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Elite reproduction and ethnic identity in Belize

Judd, Karen H., Ph.D.

City University of New York, 1992

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ELITE REPRODUCTION AND ETHNIC IDENTITY IN BELIZE

by

KAREN H. JUDD

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in
Anthropology in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,
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Abstract

ELITE REPRODUCTION AND ETHNIC IDENTITY IN BELIZE

by

Karen H. Judd

Adviser: Professor Eric R. Wolf

This dissertation examines the construction and representation of ethnic identity by elite groups over time in Belize, focusing on the creole middle class of the late 19th century. It analyzes the formation and reproduction of local white, creole, and "Spanish" elites in terms of their economic and social locations as well as through the reproduction over several generations of representative elite families. It looks particularly at the role of the colonial authorities in differentially shaping economic and social options and constraints for each group, as well as at the efforts of different groups to insert themselves into this process. Through the use of historical documents, newspaper accounts, and personal diaries and reports, it describes the processes of identity construction and validation for different groups in Belize, as well as its contestation and transformation over several generations, in both family and historical time.

The examination of the reproduction of specific families sheds light on the process of elite formation and reproduction as well as that of social reproduction in

peripheral countries of the third world. Following a description of three of the ethnic groups in Belize the dissertation presents a broader discussion of the arenas in which identity is produced and contested, and the agents of these interlocking processes.

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Judith Rew undertook the task of representing the genealogies in their current form, and drew the map. Rochelle Ritacco assisted me in mastering a data base program and allowed me to use her computer and printer. My thanks to these patient professionals.

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INTRODUCTION

The overwhelming impact of colonialism on the economic and social development of small peripheral societies in the third world, along with their continued status as resource-poor dependent economies in the world capitalist system, together determine the parameters in which processes of class formation and ethnicity take shape. This recognition presents a challenge to anthropologists and social historians--and to nationalist intellectuals in these countries as well--to bring the people in, as agents in their own history, and not merely victims of their location in the world system. A necessary first step is to identify the relative importance of economic, social, and political factors, both in the process of class formation and the way it is experienced.

Throughout the Caribbean, the colonial legacy has everywhere included underdeveloped production structures, partially developed class relations with a small commercial capitalist elite, a large stratum of petty-bourgeois shopkeepers and state employees, a small, fragmented, and disorganized working class, and a state which itself emerges in this context and which, despite its apparent autonomy, must ultimately recreate these relations (see Thomas 1984; Nettleford 1978:10-11). In many cases, moreover, the major means of production, including land, are held by foreigners, outside the country. The result is a situation in which the

vast majority of the population do not own the means of production but do not confront those who do. In such circumstances, political and social phenomena, such as racial, ethnic, and kinship relations, as well as the political relations that derive from the role of the state as major employer, gain particular salience (R.T. Smith 1988:13; Bourgois 1989).¹

Until the middle of the present century, all the countries in the Caribbean were controlled by a small white elite of planters, exporters, and administrators, "few of whom became a permanent part of the society" (R.T. Smith 1988:13), fostering an association between economic class and a hierarchy of racial groups that continues today. As R.T. Smith notes, "the term 'upper class' is rarely used to refer to local elites" (ibid.); rather, he explains, an understanding of class structure depends on an examination of competing local elites and their social and ethnic composition.

This study looks at the process of class and elite formation and its consequences for ethnic identity in Belize, a former British colony (British Honduras) located on the Atlantic Coast of Central America. It focuses on the creoles, the racially mixed but predominantly black population, and concentrates on the late 19th century, when creoles began to insert themselves as a middle class between white merchants and administrators and the broad mass of lower-class blacks. It compares the opportunities for

capital accumulation and occupational mobility of this group with those of a small, white upper middle class, with whom creoles are often conflated, as well as those of mestizos, or "Spanish" as they are called in Belize, through the presentation of selected elite family histories. In so doing it seeks to give specific class and ethnic content to the process of "creolization," by which settlements composed of European woodcutters or planters and African slaves became the multicultural societies of today. Throughout, these processes of class and ethnic identity formation are examined within the changing context of dependency, as the dominant metropolitan power shifted from Britain to the United States in the early 20th century.

Ethnicity and Class: Belize in the Capitalist World System

Ethnicity in Belize is a compound born of the country's geographic location on the Central American mainland and its history as part of the British Caribbean, first as a logging settlement and later a colony. While Spain claimed the territory as part of its mainland empire, the Spanish never settled it, allowing pirates and smugglers of various nationalities to establish a foothold on the coast. As logging replaced piracy British loggers and merchants increased in numbers, as did their African slaves. Among the Europeans, males greatly outnumbered females, with the result that white men took African mistresses, often employing them as "housekeepers," and fathering a racially

mixed, "coloured" population. The ambiguous relationship among whites, blacks, and coloured resulted in a growing population of creoles, a term which once identified native-born people, whites as well as slaves, and now denotes people of varied ancestry, but always including some African component.²

The British colonial enterprise in the Caribbean led to further ethnic diversity in the mid 18th century, when numbers of Garifuna, an ethnic mixture resulting from the intermarriage of African slaves and Carib Indians on the Caribbean island of St. Vincent, were deported to the Bay Islands of Honduras. In the following years Garifuna came to the mainland and migrated both north and south, many of them settling in southern Belize. The original inhabitants of Belize, the Maya, were concentrated in the interior forests and generally viewed as belonging to Mopán and Kekchi Indian populations in neighboring Mexico and Guatemala. After 1847, however, the so-called Caste War in neighboring Yucatán caused great numbers of refugees, mestizos (or "Spanish") as well as Mayans, to come to Belize.³

These four ethnic groups--creoles, Maya, Garifuna, and mestizos--make up nearly 98 percent of the Belizean population, which totaled roughly 200,000 in 1990, the rest comprising Chinese, East Indians, Lebanese, and North Americans. While creoles have been numerically dominant throughout the 20th century, the number of mestizos especially has been swollen during the 1980s by refugees

from civil strife in Guatemala and El Salvador, with the result that mestizos have now replaced creoles as the numerically dominant group.⁴

Creoles and mestizos were allocated very different economic locations within the colonial society dominated by white administrators and merchants, locations which have persisted with the reproduction of the country's dependency relationship and undeveloped class system. Fundamental to a developed class system is the development of the production relations to the point where workers come together in the course of their productive activity and become aware both of their own shared interests and of the opposing interests of their employers. Traditionally, this has occurred either in urban industrial workplaces, or in large-scale agricultural enterprises. While the relatively small domestic markets have retarded the development of industry throughout the Caribbean, in some of the larger islands, such as Jamaica and Trinidad/ Tobago, export agriculture provided the basis for the development of a productive capitalist class, supplemented, in the post-emancipation period, by the growth of a local trading class. In Belize, by contrast, the extraction and export of timber dominated the economy for much of the colony's history, retarding the development of agriculture and accompanying infrastructure such as road and railroads. Only in the post-war period have roads been constructed and only since the 1970s have sugar and citrus begun to replace timber as the colony's leading exports.

Moreover, until the present day, Belize has depended solely on foreign investment capital; land as well as capital has been controlled by foreigners, retarding the growth of a ruling class.⁵

The only major exception to the prevailing pattern of outside ownership is the state, which typically becomes both major landowner as well as primary employer. The state sector, which includes education as well as the civil service, historically provided the major avenue of upward mobility for educated professionals. By the 1940s and 1950s, creoles began to obtain positions in the state apparatus, from which they might have been able to acquire land and other means of production as the state took a strong role in national development in the post-colonial period. However, the decolonization struggle in Belize resulted in the emergence of political parties as an alternative arena of political influence, with the result that mestizos have been able to play an equal if not greater role in political and economic decision-making.

The recognition of the role of the state in the creation of an ethnically diverse petty bourgeoisie demands attention to the ways in which this heterogeneous class, often considered a state-based elite, operates, consciously and unconsciously, to reproduce itself. While a weak and fragmented working class encourages entry into the state sector (Thomas 1984), this sector increasingly recruits the sons and daughters of the working class, yet it offers

relatively few avenues of enrichment. The inertia characteristic of all bureaucracies stifles initiative and encourages the ambitious, once they have learned the rudiments of a profession, to go elsewhere to apply those skills. Those who have reached the top rungs of the civil service now encourage their children to aim higher; the traditional entry points--messenger or typist--that enabled one generation to climb into this sector are not the jobs to which their better educated sons and daughters aspire. Thus the civil service that once offered a source of jobs to the creole children of woodcutters and blacksmiths now offers the same to the children of Garifuna fishermen and dockworkers (cf. Wright 1986).

The constant flow of upwardly mobile young employees retards the development of common interests and thus of class consolidation and consciousness. Indeed the state, which offers opportunities for outside education and eventual outside employment in lieu of competitive wages and rewards for initiative, discourages the formation of class-conscious public employee unions; in Belize as elsewhere, the Public Service Union has often seen its interests opposed to those of the industrial or agricultural trade unions (Grant 1966: 38; Kroshus Medina 1988). By draining workers out of the most exploited sectors of the working class and offering them a way up and ultimately out, the civil service sector (the primary location of the petty bourgeoisie) becomes the ultimate "escape valve." Its very

openness simultaneously helps to keep an already weak working class weak and undeveloped, yet does not encourage the creation of a new class within its own ranks--since the acquisition of skills as a ticket out is in most cases worth more than the opportunities for advancement within the system or profit within the local economy.

The dominance of the state retards the development of a genuine bourgeoisie as well; rather than a trajectory in which state employees use their position to acquire land, businesses, and contracts, and to accumulate capital, reinvest, and eventually become large-scale employers of labor, joining the very thin ranks of local productive capitalists, it is more common--for the successful to leave the country (perhaps having secured a parcel of land for their retirement) and the less ambitious to retire on a pension. To be sure, there is a middle road: to retire at 55 with a full pension and use savings to build a small business. But in most cases there is little that can be done to turn this to class advantage. First, the opportunities for accumulation, without access to state contracts, are very limited; second, there is no way to enable the next generation to inherit. Thus, while in the course of a lifetime, one might move up from the working class to join a civil-service based "political elite," the inability to ground elite status on an economic base makes this "elite" extremely vulnerable to new groups taking the same route, and a younger generation, better able to

identify the opportunities and needs of a new era, move in to challenge them.

The dependency relationship, therefore, simultaneously retards the development of class relations, limiting the development of a local working class, and fosters the fragmentation of a bourgeoisie characterized by an ongoing struggle among competing elites (Giddens 1974; Schneider and Schneider 1983b). It is within this context of elite formation and re-formation within the petty bourgeoisie that ethnicity takes on particular salience.

This is not to argue that ethnicity is simply the creation of the colonial rulers and white ownership class, in order to "divide and rule" the dominated masses. Such an analysis has a number of problems. First is the functionalist character of the divide and rule argument, according to which "whether conscious or not, ethnicity is an ideology called into being by the relations of power and production in order to uphold those relations" (Kahn 1981: 47). What Kahn (ibid.) calls the "teleological functionalism" of the argument explains its peculiarly ahistorical quality as well, despite the claims of its advocates to base it in history. Finally, of course, the divide and rule argument surrenders the ability to shape ethnic or national destiny to the dominant absentee class and their local representatives: local populations accordingly are either passive victims or guilty of false consciousness, generally phrased as "colonial mentality."

In order to clarify the way in which elites operate to influence ethnicity, therefore, we need to recognize that all expressions of ethnicity depend primarily on the political-economic context in which they occur. Moreover, this context determines not only the nature of ethnic and nation-building phenomena but often also which elements participate: in some cases, for example, "expressions of ethnicity may involve only ethnic elites" (Helms 1978:135). A major determinant of the political context, however, is the way in which the state is integrated into the wider economic system. The failure of capitalist production to fully transform economic relations in small peripheral countries of the third world favors the perpetuation of kinship relations, which are the basis of elite organization (Vilas 1987; Hansen and Parrish 1983). Moreover, a shift in the dominant location of metropolitan control from Britain to the United States has greatly changed the terms of ethnic struggle in many places in the Caribbean, due to the U.S. tendency to differentiate social groups in racial rather than class terms (Bolland 1991:18) and a preference for mestizo managers in their business operations.

Generational Change in Family and Historical Time

From the foregoing it should be clear that the so-called creole elite of urban shopkeepers and civil servants occupies the class position of the petty bourgeoisie in Belize, lacking, for the most part either property or

wealth, at least in any sense that that term has comparative meaning. Despite their basis in kinship ties, moreover, members of this group do not extend over several generations. It is misleading to depict a creole elite extending from original white male settlers, landowners and merchants, who increasingly intermarried with coloured and black women, losing both land and wealth along with whiteness, while maintaining their political power and social position. While many creole families traced their ancestors to the early settlers, white or free coloured, the "elite" among them comprise only a handful of local merchant representatives, along with shopkeepers, carpenters, and clerks. The rest comprised a much more fluid group, whose ancestors had in the main worked themselves up, in successive generations, from unskilled woodcutters and skilled craftsmen--carpenters, blacksmiths, mechanics, and ship pilots--to civil service messengers and retail clerks. Their middle-class status derived from education and the traditional--though declining--prestige of the British civil service. Not only did most of these families not accumulate much in the way of wealth or property, they have with few exceptions historically lacked any opportunity to do so.

The absence of a self-perpetuating creole elite raises some questions about the utility of the term "elite" in comparative work. More even than class, the concept of elite is essentially relative, referring as it does to the top segment of any social category--from society as a whole to

any occupational group, including the lowest; thus for example one reads of a "slavery elite," surely an oxymoron if the concept is to be of any analytic value. When combined with the notion of creole, the confusion is compounded: a creole elite, far from a group of kin-based creoles who reproduce themselves as an elite group over several generations, means only those at the top of so-called creole, or Caribbean, society, at any given time. It is always possible to identify those at the top of society, call them an elite, and analyze the basis of their economic power. To illuminate the process of class or elite formation and reproduction, however, requires an examination of the social and economic trajectory of specific groups over several generations.

Moreover, while generational change impels virtually all analyses of the formation and reproduction of elite families over time, additional conceptual difficulties reside in the dual meaning of the concept of generation--biological and societal, or historical. While Mannheim distinguished the two in his study on the history of knowledge, he confined his interest to cultural, rather than biological generations, which he defined as those who share membership in the same "historico-social space" (in Wolff 1971:1). Hareven (1982:7-8) uses a similar distinction, pointing out it is necessary to look at generational change within both family or "life-course time," in the sense of organizing access to resources, and "historical time"--the

context of economic, social, and cultural changes in the larger society--in order to illuminate life-course responses to conditions in historical time. A similar effort to tease apart family and historical time is needed with regard to elites and ethnicity, in order to examine the ways in which elite responses to changing opportunities set the terms in which ethnicity is perceived and represented across generations.

Within the literature on elite families, however, generations are defined very differently according to whether they are viewed in family or historical time. Whitten (1965) for example, examining internal family dynamics--the expansion and consolidation of kin units--for elite families during a 50 year period in rural Ecuador, employs a span of 25 years, from birth to birth of a first child. Balmori et al. (1984), by contrast, analyzing the ability of notable families in Central America to reproduce themselves over 200 years, employ a "generational" span of 50 years, which corresponds to important eras in historical time. Viewed through this historical time lens, family dynamics were subordinate to historical conditions; thus the study concludes that families themselves did not change, but rose and fell as their opportunities changed.

The choice of family or historical time in the measurement of elite family reproduction reflects the very different ways in which the term "elite" is employed and measured. Whitten's elite comprises a lower middle class in

village Ecuador; his analysis traces the reproduction of a specific group of families to understand the process by which they rose to elite status, and then declined, in a period of little more than 50 years. Balmori et al.'s notable families comprise a national and supranational ruling class that has endured for over 200 years; their analysis is of the endurance of a category--the family elite--which comprised different families over time. While a focus on the two senses of generational time may permit a reconciliation of the two approaches, these contradictions nevertheless raise a question about the overall comparative value of the concept of elite, which will be taken up again in Chapter 6.

The dialectical relationship between the process of reproduction and the retrospective measure of generational change over time also has implications for the concept of "creolization," which pervades discussions of Caribbean society and ethnic identity formation. Used most broadly to refer to a process of New World synthesis of peoples and cultures, the concept has been employed to describe the biological and cultural production of a coloured middle class in the West Indies (Brathwaite 1971:300-08; Patterson 1975:316). More recently it has been invoked by the Caribbean nationalist intelligentsia of the 1960s and 1970s to herald the self-conscious creation of a post-colonial national cultural identity (Nettleford 1978:181-86; Lowenthal 1972:275-76; Palacio 1988:54-55). While this

latter usage provides a useful corrective to the view of culture as something received from the Europeans, as Bolland (1992:53) points out, it lacks a view of cultural and ethnic identity as a process involving creoles. The former, by contrast, confuses a process of biological change with a process in which the term "creole" has come to refer to different groups over time.⁶

Several scholars have analyzed the history by which the term "creole" has changed meaning, from a racially undifferentiated concept, applicable to whites and blacks, slave and free, to one with specific racial content in different places. Domínguez (1986), for example, examines the 19th-century process in Louisiana by which whites both appropriated the term "creole" for themselves and subsequently denied it to blacks. Oxaal (1982:44), by contrast, ties the concept of creolization to creole agents from both Africa and the Caribbean, identifying a 19th-century process by which "the diverse cultural strains of lower class Negroes tended to become mixed together to create a 'native' folk culture." Creolization has thus produced a white (creole) society in Louisiana and a black (creole) one in Trinidad.

Such studies help us to clarify two analytically separate processes: one, a retrospectively observed pattern of cultural change, the production of a creole society; the other, an active political process, in which individual struggles to define ethnic identity become collective. An

important part of the latter process is the struggle to determine how the term "creole" is defined, a process involving claims to native identity and its associated rights by different groups over time (Judd 1989:105). In Belize these claims were made first by whites. But in the late 19th century, they were increasingly made by the coloured and black middle class. Thereafter, native born whites increasingly disassociated themselves from nonwhite native born people, who continued to call themselves creoles. This shift in turn set the framework in which creole identity was initially represented and has been subsequently contested by groups who are ever more exclusively black. Belize has thus become "creolized" to the extent that creoles, increasingly black, have asserted their rights as natives. Belize families, by contrast, have become "creolized" only to the extent they have intermarried with creoles--or blacks--on a continuing basis. White families may have become Belizean; they have not become creolized.

In order to illustrate these processes, family histories in subsequent chapters are deliberately kept intact and presented as a bloc for each ethnic group, rather than broken up in such a way that the experiences of different members illustrate discussions of class, ethnicity, or gender reproduction. This presentation has been chosen to demonstrate a central proposition of this dissertation: that the concept of "creolization" has little concrete meaning, in Belize at least, in terms of cultural

and ethnic synthesis. Despite some overlapping identities (see the discussion of James Hume Blake, for example, in Chapter 3), a high degree of endogamy obtains among all ethnic groups, especially whites and mestizos.⁷ Thus ethnicity is a process that is experienced separately by creoles, mestizos, and whites; the influence of one on the other is both strong and ongoing--although constantly changing--but acts by means of opposition and competition rather than intermingling and synthesis.⁸

Ethnicity in Public and Private

Because of the centrality of the family to elite organization, recent studies on elites have focused on the development of family networks over generations. The editors of a recent volume on elite family networks conclude that the more prominent the family, the more the public and private realms become collapsed, for "when the family is the central reference point for individuals, their influence upon the public realm is seldom the result of individuality; rather it is a consequence of their participation in the family" (Balmori et al, 1984:4). The family is no longer entirely distinct from the public; it "not only nurtures them privately to participate in the public realm, it provides a framework through which and for which family members function in the public realm" (ibid.).

This observation has interesting implications for the way in which the family shapes ethnicity, for the content of

ethnicity is interpreted and defined--and often contested --in the family as well as in the wider sphere of community or nation--that is, in both the private and public arenas.

The identification of the public and private realms, and the correlation of the former with male and the latter with female activities, has come in for a good deal of criticism within anthropology, due to the tendency to use the observed dichotomy to explain the way in which gender is constructed in society--including everything from power relations to the essence of male and female natures. The restriction of both the concept and its critique to gender relations, however, obscures its potential for illuminating aspects of the way in which social identity is constructed.

Gender is just one aspect of the public/private duality in human social relations. Recent work on aboriginal identity (Weaver 1984; Beckett 1988) points out that ethnic identity takes shape in the context of specific populations and power relations within political entities. Writing of aborigines, Weaver (1984:184) distinguishes between private and public ethnicity because "although both have a basis in collective rather than individual activity," different groups assert the definition of ethnicity in each case. Thus private ethnicity is that which people "construct and reproduce for themselves in their daily lives" while public identity is that produced at the national level by institutions--including arts and media as well as legal and social institutions--of the state. She makes the point that

public ethnicity is as "real" as private, "for it constitutes the basis upon which the nation-state formally assigns (or withholds) resources..." (1984:185).

This notion of dual-constructed ethnic identity need not be limited to the most marginal groups in society, but can be applied to other ethnic groups as well; not only to those whose public definition is imposed by others but also to those who successfully define the public definition of themselves--as in the case of creoles in Belize. Indeed, it is in such cases that the way in which gender location intersects with ethnic identity becomes manifest, a point that will be taken up further in Chapter 6.

The Presentation of History in Anthropology

In 1982 Eric Wolf reaffirmed the need, which he first advocated in 1968, for anthropology to discover history, more specifically the power relationships which tie Western and non-Western countries into a single global history (1982:ix). The history envisioned by Wolf starts from the premise that processes of mercantile and capitalist development are crucial to an understanding of development in the colonized world, yet insists also that local level actors are important in their own history; subject people do not merely act out some imperial design, created and imposed by the ruling authorities, but actively participate in the creation of history (Nash 1981; Roseberry and O'Brien 1991). What is needed is thus a two-track history, in both the

colonizing and the colonized world, in which the process of history at the local level is examined alongside the more powerful historical engines of capitalist development and empire building. Most broadly this is what is envisioned by social history, or as it was once more usually called, ethnohistory (cf. Mintz 1975:480).

In the colonial and postcolonial world, however, social history does not so much move from "public institutions to domestic life" (Samuel 1981: xvi) as seek to examine both from the perspective of the ruled rather than the rulers. And while it may thus stress the "recovery of subjective experience" (ibid.:xviii) in the construction of history, it does so not in order to distinguish subjective history from "real" history, but in order to show how different perspectives themselves combine to make history. History in this sense consists of its many representations and thus is "always a partial invention" (Trouillot 1990:19; cf. R. Williams and Said 1989:178).⁹

Such an interconnected global history is essential in examining the process of economic development in colonies or former colonies of the capitalist periphery. "Caribbean societies," Trouillot (1992a:22) writes, "are inherently colonial." The process of capitalist expansion in England, which impelled the opening of markets to entrepreneurial capital throughout Latin America, wrought a different result in Belize, where the for the most part aristocratic officers at the Colonial Office successfully restricted the process

of capital accumulation, and thus the terms in which each segment of the population could forge a class identity. Even so, this process in 19th-century Britain overwhelmingly shaped the history of the colony, defining it not only as a supplier of raw material and consumer of imported goods, but also as a perpetually dependent polity, denied the right to govern itself, and thus also a receiver of civil service bureaucrats and middle-class merchants. Because both subsequently left the mark of their own development in 19th-century England and Scotland on the colonial society in which they occupied the top position, their history too is relevant.

Local actors are not only individuals but collectivities of various sorts, who in finding their own opportunities for economic and political advancement define themselves not only as classes but as ethnic groups. Ethnicity is thus the result of the same world historical process that produces class structure, its mutability limited by the same inequality and power relationships that shaped class development (O'Brien 1991:127,136; cf. Keyes 1981:27; Vincent 1974). The colonial power not only brought different groups together in the societies of the New World but dominated and mediated the power relationships that shaped their future evolution. Within the colonial context, ethnic groups are not so much dominated by a process of divide and conquer but rather create themselves within the limits of colonial dominance (cf. Sider 1987:17). Thus

ethnicity, like culture, "is a historical product, and best understood historically" (Mintz 1982:509).

The relevance of history to ethnicity is heightened, moreover, by the need of different groups to validate their own perceptions of identity by reference to a verifiable past. DeVos (1975:17) concludes that ethnicity itself is "a feeling of continuity with the past," and Wilk (1985:12) argues that the "stability and solidity of the past" becomes important to members of ethnic groups as a result of the lack of fixed boundaries between them. The importance of the past in ethnic identity is "part of what makes ethnicity a process and not a thing" (ibid.).

The lack of fixed boundaries is nowhere so evident as among creoles in Belize, who not only have interacted and intermarried with all other groups, but have over time sought validation and/or differentiation from at least three other groups, whites, mestizos, and Garifuna. Thus an understanding of creole identity requires a look at the history of competing groups as well.¹⁰ The examination of this interwoven history, in both Britain and Belize, together with its representation, accordingly presents some difficulties in organization. Indeed, the project recalls Leach's observation that the problem with history is not that it is irrelevant "but that it is too difficult to put on paper" (1954:282).

Within this interrelated history, certain periods can be seen as fulcrums, by which one process leading up to an

historical moment can be distinguished from another process resulting from it. Such a fulcrum for Belizean creoles was the period of the 1890s, when middle classes were created throughout the Caribbean by the conditions of colonial society (R.T. Smith 1982:108), when the process of middle-class formation within creole families and the construction of history within the colonial context came together. Certain free coloured families of the 1830s had, within the span of three generations, become an urban petty bourgeoisie; as such, they joined the larger group of petty bourgeois foremen and blacksmiths and carpenters, formerly slaves and free blacks. At the same time, they inserted themselves in the urban economic structure as a middle class--between an upper class of white expatriate merchants and landowners and the mass of black laborers--and began to define themselves in social and political behavior appropriate to the middle class. At this point they also began to insert themselves as actors in the reconstructions of the past, consciously shaping a continuous "tradition" in such a way as to differentiate themselves from other groups (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983:1; R.T. Smith 1982:106). Family history intersected with colonial history in private and public representations of the creole cultural heritage, providing the context in which subsequent generations would struggle to define their own visions of what it means to be creole in Belize.

Description of Problem and Outline of Chapters

Crown Colony status, voluntarily assumed in 1871 by a vote of the Legislative Assembly, became increasingly problematic over the next 20 years, reaching a crisis in the 1890s.¹¹ The events of the final decade of the 19th century, both rebellious and celebratory, challenged the way people looked at themselves, in national, ethnic, and class terms. The first involved a struggle for a greater degree of self-government--focusing on obtaining a majority of unofficial (nongovernmental) members in the legislative council, and the parallel struggle to develop the local economy. The second, very different, was an effort to elevate the significance of a battle--the Battle of St. George's Cay--fought some 100 years before, by the inhabitants and their slaves against the attacking Spanish. Both simultaneously challenged and restricted the boundaries of ethnic identity, especially for creoles. Not surprisingly, then, the interpretation of these events is still contested. This dissertation, concerned with the significance of these struggles for the shaping of creole identity, presents them in the context of creole protagonists, both white and coloured. In so doing, it indirectly enjoins the arguments, in a way which should be made explicit at the outset.

