



## **Mombacho: a volcano falling to bits**

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Many volcanoes, have debris avalanche events, but probably Mombacho (Nicaragua) takes the biscuit for falling to bits. Two major collapses have scoured the northeast and south flanks, while the east side is slowly collapsing into lake Nicaragua. The west side is cut by active faults that may be related to a small scoria-dominated avalanche. The northwest is probably undergoing flank spreading at present and may be developing a collapse prone slump. In addition there are numerous steep cliffs and ravines that can, and do, spawn small rock falls and lahars. Two avalanche or lahar events have caused notable loss of life. There is an account of a village destroyed in 1556, but a southward directed event. This may be the major southern avalanche, or a smaller secondary collapse from the southern scar. The north eastern collapse is thought to be prehistoric, as no account of its formation are found in the old literature of the conquest. However, we have discovered human bones and pottery within the basal layer of the avalanche, that will allow us to date the event. Some of the bones, like the avalanche rock itself, present jigsaw cracks. The future of Mombacho is likely to be that of continued instability, and any new growth may be accompanied by collapses.