				
(b) Urban, defined as population centers of 2,500 and over.				
Sources: Honduras, national censuses, 1960, 1964, 1981, and 1989				

City Profiles

San Pedro Sula

The second largest Honduran city, which lies on the southwestern edge of the fertile alluvial plain of the Chamelecón and Ulúa rivers, is San Pedro Sula. When founded by the Spanish conqueror Pedro Alvarado in June 1536, the site was called

"Villa de Senor Sant Pedro de Puerto Caballos" (Alvarado 1536). The initial site of San Pedro was next to the Indian settlement called Choloma, just north of modern San Pedro Sula. Three years later, under a new governor, the town was moved three leagues south to a healthier spot and slightly renamed "Villa de San Pedro de Puerto Caballos." At that time, the only activity of the Spanish colonists was placer gold mining; they all lived in twelve houses of palm "in the style of the Indians" (Montejo 1539). For the remainder of the sixteenth century and for all of the next century, primary documents consistently refer to the small, but important, administrative center as "San Pedro." Not until the early eighteenth century does "Sula" (also Usula, Ula, Ulua, Sola, and Zula) become attached permanently to the saint's name.

The settlement, although hot and humid to the colonists from Europe, was important early as a center from which the natives of the Ulua Valley were subjugated and the mines just to the west organized. But San Pedro's lasting value comes from its location to the interior of the major Caribbean port of Puerto Caballos, now Puerto Cortés. San Pedro immediately served as the political, religious, and economic headquarters of the hinterland of the port that connected the incipient colony with Spain. Still, San Pedro never attracted much population during the colonial era. The town had thirty-five Spanish citizens (*vecinos*) in 1541 (Pastor 1990:89). By 1575, the fifty Spaniards in San Pedro controlled thirty Indian towns, which accounted for about 700 tributaries and a total indigenous population of about 3000. The place was thought of as "sickly, in spite of the surrounding very fertile lands of the valley, of much maize, cacao, honey, and livestock." While the Spanish population had increased slightly over the fifty years since contact, the Indians had been reduced from perhaps 50,000 (Velasco 1575:301-306). The number of Spanish *vecinos* present, which marked the progress of the town, began to decline as well: only twenty remained in 1582 (Contreras Guevara 1582), and only nine were there eight years later (Valverde 1590).

Because San Pedro was easily accessible by a *camino real* that connected it with Puerto Caballos, pirates often continued their raiding to burn San Pedro, as happened in 1595. Honduran historian Rodolfo Pastor (1990: 106–112) has made it clear that the abandonment of Puerto Caballos and the establishment of another port—Santo Tomas at Amatique—farther to the west along the coast nearer Guatemala brought the decline and abandonment of San Pedro shortly after 1600. Between 1629 and 1665, San Pedro and Puerto Caballos virtually disappeared from the maps of the period. Pirates controlled the sea nearby, and the Indian labor force had virtually disappeared. By 1682 San Pedro had been reoccupied by 24 Spanish *vecinos*, although at the time it was the smallest settlement of Spaniards in Central America (Pastor 1990:119).

For most of the next two centuries, San Pedro was of little consequence to the history of Honduras. The site was occupied, but population growth and economic activity were stagnant. Early in the period, raids up the Chamelecon and Ulua rivers by Englishmen and their Miskito Indian allies harassed San Pedro Sula and caused temporary abandonment, but the settlement did not die. Seventy Spaniards, mostly cattlemen, oversaw a herd of almost 4000 head in 1714 (Pastor 1990:123). Still, "St. Peter's Solia," when visited in 1731 by John Cockburn, the castaway English pirate, was a very

small town where little was available to eat except roasted plantains (Cockburn 1735:22-27).

The first portion of the nineteenth century found Central Americans in their revolution for independence, and the new republics were occupied with internal strife that prohibited economic developments and population growth, both requirements for urbanization. But by mid-century San Pedro Sula found an unlikely source of immigration: the U.S. South. In 1867-1868 about 200 former Confederate rebels settled a site known as Medina on the southeastern edge of San Pedro Sula (Swett 1868). At the time the 500-600 residents of San Pedro lived mostly in dwellings of cohune palm-thatched roofs and clay-covered walls [bajareque]. The large southeastern barrio of modern San Pedro Sula still carries the name of the Confederate settlement. The railroad from Puerto Caballos, the first in Honduras, reached San Pedro in 1870 (Pastor 1990:184), and while the desired trans-isthmian route never materialized, at least San Pedro Sula had easier access to the coast and port.