Ashdown (1979a:1-8) takes up the issue of historical interpretation directly. Concerned with the issue of "agency," he rejects the structural interpretation implicit

in the development of underdevelopment thesis (argued by Ashcraft 1973), and insists on the importance of internal power relationships. Indeed, he argues with Bolland (1977b) and Bolland and Shoman (1977) that the political power of a commercial elite, wrested from the British, determined their economic dominance, rather than vice versa (Ashdown 1979a:5). More specifically, he takes issue with fellow historians Dobson (1973), Waddell (1961), and Cleghern (1967) over the significance of the British surrender of their official majority--a term which refers to the administrative structure of British Crown Colonies, in which government officials were also a majority in the legislature, the rest, the so-called unofficials, being appointed by the governor to represent the masses (R. Smith 1982:115). Dobson and Cleghern conclude that this surrender, in 1892, was not ultimately significant because they still appointed all the unofficials. Ashdown (1979a:6) argues rather that the concession was of major importance, allowing a new commercial elite to assert their own interests over the more enlightened aims of the British. He maintains that while all three historians were inclined to see the struggle as one between "the people" and the colonial government, in fact it was one between the elite, i.e., the unofficial majority, and the government in alliance with the colony's "working class," i.e., the people (ibid.:7).¹²

The position argued here is that the struggle for an unofficial majority, like the 30-year struggle for a

railroad, was simply between elites; specifically between the representatives of empire--at Government House and the Colonial Office--and articulate nationalists of all sorts, whether unofficials, radical lawyers, capitalist adventurers, or local newspaper editors--all those who wanted a more active role in the development of the colony. The "people" did not have a political voice until 1954, when the majority of the Legislative Council was elected on the basis of adult suffrage; the significance of their actions was always debated by contending elites.

Both sides claimed to represent "the people" as well as "the good of the colony"; their views of how this was done derived from their political ideology and their geographic and class location. Local nationalists believed both were best served by a more aggressive capitalist development of agriculture and trade--with both Central America and the United States, rather than merely Britain. Depending on their class interests--as merchants or planters or professionals or shopkeepers--they differed over land tenure policy, franchise qualifications, and taxation. The government, notably the Colonial Office, believed the people were best represented by an enlightened class of gentlemen who would protect them from capitalist exploiters. While governors sometimes supported the inhabitants, and in the case of the railroad did so repeatedly, they were dependent on decisions of the Colonial Office and ultimately the Treasury. Both offices were the preserve of Britain's

aristocratic younger sons, who looked down on merchants and other businessmen, regarded non-Europeans as unfit for self government, and were ultimately responsive to tight fiscal policy and the gentlemen parliamentary representatives of London mahogany firms.¹³ Thus when a public meeting in British Honduras resolved that the council be changed to a majority of unofficial members and elections be reintroduced, Undersecretary of State Herbert fumed this would be "tantamount to surrendering the public interests to a small handful of disloyal and jobbing traders."¹⁴

While the concession of the unofficial majority was significant, allowing the nationalist elite to claim a victory for the "people," the crown retained the power of the purse as well as final authority to make the laws--crown servants made up the officials in the Legislative Council, and personally chose the unofficials. In addition, the governor could overrule the unofficials if backed by the Colonial Office, while all expenditure had to be approved by the Colonial Office as well as the Treasury--hence the history of unbuilt roads and railroads. In the belief that better-off Europeans were most qualified to govern, governors appointed resident managers of London merchant houses and European merchants and planters, then criticized them in the name of the people when they acted in their own interests.

Ashdown concludes that the creole elite, victorious in their struggle for an unofficial majority, consolidated

their position in subsequent struggles with enlightened administrators: over the next 50 years, they remained rich, landed, and self-interested--changing only their color (1979a:7), with the result that creoles came to regard themselves as a "cadet branch" of the English, superior to other non-European groups, and the rightful rulers of the country (ibid.:17-18,47). Elsewhere, acknowledging that the mechanics of this process are unknown, he states that we must assume that the way in which the "'white oligarchy' of the 1820's had become one suffused with colour by 1900" was by means of steady creolisation, defined as the increasingly frequent "intermarriage between the descendents of the old Baymen and those of the free-coloured and ex-coloured and ex-slaves" (1978:50,40).

This view of the creole elite is reinforced in nationalist interpretations of the history and celebration of the Battle of St. George's Cay (Shoman 1987; Hyde 1969; Ashdown 1978; 1987). The anniversary of this battle, which took place on September 10, 1798, has been celebrated as the country's "national day" since 1898, when creole inhabitants petitioned the Colonial Office for official recognition. The battle was significant, they maintained, owing to the demonstration of slave and master loyalty, fighting shoulder to shoulder to repel the Spaniards. At the time, this view cut across class and color lines; coloured shopkeepers and carpenters, who had never been out of the colony (and thus not gone beyond primary school) joined white, London-

educated merchants and solicitors in the request for a creole national holiday. In the 1920s and 1930s Garveyite intellectuals upheld the creole claim to Belize on the same basis. But by the 1960s, a new generation of nationalists, including a growing black consciousness movement, regarded this interpretation as a product of colonial conditioning.

The struggle over the importance of this battle also was, and is, carried on between and among elites, primarily intellectuals and politicians. "The people," including the broad mass of black and working-class creoles, merely celebrate. This point is important for an understanding not only of the terms of struggle but of its effect on the local protagonists and their descendants. It is important also because the protagonists on both sides comprise the major archival sources, a point which is most often overlooked.

An examination of the emergence of a creole elite, locally referred to as "high browns," and their ability to shape the parameters of creole ethnicity, requires a look at their economic and political as well as their social and cultural location vis à vis other groups, including specifically the expatriate rulers, the white creole elite, and the simultaneously emerging mestizo elite. From the 1890s to the rise of the working-class and independence movements in the 1950s, government in Belize changed from mainly expatriates to mainly Belizeans, from mainly whites to mainly blacks. So too did contending nationalist intellectuals and newspaper editors.

Over this period, foreign, mainly British and American, commercial interests continued to hold the land and dominate the economy--a system which favored the local commercial elite. But that elite changed primarily from a small group of white merchants, local and British, backed by British capital, to a small group of white merchants, local and American, backed by U.S. capital--although it gradually expanded to accomodate Middle Eastern and Asian newcomers, as well as the more successful mestizo families. By contrast, the "good creole families" changed from landed white resident gentry to various shades of black petty bourgeois shopkeepers and lower level civil servants, with little land or capital. While the first process has involved many of the same 19th-century merchant families; the second has not. The class and ethnic nature of this latter group, the so-called creole elite, and their efforts to link their own history with that of the colony, can only be understood in this context. It forms the starting point for understanding the process of cultural and ethnic production and validation with which this dissertation is concerned.

The foregoing discussion represents an attempt to outline the terms--location within the world system, the emergence of a middle class and competing elites, and the reproduction of family and kinship--in which both context and choice operate to shape ethnic identity in Belize.

Chapter 1 will look at the shift in economic and political power relations from the first to the last quarter

of the 19th century: from the buccaneers and woodcutters known as Baymen to the consolidation of property in metropolitan hands, notably the British Honduras Company and Young Toledo & Co. Chapter 2 will cover the period of early capitalist development from the mid to the late 19th century, focusing on efforts to develop agriculture and transport. It will look at three of the white creole families whose evolution defined this history within the limits of the colonial relationship--the Bowens, Hunters, and Bowmans--comparing them with a typical expatriate family, the Gentles, and indicate the present-day changes within white domination of local capital. Chapter 3 will outline the class and ethnic composition of the Yucatecan immigrants of the mid 19th century and examine their formation as a regional family elite, independent of the colonial capital.

Chapter 4 will then take up the formation of a creole middle class, its post-emancipation occupational history and corresponding social projection, within the colonial capital. Chapter 5 will examine its reproduction through the histories of four "good creole families"--the Hydes, the Ushers, the Haylocks, and the Fairweathers. Chapters 5 and 6 will also examine the social and cultural production of the creole middle class, and its consequences for creole identity, in the battles over the Battle of St. George's Cay, or, as usually dubbed, "the Tenth." Finally, Chapter 6 will take up broader issues of arena and agency in the

reproduction of elites and the construction of ethnicity, both public and private.

In this three-way comparison of elite family histories the assertion that the nonwhite creole elite, the so-called high browns, has dominated the wealth and power of the country since the days of their white ancestors will be challenged, along with the concept of "creolization" that such a process describes. In contrast it is argued that with few exceptions, the wealthy white ancestors either went home, as in the case of the Hydes, never existed, in the case of the Fairweathers, or redefined themselves as "local whites," as in the case of the Hunters and Bowens. In the absence of either wealth or power, the creole middle class have taken what was left, rising in the civil service and political office only in the 1940s and 1950s.

Method and Data Collection

Material for this study was collected during two periods of fieldwork in Belize between August 1986 and September 1987, interrupted with a three-month period of archival research in Britain. Sources of data included census records, birth, marriage, and death registers, and baptismal records, cemetery surveys conducted in Belize City, Orange Walk, and Corozal; land maps and surveys, wills and deeds, colonial newspapers, family diaries and letters, as well as government dispatches and reports of various kinds and newspapers published in the colony.

The construction of family histories was an incremental process, which began with the early baptismal records from St. John's Church and the Registry Office in Belize. Additional information came from newspaper accounts of weddings and births and deaths and from letters, genealogies, and curricula vitae done by family members. Histories were confirmed, corrected, and expanded in interviews with family members as well as reports of weddings, births, deaths, and social announcements in local newspapers, including a Who's Who in Belize compiled by The Reporter newspaper from 1968 to 1970.

The selection of elite families, conceived as an initial step, was in fact a process that ended only with the last revision of Chapter 5. I began by selecting those names mentioned by Belize's first superintendent, Colonel Marcus Despard, as owning some nine parts in twelve of the settlement in 1787 (Bolland 1977b:33), or listed in his first or second class of inhabitants in 1790 (CO123/9). Only a handful continued in Belize after 1860, and to these I added names identified as elite families by local papers and secondary sources as well as informants. The result was some 40 family names, for which I collected information on birth, death, occupation, and place of residence in successive generations. I was able to compile preliminary genealogies for 26 families, both white and creole. I subsequently conducted interviews with at least one family member for 18 of these, thereby correcting and expanding the original

genealogies. Thereafter I concentrated on creoles, conducting interviews with at least two members of each family, of different generations, for a total of ten families. The final selection of four white families was made primarily to illustrate the course of modernizing capital, specifically agriculture and transport, and includes the country's most prominent landowners and producers. The selection of creoles, by contrast, depended on their efforts to present themselves in historical and cultural terms. I selected four individuals, prominent in the historical celebrations of the Battle of St. George's Cay, and examined the different trajectories of class and elite formation embodied in their different family histories. In describing these histories, the choice of which family members to discuss in detail is mine, not theirs; I have therefore included a genealogical chart for each family described.

Spanish families, researched in order to provide a point of comparison with creoles, were selected from archival research on the first Spanish families done by Angel Cal (1983, 1984a,b) and interviews conducted in Corozal by Mateo Ayuso, a local teacher, and expanded from records in the Catholic church at Corozal and cemeteries in Corozal and Orange Walk. Additional information was supplied by several Spanish informants, but no interviews were conducted with members of the families described here.

Information on post-emancipation occupation history was

compiled from a number of sources, including commercial directories in the settlement's Almanacks and Handbooks and an 1861 census sent to the American Secretary of State by the consul in Belize. Information on male adult occupation was also noted for each of the 40 families originally designated as elites; while hardly systematic this provided a good insight into the petty bourgeois nature of the so-called elite. An additional perspective on creole occupations history was obtained from interviews I conducted with each of the permanent secretaries in the civil service during 1987, numbering 13. I identified the ethnicity, gender, and educational background for each, as well as place of birth and occupations of parents and grandparents, and reasons for selecting the civil service.

The goal of this investigation was to elicit some of the differences within the broad category of urban petty bourgeoisie, or creole middle class, in terms of life chances and occupational mobility. However, occupational categories presented some problems. For one thing, the categories "woodcutter" or "planter" were applied equally to owners of large tracts of land and laborers on that land; only a change in occupation at some point or prior knowledge of the individual permitted proper identification to be made. Similarly the term "mercantile clerk" covered a range of occupation from counter jumpers to store managers. What Bourdieu (1984:229) calls "a systematic bias towards the maximum indeterminacy" perfectly characterized the

designations given by registry officers of both church and state--possibly reflecting the preferences of the registrants themselves. The same desire for vagueness characterized informants' categorization of their parents' and grandparents' occupations when interviewed by me. This tendency of course greatly reduced the evidence of social differences as well as obscuring paths of upward mobility.

Historical research was carried out in both the Belize National Archives and the Public Records Office in Britain, as well as the British National Newspaper Library and the library of the Commonwealth Society in London. In addition to dispatches between the Colonial Office and the administrators this included annual Blue Books and monthly Government Gazettes as well as miscellaneous reports and memoirs. I read all of the surviving issues of the newspapers of the colony, up until 1913, when the Colonial Guardian ceased publication. Throughout the dissertation, documentary history is evaluated against personal memory and family history and vice versa.

My research was primarily historical and archival. But informed with no personal insights, the early archival research I did in Belize City is almost completely useless: lists of vessels arriving or departing or reports of trials or scandals which ultimately led nowhere. Documentary research was far more efficient in Britain, where both official accounts and newspapers are far more complete and systematically organized. But the material is vast, and

required a selective principle beyond that of time period focus. This was supplied by participant observation, in both Belize City, where the overwhelming majority of the creole population still lives, and Belmopan, the capital since 1970, location of government offices and home to many civil servants, especially in the junior ranks. I lived in Belmopan for an initial two months, thereafter in Belize City, initially with creole families and later with other single women, mestizo and creole. While living in one town I spent part of each week in the other, traveling first by bus, sometimes in friends' cars, and finally in my own car, and most often staying with creole friends. Since some of the family members I interviewed live in Stann Creek, Orange Walk, and Corozal, I also traveled to these towns, staying with friends for about a week at a time. In each of these towns I frequently attended political rallies and social and cultural events, usually in the company of creole or mestizo friends.

When I was preparing for the field I expressed doubts about research involving family histories but was assured that my fears were groundless--people "love to talk about their families." This was in fact not true. With rare exceptions, people were reluctant to share distant and often painful memories, a reluctance which did not lessen when we became friends, often very close friends. The exceptions, I realized only much later, had nothing to do with their relationship to me, but reflected the fact that they had at

some point become interested in their own family history and had initiated similar investigations themselves. With only one exception, however, few families thought of themselves as members of an elite, and few could reconstruct family history beyond one or two generations at most. They too depended on archives and newspapers for much of their information; the inconsistencies in their accounts probably result as much from errors in their own sources as from any conscious manipulation for status purposes.

In fact, while a bias toward marriage and legitimacy and patrilineal descent may well reflect a rise in class status as Douglas (1991) suggests, this may be less a result of selective memory than something inherent in the data. Families focus on the side that carries the name, which is male, less because of the class or color of the original ancestor than because of the nature of record keeping and the system by which the wife takes the name of her husband at marriage, as do all the children of the union. My own conscious effort to avoid this bias was futile: while I diligently recorded marriages of women, the number of family names soon proliferated unmanageably and lacked all coherence. The exception, or partial exception, was among Yucatecan immigrants, who a) included a traceable number of single women as well as of single men, and b) retained the Spanish system of family names in which the mother's and father's names are both given to children. Moreover, the identification of women by color and legal status, and men

by occupation and origin, noted by Alexander (1977) and Douglas (1991) also reflected the nature of record-keeping and problems of reconstruction as much as the nature of memory and identification. Beyond this, the emphasis on the male as the one who built the family business or landholdings reflected the limited opportunities for women; though women inherited equally with men, businesses were generally bequeathed to one or more sons, since men, not women, were expected to run businesses and manage property.

The historical sources were in almost all cases fragmentary and incomplete: newspapers existed for a time and then closed down; birth registers do not survive intact, and censuses were few and far between. Perhaps the most complete set of historical data consists of the correspondence between the Colonial Office and the administrators in Belize, located in the Public Record Office in London. But these have two problems: they reflect only the authorities' definition of reality, and for the most part they were not made public to the local inhabitants at the time. Nor, moreover, are they accessible to most Belizeans.¹⁵ As a result, the discrepancy between a remembered past and an official past is inevitably large. In trying to understand how a creole elite constructed itself in the late 19th century, I endeavored to seek out other versions of events and their significance, including private papers, diaries, letters, and memories of informants. In addition, I relied heavily on the two most long-running

papers, the Colonial Guardian and the Daily Clarion; their editors, while very different, were both opposed to the system of Crown Colony government then in effect in Belize.

The inevitable result is a bias in favor of the individuals and families portrayed. Moreover, I cannot pretend to present the unselected, unedited voices in which they spoke; the accounts presented are, like all accounts, chosen and contextualized by me--and reflect my own perspective, acquired in the course of fieldwork. I have tried to follow Handler's (1985:180) advice, to call on as many accounts as possible to construct a narrative that is "both coherent (even readable) and explicitly tentative."

Notes

1. An effort to account for the importance of ethnicity has given rise to the theory of plural society. As developed by M.G. Smith (1965) for the Caribbean, this held that the different groups brought together in the New World kept their social and cultural boundaries intact, maintaining separate institutions of kinship, marriage, religion, and so on, and were held together only by the dominance of the colonial power. Smith's theory has been criticized for its failure to recognize that the class structure that developed in society as a whole integrates society and allocates different ethnic segments within it (R.T. Smith 1988). Some go further to argue that race and ethnicity are important only insofar as they operate to mediate class relations in given historical instances (Karch 1985).

2. Creoles today include any person of black ancestry, other than Garifuna; they are primarily Protestant, primarily urban based, and their first language is creole. Whites, whose political universe once recognized only local and foreign born Europeans, and who therefore did not need to distinguish themselves from nonwhites, increasingly refer to themselves as "local whites" (although family names often obviate such distinctions). This dissertation follows current usage, using the term "creole" to refer to the predominantly black or coloured population and the terms "white" or "local white" to refer to those who have consciously avoided intermarriage with creoles. It employs the term "white creole" to make a distinction in the past that was unnecessary at the time.

3. Recognizing the historical inaccuracy, as well as the colonialist connotations, of the word "Spanish," academics, politicians, and the census now use "mestizo," as distinct from "indio." But to themselves and everyone else they are "Spanish"--even where they are the dominant group (see Sutherland and Kroshus 1985:14-15). Burns (1977:272) notes this is true in present-day Yucatán as well (but cf. Redfield 1941:75-76).

4. The ethnic composition of the population based on the 1990 census was not released until September 1992. Percentages cited in this dissertation (see Chapters 3 and 4) are taken from Amandala, September 11, 1992.

5. Sugar and citrus provide partial exceptions. However, sugar production in Belize developed on the basis of small independent producers rather than large holdings with large workforces; and while this started to change in the 1960s and 1970s the sudden drop in the sugar market in the early 1980s retarded further modernization. Citrus is organized

along the lines of agribusiness, but to date the owners have successfully exploited the geographical differences among ethnic groups, with the result that creole workers are clustered in the urban dockyards, while migrant, largely mestizo, workers are employed in production.

6. The intellectual history of the concept of creolization is more completely reviewed by Bolland (1992).

7. While statistics are not available for the population as a whole, a preference for endogamy, especially by mestizos, has been shown by the few studies that examined marriage patterns for different ethnic groups in specific samples (see Brockmann 1977:259; Mazzabelli 1967:226; Cosminsky 1976:105) as well as more descriptive work (see Topsey 1987; Bennett 1988; but for an opposing view see Palacio 1988). Among elite families I studied, endogamy varied more by individual family than by time period for all families. In general, it has been least for creoles and greatest for mestizos, though it represented the most common form for each--a pattern reflected in the weekly marriage announcements in the press.

8. A number of authors, pursuing the notion of creolization, have identified an English-speaking or creole cultural complex, including whites, creoles, and sometimes Garifuna, and a Spanish-speaking mestizo cultural complex, fusing Spanish and Mayas (Grant 1976; Ashdown 1979; cf. M.G. Smith 1965), a dichotomy that was not born out by the family histories I studied.

9. Friedman (1992:194) reminds us that insights into the ways in which histories and identities are socially constructed should not be turned into some objective revelation of the "inauthenticity" of history or identity, and Urton (1990:127) observes that the task of anthropology is not to authenticate "mythohistory" but to understand the social and political contexts within which representations of origin and identity are made.

10. While a full understanding of the parameters in which creole identity takes shape requires a look at groups both above and below, for the emerging middle class it was those above--the whites--and those with whom they competed--mestizos--who were most relevant as sources of validation and points of comparison.

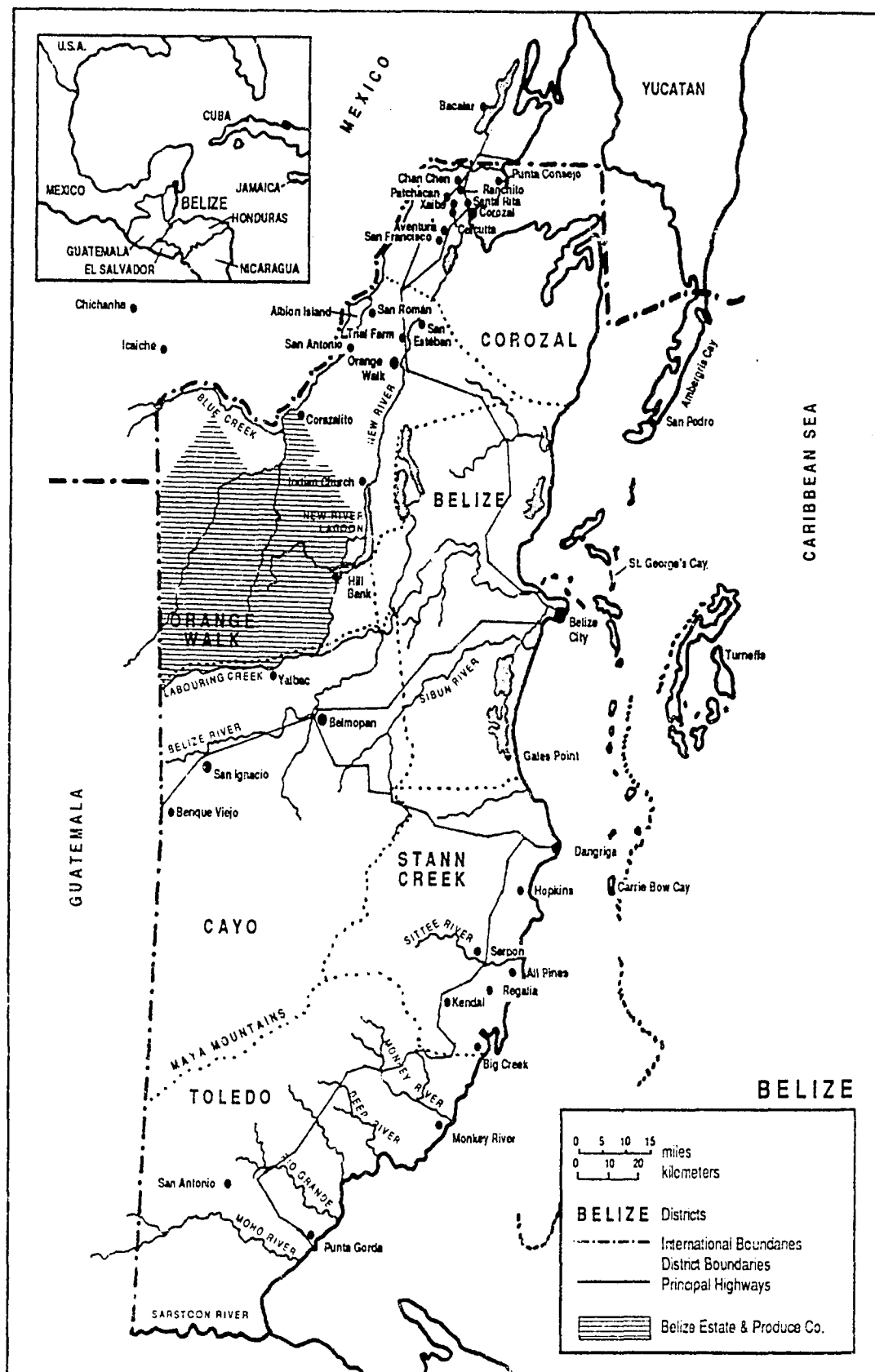
11. The Legislative Assembly voted to surrender their right to an elected legislature (and remaining degree of political autonomy) largely because merchants and landowners could not agree on who would pay for the colony's defense.

12. Ashdown (1979a:6-7) concludes that while Dobson and Waddell were probably misled by their reliance on secondary sources, Cleghern, who examined a wealth of primary material, including government and consular despatches as well as local newspapers, mistakenly equated the opinion of the elite "People's Committee" with that of the people.

13. Despite the advent of open competition in the 1870s, the civil service "remained as genteel and as privileged as it had always been" (Cannadine 1990:239). This was particularly true of the Foreign Office, where Robert G.W. Herbert, grandson of the first Earl of Carnarvon, and first cousin to his future chief at the Colonial Office, Lord Carnarvon, was permanent undersecretary from 1871 to 1892, and the Treasury, where Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, eighth baronet (Lord St Aldwyn), Sir G.H. Murray, kin to the Duke of Atholl, and Sir Edward Hamilton, relative of the tenth Earl of Belhaven, held sway. Herbert was the author of many of the scathing judgments of the early 1890s, along with Sir Sydney Olivier, later a baron and member of the House of Lords. Public school and Oxbridge products, these men whether Tories, as most were, or socialists, like Olivier, abhorred businessmen almost as much as "the great unwashed," as Herbert called the majority of the colonists (Blakeley 1972:39). They were chosen precisely in order that they could hold their own with the titled colonial secretaries of the 1890s, including Henry Holland, First Viscount of Knutsford, George Robinson, the Marquis of Ripon, as well as members of Parliament--men such as Sir Broadie Hoare and Baron de Worms, representatives of the Belize Estate and Produce Co. (see Blakeley 1972:32-42; Cannadine 1990:239-44; Arnstein 1973; Roseveare 1969:173-178). Thus their comments on exploitation of the "people" must be taken with a grain of salt at the very least.

14. Herbert to Knutsford 27 November 1890, CO 123/195.

15. The very notion of "objective" history, Friedman (1992:203) argues, depends on knowledge of "primary" sources generally more accessible to historians and anthropologists than native spokespeople.



CHAPTER 1

Creole Society and the Colonial Elite

"Arise ye sons of the Baymen's Clan..."--so begins the chorus of Belize's national anthem. While Belizeans thus give voice to an identity as descendants of the Baymen, for most Belizeans, the Maya, the Garifuna, the mestizos, they are descendants only symbolically; as schoolchildren are now taught, the first Belizeans were Mayan--but they remained largely in the interior. Later on the Garifuna, or Black Caribs, transported to Roatán in the Bay of Honduras, came to the mainland at Honduras, and gradually to Belize, but they remained mostly in the south. Still later the "Spanish," the Yucatecan refugees from the Caste War (1847-1901) came and settled in the north, founding the towns of Corozal and Orange Walk. But for the composer, creole Sammy Haynes, as well as the creoles who sing it, the Baymen represent the ancestors, and the sons of Baymen are those who settled Belize City, Belize's creoles.

It is the thesis here that identity, however amorphous, is a product of history and the way in which people experience and remember that history. The ability to also shape and present history and memory, which inheres in power relationships, develops for different groups at different times, especially in the colonial setting. Subsequent chapters will look at this process, focusing on the late 19th century, for whites and mestizos as well as creoles, through the prism of prominent families. This chapter will

outline the early history of the settlement itself, focusing on the elements--events and people and institutions--which have gone into the construction of history and feature in collective memory. It looks at the early pioneers, anonymous and legendary, and the institutions they founded and sought to preserve. In the process it will outline, very broadly, the major economic and political changes that characterized the first 200 years in Belize.

The Baymen and Mahogany Cutters

Historically the word "Baymen" derives from Belize's location in the Bay of Honduras.¹ For creoles, Baymen are the original ancestors, around whom their collective origin myth takes shape (see Chapter 5). Yet the word invokes a very different heritage depending on which creoles use it--even among the elite. For some, Baymen were the "principal inhabitants," the "oldest settlers," whose descendants are thus among the "old established families"; for others, they were "rapscallions and refugees from everywhere; not a white plutocracy like on the islands, but cutthroats and ruffians, a mixture of people."² For still others, they were Africans and Miskito Indians (Kemp and Soberanis n.d.:5).

The original Baymen were privateers and pirates: supported by the British, they made their living by preying on the Spanish galleon trade in the waters of the Atlantic off the coast of Central America. British merchants fitted out privateers to capture Spanish vessels carrying logwood,

source of the blue, purple, and red dyes much prized in the British textile industry. In 1667 and 1670, treaties between Spain and Britain outlawed privateering, and many became logwood cutters, in and around the bays of Campeche and Honduras. By the end of the 17th century they had more or less abandoned the Yucatán, where they were subject to frequent Spanish attack (Gibbs 1883:29), for the less exposed stretches along the rivers of Belize.

In Belize they staked out claims along the principal rivers, and by 1720 the more successful had begun importing slaves to cut the wood.³ Few of the woodcutters actually lived in the camps; rather, they lived on an island just off the mainland, St. George's Cay, or around the mouth of the Belize River, in the town they called Belize.

Most sources describe the privateers and logwood cutters as "British"; Britain sponsored the trade and provided the largest market, and British accounts provide the main sources. Almost everyone mentions "the famous Admiral Benbow," pointing to a creek that still bears his name (Honduras Almanack 1828:14; Fowler 1879:36; Gibbs 1883:28). Yet most acknowledge that the "free brethren of the coast," sometimes called "Gueux de la Mer," were not exclusively British; according to Swayne (1917:161-62), they "were composed of Protestant sailors from England, France and Holland." They were united not only by love of adventure and drink, but by some rough-hewn democratic institutions (ibid.:162; Temple 1857:117).

Accounts come mainly from those among them who wrote up their adventures; sailors and buccaneers such as William Dampier and John Coxon, captains such as George Henderson and Nathaniel Uring, shipwrecked off the coast in 1720. These in turn are quoted by Belize's historians. A recent portrait of Belize City, called The Baymen's Legacy, quotes an account by Captain Uring (Foster 1987:12-13):

The Wood-Cutters are generally a rude drunken Crew, some of which have been Pirates, and most of them Sailors; their chief Delight is in Drinking; and when they broach a Quarter Cask or a Hogshead of Wine, they seldom stir from it while there is a Drop left: It is the same thing when they open a Hogshead of Bottle Ale of Cyder, keeping at it sometimes a Week together, drinking till they fall asleep; and as soon as they awake, at it again, without stirring off the Place. Rum punch is their general Drink, which they'll sometimes sit several Days at also; they do most Work when they have no strong Drink, for while the Liquor is moving they don't care to leave it.

With the decline of privateering, the more industrious of these adventurers came to the land to cut wood. According to some, however, the Baymen never lost their preference for piracy. Temple, Chief Justice in the 1850s, quotes William Dampier, "that celebrated navigator" (1857:116):

[The Baymen] often made sallies out in small parties amongst the nearest Indian towns, where they plundered and brought away the Indian women to serve them at their huts, and sent their husbands to be sold at Jamaica; besides, they had not their drinking bouts forgot, and would still spend £30 or £40 at a sitting aboard the ships that came hither from Jamaica, carousing, and firing off guns three or four days together, and though afterwards many sober men came into the bay to cut wood, yet by degrees the old standers so debauched them, that they could never settle themselves under any civil government, but continued in their wickedness....

These adventurers were not necessarily born to drink,

however. William Dampier, son of a poor tenant farmer in Somerset, England, was in many ways typical of those who came to Jamaica in search of hard work and the rewards of land, only to find, after 1675, "the concentration of land, wealth, and public office in fewer and fewer hands precluded the formation of a landed middle class" (Joseph 1989:4). As society divided into a few white masters and a mass of black slaves, "whites of limited means arrived on the island to find their choices severely narrowed"; to the prospect of indentured service on the plantation, buccaneering presented a real alternative (ibid.). Moreover, logwood, during its heyday between 1650 and 1750, provided a tolerable alternative to piracy, by then outlawed. "Logging became an indispensable sideline for the buccaneer forced to mark time on land" (ibid.:11) and the two gradually began to merge between 1670 and 1690.

This combination set an indelible stamp on the settlement that resulted. Writing of John Coxon, a popular logger and buccaneer, Joseph (1989:15) says he built a "prosperous, roughly egalitarian community based upon intensive wood-cutting and looting." Though they occasionally appealed for help against the Spanish, Baymen consistently defied British authority. "The loggers were independent and doggedly stubborn, rugged individuals who chose to work knee-deep in a malarial swamp for their daily bread, rubbed elbows with alligators, and faced the loss of their homes with every new season, either by flood or forcible eviction" (ibid.).

By the turn of the century, in the early 1800s, as demand for logwood began to slow, that for mahogany increased, and loggers began to cut mahogany. Because of the greater difficulty of cutting mahogany, as well as the location of the trees further from the river banks, black slaves were imported, first from the West Indies and later direct from Africa. Slaves worked alongside masters, in open camps, and both slaveowners and their descendants remarked on the relatively less onerous nature of slavery in Belize. Later scholarship has modified this view, but the belief has become part of the popular legacy.

Writing in the 19th century, Gibbs (1883:173), though insisting that "the pioneers of a lucrative trade cannot be judged by ordinary standards," observed:

But slavery here, as elsewhere, developed the same social taint which, as an institution, has marked its existence in every country it has cursed. Nor has that taint--laxity of morals--been eradicated from the blood of the descendants of the Baymen....

The overwhelming masculine nature of this society was unmistakeable, of course. There were few European women at all before 1750, and even in 1790 white men outnumbered white women by almost four to one (Bolland 1977b:42). That there were descendants 'to think about ancestry was due to the loggers' sexual exploitation of the captured Indian women, or later, of slave women. These relationships were not always exclusively predatory; in 1776 Mr. John Smith, logwood cutter in the Bay of Honduras, willed all his property--logwood and mahogany works, house and lots, oxen

and schooner--to "Mary, the mulatto child, the offspring of my Negroe Wench Phebe--sole heires to the estate except the Negroe wench Pheby and her three other children...." He directed his executors to "keep slaves at work where they now are" and to "purtches more slaves for the benifit of my said Heires" (Will Bk 1A, pp. 60-62). As a consequence, by the late 18th century a number of free black and free coloured women owned slaves (see Chapter 4).

As the mahogany trade flourished in the course of the 18th century, greater amounts of capital, land, and labor were required; slaves were organized into large work gangs, numbering 10 to 50 men (Edwards 1819:258; cf. Naylor 1967:44; Joseph 1989:20). These work gangs were moved around from one work to another; by the end of the century the Baymen were cutting along the entire coast as far as Black River, on the Mosquito Coast, in what is now Honduras.

Burnaby's Code and the Public Meeting

While the Treaty of Paris between England and Spain in 1763 acknowleged the Baymen's rights to cut logwood, it specifically outlawed any form of formal government as well as the making of plantations (small landholdings) or manufactures. Moreover, it did not specify boundaries within which wood could be cut, resulting in a effort by the governor of Yucatán to confine the loggers to the Belize River the following year (Honduras Almanack 1828:18-21). Responding to settlers' complaints, the British sent Admiral

William Burnaby from Jamaica to Belize in 1765 to clarify the territorial limits of woodcutting. While in Belize, Burnaby also codified the existing system of laws in the settlement.

Despite treaty restrictions, some time before 1739 (Joseph 1974:29; cf. Dobson 1973:88), the inhabitants had begun to elect magistrates through the institution of the Public Meeting, a gathering of the free men of the settlement. In 1765 Burnaby drew up a list of twelve laws and regulations, later published and known as "Burnaby's Code." These regulations, signed by 84 inhabitants, validated the practices by which laws were enacted, taxes levied, and justice dispensed; specifically that laws be passed by a "majority of the inhabitants of the Bay" and disputes be decided by the election of magistrates (Burdon 1935:100-06). Both the Public Meeting and the magistrates were, by means of Burnaby's Code, accorded recognition, which while hardly formal, greatly legitimated both institutions in the eyes of the settlers (Fowler 1879; Dobson 1973:88-89; Bolland 1977b:36). A year after his visit, the settlers elaborated on the code, providing for the annual election of magistrates and the quarterly sitting of the courts, including the appointment of a clerk.

From 1765 to 1786, the settlement was governed by these magistrates. Yet the absence of any single executive power left unclear the means of resolving dissent among the magistrates. This produced a string of complaints from

British naval officers of lawlessness and licentiousness among the inhabitants (Bolland 1977b:37; Dobson 1973:89).

In 1784, Britain's Secretary of State for the Colonies appointed the first superintendent--Colonel Edward Marcus Despard. A still ambivalent Colonial Office delayed his taking up his appointment, however, until June 1786, by which time they still could not decide on the extent of his authority. By then, the 1786 Convention of London, which clarified a 1783 treaty between England and Spain, provided for the evacuation of cutters from the Mosquito Coast in return for the additional boundary limits from the Belize to the Sibun Rivers. In 1787, Britain directed Captain James Lawrie, superintendent of Black River and a major landowner in the settlement, to supervise the evacuation.

Black River was "the undisputed economic, as well as political, center for the Shore" (Dawson 1983:697), with sugar plantations and mills as well as production of beef and indigo. Among those with property in the settlement were James Bartlett, Richard Francis O'Brien, Richard Hoare, Edward Davis, Lawrence Meighan, William Tucker, and James McAulay--seven of the 11 people that Colonel Despard, in charge of settling evacuees, complained were among those who "alone possess almost nine Parts in twelve of the presented augmented district."⁴ All but Tucker were also magistrates, either before or after the evacuation, and three, Richard Hoare, James Bartlett, and Edward Davis, that very year. A number of others, including James and William Usher, Francis

Hickey and James Yarborough, were by 1790 among the largest slaveowners in Belize.⁵ The evacuation consolidated the cutters and their slaves in a much smaller territory; evacuees included 416 whites and 1808 slaves (Hale 1987:20), swelling the population by 500 percent (Bolland 1977b:32).⁶

As one of Despard's tasks was to accomodate the newly evacuated settlers, he quickly confronted the Belizean woodcutters over the issue of land. His tenure was characterized by relentless hostility between himself and the Public Meeting, and the upshot was his removal in 1790. He was replaced by Colonel Peter Hunter, who reinstated existing laws and departed in March 1791. Thereafter settlers were left to govern themselves, until 1796, when fearing a Spanish attack, they petitioned for a military officer. Major Thomas Barrow was sent out as superintendent, but he apparently accepted the settlers' right to self-government, as did three men who succeeded him.

In 1814, however, the settlers' met a new opponent, Superintendent Arthur. Arthur came to abhor the institution of slavery, and determined to punish slaveowners for harsh treatment. He also declared that no land could be occupied without his approval (Dobson 1973:101). So long as the crown refused to claim sovereignty, however, its representatives would have difficulty exercising it. The job of superintendent, Arthur wrote, "is, and ever has been, so very undefined as to deprive the Representative of the Crown of the Authority necessary for the administration of Public

Business" (quoted in Bolland 1977b:40). While Arthur gained authorization to appoint public officers in 1819, after his departure in 1822 the Public Meeting regained this prerogative. Not until 1832, and Superintendent Cockburn, did the magistrates finally lose this authority (Vickers 1955:3).

The true character of the Public Meeting is a subject of disagreement among historians, contemporary and modern. Those who liken it to the Greek city state rely on Governor Burdon's (1935) archival account that it comprised "all free Inhabitants of the Settlement"; yet Bolland notes that in addition to thus excluding slaves, at least by 1789 it also imposed property qualifications (£65 Jamaican currency), which increased to £100 in 1808 (Dobson 1973:112-13). In 1790, white inhabitants included some 133 men of property, leaving 114 men of very little or no property, mostly servants, who would not have been eligible. Free coloured inhabitants were even more restricted, being obliged to show property of £200; in 1790, those with property numbered 24, compared to 18 with no property.⁷ Moreover, they could not vote for magistrates. Even so, their membership on any terms made Belize unusual in the West Indies. As Dobson (1973:13) writes: "This liberal tendency was remarked on by all visitors to the Bay of Honduras and deplored by all Superintendents, who saw in it the explanation of much disorderly behaviour at the meetings." Over time, restrictions grew: in 1809 magistrates--elected by the Public Meeting--had to be residents, white, and British

born, and had to own at least £400 in visible property (Gibbs 1883:87).

Joseph draws a parallel between the 18th century Public Meeting and a 17th-century shipboard council of buccaneers-- "guided and limited in their behavior by a strict code" (1974:29-30; cf. Caiger 1951:47-48). Superintendents might have agreed, given that the primary feature of the code was "No prey, no pay!" (Esquemelin 1893:59). Their judgments reflected their frustration in trying to impose British rule on a reluctant--and often defiant--group of inhabitants. But by 1830 the original Baymen were losing ground--primarily due to competition from British merchant banking houses, who began to eclipse the "old independent importers" as early as 1829 (Griffith 1965:28). After 1832, Belize was "firmly administered by strong superintendents...who, having unseated the old independent merchant oligarchy, formed a new and dependent commercio-political hierarchy," including "those who represented the new commission house interests in the settlement that were engaged as intermediaries in the merging foreign trade between England and the Central American Republic" (Naylor 1967:51).

Thus the Baymen evolved into "leading inhabitants" in the course of the 18th century, by which time they were no longer the only adventurers. The restriction on local production made imports more a necessity than a luxury, and merchant groups began to "pay regular visits." Many stayed, attracted by the growing entrepôt trade with neighboring

Spanish colonies. By mid century social life had changed as well; "whereas the logger had formerly taken his 'wife' from the Indian villages and later from the black quarters, now he shipped her from home, and the marriage ceremony was an official one" (Joseph 1989:20).

Throughout the 18th century, the population of the settlement never reached more than about 3,500, its total in 1779; even after the Mosquito Shore evacuation in 1787, it approximated only 3,000 (Bolland 1977b:32). The vast majority of these, nearly three-fourths, were slaves. The rest Superintendent Despard broke down into 12 classes in 1790:

- 1) Cutters and Exporters of Wood, possessed of considerable property (13);
- 2) Cutters of Wood, possessed of less property (34);
- 3) Cutters of Wood, of small property (24);
- 4) Housekeepers and Traders (24);
- 5) Housekeepers and Tradesmen (18);
- 6) Men of small property in the service of Wood-cutters (12)
- 7) Men of no property in the service of Wood-cutters (37);
- 8) Housekeepers of little property, chiefly Refugees from America (14);
- 9) Housekeepers & Turtlers, possessing boats & Employing Servants (8);
- 10) Turtlers of little or no property and employed as Servants (63);
- 11) People of mixed Colour & possessed of property (18);
- 12) People of mixed Colour possessed of no property (24).

Total: 289

Clearly things had changed since the rough and ready buccaneering days. London merchants had become interested; restrictions on local cultivation and manufacture made imports essential to the life of the colony, and these included everything from food to clothing to machinery. As early as 1801 a group of "Merchants trading to Honduras" joined petitions for enlarging the territory (Humphreys

1961:14-15). The cutters needed ties with London merchant houses in order to export their timber, and as profits increased so too did the settlement. By 1830 it had lost its rough edges: magistrates "met almost daily as a miniature Executive Council" (Dobson 1973:107), and not only initiated legislation and allocated public money, but also passed judgment on their fellow settlers.

Ultimately, the Baymen and slaveowners were no match for the London merchant and banking houses, who could lay out cash even in hard times. A few large firms--notably Hyde Hodge & Co and Young Toledo & Co.--bought out the old cutters (see below) and by the 1860s practically no descendants of the original woodcutters remained. Of the large slaveowners at the end of the 1790s--Thomas Paslow, Richard Hoare, James Lawrie, James Bartlett--none was left by the end of apprenticeship in 1838.

A few of the original woodcutters tried to ride out the changes, but to do so they had to think big: large companies were cutting further into the interior and across the boundaries with Mexico and Guatemala. One of those who tried to compete in the changed climate of the 1830s and 1840s was Marshall Bennett, a landowner and magistrate in Belize as early as 1790. His efforts to corner the mahogany market and enter mining and agriculture in neighboring Central America involved a struggle with metropolitan commercial houses as well as crown representatives determined to control the economic and political development of the settlement. Though

the struggle was ultimately to fail, Bennett's long career tied Belize directly into the economic and political history of Central America.

The Merchant Adventurer: Marshall Bennett

Exactly when Bennett came to Belize is not clear. He was involved in a dispute over the British settlers evacuated from the Mosquito Coast in 1787, and appeared in the General Return of the Inhabitants in 1790.⁸ Unmarried, and already a magistrate, Bennett headed a household with another white man, Samuel Freeman, and two free men of colour (elsewhere listed as servants), as well as 16 slaves. He was therefore in Despard's class 2 (above); at the time the household of James Bartlett and James Hyde, later rivals, included 82 slaves. By 1816, however, Bennett was the largest slaveowner in the settlement, with 277 slaves--including 66 from the estates of William Jackson and Edward Meighan. In 1823 he had 275 slaves.⁹

By 1826 Bennett was one of the major mahogany merchants in Belize, rivaled only by Bartlett and Hyde. His household resembled a small firm: one of seven white men, including Thomas Phillips, later the executor of his estate, and three free coloured men, he owned 271 slaves plus 26 from the estate of Thomas Paslow. Thereafter, his slaves numbered 266 in 1829, 253 in 1832, and 237 in 1834--over twice as many as the next largest slaveowners, James and George Hyde.

Early in the 19th century Bennett tried to turn this labor capacity to agricultural development. In 1818 he got the support of Superintendent Arthur for a scheme to grow cotton, which Britain was then encouraging throughout the West Indies. But this, like so many development projects, was turned down by the Board of Trade as a violation of the 1786 treaty with Spain (Dobson 1973:130).¹⁰

Bennett thereafter turned to neighboring Central America, spending more and more time there, despite the fact that he had at least two families in Belize--a son Marshall was born to Catherine Cunningham in 1828, who in 1832 headed a household with Bennett's children Sarah and Henry; another "Family of Marshall Bennett" was headed by Catherine Meighan, a free coloured woman. Bennett's own "household" by contrast consisted of four white men, a free black woman and a coloured child--virtually a mobile woodcutting camp.

By 1826 he had spent over 35 years as a magistrate. Elected in 1790 and again in 1795, he voted to defend the settlement against Spanish attack in 1798, at what became the Battle of St. George's Cay. Thereafter he remained on the bench until 1828, when he left for Guatemala. He thus played a part in making the settlement more "respectable": magistrates passed a resolution banning Jews from the settlement in 1813, and three years later resolved unanimously that "Pews on the East end of the church be appropriated to white and married persons and no kept mistress entitled to sit in any pew at that end."¹¹ In

addition, he led the fight with Superintendent Arthur over the right to legislate and appoint officials. In one particularly acrimonious struggle in 1819, Arthur obtained authority to appoint the public officers, obliging the magistrates, Bennett among them, who had insisted that this prerogative belonged to them, to go to Arthur for confirmation of legislation already passed by them, and to request special consideration for those who had been acting in that capacity.¹²

Finally, Bennett joined in the "Defence of the Settlers" in 1823 against Arthur's charges of slave cruelty, in which it was claimed that "Slavery existed but by name" in Belize. In 1827, he delivered a lofty opinion on the case of a slave who had assaulted a free black man for calling him a "damned Negro slave":

The Magistrates would never allow even in the most remote degree, abusive and contemptuous language to be used towards slaves, particularly by a class of persons who differed from them only in having the good fortune to obtain their manumission. It [is] quite misfortune enough for a person to be a slave without being taunted with it.... (quoted in Dobson 1973:155).

That year he was appointed to a five-man committee to decide whether slave evidence could be admitted in trials.¹³

But slaveowners had further problems. One of the first actions of the newly independent Republic of Central America in 1823 was to abolish slavery, with the result that a number of slaves sought freedom in neighboring countries. In 1826 Bennett led a commission of magistrates to Guatemala City to demand the return of fugitive slaves. The Honduras

Gazette and Commercial Advertiser of July 1, 1826 noted that Bennett, "our worthy friend and fellow settler," had gone "to protest and negotiate the injustice of encouraging our slaves to desert"--a mission that was unsuccessful (cf. Rodríguez 1964:59).

By this time the supply of mahogany within the old treaty limits was thinning out, and many cutters were operating as far south as the Sarstoon River. Despite the restrictions, Bennett and others combined mahogany cutting with general merchandise, exchanging European goods for livestock and agricultural products from Central America (Cleghern 1967:7). This trade increased with Central American independence in 1821, making it legal, and its profitability attracted even more competition from British commission houses and merchant firms. They set out to break the power of the local mahogany merchants--allied for this purpose, according to some accounts, with Arthur and his successors (Cleghern 1967:8; Naylor 1967:51).

Bennett, however, did not give up easily. In 1826, he went into commercial partnership with William Hall of Belize and Carlos Antonio Meany from Guatemala, and set up the only Belizean firm dealing directly with the new authorities in the Republic of Central America (Naylor 1967:52-53; Griffith 1965:28-29). In 1828, he sought unsuccessfully to be appointed British Consul in Guatemala, despite the fact that at that time he was considered "the most important British merchant in Guatemala" (Dobson 1973:136-37).

Then in 1830, the Guatemalan president, Mariano Gálvez, anxious to develop the Petén, but lacking resources, set out to settle the region on a commission basis. In 1831 one Juan Galindo, a British-born immigrant to Guatemala, aware of the timber cutting encroachments from Belize, had secured a large tract of land directly across the border in the Petén, with the intention of forcing British cutters to buy land from him. In 1834, Gálvez granted numerous concessions on land taxes, import duties, rights to collect tolls, as well as government protection, in return for a promise of settlements and development, especially transport (Griffith 1965:ch.2; Naylor 1967:53; Rodríguez 1964:75).

That year Bennett, back in Belize "after six years of nearly continuous residence in Central America" (Griffith 1965:28), encountered a Mr. Gould. Gould represented an outfit called the Eastern Coast of Central America Commercial and Agricultural Company, "obscure London speculators whose assets and plan of operation had been acquired from Gregor MacGregor" (ibid.:20), originator of a fraudulent settlement scheme known as Poyais on the Honduran coast in 1820. The reconstituted company's own scheme, to attract newly freed Caribbean slaves to the Mosquito Coast, was condemned by the British consul (Frederick Chatfield), as well as by Belize's London agent--and Bennett's rival--James Hyde (ibid.:25-27).

Bennett, whose own connection to the Poyais affair--as rescuer or kidnapper, depending on the sympathies of the

teller--had been the subject of a libel suit in 1826, had by the mid 1830s acquired mines in El Salvador and Honduras, as well as former Dominican holdings in Guatemala, including a huge hacienda and sugarmill at San Jerónimo and newly built sugar factory at Convento Viejo in Guatemala City (Griffith 1965:29). Perhaps concerned with how to most profitably employ his large number of apprentices in Belize, however, he sought title to a large tract of timber land from the Guatemalan authorities, and Gould's settlement scheme seemed a way to achieve this: "If he could interest the agent of the London speculators in negotiating a colonization contract with Guatemala, his own proposals would be made to appear part of a comprehensive colonization effort" (ibid.:30). Together they went to Guatemala City, where Gould secured a vast land cession, including most of the Petén, and Bennett and Meany won extensive tracts in the departments of Chiquimula and Vera Paz (Rodríguez 1964:74ff)

Bennett and Meany, by selecting areas outside those claimed by cutters in Belize, were the only ones to immediately profit, since the unanticipated support of the British government for the boundaries claimed by the cutters rendered the other cessions problematic. Moreover, in 1835 Bennett joined Francisco Morazán, president of the Central American Federation, in a partnership to cut mahogany on the Honduran coast as far south as the Río Román (ibid:76).

Gálvez' enthusiasm for colonization must have blinded him: mahogany was the only marketable resource, and Bennett

was by this time one of the foremost mahogany merchants in the hemisphere. Yet the concessions allowed Bennett and Meany to cut mahogany immediately, without having to show colonization efforts for up to 20 years. Moreover, they were allowed to import tools, equipment, and work gangs from Bennett's works in Belize, as well as provisions and supplies, totally duty free (Griffith 1965:84).

At the same time, Bennett set out to make the hacienda at San Jerónimo a going agricultural enterprise. He recruited among newly arrived immigrants at the Eastern Coast of Central America Company's settlement in the Petén wilderness, where instead of an earthly paradise they encountered a jungle nightmare of biting insects and poisonous reptiles (Griffith 1965:141). Under the circumstances, Bennett--who had somehow been appointed honorary director of the Company in 1835--was again able to style himself as deliverer, proposing settlers "accept employment" at Jerónimo, and offering transport, land, and wages. Most preferred to try to get to Belize, where they were quickly admitted to the public hospital (ibid.:142-43,151).

Bennett's operations had a number of long-term consequences. First, Belizean magistrates passed a measure to increase the duty on mahogany exported through Belize by nonresidents, prompting the British, under pressure from Bennett, to withdraw all preferential tariffs and local duties; they declared that mahogany from any part of the Bay of Honduras could be cleared from Belize and admitted at the

same rate. The large Belizean cutters, notably Hyde and Forbes, by now in partnership with British interests, then determined to challenge Bennett's Río Román claims by securing grants from the Miskito King--upheld, however reluctantly, by the British crown. Thus the Hyde-Bennett rivalry, in one view, "precipitated an international dispute as to the nature and extent of the Mosquito Nation" (Naylor 1967:57; cf. Rodríguez 1964:126-27).