Events that led eventually to the true urbanization of San Pedro Sula occurred at the beginning of the twentieth century when foreign capitalists, including the North Americans interested in the incipient banana operations, entered Honduras with some intensity. Pastor (1990:277) reported that in 1912, more than one-third of the "first class capitalists" of San Pedro Sula were from abroad. Several Christians from Palestine, often called "arabes" (Arabs) or "turcos (Turks) in Honduras (Crowley 1984), along with a few Germans, French, Italians, and English, added their money and abilities to organize small industries in the community. Tobacco, beer, furniture, construction materials, and soap were the first products. Of course, there was the powerful Samuel Zemurray, eventual head of United Fruit Company, who entered the Ulua Valley with gusto, buying farms, draining the swamps, constructing levees in the Ulua floodplain with the first tractors brought to Honduras, and paying, for the first time, enough in taxes for the town to erect an infrastructure worthy of a city, including passable roads that reached in all directions. The wave of wage-seeking migrants to the valley adjacent to San Pedro Sula tripled the population during 1910-1920 (Pastor 1990:304). By 1930 the rural valley had 68,000 people, by 1940, 87,000, and by 1950, 125,000 (Croner 1972:55-69). The valley had become the greatest banana-producing area in the world, and on its margins a real city was being created.

In fact, for a decade, San Pedro Sula was the fastest growing city in Central America (Crowley 1972). Between the censuses of 1950 and 1961, while Tegucigalpa grew by 86 percent, San Pedro gained 177 percent. Obviously, most of San Pedro's growth came from in-migration, because the annual natural increase has been estimated to be about 3 percent. Several factors seem to have encouraged migration to San Pedro Sula: (1) increased and better all-weather roads that led into the city from all directions; (2) labor displacements from the banana plantations; (3) development of new industry in San Pedro; and (4) poverty and lack of education in small towns and the rural areas (Teller 1972: 35-39; Croner 1972). Even residents of La Ceiba, a once-bustling fruit company port, left for San Pedro Sula (Thomas and Croner 1975).

Throughout Honduras, modern San Pedro Sula is known as the industrial capital of the country (Shirey 1970). The number of industries has grown from 5 in 1935, to 30 in 1955, and to 116 in 1970, and industrial growth continues until today. Clearly, for the early 1990s, the most dynamic industrializing region of the country is the zone including San Pedro Sula, Choloma, and Puerto Cortes. This narrow corridor, which runs along the new four-lane divided highway, is an area of booming development for industry and a transshipping depot. At one end is Puerto Cortés, the largest port in Central America; at the other terminus is San Pedro Sula, one of the fastest growing cities in Central America. Recent population growth expanded throughout the entire Ulúa Valley and includes, besides San Pedro Sula, many of the other largest cities in the country: El Progreso (fourth largest); Choloma (sixth largest); Puerto Cortés (eighth largest); and La Lima (tenth largest). Taken together, the population of the Ulúa complex rivals the population concentration of the primate city and capital, Tegucigalpa.

Tegucigalpa

Honduran historians have consistently suggested that Tegucigalpa, the largest city and capital of the republic, was founded as a colonial center in 1578 (Oyuela 1989:19; Duron 1904). According to the standard account, Spanish miners from Comayagua headed south and found ores, especially silver, in the uplands east of Tegucigalpa. Of particular importance were the deposits at Santa Lucia, Valle de Angeles, and San Juancito. Tegucigalpa became a *real de minas*, a center for administering the mines and for smelting the raw ores. There is, however, ample evidence that before Spanish entry an important indigenous settlement was in situ and continued afterward. Perhaps the first rendering of "Tegucigalpa" was that in the 1536 repartimiento, or the allocation of Indians, by Pedro Alvarado to his Spanish colleagues of conquest. A place transcribed as "Teguycegalpa" appears in his list of Indian sites within the jurisdiction of Gracias, the new Spanish headquarters in western Honduras (Alvarado 1536). "Tagusgualpa," as an area interior to Trujillo, was mentioned by Bishop Pedraza in 1544, but it is unclear whether that territory (which later becomes known as La Mosquitia) refers to the current Honduran capital or not. Clearly, by 1549, when a major census of Indian laborers (tributaries) in Central America was taken, "Teguiagalpa" (also "Teguiagala") appears in the list as home of 150 tributaries (Cerrato 1549). The next tributary census, that of 1571-1574 by Velasco (1575), adds no new evidence because it appears to be simply a copy of the 1549 count. The next few censuses all indicate the relatively large size of indigenous Tegucigalpa, including adjacent Comayaguela, a purely Indian settlement. In 1582, "Tegucicalpa" had 110 tributaries (Contreras Guevara 1582); 160 lived there in 1590 (Valverde 1590), and two years later there were 163 (1592). In any instance, the natural environment of "Teguz," as it is now known to Hondurans, is not well suited for the development of a large city. The original site is in a bowl-shaped depression along the upper reaches of the Choluteca River near the convergence of three small streams. The central plaza is about 935 meters above sea level and some 220 meters below the rim of the enclosing plateau. Lands in and surrounding the city are quite sloping, relatively infertile, and seasonally dry.