Second, Guatemalans, alarmed at the wholesale land giveaways, pressed Gálvez to clamp down on Meany and Bennett and their Chiquimula cession was canceled in 1837. But the next year the inhabitants joined the successful rebellion by Rafael Carrera (Griffith 1965:89). Under Carrera British merchants in Guatemala City were able to make direct trade connections with Europe, eliminating the need to go through Belize altogether. Thus Bennett, though beaten by the banking houses and crown authorities, bequeathed them a future backwater (see Cleghern 1967:9).

Bennett and Meany continued to cut mahogany in Guatemala until Bennett's death in October 1839 (Rodríguez 1964:261; Naylor 1967: 51), and under the stewardship of his executor Thomas Phillips, for some years afterward (Griffith 1965:90). But a notice in the Belize Advertiser (11.2.1839) announced the sale of Bennett's Belizean estate, including a saw mill and machinery, a schooner and drogher; the whole of his property at Sittee River; a land tract at Haulover Point; "a valuable Plantation" called "Fowler's Bank" near

Convention Town; houses and lots in the town of Belize and St. George's Cay, and 19 mahogany and logwood works on the River Belize, two in Northern Lagoon, and one in New River.

Bennett's empire on the frontier had come to an end, along with locally elected magistrates, slavery, and strict protectionism. The next chapter would belong to the merchant banking houses and the officials sent out from London.

Merchant Capital and Metropolitan Consolidation

The boom in mahogany demand that began in the 1820s intensified in the 1840s, as Britain began to build railroads, at home and in the colonies. Belize cutters greatly expanded their operations, into more and more difficult locations. Many of the largest timber merchants began to establish links with London commercial houses, which provided the capital for expansion. Then in the 1850s, the price of mahogany fell, making the continued operation of many of these locations uneconomic. At the same time, the entrepot trade with Central America, booming in the first part of the century, began to decline drastically with the opening of railroads in Guatemala and Panama. Those without access to metropolitan capital were forced to sell their unprofitable works. Yet agricultural development was still forbidden, as Britain continued to maintain the fiction of Spanish sovereignty long after the independence of Central America and Spain's recognition of its former colonies.

In 1840, Superintendent MacDonald independently

declared the laws of England to be in force in the settlement, and "after much consideration, the Colonial Office decided that it would do more harm than good to disavow his action, although it was still not prepared to accept British sovereignty" (Waddell 1988:20). While the Colonial Office empowered the superintendent to appoint an Executive Council to replace the magistrates, it turned down an 1841 petition for secure land titles submitted by landowners interested in developing agriculture.

In May 1850, the Americans planned to close their consulate due to doubts about British rights to the territory. Christopher Hempstead, U.S. consul, dispatched a copy of a speech by Justice Temple that disputed the claim that Belize belonged to Britain by right of conquest but claimed title by occupation instead: "At the time of the Central American revolt, this country was vacant and we occupied it, and that occupation gave us a territorial right." Noting the prohibition on agriculture, Temple wrote:

Has it been planted? You may see a few plantain grounds, Indian corn patches, and cane pieces scattered over the country, but what produce has been exported? None whatsoever. No tobacco, no cotton, no rum, no sugar, no coffee, no Indian corn. Does it raise sufficient produce to maintain itself? Certainly not; we depend almost entirely upon the markets of American and England for our food.¹⁴

Some 16 years after emancipation, with freed slaves unable to get land, unable to plant it, and increasingly out of work, the statement is testimony to British policy in Belize

The United States closed the consular office in 1853,

but reopened in 1861. In 1854 Belize received its first real constitution, and the Public Meeting was abolished in favor of a Legislative Assembly. Even then the Colonial Office avoided any mention of the status of the settlement (Waddell 1961:7). The Honduras Land Titles Act was finally passed in 1861, and the next year the territory was declared a colony, British Honduras, under the governor in Jamaica. By that time the Joint Stock Companies Act, which facilitated capital accumulation by letting investors invest in limited liability companies, had been in effect in Britain for five years, and most of the woodcutting and merchant operations of Belize were securely in metropolitan hands.

By then, little remained of the old oligarchy blasted by Despard--or their descendants. Of the 11 named, all but two returned to Britain; Bennett had acquired most of their holdings, along with their slaves, by 1826. The exceptions were Ushers, James and William, and James Bartlett, who with household member James Hyde and his son went on to found the largest landowning and commercial firm in the country.

"2/3 of the Colony": British Honduras Co. and Young Toledo & Co.

In the early 1830s James Hyde and his free coloured son George appear to have dissolved their partnership. They are listed as James and George Hyde until 1830, even though George had set up his own commercial house, George Hyde & Co., in 1826 and James had established another merchant

house in 1828, known as Hyde and Adam, which became Hyde and Forbes in 1832. Their separate houses are listed in the census of 1834, but thereafter George is not listed.

James Hyde returned to the City of London, where he joined his son James Bartlett Hyde and John Hodge to form James Hyde & Co. The first mention of this firm is in a 1860 letter that refers to a purchase in 1844 of a mahogany works on the Río Hondo from Francis Young (who had died in 1841) by John Hodge, on behalf of James Hyde & Co.¹⁵ Two years later, James Hyde & Co. bought a large mahogany work on New River from Alexander France.¹⁶ In 1848 Hodge was appointed London political agent for the Belize Public Meeting.¹⁷

In 1859 James Hyde died, and the remaining two partners changed the name to Hyde, Hodge & Co. They took advantage of the new Joint Stock Company Act of 1856 to form a new company and thus get sufficient funds to acquire lands by freehold title, as required by the Laws in Force Act of 1855. In the course of buying out most of the other landowners in Belize, however, the firm went bankrupt. The creditors (bankers and merchants) then took over the assets and formed a successor company, the British Honduras Company (BHC), "in the belief that large and valuable estates might be available for ultimate payment of debts, but also in the belief that acquisition and cultivation of lands in the settlement and promotion of emigration thereto, offered ample field for profitable employment of capital."¹⁸ John Hodge, the senior member of Hyde, Hodge & Co., was appointed

manager and general agent in Belize, in which capacity he went to the United States to try to get freed slaves to immigrate in 1863 (see Chapter 3). Hodge was a member of the Legislative Assembly from 1862 until his death in 1869.

The greater availability of capital, as Bolland points out, allowed the company to keep lands idle while others were obliged to sell in order to get cash (1977b:186). The deeds books in Belize are mainly concerned with properties bought and sold in the late 1850s and early 1860s. The first Claims Book (1859-62) shows that these firms had acquired the old mahogany works of most of the old inhabitants, among them Young, Gabourel, Hickey, Gentle, White, Swasey, and Craig (Bolland and Shoman 1977:81). Many entries involve mortgages taken by John Hodge--presumably later foreclosed--and the purchase of small lots adjoining large properties, and disputed claims. In 1861 Hodge sued George Burn for trespass on a location marked on an 1800 plan as "Gappers Works"--among those for sale by Bennett in 1839.

By this time BHC's only serious competitor was Young Toledo & Co., founded in 1839. The brothers John and Francis Young had been landowners since the 1830s. John Young, a free coloured slaveowner in 1816 and 1823, was a magistrate in 1839; in 1854 he was named to the newly formed Executive Council, where he sat until 1856; and he was elected to the Assembly in 1856 and as speaker in 1858.¹⁹

Francis Young died in 1841, after which his executor, William Harrison, sold considerable property, including

Goshen and Pembroke Hall (see Chapter 3), to an English land speculator William Hampshire. Harrison then joined James Young and Frederick Robert Bevan as London partners of Young Toledo & Co.; the Belizean partners were Philip Toledo and Malcolm Glassford. Philip Toledo was magistrate in 1859 and 1860, and again from 1863 to 1866, and nominated to the legislature in 1871. In 1859 the firm purchased some 25 mahogany works from Austin William Cox, a Legislative Assembly member and large works owner, for \$19,000, and the next year bought the land on the left bank of the Sarstoon River from John Johnson for \$1,350, and properties of William Jones, Petzold, and Charles Evans (Deek Bk. 2, pp.45ff.). In 1861 they bought the Orange Walk properties of Henry Oswald (see Chapter 3), and in 1864 they acquired all 23 works held by the former Carmichael Vidal & Co. (Bolland and Shoman 1977:82).

By 1870, the British Honduras Company and Young Toledo & Co. between them possessed "almost 2/3 of the Colony," over 2 million acres.²⁰ Ten years later, Young Toledo & Co. went into liquidation, reconstituting itself as William Guild & Co. (Colonial Guardian 11.15.1884) and transferring at least nine mahogany works to BHC (Bolland and Shoman 1977:80). Guild & Co. in turn liquidated in 1884, after which the major landowners were four London-based firms-- Bernard Cramer & Sons, Mutrie, Arthur, & Currie, Sheldon Byass & Co., and especially, the British Honduras Co., which in 1875 had been taken over by the Hoare banking family,

changing its name to the Belize Estate and Produce Company (Ashdown 1979a:23).

By the 1880s a single company thus owned over a million and a half acres--or about half of the privately-owned land in the colony (Bolland and Shoman 1977:82). In 1890 Hydes, Bartletts, Youngs, and Bennetts were no longer owners of great tracts of land, just as "no major merchant house bore the name of one of the old Baymen families," and "only a handful of the smaller concerns in the capital" were owned by local creoles (Ashdown 1979a:33). Little wonder that the chairman of the British Honduras Co. declared in 1874: "We feel we could not be justified in longer forbearing to urge the claims of our company and of the Colony of British Honduras, the interests of both being nearly identical" (quoted in Cleghern 1967:54). The practical consequences were clear when in 1890 the governor tried to impose a land tax of 1¢ an acre, the company mobilized its London agents, who besieged their local MPs. As the Colonial Office wrote:

This tax, though apparently ridiculous in amount, comes to so high a figure on the vast domains of the Belize Estate Co. that even the proposal to make it 1/2c per acre, or \$3.20 a square mile, or, as the governor suggested in 1883, \$3 a square mile was defeated in 1879 and 1883, by the pressure of Mr. Hoare and his friends, which will now no doubt be renewed.²¹

"Catfish Still Uneaten": Public Meeting to Unofficial Majority

The economic eclipse of the independent landowners by London commercial houses was paralleled in the political arena. After 1833 magistrates were no longer elected by the

Public Meeting but were nominees of the crown and its superintendents--who after 1842 also gained the power to legislate (Gibbs 1883:100-04). In 1854 the Public Meeting was disbanded, and a Legislative Assembly introduced, which could be dissolved by the superintendent at any time.

Thereafter "British Honduras had become a colony in all but name" (Waddell 1961:53), and the settlers petitioned for recognition as an official colony in 1861. In 1862 British Honduras was declared a colony, under a lieutenant governor and the governor of Jamaica, but it retained an elected assembly. In 1871, however, the Legislative Assembly voted to relinquish the right to elect its members and British Honduras became a Crown Colony, with an Executive Council composed entirely of government officials--chief justice, colonial secretary, colonial treasurer, attorney general, and chief military officer--and a Legislative Council made up of these five plus four unofficials--chosen by the governor--as representatives of the people. Due to the official majority in the legislature decisions of the governor always passed (Gibbs 1883:153-54).

Colonists regretted this decision almost immediately, and in 1880 the Legislative Council petitioned for the restoration of self-government--in vain (Vickers 1955:7). These demands intensified thereafter, especially during the tenure of Roger Goldsworthy, the first governor, who arrived in 1884. After two years of his administration, a budget surplus of \$90,000 had changed to an equal amount in debt,

requiring the imposition of either land or import taxes. These measures, always unpopular, were particularly so as it was not clear how the money had been spent. When Goldsworthy was recalled in 1886, Belize City creoles turned out for a gala celebration. A crowd stood on the shore, while "a large number of pleasure boats, lighters and schooners" displaying rude banners, awaited the "joyful event." Creole women and children picked up stones from the sea floor and hurled them after the governor's barge. As it passed, "a lighter--with a large white flag having Catfish Still Uneaten, in red letters, in reference to a threat made by the Governor that 'he'd make the people eat catfish before he had done with them'--passed by and dipped her flag."²²

In April 1890, a London court awarded compensation to C.T. Hunter, brother of the Colonial Surgeon (see Chapter 2), for breach of contract--arising from his decision to pile refuse dredged from the canals onto the city's streets instead of dumping it at sea. This decision, supported by Goldsworthy, was naturally unpopular--especially after an outbreak of yellow fever in 1885--and during the governor's absence in Britain his successor canceled the contract, leading to the suit. The subsequent award sparked the resignation of all five unofficial members of the Legislative Council, who then joined with a larger "People's Committee" to demand constitutional changes. These included a majority of unofficals on the Legislative Council; and reinstatement of elections to these positions.

These demands were rejected, on the advice of the head of the Colonial Office, Sir Robert George Wyndham Herbert, in terms which caused considerable bitterness in the colony.

The Secretary of State wrote:

In a colony on the mainland of America, having relations with foreign countries for which the Crown is responsible, containing only about 400 inhabitants of European descent out of a total of 30,000, it is impossible for Her Majesty's Government to surrender its control over legislation and finance.²³

Failing to find unofficial replacements, Goldsworthy appointed additional officials, members of the Colonial Service, in February 1891. During their tenure, an amendment to the Customs Tariff was passed, which was subsequently challenged by the merchant firm of Steven Brothers on the grounds that the officials could not serve as unofficials. The Supreme Court upheld this challenge on July 13, 1891.

The decision persuaded the Colonial Office to compromise, however reluctantly, and on January 21, 1892, the governor announced that the Legislative Assembly would henceforth consist of four officials and five unofficials. The demand for elections was dropped and three of the protesting unofficials--Benjamin Fairweather, John Powrie Robertson, and R.M. Rokeby Price--were reappointed along with James Currie of Mutrie, Currie and Arthur and Charles Edwin Connor, manager of Belize Estate and Produce Co.²⁴

On January 21, when the governor announced the surrender of Secretary of State, the colony celebrated once more (Colonial Guardian 1.23.1892):

flags were displayed at the various Consulates and from private houses, and every store in town suspended business for the day. In the streets, leaflets announced the following: 'At 11:45 a.m., to day, the taxpayers are respectfully invited to attend the remains of the Official Majority, from the Council Chamber to their last resting place in the Slough of Despond.'

Thereafter the Legislative Council had veto power over government measures, including such reforms as increasing land taxes, changing land tenure and labor laws, or allocating more money to education. For this reason, the selection of unofficials was crucial, and this remained the privilege of the governor. A review of unofficials shows them to be consciously chosen from the largest merchants and landowners, always including the local manager of the Belize Estate and Produce Co., whose major shareholder and director, Brodie Hoare, was an influential British MP.

Moreover, the Legislative Council had to accept, and budget for, all appointments to government offices, and all decisions regarding their salaries and pensions. In addition, the governor and Colonial Office, and usually the Treasury, had to approve all measures initiated by the unofficials, whether to improve communications or build roads, as well as sales or grants of all crown land.

The result was an impasse--and a colonial backwater. As late as 1921 Sir Samuel Hoare, who as major shareholder in the Belize Estate and Produce Co. was as much responsible as anyone, observed: "In the whole colony there are only twenty miles of public railway, and these derelict, and only a few

hundred yards of metalled road, and these leading inauspiciously to the principal cemetery" (1921:608). While a series of governors condemned the unofficial members for the backward state of the colony, due to their refusal to accept additional taxes (see Ashdown 1979a), Hoare laid the blame on the Crown Colony system. He compared the crown to "some ground landlord who will neither build on his property nor sell his land" (ibid.:607). In fact, the Colonial Office tried several times to reimpose total administrative control by means of so-called reserve powers. The Legislature refused until 1931, when a devastating hurricane destroyed much of Belize City and forced them to request emergency aid; as a condition of granting this aid, Britain insisted on reserve powers, resulting in total Treasury control.

Gordon Lewis writes: (1968:296)

The powers thus granted included gubernatorial control of the colonial finances so long as colonial indebtedness to the Imperial exchequer existed; and since it did exist most of the time Belize was, in fact, the resentful prisoner of the British Treasury mentality.

Not surprisingly, little changed, and even the bulk of the hurricane relief money went to the Belize Estate and Produce Co.! A report of the Evans Commission in 1948 concluded:

Britain denied the Colonial Assembly power to either reform the outdated taxation system or to exact more equitable tax returns from the British-controlled foreign business empires, and then cited the low revenue level caused by this denial as the excuse for continuing Treasury control.²⁵

Conclusion: The Context of Ethnic Identity

These struggles illuminate not only the context of dependency and powerlessness against which creoles tried to define themselves but the means by which they expressed resistance. The spontaneous sendoff of the creole masses for Governor Goldsworthy in 1886 and the 1890 walkout of the unofficial members of the Legislative Council represent important moments in the construction of creole identity--in which can be seen a convergence of mass level and elite expressions of resistance to domination. To them must be added two other incidents of the late 19th century: a riot by creole mahogany cutters over a currency change in 1894, and the elevation, in 1898, of a 100-year-old battle against the Spanish to the status of a national holiday. In both cases, the elite members of the Legislative Council took up a street level demonstration of resistance and made it respectable. In both, the experience of dependency and powerlessness became a shared basis of expression for both the creole masses and their middle-class "representatives."

All four actions represented "rebellions to right injustices" (see Wolf 1982:389). They not only combine what people say in public with what they say off-stage (Scott 1990:10) but also combine elite and mass levels of expression, and thereby provide the context in which collective identity begins to take shape. But this identity almost immediately began to fragment: "creoles" in the late 19th century included both whites and nonwhites; 20 years

later this would no longer be the case--and middle-class creoles would find themselves left with a hollow ideology.

The heavy hand of British colonialism formed the context in which took shape the collective identities of all groups in society--whites and creoles, who lived in the capitol and participated in the ritual business of empire, especially, but also mestizos, who developed a somewhat autonomous agricultural base in the north and more and more inserted themselves between whites and blacks in the process of capital accumulation. (While British colonialism also shaped the opportunities and options for Garifuna and Mayas, of course, they are outside the scope of this work.) The following chapters will look more particularly at each of these groups, starting with the process of capitalist development in the 19th century, and the white families with whose histories it is intertwined.

Notes

1. Before 1862 Belize was known as "Her Majesty's Settlement in the Bay of Honduras" (Squier 1880).
2. The second meaning, articulated by one informant, was expressed by many.
3. Swayne (1917:167) says as early as 1700, the Honduras Almanack around 1718 (1828:18; cf. Gibbs 1883:31), while for Joseph (1974:30) "the earliest reliable date for the introduction of slaves to the logging settlement is 1724."
4. Letter from Superintendent Despard, 23 February 1787, quoted in Bolland 1977b:33).
5. The first known "census" was compiled by Superintendent Despard, and returned 22 October 1790; entitled "General Return of the Inhabitants in the Bay of Honduras, Free people of every description and slaves," it is hereafter referred to as the General Return of 1790.
6. Hale cites a contemporary report by Robert White, London agent for the settlers (The Case of His Majesty's Subjects having property in and lately established upon the Mosquito Shore in America, London 1789), but cf. Bolland (1977b:41), who takes the figures 537 free people and 1677 slaves from Despard's correspondence in October 1787.
7. "His Majesty's Subjects who occupy the district allotted for cutting wood in the Bay of Honduras by the Definitive Treaty of 1783 and the Convention of 1786"; C0123/9.
8. For an account of the dispute over the evacuation, see Despard to Sydney, April 19, 1787 C0123/6.
9. That year Marshall Bennett Jr., single white male, owned one slave--as in subsequent years. In 1824 Marshall Bennett Jr. was a captain in the coloured Light Infantry of the militia--commanded by Marshall Bennett (Fairweather 1977:9).
10. Dobson (1973:130) writes that the Public Meeting proposed in 1833 that "cotton, tobacco, coffee, rice and other tropical produce be cultivated, but this was also turned down with the explanation that it was not a suitable moment for discussions with Spain. Later petitions were equally unsuccessful and similar restrictions were applied to attempts to develop a shipbuilding industry."
11. The first was disallowed by the Secretary of State for the Colonies. See Meetings of the Magistrates, AB.

12. Meeting of the Magistrates, 17 January 1820; R2, p.24, AB.

13. This and other information not otherwise credited is taken from the Meetings of the Magistrates, AB.

14. Hempstead to Buchanan, May 1850. U.S. Department of State, Despatches from U.S. Consuls in Belize, 1847-1906; Film T-334, Reel 1.

15. This title was later disputed; see Young to Merivale, February 1860; CO123/103.

16. John Young to Merivale, 24 August 1860; CO123/103.

17. Proceedings at the British Settlement of Honduras, R20 (1849). p. 302; AB.

18. John Young to Herman Merivale February 1860; CO123/103.

19. Young, who was two at the time of the battle of St. George's Caye, had nine children--among them Peter, who in turn produced one branch of the very large Young family, but these apparently had to make their own way in the world.

20. Police Magistrate Cockburn to Longden 24 February 1870; R106, AB.

21. Minute #48, 25 April 1890 to Wingfield from Olivier; CO123/194.

22. Colonial Guardian, November 6, 1886. Catfish feed in the sewage canals in Belize and thus are never eaten.

23. CO123/195 Knutsford to Melville, 28 November 1890. Herbert's minute read:

I would not encourage any hope that British Honduras will cease to be a Crown Colony pure and simple; and would say that the situation of the Colony on the mainland of America, having relations for which the Crown is responsible with Mexico and Guatemala, and having only some 400 inhabitants of European descent, precludes Her majesty's Government from entertaining any proposal that the Crown should surrender its control of finance and legislation.

CO123/195, minute of RGW Herbert 27 Nov, 1890 on Melville to Knutsford 7 November 1890.

The Colonial Guardian published the refusal on December 30, 1890, and the next week a columnist noted that Knutsford's "narrow-minded policy," while shameful, was not unique; his

chief, Lord Salisbury, espoused similar views about India. On the anniversary of the dispatch, November 28, 1891, Gahné published it again, again protesting its bigotry.

24. These events are summarized in Bristowe (1892:35-39).

25. See Colonial Office, Report of the British Guiana and British Honduras Settlement Commission (London: HMSO, 1948).

CHAPTER 2

Local Whites: Modernizing Capital in the 19th Century

It is easy to overlook the local whites in Belize. The most notable feature of this group is its small size, consisting of only some eight to ten families. Moreover, the landownership structure in the country--in which the majority of the arable land has been held by foreigners, generation after generation--has also obscured their prominence (Bolland and Shoman 1977).

Once simply called creoles, and generally identified in the literature as white creoles (see Grant 1976; Ashdown 1979a), this group increasingly refers to itself as "local whites." It includes the Bowens, Bowmans, Hunters, Burns, Geggs, and MacMillans, as well as the Sharps and Polacks, white creoles from Jamaica.¹ Unlike other prestigious families, such as the Ushers, who increasingly married other creoles (see Chapter 5), these elite families have sought to marry only other whites; they are still relatively small, tight, and white.²

The small size of this group has contributed to its coherence as an ethnic elite, operating against the encouragement of internal class differentiation; there are no "poor whites" in Belize (as there are, for example, in Jamaica; see Douglas 1991). As a consequence, the original white ancestor, and how early he arrived, which in Jamaica creates a focus of differentiation, is not important (ibid.). Important is white ancestry--on both sides.³

Partly this is due to the nature of accumulation in Belize, based on the extraction of timber rather than the cultivation of export crops, which retarded the development of what could be called a settler elite. By the mid 19th century there was a virtual changeover of the dominant white class--as the original landowners sold out to metropolitan merchant houses and a new group of merchant capitalists came to make their fortunes. The emphasis on color over longevity has also imparted a great flexibility to the local white elite--allowing members to leave or stay, and to incorporate larger or smaller numbers of European or American newcomers.

The tendency of colonial merchant adventurers to come to Belize to make their fortunes and then retire to England or Scotland was remarked upon by all observers; these "birds of passage" (Fowler 1879:50; Morris 1883:15) are part of the colonial legacy. But a few stayed, joined by new entrepreneurs eager to share in the development of a new colony. Their pioneering efforts in the second half of the 19th century represented the dawn of the modern era in Belize. They experimented with small manufacturing enterprises and new crops, opened up new areas of the country to large-scale agriculture, and formed steamship companies and railway investment companies. With landowning dominated by metropolitan-owned mahogany firms, and the crown interested in Belize for its strategic value more than its productive potential, they faced formidable odds. But they had capital, and in a colony which had exported capital

for over 150 years, lacking a settler class, and with a labor force barred from landowning, this went a long way. In the late 19th century a small group of white families, creole and immigrant, established a place at the top of the colony's local elite, as agriculturalists, manufacturers, and professionals alongside the expatriate merchants.

This chapter will look at three such families--the Bowens, who acquired property from early unions with free-coloured women and are now the largest local capitalists; the Bowmans, who pioneered large-scale agriculture in the Stann Creek Valley; and the Hunters, who represented modernizing capital and the effort to develop communication and transport. It will also look at the Gentles, one of the expatriate merchant families who provided the model for economic, political, and social life in the late 19th century. It will describe the process by which local white families have accommodated to the changing demands of international capital, becoming a local, and in time an international, elite. In so doing it will provide a point of comparison for competing elites, both mestizo and creole.

Old Money to New

Possibly the oldest of the local white families are the Bowens, descendants of Dr. William Manfield Bowen. Listed as a new member in the Meetings of the Magistrates in 1808, two years later Dr. Bowen served as a magistrate himself, as he did again in 1815, and thereafter every other year until

1821. That year he was turned down for membership on a committee to consider the Consolidated Slave Laws--"due to circumstances recently transpired."⁴ The circumstances pertained to his trial on charges of cruelty to a female slave, which turned less on the facts than on whether or not British laws regarding slave treatment were in effect in the colony. The incident was an early round in the struggle of administrators to curtail the power of the slaveowning mahogany cutters to rule themselves.⁵

Bowen had earlier petitioned to be exempt from a fine for not keeping "Christmas Guard," a civic duty, on the grounds that his patients would suffer owing to his not possessing any "negro property."⁶ In 1816, however, he became executor of the estate of Mary Hickey, a free coloured woman who had inherited slaves from her white father Francis Hickey in 1788.⁷ By 1808, Bowen and Mary Hickey had formed a union; two children, William Manfield Bowen and Sophia Searle Bowen, born to Dr. Bowen and Mary Hickey were baptised in January 1809, followed by Catherine Amelia and Matilda Caroline (baptised in 1815), Caroline (who died in infancy in 1816), and two boys, James (baptised in January 1818) and Charles, born in August 1818. Another boy, Richard Manfield, was probably born the following year.⁸ In February 1816 an indentured servant of Dr. Bowen's complained of harsh treatment by Bowen's "housekeeper" Mary Hickey.⁹ Mary Hickey died in 1820, and in the 1826 census the "Manfield W. Bowen family" consisted

of Manfield and Mary Ann, both white; they owned 22 slaves, plus 40 from Mary Hickey's estate under Bowen's charge.¹⁰

Of the six children to whom Mary Hickey had bequeathed slaves in 1826, only three are known to have survived past childhood: Sophia Searle, Matilda Caroline, and Richard Manfield. Dr. Bowen died in 1833, aged 83. That year, the "Misses Bowen, Matilda and Sophia," his daughters, arrived from London to petition regarding the estate of "the late Mary Hickey, their mother."¹¹ In December 1840, however, they both died, a week apart. Richard, like his father apparently formed a union with a free coloured woman, Mary Elizabeth Hume, one of the largest property owners in the north (see Chapter 3).¹²

This couple had five children, two boys and three girls. Only the daughters are mentioned in their mother's will, drafted in July 1904: Matilda Caroline (who married Hugh Towrye Price, a solicitor and planter in Stann Creek), Kathleen Alice, and Laura Hickey, who with their children inherited their mother's house in Belize City and mahogany works at Rowley's Bight. The eldest son, George Hume, drowned in March 1886, aged 21. The younger son, William Manfield Charles, was left to succeed on his own. He married Hardee Alberta Davis and became a surveyor and timber measurer. As executor of a cousin's estate--Frederick Henry Bowen, who manufactured aerated waters and ice cream--he sold the stock and the business. He and his wife had seven children: at his death in 1940 he divided all his real and

personal property among his four daughters and named his three sons executors (Will Bk 3, p.862).

Only two of these children stayed in Belize--Barbara, who remained a spinster, and Eric William Manfield, who again had to succeed on his own. By the 1930s he was director of the Corozal Sugar Factory and Salt Creek Estate Ltd. and subsequently resurrected the Bowen aerated waters manufactory, building it into a large bottling works and commission agency, managed as Bowen and Bowen, Ltd. In 1935 he also owned over 15,000 acres of land.¹³ He received a knighthood from the King of Norway and an OBE from the Queen of England. He married Emilie Blancaneaux, daughter of a French botanist who became a prominent tobacco grower and chiclé dealer in the Cayo district. She completed her education in the United States after her father died and her family went back to France.

The Bowens' four children were also educated abroad. The eldest son, Barry Manfield, inherited his father's business acumen. Born in 1945, by 1981, when he bought a controlling interest in James Brodie Inc., Belize's largest department store, he owned some half a dozen businesses, including a Coca Cola factory, bakery, brewery, distributors firm in Corozal, and crop dusting operation (King 1987:65). In 1982 he bought the enormous landholdings of the former Belize Estate and Produce Co., which by then consisted of 872,412 acres, one-eighth of the land area of Belize, for \$7 million. When international backing for his forestry

development scheme fell through due to concerns over the environment, he had difficulty meeting the bank payments, and owed the government a large sum in back taxes. He turned over a large chunk of the land to the government in lieu of taxes, and in 1985 negotiated a three-way deal with Coca-Cola Foods and two Texan businessmen, under which they each received 200,000 acres and jointly owned another 100,000.

This deal, heralded by the government as a boost to the citrus industry, alarmed environmental organizations, and Coca Cola, unable to get political risk insurance, and frustrated in efforts to obtain labor and price concessions, threatened to pull out altogether. In the end, Coke and Bowen engineered something of a public relations coup: Coca Cola donated 42,000 acres to the Program for Belize, a nonprofit forest conservation and management group, and Bowen sold them another 110,000 acres for \$3.5 million.¹⁴ An energetic visionary, Bowen is both the wealthiest single individual and the largest private landowner in the country; taken together his companies are the largest taxpayer and the larger employer (over 900 people) outside the government. Currently he is developing a cattle farm and tourist resort on his remaining 120,000 acres; the tourist complex, Chan Chich, is a highlight of ecotourist vacations.

Britain and Belize at Mid-Century

England in the mid-Victorian era was leading the world in an unprecedented period of industrial and trade

expansion, symbolized in the railway mania that swept the country between 1845 and 1870. The passage of the Joint Stock Companies Act in 1856 created limited liability for a large number of investors in a company, and thereby facilitated capital accumulation and more aggressive investments, both at home and abroad. At same time, the government took a renewed interest in imperialism--not only to share the benefits of British civilization but to facilitate emigration, especially after the mid 19th century (Thomson 1950:94; Richards and Hunt 1965:427-29). Britain's export of capital was thus matched by that of people from 1850 to 1880 (Best 1972:127)--and together they opened up the New World countries to agriculture and industry.

Scotland was part of this expansion, having profited from an "immense revolution in transport" (Mackenzie 1947:180), both railroads and ships. The Edinburgh-Glasgow line opened in 1842; the northwest opened in 1852. Between 1750 and 1820, the lowlands in particular saw a great growth of towns, and with them a great sense of opportunity (Smut 1971:363). Glasgow merchants provided the dynamic class in the early 19th century--unlike the nobility they did not go in for lavish displays of wealth, and as a result they had liquid capital for new investment.

The years 1845 and 1846 saw "a wild epidemic of speculation in railways." According to Mackenzie (1947:173): "Hundreds of schemes for new ones were rushed out, and thousands of speculators rushed into them, without much

critical heed to the schemes, or the schemers." When this was followed by a sudden fall in the price of wheat, business houses started to fall, and hardship led to even greater immigration: the annual average for each year between 1847 and 1849 was over 250,000 (Thomson 1950:94).

All this impelled the exodus to the New World--including Belize, which by the 1870s seemed to have exhausted its mahogany exports. The need for agriculture, prohibited in the early years and long opposed by the mahogany interests, was by mid-century becoming apparent--as was the transportation to make it possible. The opening of the Panama railroad in 1855 threatened to cripple the colony's position as an entrepot trading center with Central America (Cleghern 1967:20; Ashdown 1979a; Bolland 1977b). While administrators sent off dispatches about the need to open the country, however, the Colonial Office was no more inclined to invest in the colony than the mahogany interests, which had operated for over a century without building so much as a road, and whose representatives were tireless lobbyists at Whitehall. The merchants, for their part, found a short-term alternative to the Central America trade in contraband trade with the U.S. confederacy.¹⁵

But when measures to prevent contraband trade improved, efforts to develop agriculture were renewed. Authorities and landowners both focused on a need for imported labor. Major landowners and mahogany cutters first sought to import newly freed blacks from the U.S. South, realizing that Belizean

creoles knew only logging while U.S. Negroes were trained in agriculture (Cleghern 1967:34). The U.S. consul in Belize advised against this, recognizing in the proposed terms a virtual renewal of slavery, and President Lincoln eventually rejected the project (ibid.:35). But by the end of 1865 economic decline had reached its nadir and landowners succeeded in getting a shipment of workers from Barbados in March 1865 and one from China in June 1865.¹⁶

Development-minded administrators next campaigned for measures to attract Confederate emigreés (see Chapter 3). But land was priced at \$5 an acre--crown land as well as private--at a time when Brazil and other countries were offering land for free, and even the United States was selling it at \$1.25 (Cleghern 1967:34,41).¹⁷ A number of Confederate planters did acquire land, but most eventually returned home, due to difficulties with cotton, which did not thrive in the settlement--(ibid:43), and the long start-up time needed for sugar.

Nevertheless, trade increased, as Belize became a depot for goods from both the United States and Britain. In 1883 Governor Barlee succeeded in getting the route for the subsidized mail contract to Britain shifted from Jamaica to New Orleans; besides these biweekly steamers there was a private line to New Orleans, as well as one to Philadelphia, one to New York and one to London via Jamaica. But the major productive land of the colony remained inaccessible by anything but rivers. "All that is wanted," wrote Archibald

Gibbs in 1883, "is additional capital and increased energy to develop its magnificent resources" (1883:5).

Capital, of course, was for the most part expatriated to the metropolitan firms in London. Still, in the latter half of the century, some entrepreneurs began to expand out from Belize City. A few creole families, perhaps most notably the Bradleys, established marriage ties with the newly arrived mestizo families, who had both capital and agricultural experience; Bradleys soon had land and businesses out on the western frontier of Cayo as well as the northern districts and the cays. In addition, by mid-century some younger sons--including Scotsmen Findlay Bowman and Hugh Montague Rokeby Price, decided to try their fortune in the south, near Sittee River. There they planted sugar and bananas, and later pioneered the citrus industry.

Agriculture in the Emerald Valley

The pioneers of agriculture--Yucatecan sugar planters in the north, Confederate banana growers in the south, and the primarily Scottish citrus growers in the Stann Creek Valley--saw the potential of the land between the rivers: for those with capital, land and water could be purchased in abundance. Capital gave them access to land, and the fruits of development. It also gave them unquestioned historical legitimacy, as immigrants and colonists.

Sittee River was still a wilderness when Alexander Findlay Bowman left Stone Haven in Scotland and went to

Demerara, where he became a sugar planter, in the 1860s. "After a residence of some years" he went to Belize; by 1874 he was a sugar planter in Indian Church. Some time afterward he became manager of the Serpon sugar estate, then owned by the Belize Estate and Produce Co., at Sittee River, and "on the Company giving up their estates [he] took charge of the Estate of Serpon on his own account" (Colonial Guardian 1.7.1888). A Guardian correspondent praised his changes, which included a new engine and mill, in 1886: "The owner being now a planter and not an amateur engineer pays greater attention to the cleanliness of his fields with perhaps better results in the sugar house after all..."(1.2.1886).

At that time Serpon had 250 acres in cane, 50 acres in bananas, and 3 or 4 acres in plaintains, in addition to 130 head of cattle. Bowman's innovations included the employment of women as field hands, a policy commended by the editor of the Colonial Guardian (ibid.). Soon after, he converted totally to bananas; in January 1888 the Guardian (1.7.88) wrote: "the unfair competition of beet eventually drove him to convert that sugar estate into a gigantic banana plantation, which bids fair to be one of the most successful in the Colony."

Alexander Findlay left his property in trust for his children, and left £3000 to his wife Emily, who later married Ralph Montague Rokeby Price, owner of the nearby Kendal Estate. She and Price had three children, the eldest of whom--Arthur Montague Rokeby--married Eliza Kuylen,

increasing the links among the Bowmans, Prices, and Kuylen-Genico families in the southern valleys.

Of his brother Thomas, described by the Guardian (3.15.1884) as "of Serpon," less is known. He married Ella Jex, younger daughter of William Jex, who had come out in the mid 1800s and made a fortune (Clarion 12.25.1902). He became a planter at Little River and died in December 1888, leaving his property in trust for his children. His widow later married Frank Sharp, a white creole planter from Jamaica, who would help pioneer citrus in the valley.

Thomas and Ella had two children, William Alexander Jex and Thomas Findlay. Both boys were in the first class at St. John's, the Jesuit school for boys that opened in 1896, along with Carlos and Emilio Kuylen from Stann Creek. They were joined 1900 by their half-cousin Rokeby Price. William graduated in 1900, Thomas in 1902. They then went to work for John Harley, friend and executor of both their father and uncle's estates, at the firm of John Harley & Co.

Harleys, founded by James and John Harley in 1864, formed a major training ground for white creole expatriates, especially Scotsmen, and Thomas Bowman's merchant career followed the typical expatriate pattern. When John Harley died in 1904, the firm carried on under L.P. Grant and his son until the 1920s, when Thomas, with expatriate merchants Frederick Ross and Murdoch MacLennan, bought it. Thomas married Edith Beatrice Batty of Belize City, and they had two children, William Findlay (1912) and Jean Beatrice

(1914)--to whom Thomas left his interest in Harleys at his death in 1947 in New York City.

It was William, however, who was to have a lasting impact in the colony--due to his pioneering of agriculture. At the turn of the century he moved to Stann Creek, where he married Marie Therese Genico in 1906. Her father, a Belgian businessman, was one of the founders of the British Honduras and Steamship and Fruit Co, in 1887, set up to secure better prices for local fruit-growers and to charter its own steamship, with capital of \$200,000.¹⁸ He also owned a store in Stann Creek, which his son-in-law helped run as Genico and Bowman; in the 1920s they, along with the British Honduras Syndicate, were the largest merchants in town.

By then, a number of agriculturalists, both British and American, were settling in the coast and valley regions of the south. The first crop they tried was sugarcane, which had been successfully pioneered by the Yucatecan immigrants in the north, and appeared to offer an opportunity for local capital accumulation; by the 1890s seven large estates in the Stann Creek Valley were devoted to sugarcane. When this declined in the 1890s, planters were urged to go into crops such as bananas and cacao; the Colonial Guardian campaigned ceaselessly for crop innovation. But there was still no road or railway, and planters had difficulty shipping produce out. In 1906, the government finally subsidized a small rail line, and ignoring the great need of potential smallholders for land, sold a large amount of land at a bargain rate to

United Fruit, which began large-scale planting of bananas. William supplied the company for while but his real interest was citrus. In 1913, he ordered the first 300 budded grapefruit trees from Florida, and planted 15 acres in citrus. Thus when Panama disease struck in 1918 and virtually wiped out bananas in Belize, he had the only alternative agricultural know-how. By 1943 he had 850 acres and 2000 by 1951. His orchard at Sarawee provided citrus trees for other planters in the valley, including his son Henry and the Sharps, owners of the Middlesex estate.

William was appointed to the Legislative Council in 1922 and became a patron of St. John's College. His two sons--Henry Thomas Anthony and Alexander Edmund--attended St. John's as boarders from the age of ten, along with 136 boys from Central America. After three years they went to St. Mary's College, a Jesuit training school in Kansas. On their return, Alexander experimented with bananas for a time, but after the United Fruit Company pulled out in 1924 he gave it up and moved with his wife to the United States; his sister and half-brother also moved abroad, leaving Henry to carry on the estate in the Emerald Valley.¹⁹

In a memoir published in 1979, Emerald Valley and Twinkling Town, Henry conveys his sense of making history in the New World. Noting that "the feeling of striking out on my own was an urge I had to fulfill," in 1925 he "managed to purchase fifty acres of land by Macaroni Hill," for \$150, believing it to be better for citrus. When United Fruit

pulled out he took over the subagency for purchasing bananas and bought a one-man pump car to travel the private United Fruit railway--the only one in the country. "One day my dear mother came up the valley to visit me; and found a small coral snake in my bush bed under my pillow. She immediately got my father to lend me \$1,000 to build a wooden house on the farm for me to live," he writes (Bowman 1979:18).

Later he had the first Model T Ford in Stann Creek. In 1929, when he was 21, his father gave him a copy of "If" by that chronicler of empire, Rudyard Kipling. Henry followed his father to the Legislative Council in 1938, elected for one term and nominated for two further terms. Following his wife's death in childbirth, in 1934 he married his cousin, Carrie Kuylen.²⁰ In 1935, his mother died, and his father married Gladys Napier Gegg, sister of Edgar Napier Gegg, wealthy white creole merchant and landowner.²¹

With British shareholders he formed the British Honduras Fruit Enterprises Co, growing mostly bananas, selling out to the Colonial Development Corporation when the crop was hit by disease in the 1950s--but not before setting out some 20,000 citrus trees. In 1985, H.T.A. Bowman Ltd. was the largest private citrus estate, employing some 50-60 workers (Kroshus 1987:10). Salada in turn bought the CDC holdings, and built a processing factory, which was bought out by Nestlé's in 1978 and, in 1991, by a group of Belizean shareholders headed by Eugene Zabaneh, a wealthy Salvadoran. The other factory, once owned by the Sharps, is now the

Citrus Company of Belize; its directors are Henry's oldest son William and Patrick Polack, a white creole from Jamaica. All three are members of the powerful Citrus Growers Association, chaired by Henry Bowman and his son William for many years, and jointly own over 36 percent of the groves (Hartshorn 1984:85; Kroshus 1987:12).²² Today, his granddaughter Teresa runs the hotel he bought from Zabaneh and chairs the Belize Tourism Board; with their coral reef research station at Carrie Bow Cay and tours to the Cockscomb Jaguar Preserve, the Bowmans are leaders in the new ecotourism industry.

Canals, Railroads, and Crown Colony Government

The great railway mania that characterized Britain for 40 years after the opening of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway in 1830 spawned a belief in progress and a desire to open the land to expanded trade and efficient agriculture. This was followed by the expansion of railroads throughout the New World, financed by British capital. In Belize it was followed by some 30 years of earnest--and totally futile--efforts to build a railway to develop agriculture and open the land to the Guatemalan frontier.

While interest in a Belize-Guatemalan railway began as early as the Anglo-Guatemalan treaty of 1859, with the promise of mutual efforts toward a "cart-road," agitation for a railway began in earnest in 1870, with opening of United Fruit's railway in Costa Rica, and the Honduras

Interoceanic Railroad begun in 1869. In 1883 a U.S. investor, Walter Regan, proposed to undertake a survey for a railroad from Yarborough Bridge in Belize City to Guatemala; if feasible he would build it with a grant of land concessions. Lt. Governor Harley agreed. Upon completing the survey Regan recommended a southwestern route, through the Sibun valley to Coban, and estimated a cost of \$3 million; he requested concessions of 12,800 acres per mile.

A Public Meeting in June 1884 drew over 800 people in support of a railway.²³ However, there were rival routes. The Regan route, to the south, went largely through crown land; the alternative went west to Cayo and the Petén--largely through private lands; thus while shorter, it would involve compensation to private landowners. Among these, according to the infuriated editor of the Guardian (7.26.1884), was Henry Fowler, administrator of the colony, who owned property in Cayo and blocked the Regan plan. The next governor, Walter Goldsworthy, who arrived in 1884, initially supported Regan's plan (Humphreys 1961:158). His administration, however, bogged down in a project to dredge the Belize City canals under a contract with one C.T. Hunter--supported by his brother Dr. Alexander Hunter, whom Goldsworthy had appointed Colonial Surgeon in 1884.²⁴

Charles T. Hunter, entrepreneur, rogue, and vocal iconoclast, represented aggressive, modernizing capital in the tropical mercantilist backwater. From his arrival in the colony in 1853, he focused all the frustration of a colony

only reluctantly claimed, and eager to advance in the new capitalist world. He began his career as a clerk in the firm of Messrs Guild & Co., joined John Gentle & Co. and then became partner in Harley, Hunter & Co., leaving after a few years to set up his own merchant goods business in Belize City and Corozal. By 1892 he was one of the largest landowners in the northern district, owning a total of 9,600 acres.²⁵ In 1883 he had some 10,000 coconut trees at his Commerce Bight plantation--probably the largest in the colony according to one observer (Morris 1883:27)--where he also experimented with bananas. He built a three-story brick house in Belize City (Gibbs 1883:69) and set up a machine to make coconut fiber and a factory to make coconut oil.²⁶ He tried manufacturing cigars, which he exported in "large consignments" as well as supplying the home market (ibid:182), and patented a method for extracting gold and silver from ore (Government Gazette 11.28.1896).

At his International Hotel in Belize City, he was repeatedly fined for operating without a liquor license; in 1873 a charge of operating a "foul and offensive privy" was dismissed as unproven.²⁷ Litigious as well as contentious, he had staunch supporters as well as detractors.²⁸ Elected to the Legislative Assembly in 1866, he served until 1870.

Most important, in an age of canals and railways, Hunter was truly a man of his time. His efforts to dredge the canals led to an outbreak of yellow fever, breach of contract, and subsequent lawsuit, polarizing the town and

sparking a constitutional crisis. And his schemes to build a railway, pursued through the entire shabby history of frustrated efforts to open up the colony, ended only with his death, under the wheels of a London train, in 1906.

By then, the railway project appeared to have new hope. Goldsworthy's successor had inaugurated a four-mile tramway in Stann Creek in 1892, built by the Western Land Syndicate (a British firm) in order to develop the banana industry. Though affecting only a small area, it did in fact facilitate banana cultivation, and raised the additional possibility of a rail route from Stann Creek to the Cayo (Colonial Guardian 6.11.1892; Dobson 1973:282).

Hunter's project, advanced in 1895 with backing from New York capitalists, was to go west. The Colonial Guardian immediately pronounced it the worst, as it required a guarantee of interest on the cost of construction, and would not open crown lands. But privately sponsored proposals all had these terms; successive reports had shown routes through the Sibun to be too mountainous to be feasible. The western route, Hunter argued, would allow exploitation of uncut mahogany forests and provide transport through the agriculturally rich Belize River valley.²⁹ The Colonial Office objected to Hunter's proposal, as it had all others, on the grounds that someone might make money.³⁰ It felt that if a railway was to be built the government should build it, then commissioned its own surveys--at the colonists' expense--to show that the project would not in

fact be able to pay for itself. It was clear, as the Times of Central America argued May 31, 1895, that "during the 20 odd years and more in which a railway has been talked of, if the Colonial Government had any intention of making one, they would before this have taken it in hand...."

After 20 years, as C.T. Hunter pointed out, there was "no railway, tramway, telephone, telegraph nor postal service whatever into the interior. Belize is without a post-man to deliver letters, is only imperfectly lighted by a few oil lamps and has no water supply."³¹ The trip to Cayo, 120 miles along the Belize River, took on average three weeks, by dugout canoe (Leslie 1987:11). A new Hunter proposal--without the interest guarantee--was endorsed by a public meeting in 1898 (Clarion 4.23.1898), and finally even the Colonial Guardian supported it (7.22.1905). In January 1906 the paper's editor, Dr. Frederick Gahné, wished Hunter success on his departure for London to obtain Colonial Office approval of the new proposal. Gahné, though an outspoken critic of Hunter's arrogance, especially regarding the canal dredging contract, nevertheless admired his efforts to break the paternalist grip of Crown Colony rule. Though Hunter's energy and drive often made enemies, ultimately it represented the only hope to develop the colony, as Dr. Gahné recognized. Thus the paper expressed its shock at Hunter's death in September that year, and on October 6 it reprinted the account from the Hertfordshire Standard:

"It is fortunately seldom that it falls to our lot to chronicle an accident so sad and horrible in its results as that which occurred at the Midland Railway station on Tuesday afternoon, causing the death of Mr Charles Thompson Hunter, of 105 London Rd, St Albans. It was at the busiest part of the day, about 3 o'clock, when there were a number of passengers upon the platforms and when the officials and servants of the company were busily occupied in making all necessary arrangements for the arrival and departure of trains that they witnessed a sight which will, it is safe to assert, never be effaced from their memory. The 2.15 p.m. train from St. Pancras, which reaches St. Albans at 2.54, had just arrived, and ran into No.3 platform. A good number of passengers alighted, and as usual some were endeavouring to cross the line without passing over the footway, but their progress was barred by the warning shouts of some of the officials, prominent among them being the station policeman Allway owing to the fact that the up and down expresses were signalled, and might pass through the station at any moment. Mr Hunter, who was well known to the officials as a constant traveller on the line, was seen to alight from the train, and according to some accounts was one of the last to leave his compartment. He was attired in a reefer jacket and wearing a silk hat, and in his hand he carried a newspaper which he appeared to be reading. He walked leisurely down to the southern end of No.3 platform, and Allway, coming to the conclusion that he intended to cross the line at the level crossing, shouted loudly calling him by name, and warning him not to do so owing to the approaching expresses. By the time Mr Hunter had reached the end of the platform the down express came in sight. He turned to cross the line by the level crossing, and to the horror of all onlookers, he continued his dangerous walk, heedless of the warnings which was [sic] being shouted to him by the officials and others. Mr Hunter appeared to be reading his paper, and whether he heard the shouting or not it is impossible to tell. The fact remains that he was almost upon the track of the down express before he noticed its approach, and it was then so perilously near that he had no time to think what to do. Had he returned or remained where he was he would still have been alive, but he endeavoured to complete his journey over the crossing before the train reached it, with the awful result related above. Mr Hunter, according to the statements of eye witnesses, made a tremendous effort to reach the other side of the line in safety, and had almost succeeded, as was proved by the fact that the left buffer of the engine struck him first in the side. He was carried for some 20 yards between the engine and the platform brickwork, after which he fell under the

train, and was mangled in a shocking manner, both legs being completely severed. After the train had passed Mr Hunter's hat was swept for a considerable distance up the platform and the spectacle which the permanent way and the edge of the platform presented baffles description. Portions of the unfortunate man's remains were scattered for some 30 yards or more along the line, and the platform was bespattered with blood.

With Hunter's death went the last hope of a railway in the colony. Reviewing the whole sorry history in 1908 the Guardian concluded that this, like all improvements proposed for the colony, was "negatived by the Clerks of the Colonial Office because 'it isn't British you know.'" ³²

C.T. Hunter's brother Alexander retired with his family to Hertfordshire in 1888, where he died in 1927. But C.T. left more than a memory in Belize. He had at least six children, with four or five different women. His son James Alexander married Everalda Ida Bradley, daughter of Francis Alexander Bradley and a free coloured woman, Mary Francis Gabourel.³³ C.T. then formed a union with her sister, a Mrs. Frances Gabourel Beauchot, an independent property owner.³⁴ This produced two children, one of which, Alexander John, became one of the first shareholders of James Brodie, Inc. in 1915.³⁵ Neither James Alexander nor Alexander John is mentioned in C.T. Hunter's will, which allocates £100 each to his "natural" daughters with various women, though Alexander John may have inherited property from his mother. Both boys attended St John's, where they met the sons of expatriate merchants and mestizo businessmen--relationships continued at the Pickwick Club,

which Alexander John founded in 1938. Alexander John became a liberal benefactor of his alma mater (Clarion 9.4.1924).

Alexander John married twice, and had twelve children. Of seven children with his second wife, Sally Bailey, one died in infancy and five are in the States; only Fred is still in Belize, fashioning a somewhat iconoclastic political career as a rightwing torchbearer. Of three surviving children of his first marriage, Charles, a Jesuit priest, is a historian and teacher at St. John's College and Inez married Andrew Burn, heir to Angelus Press. The youngest, Alexander Albert, first went to work for United Fruit in Costa Rica, where he met and married Araceli Marin Sanchez, cousin of former president Arias. He joined James Brodie & Co. in 1947, where he became a director in 1952. An active politician and former PUP minister, Sir Alexander has served on numerous boards and commissions, and is an active member (and former vice-president) of the St. John's College Alumni Association, self-appointed political leadership association.³⁶

Expatriate Legacy: The Metropolitan Elite

By the 1870s Belize Town was for the first time a truly colonial capital. Representatives of the London merchant houses were joined by colonial administrators, who proliferated after the establishment of a colony in 1862. With a virtual monopoly on wealth and power, they defined the tenor of social life and set the terms of economic development.

Representative of the white expatriate elite were John, David, and Robert Gentle, Edinburgh-born merchants. As importers they profited from Crown Colony status and sought to keep it that way. They kept their business within the family, and married their children to cousins. With the Beatties and the Cuthberts, the Harleys, Grants, Arthurs, and Curries, they fraternized in literary and debating societies, the Colonial Club and the St. Andrew's Society, reproducing mid-Victorian Edinburgh.

Edinburgh society in the 1850s had been defined by highland lairds and lawyers. Mostly younger sons of landowners, a few sons of wealthier merchants, they were not only well read and accomplished but sociable: "They were the backbone of the city's innumerable clubs and societies which existed for every possible purpose from drinking one another under the table to awarding premiums to virtuous manufacturers. In short, they formed a cultural elite" (Smout 1971:374).