However, in spite of the relatively poor habitat, the irresistible attraction of mineral wealth brought increasing numbers of Spanish vecinos (citizens of the city) and their native laborers. Representatives of the church, as well, quickly entered the new population center. By 1592, the Franciscans had founded their convent; the Mercedarians entered about fifty years later (Cruz Reyes 1989). When Governor Juan Ayala reported on his reconnaissance in 1611, "Teucigalpa" was a town mainly of Indians with two priests, who administered to the miners (Ayala 1611).

Mining successes brought more rewards from Spain. In 1608, the king created the Alcaldía Mayor de Tegucigalpa, which enlarged the political realm of the real de minas to include the south, to Choluteca (Fiallos 1989: 164). Jurisdiction was again enlarged to cover most of central Honduras when the Villa de San Miguel de Tegucigalpa de Heredia was established in 1763 (Fiallos 1989: 164).

By the time of the census of Governor Ramon de Anguiano in 1801, Tegucigalpa had 86 Spanish families, 507 Ladino families, and 81 Indian "souls" (Anguiano 1801). Comayaguela, the Indian settlement adjacent just west across the river, contained 1,062 souls. At the time, the combined population of the two cities might have reached 4,600. The census of independence twenty years later reported 5,500 people living in 831 houses in Tegucigalpa-Comayaguela (1821). The rivalry between Tegucigalpa and Comayagua contributed to Honduras's instability during the nineteenth century, and the designation of national capital floated back and forth between the two cities (Blutstein 1971: 7). Then, in 1880, Tegucigalpa, "riding the crest of a revived silver mining boom," became the political capital of Honduras (Morris 1984: 1). In 1890, Tegucigalpa and Comayaguela were formally joined as the same city; statistics afterward have included both places under the Tegucigalpa designation (Fiallos 1989: 165).

During the presidency of Tiburcio Carias Andino (1932-1949), Tegucigalpa benefited from the expansion of the national government bureaucracy, as it gained both new buildings and increased population (Morris 1984: 9). However, since Honduras remained overwhelmingly a poor, agrarian-based nation, despite its status as national capital, Tegucigalpa remained a small city. As late as 1950, it had a population of only 72,000. From that time, however, it began to experience substantial growth (see Map 3-2).

In part this resulted from its growing importance as a commercial center and as a site for light industry, especially textiles. It also reflected the growth of agro-business, which saw the uprooting of many peasant farmers. Increasingly, the city became a magnet for migrants, especially from smaller towns (Blutstein 1971:57). By 1961, Tegucigalpa grew some 85 percent to reach 134,000. By 1980, it had reached 400,000, which was about 43 percent of the nation's urban population (Helms 1984:67). Such rapid growth, of course, placed severe strains on the city's infrastructure, which was not particularly well developed to begin with. Squatter settlements mushroomed on hillsides along the city's outskirts, in the process deforesting the pine trees to use as fuel. Typically, homes in these settlements lack water, sewerage, and electrical service (Montana 1980: nn).

The landscape of modern Tegucigalpa reflects its growth over several centuries from a small area around a central plaza downtown to the far-flung suburbs that extend over some 100 square kilometers and virtually fill the bowl (see Map 2). Today the city is a colorful complex of the old (congested, irregular, narrow streets and colonial architecture in *el centro* and crowded open-air markets with an indigenous flavor) contrasted against the new (large, modern shopping malls, high-rise, first-class tourist hotels, elegant mansions, wide boulevards, and the national university). How different this dual flavor of Tegucigalpa is in comparison to the consistent rectangular grid pattern and relatively modern structures of San Pedro Sula.

Map 2.