John and David Gentle were typical representatives of the Scottish merchant community. David studied medicine at the University of Edinburgh, and was licensed to practice, but he preferred a merchant career.³⁷ In 1874 he came out to Belize to join his brothers John and William in the firm of John Gentle & Co., an established fixture in the colony since 1865.³⁸ Together they acquired mahogany works and coconut plantations.³⁹ John was nominated to the Legislative Council in 1879 and served until 1882. He left

Belize in 1883 to manage the London end of the firm with his wife's brother, Robert Jobson. He died in Hampstead in 1894, leaving the bulk of his estate in trust to his wife Rachel.

David, who declined the seat on the Legislative Council offered by Goldsworthy, was appointed by Goldsworthy's successor (Sir Alfred Moloney) at the end of 1894. He thus augmented a group that was already, as the Times of Central America (3.29.1895) put it, "merchants principally Scotch who have for years monopolised the Councils, and who have ruled the Colony for their own selfish ends...." He became involved in the struggle for a more representative system, fought out in the Belize City press, as defender of what the Times called the "Scots Clique."

In Belize, the beginning of a press in the 1870s and 1880s represented a coming of age. All of the issues of the day--agricultural development, transportation, labor migration, as well as Crown Colony government--were battled out in its pages. The Times--along with the Colonial Guardian, the Clarion, and other champions of economic development--was enraged at the system by which the crown, defeated in its official majority only after bitter struggle, appointed expatriate merchants to represent the people as unofficials and bowed to the interests of the large mahogany firms, notably British Estate and Produce Co, whose chairman was the MP for Hampstead, Sir Brodie Hoare. Frustration with colonial government peaked in the 1890s with the regressive land tax and do-nothing railroad policy.

The longstanding failure of the unofficials to do anything about these concerns was capped by their failure to stand up to the government regarding the colony's much-detested constabulary (consisting largely of Barbadian and Jamaican recruits). Public disgust mounted after the constabulary rioted in protest at the devaluation of their wages due to a change in currency in October 1894, and the Council in response agreed to raise their wages.⁴⁰ Though the unofficials condemned the constabulary, favoring a new police force with Belizean recruits, they went along with the salary increase. The Times, along with F.M. Maxwell, Barbados-born son of a Lancashire clergyman, condemned the contemptuous actions of the crown and its merchant representatives on the Legislative Council, and mocked Gentle's ineffective efforts to defend them--dubbing him champion of the "Scots Clique."

Gentle had not been on the Council during the preceding years, and had been out of the colony during the riot; moreover, in supporting increased taxes on idle lands he may have been more progressive than most.⁴¹ Even so, the label suited him. A bachelor, he did much to re-create Edinburgh society in the Old World "tradition": he was a director of the Belize Independent Newspaper Co, founded in 1888, and a committeeman on both the Belize Literary Association and the Colonial Club. With other self-proclaimed Scotsmen he celebrated St. Andrew's Day--the anniversary of the patron saint of Scotland--each November 30, by swilling whiskey,

eating haggis, wearing tartans, and reciting highland ballads. In these offices and activities he was joined by F.M. Maxwell, later Sir Frederick--the two men differed only in their views of Crown Colony government and the merchant interests it served.⁴²

Neither David nor John had children. William had died in 1875 and his children had left Belize; thus the brothers encouraged the son of their late brother Robert to carry on the business. William Robert came out to Belize, and in 1896 David, together with John's executrix and heir Rachel, turned over all interest in the firm to him. David retired to Edinburgh and William Robert thereafter ran the firm.

In 1902 Rachel Gentle died, and later that year William Robert married her niece (and his cousin), Annie Clark Jobson, daughter of her brother and additional partner in the firm. The bride, newly arrived from London (along with the wedding cake) wore diamonds and rubies; the guest list read like a Scots register: Aikman, Beattie, Biddle, Baber, Cran, Hunter, along with Council members R.H.R. Price, J.M. Rosado, A.R. Usher, and S.G. Woods (Clarion 12.4.1902). Indeed, the description of the wedding filled several columns in the Clarion, which regularly reported on London society as well as the activities of the colony's tiny white creole elite. Weddings especially allowed these families to mount a public display both of their ability to import the necessary trappings and their command of the proper show, both of which buttressed their claim to elite status.

Accordingly, William Robert carried on the family social tradition in Belize: he joined a committee for the formal celebration of St. Andrew's Day in 1896, and was a member of the Belize Golf Club, founded in 1900 and patronized by expatriate whites. Appointed to the Legislative Council in 1903, he served for only one year. Shortly thereafter he liquidated the business and for a time became a partner in the firm of John Harley & Co, before retiring to Edinburgh.⁴³

As important as social occasions to a demonstration of elite status were the social institutions established by expatriate British and Scots merchants and administrators, notably their clubs and societies. These had developed with the growth of towns in Victorian England and Scotland--in tandem with a desire for more accessible education and entertainment. They comprised (Best 1971:169):

a vast range of historical, antiquarian, and scientific societies and such, offering library facilities and variously improving and educational lectures to well-heeled subscribers and their families...that brave army of evening and week-end adult educationists and mutual improvers....

Often supported by cooperative societies, lectures ranged from "religion to ribaldry," and music-making flourished, as did sports. Almost all male, they reflected the acceptance of hierarchy that characterized the late Victorian era; those excluded by aristocratic "county" society--merchants, managers, and bankers--in turn disdained the company of shopkeepers, and so on (ibid.).

Within the tropical empire, where upper-middle-class administrators imposed their values and set the tone (Gorer 1975:167-68), a strict hierarchy ruled the private clubs, which were the "centers of all social life": they excluded not only "the natives" but Englishmen of lower social classes (ibid.). In Belize, clubs flourished in the heyday of expatriate Scotsmen--the 1890s. Though Christian and charitable institutions existed in the 1820s and Belize had a regatta club as early as 1839, thereafter they lapsed, as the first generation of mahogany cutters went bankrupt or sold out and retired. Social clubs began to appear again with the new wave of merchants and administrators after 1870: the Belize Literary Association was established in 1876 and met monthly to read essays and debate "matters of interest," and in 1879 the Catholic Men's Association was founded, "for relaxation and discussion," with the Colonial Secretary the first president (Buhler 1976:30).

In 1880 the Colonial Club was formed. Exclusively male, it had some 120 residents and 40 non-resident members by 1890; "club rooms are open daily (Sundays excepted), and are well provided with papers, magazine, a library, two billiard-tables, piano, and other amusements" (Bristowe and Wright 1890). In 1886 the Club merged with the Literary Association, taking over its library, and a year later added the Colonial Club Boating Association and the Colonial Club Orchestra Association. In 1891 a branch of the Orchestral Association, the Mutual Recreation Club, was added for

monthly dances. While the Colonial Club dissolved at the end of 1892, others quickly formed, still exclusively white as well as all-male: the Phoenix Club (1891), "comprising most of the leading men of the Colony--members of Council, merchants, the legal profession and others" (Bristowe 1892), La Union Philharmonic Society, the Cinderella Club (1894); the Jockey Club (1899), the Bachelors Club (1898), the Rifle Club (1898), and in a flurry of cultural jingoism, the St. Andrews and St. George's clubs in 1898. In addition, "the fine old English game of cricket is fairly well kept up in the colony, there being about eleven clubs" (ibid).

Shunned by expatriate merchants and civil servants, middle-class creoles set up their own organizations, and from the turn of the century through the late 1950s a complex occupational, color, and class hierarchy reigned. At the pinnacle were the Belize Golf Club and Belize Polo Club (which later merged into the Belize Club), in which white businessmen, local and expatriate, socialized with colonial officials; as Grant (1976:100) notes, "decisions affecting their economic interests were often a confirmation of hints given in the club or on the tennis court and cricket field." Creoles formed two clubs: the Newtown Club (1924), a sports club patronized by businessmen, and the Colonial Band Association (1911), a musical and cultural association for civil servants, which despite its name was the more intellectual and progressive, as well as self-consciously creole. In 1938 mestizo and white businessmen formed the

Pickwick Club. Today, only the Pickwick Club and the Colonial Band Association remain, with the result that the former has become something of a white preserve; creoles hesitate to attend functions without official invitations.

As white expatriates retired, creoles and mestizos slowly filled their ranks in government and business, and club life changed as well. Alumni associations fostered occupational connections--Wesley Old Boys Association for entry into the civil service and the St. John's College Alumni Association for careers in law, business, and politics--and the creole concern with community service fostered the Lions and Rotarians, the Red Cross and the scouts (see Chapter 4).

Once dominant in cultural and political as well as economic life, today local whites are practically invisible in much of national cultural life. Never known for their civic largesse, they surrendered civic responsibility to the creole middle class by the middle of the present century.⁴⁴ There are no white arts patrons or library benefactors, while scouting and Red Cross organizations, once filled with white expatriate wives, are now staffed by creoles or mestizos, depending on location. The social and cultural rituals typical of creole class cohesion are not necessary to maintain the whites' position--nor is the ability to dominate the educational and legal professions, now more closely tied to one or the other political party, and to either creole or mestizo networks. A British education--and

the ability to play cricket--is no longer restricted to this class--nor does it convey the same prestige.

Politically, too, with the change to an elected government local whites have found it more expedient, and effective, to play a behind the scenes role--based on money and international contacts--than to enter the ethnically charged electoral fray. The Bowmans, once active in politics, have withdrawn completely. An early PUP supporter, H.T.A. distrusted Price's anti-British stance, and his close identification with the colony's white administrators made it difficult to make the shift to the strong nationalist politics of the independence movement. One son has moved to the States and another occupies himself with the family's citrus operations, while the third committed suicide when his own son was critically injured in an accident in 1983.

The Bowens followed a similar pattern. Eric William Manfield was a member of the Legislative Council under the colonial system, elected under the limited franchise introduced in 1936 and again in 1941. As the political momentum shifted in the 1950s, he was nominated to the Legislative Council in 1955 specifically to counterbalance the young creole nationalists (Grant 1976:194). When this became untenable he withdrew from political life to concentrate on his business empire. Barry Bowen backs both political parties--as do all major businesses, in order to secure government backing for their business ventures at any given time (Shoman 1987:79-82).

Only the Hunters keep a hand in political life. Alexander's daughter, director of the Department of Culture, is active in the intellectual and reform element of the PUP. Reflecting the confidence of her elite background, she today identifies as both white and creole--raising the eyebrows of creole friends whose darker skin and other features give them fewer options. A determined nationalist, she has actively embraced the creolization of her own family, as when her brother married a creole in 1989.

Her local white contemporaries keep a greater social distance. Barry Bowen maintains a home in Miami as well as several in Belize; when in Belize he lives on Ambergris Cay, commuting to Belize City by private plane. His brother prefers the family home at St. George's Cay, where he socializes with other local white families, comparing yachts and fish and women. They shun rotary and Chamber of Commerce functions--though Barry serves on the executive of the Chamber of Commerce and Bowen & Bowen money backs sports teams, beauty contests, and so on each year. Their sisters, like their ex-wives, live in Britain and the States. The Bowmans rarely come to Belize City, preferring Carrie Bow Cay or their estate at Stonehaven, and the company of archeologists and marine biologists from the Smithsonian.

Conclusion: An International Elite

Today, the economic success of mestizo and non-European immigrants has obliged local whites to open their ranks--at

least to Lebanese and Palestinians, if not Indians or Chinese. But while the elite white families no longer monopolize every economic arena, they are among the top ranks of all of them. They hold onto their position less by internal solidarity than by their ability to attract (and marry) wealthy white American and European outsiders.

Thus the local white elite in the present generation is becoming a truly international breed, educated in the United States, their spouses bona fide British or American whites, their friends and contacts a growing number of foreign investors (mostly U.S. but also British and German), multinational representatives, and jetsetters. The "continuity of tradition" (Jaher 1973:274) that distinguished the white creole elite in the late 19th century was dependent on their privileged identification with the metropole. As transport and communications improved and England lost its predominance in economic and political life, creoles successfully challenged this continuity, and white Belizeans withdrew from the contest. As Wilk (1989) has noted, television has made it impossible for the elite to continue to translate metropolitan values to the masses, as they once did, since "the masses" have access in the same present time. Instead, the wealthiest among them have now simply joined the metropolitan elite--and no longer seek their status in the same local arena.

Notes

1. The success of tourism will soon swell these ranks, with the families of hoteliers Paul Hunt (married to B.J. Eyles), Roger Dinger (whose mother was Jean Beatrice Bowman), and Steve Maestre (son of a Lebanese merchant), Welshman John Searle, and American Stuart Krohn (married to Lita Hunter).

2. Whites made up 4 percent of the population in 1980, but this included a large number of Mennonites, who do not consider themselves Belizean. In 1990 whites did not include Mennonites, and made up only .8 percent.

3. White families are generally not interested in genealogies, perhaps because white ancestry is harder to demonstrate in the early years.

4. Arthur to Magistrates 23 November 1821, R2, pp.137-8, AB.

5. The trial took place 25 September 1821. Twelve men, all slaveowners, heard evidence and declared Bowen not guilty. Subsequently Arthur demanded--and got--authority to declare the law in effect. He published his correspondence with the Colonial Office on the issue, and rejected Bowen as Magistrate the next year (Dobson 1973:157; Gombay 1979:14-15).

6. Meeting of the Magistrates, January 10, 1809.

7. Will Bk 3. Mary, educated in Bermuda by her father, was a minor under 19 under the guardianship of Hickey's friend R.F. O'Brien in 1790; at that time this household owned 82 slaves, while an additional 35 were listed to the Estate of Hickey (Despard, "General Return of the Inhabitants," 1790).

8. Richard is not in the birth records, but is among Mary's children in the 1826 census and at the wedding of daughter Matilda Caroline. Belize Independent, October 11, 1888.

9. Meeting of the Magistrates, February 21, 1816.

10. While the 1816 Census lists "Mary Hickey, deceased" her death in 1820 is in the burial records (#4, 1817-1827, AB).

11. They requested letters of administration be taken from Marshall Bennett's attorney (Meeting of the Magistrates, May 17, 1833; June 17, 1833).

12. The Statement made in Nov 1892 (CO 123/23) lists "Mrs. Bowen" as owning 17,280 acres. Her will names her three daughters as well as her grandchildren (Will Bk 2, p.703).

13. This land is listed under #40 ("McCrae"), in the Index of Principal Property Owners (to accompany Property Map of Colony), 1935-40. In the list for 1987, some 5000 acres had been sold off; the remaining 10,470 identified no owner. In 1935 the estate of Mary Elizabeth Bowen, nee Hume, #269 ("Little Belize") was still 17,500 acres.

14. Coca Cola got tax concessions, but the Citrus Growers Association protested its waiver from the Citrus Ordinance, governing labor and price agreements, and the government backed down. Coke sold over 100,000 acres, keeping only 50,000. Its citrus plans are on hold. Bowen now promotes himself as a protector of the rainforest as well as over 700 Mayan sites, while Texans Walter Mischer and Paul Howell, incorporated as the Yalbac Land and Cattle Corporation, have cleared land for citrus and cattle. The Program for Belize an independent project, operates in agreement with the Belize government (New York Times, July 11, 1989). It plans to manage a wildlife preserve and controlled resource development. See Miami Herald, October 9, 1988; Washington Post, October 9, 1989; Programme for Belize Newsletter 5, 1991.

15. Cotton from the southern states was shipped through the Yucatán and sent to other ports, and gunpowder and arms were shipped to Mobile or New Orleans. In one case gunpowder was taken from the public magazine, with the connivance of the customs officials, repacked in drygoods barrels at various merchant houses, and cleared for Mexico (Cleghern 1967).

16. With the exception of eight Chinese in hospital, all were allotted to a few "leading and respectable proprietors of estates on the New River and Corosal districts" (British Honduras Colonist and Belize Advertiser, July 1, 1865).

17. The price was reduced to \$2.50 in 1867; mahogany was in decline, enabling a group of U.S. Confederates to buy a large tract of land in Toledo from Young Toledo & Co.

18. See Colonial Guardian, August 27, 1887. In 1890, Enrico Genico and Valeriano and Emilio Kuylen were listed as land-owners in Stann Creek (Approximate Return 11/91; CO123/195).

19. William himself died in New Orleans in 1958.

20. Carrie's Aunt Eliza, who married Arthur Montague Rokeby Price, had three sons, who founded a third merchant empire now run by Nigel Price.

21. In 1935 Edgar Gegg still owned nearly 30,000 acres of the Duck Run Estate.

22. William formed a shipping company, Belize Line, Ltd., with a Florida businessman, and ships concentrate to Florida and Trinidad-Tobago; see Caribbean Update January 1988, p.4.

23. Colonial Guardian, June 21, 1884.

24. Dr. Hunter was for many years the Public Medical Officer; in this capacity he joined the Hondo Expedition against Indian attacks in 1866 (Gibbs 1883:138).

25. "Statement (made in Nov 1892) shewing approximately the areas owned by the Chief land holders in the Colony. By Districts"; CO123/23.

26. In 1871, his brother, watching the fiber-making machine in operation, caught his sleeve in the works and "severely lacerated his right arm" (New Era 6.3.1871).

27. The Observer, June 27, 1885 contains the license history; the privy charge was brought by C.H. Eyles, colonial surgeon, June 7, 1873; Summary jurisdiction, 1893, AB.

28. The Colonial Guardian (1.1.1890; 7.12.1884) charged that Regan's railway proposal was neglected due to Goldsworthy's "Hunterian proclivities" and the preference of some to let the colony sink rather than let Americans invest. The Times of Central America (5.31.1895) asserted that Hunter's opponents would "decline admittance to paradise if it were a necessary condition of their entry that they should be escorted by Mr. C.T. Hunter."

29. C.T. Hunter to Chamberlain, 6 December 1895, CO 123/216.

30. Typical of Colonial Office scorn for capitalist schemes was Sir Sydney Olivier, who accused supporters of wanting a railroad "in order that the lawyers, promoters, contractors, local landowners, merchants, shopkeepers or labourers there may handle some of the money employed in its construction" (quoted in Ashdown 1979a:96). In Belize, these seemed like excellent reasons. Times of Central America, May 31, 1895.

31. C.T. Hunter to Chamberlain 27 January 1897; CO123/227.

32. Colonial Guardian, July 4, 1908. After 1895, the Colonial Office favored a railroad, but the Treasury remained adamant, and ultimately killed its construction. For a discussion of the history of railway proposals see Cleghern (1967:72-76;124-34); Humphreys (1961:157-66); Dobson (1973:231-34; 280-82); Ashdown (1979a:94-99;108-10).

33. The Daily Clarion (9.29.1951) reported that "Francis Alexander Bradley of Birmingham, England and Mary Frances Gabourel of Glasgow, Scotland" came to Belize in 1759. This

in an obituary for their daughter, born in 1858, which would have made them over 100 at her birth. The 1839 census, the first record of Bradleys, lists Francis, a white man living with Mary Frances Gabourel, a free coloured woman.

34. At her mother's death in 1890 Mrs. Beauchot inherited a mahogany bank in the Northern River known as "Leah Bubby"; half the property left to her brother, including rents and moneys derived from adjacent mahogany and logwood works, came to her by the terms of his will in 1894.

35. When James Brodie died in 1916 his wife Katherine, already a stockholder, inherited his entire estate. When she died in 1925, she left 1500 shares each to Charles Percy Poulter, Horace Stansbury, and Alexander John Hunter.

36. The Association advocated a "concerted Catholic action in politics" and that they "assume the political leadership of the country." The People's Committee, 1947; SP1318, AB.

37. 9 January 1890 minute from Hales, CO 123/194. It is possible that all four brothers were sons of William Gentle, white slaveowner and magistrate from 1806 to 1828 who headed a commercial house in 1828, but no link was claimed.

38. Gentle was operating in 1865 as Gentle, Lawson, and Co, according to a January 3 1865 memorial from the merchants.

39. David owned 293 acres on Caye Chapel. John held the mortgage on land owned by Alexander Hunter--arousing criticism when he was named arbiter in the Hunter suit in 1890.

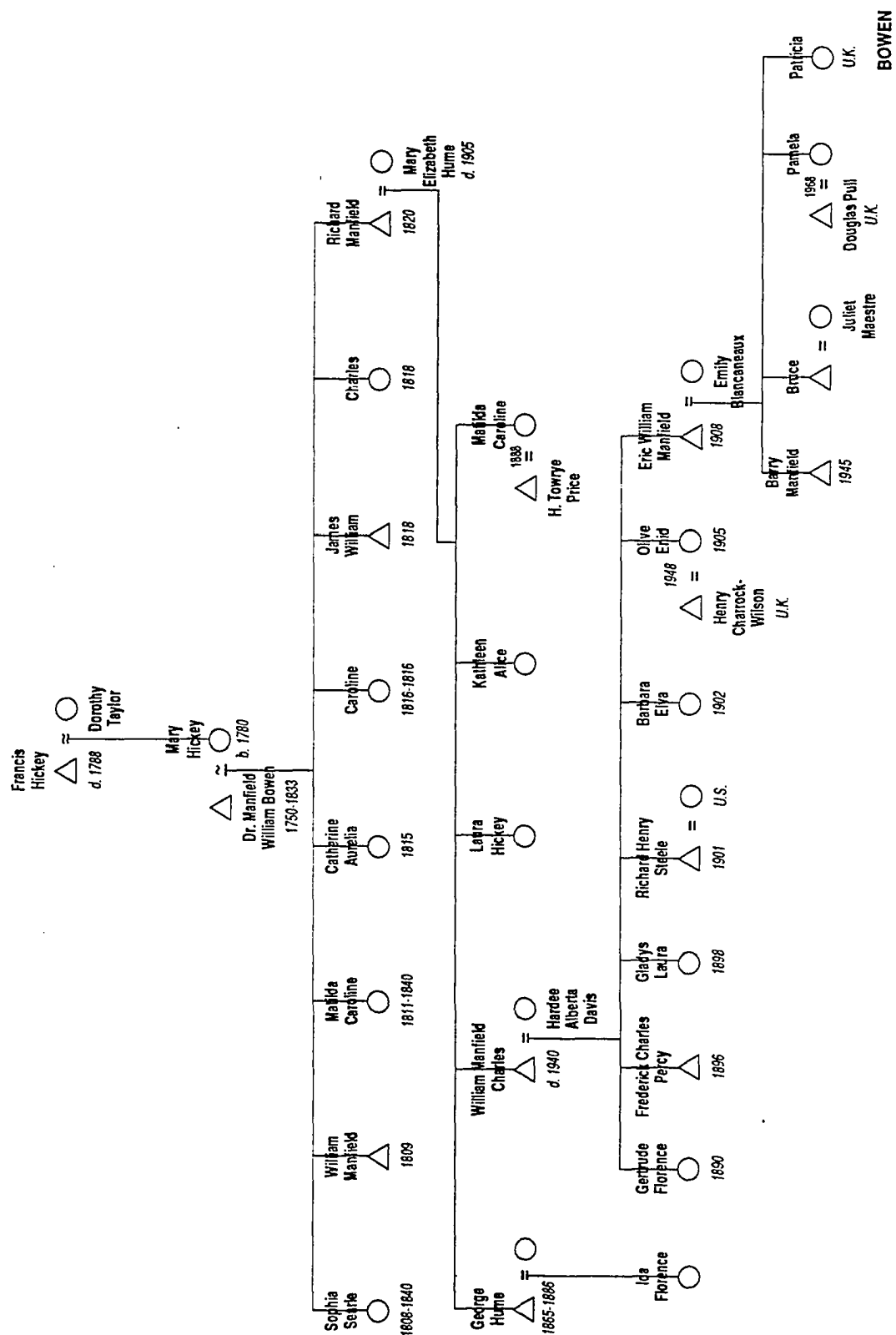
40. The colony changed from the silver standard (based on the Mexican sol) to a gold standard, cutting wages virtually in half. When it was announced that constabulary would henceforth receive 72 cents to the dollar, they rioted.

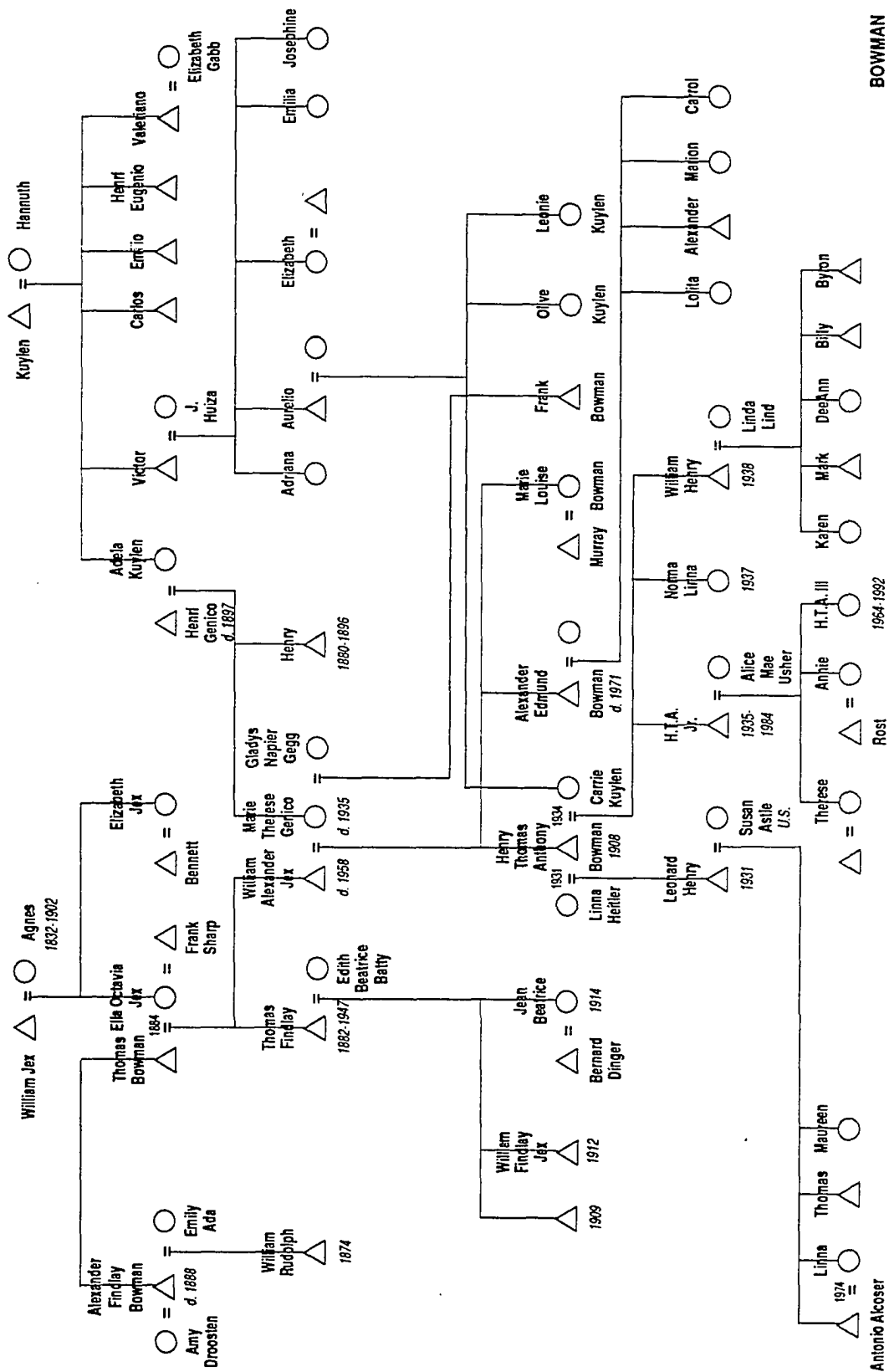
41. As a merchant, he may also have preferred this to taxes on imports; see Times of Central America, April 26, 1895.

42. Maxwell's criticisms of the government system did not prevent him serving it--as Attorney General in 1890 and again from 1896 til 1907 when he was appointed Chief Justice (Ashdown 1979:1-8). See the Times of Central America, March 29, April 5, April 12, April 19, and April 26, 1895.

43. He went into partnership with Lewis Russell Grant, as Harley had died in 1904 Colonial Guardian, November 7, 1908.

44. There are exceptions. In 1992 the Bowmans and Bowens both donated funds to a national museum, and several white women, local and expatriate, work in charity activities.





CHAPTER 3

First Spanish Families: A Regional Elite

Mestizos, or "Spanish," as they are known locally, have a long history in Belize. The first Spanish families came from neighboring Yucatán in Mexico, fleeing the Caste War between Yucatecans and Mayas that began in 1847. They ranged from rancheros and planters to landless laborers, from light-skinned Yucatecans to dark-skinned mestizos. Rancheros quickly established themselves in the north of the country, where they began to plant sugarcane. Today, Spanish-speaking mestizos are the fastest growing segment of the population. While in 1980 they constituted only 33.4 percent of the population, Central American refugees swelled their ranks throughout the 1980s, and they now make up fully 43.6 percent. Mayas, who in 1980 made up only about 9 percent of the population, now make up 11.1 percent.¹ While not yet a threat to the dominant white class, mestizos dominate the sugar industry and are solidly established in the business sector. In the 1960s, an observer noted: "they accumulate capital more rapidly than any other of the groups, except perhaps the Near Eastern section" (Gregg 1968:126). The following decade saw a boom in sugar, with the result that in Orange Walk, "the rich are all mestizos, except for one European" (Brockmann 1977:256).

Unlike other ethnic groups, notably creoles and the initial Chinese and East Indian groups, the Spanish were not

inserted into a subordinate category, culturally and politically, as a result of the labor requirements of the dominant class. Their possession of capital, no matter how limited, and their experience with agriculture positioned them to dominate commercial agriculture, which had become a necessity by the end of the century. Their success as a regional elite, moreover, intensified the dependence of the nascent creole middle class on the mediation of the British for their own economic and social advancement.

The economic and numerical importance of the Spanish forms a key part of the three-way mirror in which ethnic groups see and reflect each other's identities. This chapter will look at this group through their history, beginning with 19th-century Yucatecan society. Focusing on prominent Spanish families, it will examine the opportunities and restrictions within which they were able to prosper in Belize.

19th Century Yucatán: Ladino, Mestizo, Maya

The 19th century Caste War lasted for almost 50 years.² At its beginning, in 1847, Mexico had been independent of Spain for some 24 years. At independence the remaining Spanish population was either "discredited or expelled" (Reed 1964:20); thus Yucatecan society comprised ladinos--"all those of Spanish or half-Spanish descent who considered themselves 'white' and lived, dressed, and thought according to a European heritage" mestizos, the half-castes; and indios, or Maya (ibid.:5). Bricker

(1981:92) argues that while the colonial caste system was abolished in Mexico after 1821, it survived in this three-part form in the Yucatán for the rest of the 19th century.

While residents of the southern frontier were less obsessed with racial purity than those in the north, the three-part Yucatán hierarchy dictated that if occasionally a pretty mestiza could move into the ladino world, a mestizo virtually never could (Reed 1964:22). Some mestizos, fed up with this situation, became leaders of the Mayan rebels, while others sought their own haciendas on the frontier, or across the border in British Honduras, where distinctions were harder to maintain. As far as the British and creoles were concerned, refugees fell into two categories, Spanish and Indian. Ladinos and mestizos were thus lumped together as part of the non-Indian or Spanish community.

Olga Stavrakis (1979: 40-41), who worked in a Maya/mestizo village in Belize in 1975-76, observed that these two worlds persisted over time: as late as 1973, none of the Mayans owned land, while "on the other end of the continuum, the Spanish families, with such names as Castillo, Espejo, Escalante, with blue eyes, blond hair, and skin which burns in the sun" have continually owned land and engaged in commercial agriculture.

Throughout the colonial period Maya communities had remained more or less intact in the Yucatán peninsula, especially in the southeast. The Spanish, who occupied the cities, were content to rely on Indian production of cotton

and cloth, as well as foodstuffs, demanding annual tribute in these goods. Their own commercial operations were primarily in cattle-raising, an occupation that required little Indian labor. But with Mexico's independence from Spain in 1821, the Yucatecan economy changed dramatically. Cattle-ranching, based in the north, became unprofitable with the loss of the primary export market in Cuba--which as a Spanish colony was now cut off. Also cut off were imports of Cuban sugar and rum, with the result that capital shifted from cattle to sugar. Commercial agriculture in turn shifted from estancias in the north to sugar plantations in the east and south, where the land was better suited--areas formerly owned by Indian communities.

Unlike cattle ranching, sugar production demanded an integrated and controlled labor force (Bricker 1981). The Mayas, accustomed to moving around in order to avoid tribute or debt, began a steady exodus. Politically, the period 1839-45 was one of intense regionalism, and a series of conflicts in which Yucatecans enlisted Indian recruits. Indians, who joined on promise of end to "the tributes, the obventions, and the obligatory personal service" (Bricker 1981:92) due to church and landowners, and the right to continue to cultivate their own land, gained neither land nor liberty, but did acquire both arms and military experience (ibid.:90). While the Caste War led to a number of shifting allegiances over the years, and different groups of Maya took different positions, those who made peace with

the Yucatecan authorities did so mostly in order to be left alone, a course in which they were more or less successful (Dumond 1977).

As estancias and sugar plantations moved into the southeast Yucatán, British trade out of Belize increased steadily. From the late 18th century, British commercial houses operating in Belize profited from the Spanish restrictions on both imports and exports from its colonies, and a lively entrepot trade developed with the countries of Central America and Mexico. This increased with Central American independence, as the newly formed federation allowed British importers to import duty free from Belize and sell on the local retail market in 1823. British merchants traded European goods for agricultural products, on which the settlement increasingly depended. From Mexico the largest imports were sugar and rum. In 1847 the Belize superintendent reported that sugar was "almost exclusively" imported from Bacalar, across the border in Yucatán.

While Bacalar flourished as a market for British goods, it also threatened to become something of a refuge for runaway British slaves; Central America quickly abolished slavery on independence in 1821. For British cutters operating more or less illegally on both sides of the Río Hondo border with Mexico this was a particular problem, as were the demands of Mayan rebels and Mexican authorities for payment for cutting on their territory. As a result managers of the major firms, such as Young Toledo & Co. and the

British Honduras Co., as well as independent traders and landowners, including Henry Oswald, James Hume Blake, and John Carmichael, cultivated good relations with both Mayas and ladinos, cemented by their willingness to deal in arms and ammunition.

While official British policy condemned the arms trade, there was considerable sympathy for the rebel Mayas in Belize, which increased as Mexico made peace with the pacificos at Icaiché and encouraged their raids against the British (Cleghern 1961:15-16). Lt. Governor Barlee maintained that most of those involved in the sale of arms to the Mayas were not in fact British but refugee Yucatecans.³

The Caste War and the Flight from Bacalar

Bacalar was attacked by the Santa Cruz Mayas in April 1848, the rebels offering to spare the lives of its ladino inhabitants if they surrendered and left for British Honduras (Cal 1983:47; Anderson 1952:15). Thereafter, refugees from the ranchos around Bacalar moved to Belize, stopping at Douglas, Haylock's Bank, and Four-Mile Lagoon. By July there were an estimated 1,000 ladino refugees in Belize.⁴ While ladinos retook Bacalar the following year, and many refugees returned with the troops (Reed 1964:118), most stayed, moving south along the New River: to Corozal, Back Landing, Orange Walk, San Estévan (Cal 1983:60,208).

During the next decade the conflict "devastated the cane-growing districts and forced white planters to abandon

their sugar estates and flee"--north to Mérida or south to Belize (Wells 1982:228; see Reed 1964:130). For the most part owners of small amounts of capital, the refugees became rancheros, producing corn, beans, sugarcane, and rum, or subcontractors for the English mahogany logging firms, recruiting Mayan labor (Cal 1983:209). Their ability to manage Mayan workers was especially highly valued (Cal 1984a:67). One Manuel Jesús Castillo, who arrived in the village of San Antonio in 1847 from Tekax, was known to be experienced with Mayan labor; he got into timber and became the nohoch dzul ("big boss") of San Antonio, cutting both sides of the Hondo, with all the Mayan villagers working for him (Cal 1983:107).

Similarly, Florencio Vega, "a wealthy Yucatecan refugee" (ibid.:61) who operated a boat on the Hondo as early as 1849, was regarded by the British Honduras Company as good at dealing with Maya workers and taken on as a subcontractor; he subsequently employed many of the Mayan leaders, including Ascension Ek, Augustin Ongay, and others. Angel Cal, who did a sample of the late 19th-century inventories, indicates that most if not all rancheros or timber subcontractors had "a permanent body of Mayan laborers either resident at their ranchos or at temporary camps in the forest" (1984a:7).⁵

By the latter half of the 19th century the need for labor concerned both the British administrators and the metropolitan merchant houses, who by then owned most of the

land. Creole laborers, restricted from buying land, for the most part resided in Belize City and hired out as mahogany cutters (see Chapter 4). Thus agriculture, if it was to be developed, needed a new labor supply.⁶ While a number of sugar planters, among them Henry Oswald and John Carmichael, eventually succeeded in getting the authorities to import some Chinese laborers in 1865, these were not a success; a great many died, and others deserted to the Santa Cruz Maya (Fowler 1879:51; cf. Swayne 1917:167; Morris 1883:16).⁷ Moreover, apart from a single shipment from Barbados that same year, attempts to attract cheap labor from the U.S. South or the West Indies came to little (Cleghern 1967).

How well off the Yucatecan rancheros in fact were when they arrived is almost impossible to determine, since none of the sources are impartial--their supporters, those anxious to develop the agriculture potential of the country (without additional government expense)--described them as hardworking smallholders, the backbone of sugar production (Gibbs 1883, Fowler 1879), while their detractors, those unwilling to see their monopolistic timber and chicle operations challenged, considered them "principally dependents of the most opulent families for whose benefit the Indians had been obliged to toil and labour."⁸

By the 1850s superintendents were anxious to encourage them, as they grew not only sugarcane but the rice, corn, and vegetables for which the settlement was primarily dependent on neighboring countries (Bolland 1977a:84).

Indeed, a letter from 25 Yucatecan planters in Corozal, complaining to the superintendent about the introduction of a sugar tax in 1856, threatened to abandon not only sugar cultivation but also "coffee, castor oil, cotton, tobacco" out of fear of additional taxes. This letter makes clear that they all depended on hired laborers, who had to be treated well enough to dissuade them from returning to Bacalar, and that they have mortgaged future production in order to clear and plant.⁹

Brockmann (1985:105) notes that blanco and mestizo refugees ranged along an economic continuum:

a small segment composed of Spanish and highly hispanicized Mestizos were able, with funds brought from Mexico, to establish themselves as a regional elite of planters, retail merchants, and forest products contractors. The bulk of the immigrants, Mestizos and Yucatec Maya, lived as tenant milpa farmers and seasonal unskilled laborers for the regional Spanish elite and British logging companies

Commercial sugar production further differentiated the immigrants economically. By 1863, Manuel Castillo was also planting cane and producing sugar from a cane mill on the opposite side of the Hondo (Cal 1983:151). As sugar expanded during the next decades, enormous investments were necessary--in land and equipment as well as labor. Governor Swayne noted in addition to lack of suitable labor, falling prices for sugar demanded ever more investment in modern machinery in order to produce more cheaply (1917:170).

Moreover, by the 1860s most of the land was already controlled by British banking houses, who also dominated

commerce. Yucatecans nevertheless utilized family ties to put together land and commercial properties. Those who succeeded, like Juan Carillo or Manuel Romero in Corozal, Manuel Castillo in San Antonio and Francisco Vega in San Estévan, purchased or leased small tracts from the British firms, parlaying their experience in recruitment of Mayan labor into favorable terms, from landowners and government both, and borrowed money to develop them. The women, who according to early records migrated to Belize in the same numbers as the men, kept the extended family together, increasing marriage ties, and consolidating the elite families of Corozal and Orange Walk.¹⁰

A Provincial Elite: Corozaleños in the 19th Century

The protracted Caste War produced enormous changes in Belize's nearly deserted northern districts. After the second fall of Bacalar in 1858, there were an estimated 10,000 refugees in North Belize.¹¹ A Jesuit census in 1858 showed 4,500 people in Corozal--"Yucatecos principally but some Indians & Creoles" (cited in Bolland 1977a:83). Having absorbed 2000 fugitives in the previous year alone (Reed 1964:170), Corozal was by then the second largest town in the country, followed by San Estévan, with some 1300 "yucatecos." Citing the 1861 census, Waddell (1961:18) writes: "By 1861, in the country as a whole, this new Spanish-speaking white and mestizo population of some 9,000 outnumbered the negro and coloured element of some 8,000."

This was in addition to the Amerindians, then numbering between 4,000 and 5,000.

In Corozal, those who could obtain land quickly planted sugar (in 1856, Corozal already had 490 acres in cane, while the whole of the New River had only 156). Among these was Juan Eduard Carillo, who owned the sugarmill at Rancho San Roque, near Xaibé, and Juan de la Cruz Ramírez, who owned the San Francisco estate, near Corozal. Other Yucatecans leased ranchos from the large estate owners around Corozal and Punta Consejo, and borrowed money to plant cane. Most of the land in the immediate vicinity was in two vast estates, Goshen and Pembroke Hall, granted to Captain Hugh Wilson in 1794. By 1855 both were owned by creole landowner James Hume Blake, who welcomed the refugees, and indeed encouraged them to settle on his land--by 1870 sugar rancheros operated some 14 estates on the property (Jones 1969:82).

By 1850, Belize "had become the chief port of entry for goods in transit to and from Yucatán and Petén" (Romney et al. 1959:116). As sugar prospered, Corozal planters also set up stores in town, allowing them to survive the hazards of market production over the next 50 years. By the 1890s, when sugar exports plummeted due to competition from beet sugar, Corozal merchants thrived on the sale of imported food (Jones 1969: 150). Imports more than doubled from 1879 to 1889; imports from Mexico went from \$25,447 in 1887 to \$65,120 in 1889 (Bristowe and Wright 1890:169). By the turn of the century sugar cultivators Manuel Romero, Cornelio

Lizarraga, and Juan de la Cruz Ramírez, along with Juan E. Carillo and Eulogio Perez, all had enterprises in Corozal, ranging from dry goods to hotels, bars and billiard halls (Jones 1971:11; Metzgen and Cain 1925:443-45).

All of these men were sons of those who came from the Yucatán in the first decade of the Caste War and all built their success on interlocking family networks. Notable in this regard were the Carillos and the Romeros. Juan E. Carillo's mother, Aniceta Ongay, was eulogized in the Guardian (8.8.1896) as one of the first immigrants from Bacalar who took refuge in the colony and "set about converting the lonely forests of the North into town, villages and cultivated ranchos and milpas. And the death of his younger brother Bernabé four years later "cast a gloom over the little town of Corozal [where] such a funeral procession has never before been seen...." (Colonial Guardian 8.25.1900). In 1925 "Juan Carillo & Sons" had premises in Belize City as well as Corozal. Their daughter Elvira married José Romero, son of "one of the principal merchants of Corozal," whose brother Manuel owned the Saltillo sugarmill, employing 37-40 workers on property comprising some 1000 acres (Colonial Guardian 1.12.1907).

Cornelio Lizarraga, whose father came from Valladolid, in northern Yucatán, installed modern milling equipment at San Máximo, which he leased from Schofield. He married Petrona Staines (niece of Bernabé Carillo), and their daughter married Leopoldo Rosado, son of merchant José

Remigio Rosado and sister of Catalina María Rosado de Schofield.

Juan de la Cruz Ramírez, whose parents both came from Mérida, owned sugarmills at San Francisco and San Pedro Patchacan; from there his sons, Juan, Felipe, and Luís Felipe, expanded into stock raising and more shops, and in 1958 Luís Felipe bought the 377-acre San Pedro estate from William Schofield. Eulogio Perez, son of Francisco Perez and Fernaba Briseño was another Corozal merchant; his daughter wed L.A. Alpuche, owner of Chan Chen sugar estate.

Yucatecan immigrants, though viewed by successive regional administrators with characteristic British contempt for the Spaniard--on either side of the ocean--had one thing going for them that was not true of the British fortune-hunters: they intended to stay. As Fowler notes, "The Europeans or whites (principally Scotch) are birds of passage, business or duty calling them here, and but very few entertain the thought of making permanent homes in the Colony" (1879:50)--a situation much regretted by Swayne some years later (1917:175). By contrast, according to Fowler, the "Spanish element" appreciate the "freedoms and security of our institutions...[and] are gradually begetting a confidence which order and good government engender" (1879:52). The marriages, partnerships, and contracting relationships they established with British merchants and representatives in the 1850s were to endure long after the senior partner had retired to Britain.

A good example was the experience of José Maria Rosado, whose colorful history as a captive of the Santa Cruz Maya as a boy of ten is the subject of a memoir. His father Tiburcio was the son of a Spaniard in the Spanish army, "sent by the King of Spain with the troops long before the Independence of Mexico," who married in Bacalar and had several children, "who nearly all followed the military career" (Rosado 1915:6). Rosados were prominent in the Caste War: Colonel Octavio, comandante of the southeast frontier; Felipe, who as a partisan of a Yucatecan insurgent vacillated constantly between courting the rebellious Mayas and joining the official forces when it looked like they might be the winners; and perhaps most notoriously Colonel Eulogio, comandante of Valladolid, whose determination to show Indian rebels that they would be punished more harshly than blancos did as much as anything to turn a factional conflict into a race war (Bricker 1981:95-97; Reed 1964).

In 1858, while his father was defending the city, José and his mother, three brothers, and three sisters, along with a nurse and two servants, were captured by the victorious Santa Cruz. Following the futile efforts of a Belizean magistrate and British naval captain to gain their release, some of the women and children, including José and two sisters, were separated from the rest; the others, including his mother, were shot.

Tiburcio became a successful trader in Corozal, from which he endeavored to secure the release of his son. The

boy was taken by General Leonardo Santos, a mestizo leader of the Santa Cruz Mayas, to a ranch in the country, where he stayed for nine months, until Santos negotiated for his release with two friends of his father's, also residing in Corozal. United with his father, he went to Belize City to complete his schooling, staying with a cousin, Tiburcio Rosado Martínez, a storeowner in Belize City. At age 19 he became a clerk in the firm of Johnston & Co., established in the 1830s (Honduras Almanack 1836,1839), and rose to manager in 1871. In 1882, on the death of John Johnston, the firm became Stevens Brothers, and Rosado became a partner, with James Steven in London and Ewing Steven, Rosado, and a Scot, John Pourie Robertson, partners in Belize. In 1896, Rosado was appointed to the Legislative Council, remaining until 1912, when he resigned to sit on the Executive Council.

At its founding in 1892 Stevens Bros.--which had a store in Corozal as well as Belize City--was one of the largest landowners in the northern district, holding some 48,000 acres of mahogany and logwood works.¹² Johnston had been one of the first of the merchant houses to start a large-scale sugar plantation and Stevens Bros. continued the operations at Santa Rita, one of the two large estates monopolizing local sugar production during the 1880s and 1890s.¹³ Robertson duly retired to Scotland in 1904, after which Rosado and Stevens were the only partners.¹⁴

However, Stevens later became insolvent, and pulled out in 1909, leaving Rosado with a large debt, and he soon

thereafter turned over the business for liquidation to an attorney, W.J. Slack. In 1922 his property on Gabourel Lane in Belize City, along with his mahogany work on the Northern River, was offered for sale.

A cousin, Jesús José Remigio Rosado, prospered as a merchant in Corozal. His son Juan Jesús Remigio owned a successful sugar factory in Corozal, and married Juana Martínez; their daughter Catalina María married William Schofield, last owner of the Corozal and Goshen estates.

Yucatecas of Goshen and Pembroke Hall

Catalina María Rosado was by then part of a tradition of Yucateca marriages with the wealthy squires of Goshen and Pembroke Hall, the two largest estates in the north. Unlike creole and even white families, Spanish family histories do not begin with the arrival of a single white male; Yucatecan immigrants included men and women in equal numbers, and mobility was not limited to the men. Stephens observed (1841:230) that Yucatecan women outnumbered the men by two to one, while Belize was a land of unmarried landowners and traders. Mestizo endogamy grew by the 1880s, but in the early days the women also married wealthy whites and light-skinned creoles, over time incorporating them into mestizo landowning and commercial networks. Indeed, while Yucatecos leased or borrowed from the large landowners, Yucatecas married them, uniting ladino capital and agricultural experience to some of the largest landowners in the colony.

Notable was Antonia Andrade, a "wealthy Spanish widow from Valladolid" (Godfrey 1983:31), who married James Hume Blake shortly after 1848. José Domingo Andrade, a Yucatecan trader with blanco and Maya contacts, served as interpreter to the Santa Cruz Maya in peace negotiations in Belize in 1884 (Jones 1978:3). An early immigrant to Belize, he joined other vecinos from Corozal in a petition to the Crown in 1851, explaining that as "logwood cutters, cultivators of the soil and engaged in other occupations obliged to employ a large number of laborers" they found it tedious to have to go to Belize City for adjudication of labor disputes and wished to have such things settled locally.¹⁵ Andrade was one of 25 planters who protested the sugar tax in 1856.

James Hume Blake bought the Goshen Estate in 1853, followed by Pembroke Hall two years later. He had business contacts with both ladinos and Mayas (Reed 1964:170) and encouraged Bacalar refugees to settle on his land--advancing them money for the purpose (Anderson 1952:15). A light-skinned creole, he had inherited land and mahogany works at Rowley's Bight, near Corozal, from his free coloured mother, Jane Hume, a slaveowner in Belize as early as 1816.¹⁶ By 1858 he was magistrate of Corozal, and when the Mayas attacked Bacalar that year he endeavored to intercede on behalf of the Yucatecan hostages. These efforts failed when Captain Anderson, of the 2nd West Indian Regiment, refused to exchange the Bacalar commandante, Manuel A. Perdomo, who had escaped to Punta Punta Consejo (Cal 1983:67; Reed

1964:170-71).¹⁷ It is in this connection that Blake is both cited and remembered, most often as "a wealthy Englishman."

Blake was one of the first to realize the potential of sugarcane (Gibbs 1883:127). In 1856 he produced two-thirds of the total reported sugarcane crop of the northern district (Cal 1983:42) and also experimented with henequen (Colonial Guardian 10.13.1894). His expansion, however, was at the price of mortgaging both properties to a French concern, to which they were conveyed in 1859. For a time he remained in Corozal, where he was magistrate as late as 1863.¹⁸ In 1869, however, Ambergris Cay--once entirely owned by the Belize Agricultural Company, who operated a plantation on it--was put up for auction sale. Blake, a former director of the company, purchased the cay at an auction in 1869 for \$625, and some time after he moved there with his wife and two daughters, Juanita and Manuela.¹⁹ Both girls had children for a resident Englishman, George James Parham--Juanita with the blessing of marriage, Manuela outside. Juanita's daughter, Anita Parham, subsequently wed chiclé contractor Anastacio Alamilla, while her sister's son, James Howell Blake, married Alamilla's sister Elena. George James Parham himself married Nicanora Alamilla.

After Blake and Andrade died, around 1882, Ambergris Cay was inherited by Andrade's two daughters by a former marriage, María and Romana Exaltación. Romana died, leaving her estate to María, and María relied on James Howell Blake, her nephew, as her agent. The three interrelated families--

Blake, Parham, and Alamilla--owned virtually all of the caye, along with its chiclé and coconut plantations, until the 1960s, exporting chiclé and coconuts--and later lobsters--through their commercial enterprises. Blake and Alamilla and Parham Brothers were two major export firms in Belize City throughout the century.²⁰

Goshen and Pembroke Hall meanwhile, were purchased by John Carmichael, manager of Carmichael, Vidal, & Co., who took over a \$41,639 debt from the French company in 1868.²¹ Though by 1871 he was one of the four largest landowners in the north, with some 25,000 acres (Bolland 1977b:187), Carmichael too overextended himself in order to modernize his sugar operations, borrowing some \$15,000 from a British expatriate, Thomas Schofield. He purchased a quantity of Chinese laborers in 1865--who largely deserted to the Santa Cruz Maya (Fowler 1879:51)--as well as a sugarmill and a steam engine. For a time he tried to pay off his creditors by selling parts of his two estates--Santa Rita was sold to Captain A.H. Hall, a Jamaican East Indian, Santo Tomás to James Steven, and Santa Carolina to W.R. Purvis--and transferring the estate rents to Schofield, but it was not enough. Within a few years he returned to Liverpool, where he died in 1873. Though he had had a child in Belize in 1865, he left his property to his British widow, Sarah Ann, his sole heir and executrix.²² After lengthy litigation, she conveyed title in 1878 to the London firm of Skelton and Schofield, who paid the French concern \$10,000 for their

interests. Thomas Schofield's son Ernest Augustus was then in Corozal as the company's agent (Cal 1984b:43).

Ernest Augustus Henry Schofield, born in Blackpool in 1851, like James Hume Blake, married a Yucateca, Petrona Novelo, and returned the estates to the Spanish family networks. At his death in 1934 his son William, who married Catalina María Rosado, inherited Goshen and Pembroke Hall; his son Octavio, one of the first graduates of St. John's College, inherited the family's five coconut plantations. The rest received money--\$15,000 each: one daughter married into the Perez family, another married a Riverol, both in Corozal, while a third married into the Sharp family, white creole planters from Jamaica (Will Bk 3, p.751). Although Ramírez and Lizarraga eventually bought their estates outright, William held on to the bulk of the land of Goshen and Pembroke Hall until 1956, when he sold 35,000 acres to the government--embracing the towns of Corozal, Xaibé, Patchacan, Calcutta, and Ranchito (Jones 1969:162).

Schofield also experimented with henequen, having studied its cultivation in the Yucatán, and imported a steam-powered fiber scraping machine. To encourage its cultivation he offered land "rent free in perpetuity" to anyone who would grow the plant.²³ He also leased out large tracts for sugar cultivation to mestizo contractors, including such large employers of labor as Juan Ramírez (at San Pedro Patchacan), Cornelio Lizarraga (at San Maximo), and Nicholas Aguilar (at Aventura). Although these tenants

all purchased modern steam-driven equipment for their sugarmills, because of an antiquated land tenure law Schofield retained all rights to their improvements.²⁴

One other Yucateca immigrant incorporated a white planter into an enduring mestizo network: Petronila Espejo. She married a John Wallace Price, a Louisiana confederate, who bought the San Román sugar estate in the 1860s. The couple had four daughters: one married Teodoro Santiago Castillo, a prosperous planter and chiclé merchant from Guineas Grass; a second wed John Ross, a white expatriate, and a third married first Father Kevlin, who built the Sisters of Mercy convent in Corozal, and later Theodore Hudson, Cayo District Commissioner.

The next generation expanded the kin network and contacts: the Kevlins' daughter married the son of George and Juanita Parham in San Pedro. Teodoro Santiago Castillo's sister Basilia married Antonio Alamilla, son of José Alamilla and Elena Avilez from Yucatán; their son Maclovio, born in 1895, was one of the largest chiclé contractors in Corozal until a 1955 hurricane. The Castillos' son Santiago, who married Ercanacio Vega, now owns a large commercial empire in Belize City, rivaled only by the current owner of the Belize Estate Co. lands, Barry Bowen.

Petronila Price carried on the merchant manufacturing firm of "Estate of J.W. Price" for several years after her husband's death in 1878; listed in the 1919 Guide to British Honduras (Sologaitoa 1919:170), the firm owned the San

Román sugar estate as late as 1935. "Mrs. Price" was a pillar of Orange Walk society til the end of the century.²⁵

These Yucateca immigrants--Antonia Andrade, Petrona Novelo, Petronila Espejo--succeeded not only in improving their own fortunes--they put new life in a languishing elite. Individuals such as Blake and Carmichael and Schofield were among the few who held onto their lands after most of the European landowners had been bought out by the large merchant firms. By marrying Yucatecan women they gained a stake in the future: valuable experience with commercial sugar production as well as access to a new source of labor, the Yucatan Mayas.

Social Life and the Press

Mestizo social life in the rapidly growing northern towns reflected the newcomers who built them, focusing on the family and community, which included the church. The self presentation that was so essential to creole public life, was not a feature of church and community life in the newly settled villages and towns of the north. There were no papers in the districts. And while by the 1870s a succession of newspapers announced their commitment to news of interest to Spanish-speaking residents, and made periodic efforts to publish such news in Spanish, their editors were creole, both white and coloured, and they all lived in Belize City. While they might be concerned with general district issues, such as agricultural development, land tenure legislation,

or the best labor for the plantations, their personal network rarely went beyond the creole events and inhabitants of Belize City.²⁶

The fiestas that so crowded the social calendar in Yucatán at the time of Stephens' travels (1848), continued in Corozal and Orange Walk, but under the patronage of the large landowners and merchants, whose names were known to Belize City readers.²⁷ An example was the mestiza dance, which from time to time a correspondent described. In "News from the North" the Guardian (5.7.1887) noted that Mr Ernest Schofield had revived the "old Xaibé festival"--discontinued for some years--by calling together his Indian tenants and holding the preliminary meeting, at which pledges were obtained for the proposed mestiza dances.²⁸ Victoria's Jubilee that year was celebrated in Orange Walk with another mestiza dance, along with horse races, a review of the constabulary, and church services.

Official visits were another occasion for describing local festivities, of course, and sometimes the two coincided. Governor Goldsworthy, so despised in Belize City, made increasingly frequent visits north after 1890. A visit to Corozal that year included a tea party and Court House ball (Colonial Guardian 6.7.1890), and a trip to Orange Walk in February 1893 included a carnival celebration. "Carnival at Orange Walk" opened with a Mestizada, "a dance peculiar to the mestizos," and was followed by several more (ibid. 2.25.1893):

Monday was devoted to the "Cinta" or ribbon dance. This dance is peculiar to the people of Yucatán; and their descendants, in Orange Walk, keep up this custom by frequent observance.... On this occasion the band of festive doncellas visited the houses of the principal inhabitants, after the ribbon dance had been performed.

On Tuesday a band of strange Indians suddenly made its appearance in the town, to the surprise of the majority of the inhabitants. After wandering about for some time, they commenced to execute the Xtol or aboriginal native dance, to the amusement of those present. Sometime afterwards it leaked out that these were only sham Indians, being certain of the inhabitants, who had so well disguised themselves that they were actually believed to be genuine Maya Indians.

When the dance ended at midnight, the band accompanied the colonial officials to the fort and "thus ended the carnival at Orange Walk, pleasantly breaking the monotony of the daily avocations of its inhabitants."²⁹

Orange Walk received a new governor, Sir David Wilson, in April 1897, but he apparently kept his distance; a communication in the Guardian (4.17.1897) ended:

One thing only left us in a painful state, and that is, that not one of us Yuctecans had the honor and pleasure of being presented to and of shaking the hands with such a worthy Governor, not even the President of the [reception] committee [Tiburcio Escalante].

As official interest declined, reports of such festivities disappeared--though in 1902 the Clarion noted that Carnival was celebrated in Corozal and in 1909 a Mestizada in Belize City occasioned a Guardian report (1.2.1909):

The dancers, on Christmas Day, went in full Indian gala costume to the house of the Hacendado or chief of the Indian cow boys and, headed by him, marched to the dance. A number of people went to view the unaccustomed spectacle and each curious male had to pay 25¢ for being captured by a Mestiza and, if he chose to put his hat on her head, he had to pay 25c more.

Rural Cousins: The First Orange Walk Settlers

Throughout the 19th century, while Corozal became the center of "Spanish" society, Orange Walk remained a frontier town. Larger tracts of land were available for leasing or subcontracting. While Corozaleños combined small sugar ranchos with shops in town, those who ventured south along the Hondo or New River relied more on timber cutting and chiclé bleeding on large landholdings, expanding into sugar production when it looked profitable. Among these were Manuel Castillo and Francisco Escalante.

By 1892, when Pembroke Hall and Goshen were already in the hands of the Schofield family, Castillo and Escalante were included among the largest landowners in the northern district, a list dominated by five British merchant houses: British Honduras Co, R.N. and Andrew Byass, Mutrie, Arthur and Currie, Bernard Cramer, and Stevens Brothers.³⁰

Northern District

Landowner	Acreage
Bel.Est. & Pro Co Ltd.	536,280
R.N. and A. Byass	67,840
Mutrie, Arthur & Currie	140,680
Stevens Bros & Co	48,000
Mrs. Bowen	17,280
Wardlaw & Usher	17,280
B. Cramer & Co	17,280
Mrs. Usher	12,800
Miss Altereith	6,400
E.A.H. Schofield	32,000
C.T. Hunter	9,600
M.J. Castillo	12,800
F. Escalante	20,480
Gabriel & Smith	12,800
Est. of G. Estevez	10,240

In order to clear and drain their land, Yucatecans

borrowed heavily from the large landowning firms: thus in 1863, Manuel Jesús Castillo mortgaged 625 acres on Albion Island on the Río Hondo (including the village of San Antonio) to Young Toledo & Co. for \$5864, and drew another \$5864 the following year on the same property (Deed Bk 2). That same year he died, and Young Toledo & Co acquired the land. Meanwhile, however, Young Toledo & Co. was encountering its own financial difficulties, and by 1880, when it dissolved, most of its lands had been purchased by the Belize Estate and Produce Company (BepCo) (Bolland and Shoman 1977). Thus in 1874, Castillo's son, Manuel Jesus, a logwood cutter from Orange Walk, purchased 625 acres from BepCo for \$3000 (Deed Bk 4).

For the next thirty years Castillo and his son Policarpio operated as logwood and mahogany cutters and sugar cultivators as the firm of M.J. Castillo and Son. But by 1904 the prices for all three items had dropped and Castillo and Son again sold the land to James Currie, surviving partner of Mutrie, Arthur and Currie, together with a mahogany work called Eight Mile Creek and adjoining work, 2 mules, 9 cows, and 5 steers, all buildings except their residences, and two U.S. insurance policies. When Currie died in 1915, the value was assessed at £20,000. Currie's heirs tried to hold onto the property, but could not find anyone to manage it properly, and in 1918, Belizean millionaire Robert Turton bought the property for the rock bottom price of \$700. Thirty years later, when the colonial

government had committed money to develop sugar, Crispin, Policarpio's nephew, bought it back for \$BH2900.

While the bulk of Albion, some 10,000 acres, remained throughout in the hands of BepCo, the Castillos continued as resident squires: Olga Stavrakis, who did fieldwork in San Antonio in the 1970s, pointed out that among the Maya villagers, the Castillos were said to have "amassed their wealth (gold) and their peons" and come to the village, where they buried the gold in order to "keep it out of the hands of the Indians" (1979:46).

Francisco Escalante, who established a store in Orange Walk, then a town of only some 1200 people, traded with Mayas and Yucatecans on both sides of the Hondo, and was said to have prospered considerably in the trade in guns and ammunition (Emond 1983). By 1872 he was one of the town's wealthiest residents and known locally as a hero of the 1872 Battle of Orange Walk (reputedly having shot the Mayan leader Marcus Canul). By 1882 he owned one of the two bars in town, and by 1883 he had acquired the two large sugar plantations at Indian Hill and Trial Farm initially owned by trader and planter Henry Oswald.

Oswald's experience illuminates the fortunes to be made and lost in sugar. Oswald came to Belize in 1848 from Nassau, where he was persuaded by a Frenchman, Adolphus Lanabit, of better prospects in Belize. After failing to make a go of an initial hotel venture, the two invested in a trading expedition to the Yucatán, where they had become

established by 1850 (Cal 1983:64), trading further and further inland. After a few years Oswald "settled down as a sugar planter for a year or two" at Corozal, drawing on some money inherited from his family in Scotland.³¹ In 1856, he sold his plantation, and bought two works on the Sittee River--Uncle Sam and Plenty--from Charles Usher Forman (Deeds Bk 2, p.67). In 1861 he sold both to Young, Toledo & Co, at a profit, and purchased the land he had been leasing from the same firm called Indian Hill, followed by another purchase a mile up on the New River, called Trial Farm.

An "enthusiastic agriculturalist," Oswald bought out his partner in 1861 and began to experiment with cacao and coffee, but while he did well at first, he found the plants died when their roots reached the subsoil (Colonial Guardian 7.15.1905). In 1872 he too played a heroic role in the Battle of Orange Walk, rescuing the town magistrate "from the clutches of hostile Indians," and escorting a group of refugees (including his own wife and children) down river to San Estévan.³² Thereafter, however, he had a series of setbacks: a fire and an explosion ruined his cane fields, rum stores, and distillery at Indian Hill. He tried to plant at Trial Farm, but the swampy nature of the land required him to invest in an extensive series of drains. He took a loan, at typically high interest, from Mr Hodge, of British Honduras Company, to expand his acreage and purchase a new steam mill, mortgaging both properties and consigning his produce to Hodge. Hodge of course thereby obtained both

properties not long afterward. Oswald died in 1877, and Francisco Escalante shortly thereafter purchased the sugar estates from the Belize Estate and Produce Company.

Francisco's two plantations were willed to his son Tiburcio, with shares to his brother Eliodoro, a merchant in Orange Walk. After Tiburcio's death in 1920 the land remained in the estate until 1964, when Indian Hill was acquired by the government on behalf of the Belize Sugar Company. By then, there were other fortunes to be made in sugar, and the Escalantes were among those who made them.

However, Orange Walk was always regarded as something of a rough frontier town; only a few saw it as a land of opportunity. Corozal was where the Yucatecan elite made their homes, and Corozaleños retained close, perhaps closer, social ties with Mexicans. Noting the death of the Mexican comandante in 1902, the Clarion observed that among his friends, including Juan Carillo, José Rosado, and Manuel Romero, he was "as much mourned as any of our own citizens."³³ Those who did not make it in Corozal more often moved across the border to Cancún or Mérida than up river to Orange Walk.

The fact that towns were connected only by rivers up until the 1940s had an extraordinary impact on social development; travel to Corozal involved over 50 miles through rivers and lagoons, a journey of several days, and longer still in terms of social distance. While from Belize City the north is another world, from Corozal, which until

the early 1950s was the administrative center of the entire northern district, Orange Walk, the country's second largest town, is itself another world. Even today, though Orange Walk is less than 30 miles away by road, informants who know everyone in Corozal look blank when asked about Orange Walk.

Sugar, Chiclé, and Coconuts

When James Hume Blake was obliged to sell the Goshen and Pembroke Hall estates in 1859, sugar was just beginning to take off, following a decline in 1858 due to drought and panic. Already in 1857, small planters were producing enough to supply the domestic market, and ship the first small surplus (Romney et al.1959:117) and the first shipment of sugar concrete was in May 1867 (Gibbs 1883:128,131). That year Lt. Governor Longden noted that 3000 acres were planted to cane, 868 tons of sugar produced, 544 tons exported, and in addition 53,914 gals of rum were produced, of which 4800 gals were exported (cited in Bolland 1977a:85).

As sugar expanded, however, success required investment--in fertilizer or drainage but especially in steam mills, to replace the small cattle mills used by the small planters. The U.S. commercial agent observed as much in 1867: "Many years must elapse I think before sugar can be exported from Belize in any considerable quantity," he wrote, "owing principally I think, to the lack of capital with which to prosecute the business" (quoted in Cleghern 1967:43). Gibbs (1883:127) pointed out that while the

operations of the Yucatecan "rancheritos," with small capital, were limited, their success encouraged the British merchant-logging firms, who by 1860 were suffering from a depression in the mahogany trade. In 1868, Longden noted that ten estates had installed steam machinery--by far the largest being British Honduras Company, with four estates, including those modernized at such cost by Oswald, at Trial Farm and Indian Hill (see Bolland 1977a:85).

In 1877 Governor Barlee, concluding that small producers were discouraged by the excise duty on sugar, abolished it, thereby encouraging both sugar and rum production, despite the addition of a distillery tax on rum (Cleghern 1967:62-63). Sugar reached a peak in the 1880s: in 1881, 1902 tons were exported (Gregg 1968:97) and in 1889 1900 tons were exported (Ashcraft 1973:43). At that point it stagnated, due to lack of infrastructure; a 1891 Government Report stated: "Neither roads nor a road system exists" (see Bolland 1977:45), and the struggle over a railroad was still bogged down in competing schemes and British reluctance to spend any unnecessary money (see Chapter 2). Thereafter, falling market prices resulted in the decline of the industry throughout the settlement. Exports fell to about 200,000 pounds in the early 1890s (Government Gazette 21 July 1994), and by 1906 only 1500 tons were produced, mostly for local consumption, though 49 mills and 10 rum stills still operated (Ashcraft 1973:58).

A further limitation was the shortage of labor, caused

primarily by the domination of the large lumber companies. Ashcraft (1973:36-37) points to the striking coincidence that mercantile firms engaged in the mahogany trade pushed through a revision of the labor laws at about the same time as commercial agriculture--mainly sugar and bananas--"was attempting to gain a foothold in the territory" and in 1885 all of their requests were granted. Allegedly enacted to ensure employers against workers who did not show up for work, the laws restricted woodcutters from entering into any additional contracts, particularly on agricultural estates. Thus woodcutting continued to dominate the colonial economy.

By the 1890s chicle, which was obtained by cutting and bleeding the bark of the sapodilla tree, and could easily be combined with logwood cutting, was also beginning to thrive. In 1838 the Belize Agricultural Company held the lease on the fertile island of Ambergris Cay, at the bottom of the Yucatán peninsula. As a director of that company Blake may well have been aware of its assets; accordingly when he and his wife acquired the island in 1869 they became contractors for the extensive logwood stands on the caye and across the border in Yucatán. Around the turn of the century, when the market opened up for chicle, which grew in abundance on the caye, they added that. From 1904 to 1930 it was a major export to the United States (Ashdown 1979a:105)

Particularly after 1901, when a British-Mexican treaty officially ended the Caste War, the chicle industry really began to open up in the southern Yucatán. The Mexicans

supplied the necessary infrastructure, including railroads, warehouses, and ports, that did not exist in Belize. The Blakes and Alamillas used their Yucatán connections--among both ladinos and Mayas; one Alamilla was said to have contacts with Cruzob leader General Francisco May (Godfrey 1983:38)--for access to areas in the southern part of the peninsula that were inaccessible to outsiders (see Jones 1971:13). Maclovio Alamilla was the largest contractor in the Corozal area until 1955, when a hurricane devastated the chicle trees (Birdwell 1979:71-72).

Chicle declined with the 1930s recession, as the United States developed synthetic substitutes, and the Blake family fell back on coconuts, which had been the mainstay of the island economy from the 1880s.³⁴ While the tree grew well "in the most sterile soils"--along the coast and on the cayes (Gibbs 1883:184)--coconut plantations required a good deal of capital, since the bush had to be cleared and planted, and tended, and most of the plantations on the mainland were owned by BepCo, which also controlled the marketing. But good stands of cocals already existed when the Blakes came to Ambergris Cay, and with their Yucatán connections the Blakes and Parhams and Alamillas exported through Mexico to the United States. A succession of hurricanes had pretty much destroyed the plantations by the mid 1960s, but by then lobsters, which thrive in the waters around the caye, were in great demand. The Blakes and Alamillas again had useful connections, this time with

entrepreneurial Americans--a link which they are today parlaying into successful tourist ventures.

The Changing Context of Dependency

Beginning in the 1960s, the colony's economy, which had begun to shift toward greater integration with the United States early in the century--Swayne commented in 1917 that the United States secured "the lion's share both of imports and exports" (1917:174)--lurched more dramatically in this direction. In 1960, 59 percent of the colony's exports went to the UK, as against only 11 percent to the United States; by 1981 only 27 percent went to the UK, while 53 percent went to the United States. Sugar, despite its slump, is still the largest export, and over three-fourths goes to the United States, while the rapidly growing garment industry exports almost exclusively to that country and citrus goes both to the United States and the Caribbean. Only bananas go exclusively to the UK, under contract with Fyffes, Ltd., a British subsidiary of United Fruit (Everitt 1987:50).

Imports show a similar shift: already in 1970 the United States had 30 percent of the total import value, compared to Britain's 25 percent, while in 1981, Britain held onto only 14 percent, compared to 35 percent for the United States. In 1980 the major importers claimed the figure was as high as 75 percent for the United States, as against only some 14-15 percent for the UK (Everitt 1987:50). The shift was further consolidated in 1976, when

the Belize dollar was no longer tied to sterling; it has since remained tied to the U.S. dollar, at a ratio of two to one.

The shift in economic orientation has greatly favored the mestizo business interests (Grant 1976:175,255). Their interest in business--and their light skin--brought them into the commercial banks and other international commercial institutions early in the century. Then in the 1920s a number of mestizos profited from rum-running during U.S. Prohibition, strengthening their U.S. connections.³⁵ Not until the depression years of the 1930s did mestizos seek economic opportunities within the wider society, including the state apparatus. Within the civil service, while expatriates still monopolized the higher levels, creoles had established themselves in the lower and middle ranks, effectively closing these to mestizos.

By the 1950s and 1960s, however, with the rise of political parties and self-governing status, mestizos gained access to state power via party politics. By 1972 Brockmann found that mestizos occupied civil service positions in about the same proportion as they occurred in the population, while they held all the elected posts (1977: 255). At the same time, the government-sponsored sugar industry was revitalizing the towns of Corozal and Orange Walk, offering dynamic business opportunities at home. Today, as U.S. investment increases, and with it the preference for light-skinned employees (Bolland 1991:18-19),

government jobs are again a last resort for mestizo graduates.

Mestizo business connections are sustained by educational and social institutions. Grant (1976:175) stresses their Catholic nature, arguing that the limited potential of the mestizo elite for "group affiliations" resulted in their drawing "their solidarity and group corporateness almost entirely from their various Catholic institutions." Notable among these is St. John's College (SJC), run by American Jesuits, to which middle class mestizos send their children.

The St. John's College Alumni Association has long functioned as both a recruiting network and mini chamber of commerce for the business elite. Less significant than its Catholicism, however, has been its American orientation: if the British had tutored its creole subjects in the superiority of British institutions for centuries, the Jesuits shared no such bias. Moreover, while Anglican and Methodist schools conformed to the Cambridge entrance exams, and sent their best students to England for further study, SJC's curriculum "reflected the preferences of the American Jesuits, who encouraged and arranged for the more promising students to continue their studies in Catholic institutions in the United States" (Grant 1976:99).

U.S. study has never been limited to Catholic school graduates, however. Swayne noted the opportunities for higher education in the United States as early as 1917,

commenting that in "after-life" these U.S.-educated Belizeans looked to the States for "inspiration" (1817:175). In 1951 Belize sent 14 students for higher study in the UK, and 17 for that purpose to the United States (Cain 1965: 56). After 1965, when U.S. immigration quotas for hemisphere residents were opened up, students increasingly looked to the States for post-secondary education, and SJC graduates were in a good position to get scholarships.³⁶

However, whites and creoles were by no means exclusively Anglican. Throughout the 19th century, a majority of the white business elite were Scots, both Catholic and Presbyterian. Indeed, what is noticeable about the SJC boys, even in the early years, is the predominance of local and expatriate whites. Burns and Bowmans, both of local white families, attended from its founding, along with the sons of colonial officials and expatriate merchants. The younger sons of both the Hunters and the Woods studied for the priesthood, and later taught at SJC. Thus mestizo school ties were not only with each other, but also with the dominant business class.³⁷

Conclusion: Economic Location and a Regional Elite

Mestizo immigrants succeeded in the process of capital accumulation by means of their successful exploitation of commercial agriculture in the late 19th and early 20th century. The pioneering development of sugar, mainly, but also coconuts and chicle, primarily in the north of the

colony, facilitated their entry into commerce, especially in the border town of Corozal. Commercial operations, specifically the import-export trade, has been crucial to the ability of local capitalists to withstand the market blows to which local production--industrial as well as agricultural--has always been subject. The Spanish rancheros and planters developed a commercial center in the northern districts, from which they were both protected from competition with metropolitan merchant interests in Belize City and well placed to profit from entrepot trade with Mexico and Cuba. Many of them were also able to parlay this position into successful partnerships with metropolitan and Belize city firms, from which, at the senior partner's retirement, they inherited estates or commercial operations.

The nature of this economic location is particularly interesting in terms of its cultural consequences. Throughout the 19th century, the British project of empire was a totalizing one, in which the identity of different groups was constrained to various degrees by the dominance of British political and social institutions, including education, religion, law, and government (Asad 1990). The British by no means exempted the Spanish from such institutional constraints; indeed, the surrounding "Spanish republics" provided the examples of anarchy and violence against which British institutions were most frequently defined. But in addition to their crucial economic location, a number of factors combined to insulate mestizos: their

location in the northern districts, away from the "project of empire," encouraged the growth of community-based civil and religious institutions, while the establishment of the Jesuit mission in Belize in 1851, and the Jesuits' rapid dominance of secondary education, provided an alternative path of social mobility and cultural legitimation.

As a consequence, the mestizo population strove neither for acceptance and integration with the dominant British culture, nor to validate their identity outside of their own communities.³⁸ Rather, both Spanish and Mayas validated their own status and identity vis à vis each other, in cultural rituals centered on community and church. The elaborate religious festivals, processions, public dances, and bullfights, which the British found "barbaric and noisy" (Jones 1969:77), formed a focus of unity between Mayas and Spanish, reinforcing their status in society and fostering the patronage relations on which it depended. Wolf (1959:238ff) has described the ability to attract followers through such alternative "networks of social relations and communications" as the hallmark of mestizos throughout Central America, arguing that it was precisely in this ability that they found "a validation of self and of [their] station in society" (ibid.:239). Thus Yucatecans, quintessentially adaptable, were ideal immigrants; far from seeking validation from the British, as did creoles, they were indifferent to their opinion and flourished under their neglect.

Notes

1. The government estimates total refugees at 40,000, or 20 percent (Government of Belize 1991), of which Guatemalans, with a large Maya element, total 6 percent while Salvador-ans, who are overwhelmingly mestizo, constitute 14 percent. While Waddell (1961:73-74) anticipated Mayas would become more and more hispanicized, Birdwell-Pheasant (1985:8) found Indian ethnicity had been revalued with economic prosperity among Maya sugar farmers in the 1960s and 1970s.
2. Recent studies have examined the material basis of the Caste War (Joseph 1986; Patch 1985) as well as its impact on different Maya groups in the Yucatán and Belize (Dumond 1977; Bricker 1981; Farriss 1984; Jones 1984).
3. Barlee to Musgrave, 1 August 1878, cited in Bricker (1981:116).
4. Fancourt to Grey 8 July 1848, R25, AB.
5. Florencio de la Vega, tried for putting a laborer in military stocks, testified that such punishment was "customary" in Yucatán (Cal 1984a:14, citing de la Vega to Superintendent, 17 August 1850; R29, pp. 545-46, AB).
6. Administrators simply echoed landowners, who were never satisfied with the supply of labor (Swayne 1917:70; Gibbs 1883). In the northern districts, wages and conditions in the sugar industry were such that workers regularly deserted to Mexico and Honduras (Cal 1983:225). During the depression in mahogany in the 1880s, landowner Carlos Melhado argued that there was plenty of unemployed local labor, were cutters to pay adequate wages (The Observer, 10.24.1885), and Ashcraft (1973:55) noted that with the depression in 1914 the colony went from a labor shortage to a labor glut in less than a decade.
7. Dr. Gahné opined that the workers were to blame, being "the human scum and offscourings of a Chinese port, and nearly all...confirmed opium eaters." Thus "not many months after they had been assigned to different employers, they began to die like flies from dysentery and malarial fever on the majority of the estates" (Colonial Guardian 11.7.1908).
8. Doyle to Grey 7 June 1848. The Colonial Guardian also regarded them as hardworking farmers, primarily tenants of large landowning firms (see Cleghern 1967:63).
9. R.54, p.496-97, AB.

10. An 1848 census from Punta Consejo, where Yucatecan refugees first settled, shows 52 married men, 52 married women, 41 single men, and 48 single women (in addition to children of both sexes) (Faber to Fancourt 4 December 1848, cited in Cal 1983:227).
11. Seymour to Darling, 17 October 1858, R65, p.12, AB.
12. C0123/23 Statement by chief landholders in the colony...
13. Colonial Guardian, January 7, 1882 and July 30, 1887.
14. In 1901 he testified that he owned one mahogany work at northern river (500 acres), and a "sugar estate which has been abandoned" (Report of the Land Tax Commission 1902:14).
15. December 29, 1851 petition; R39, p. 109, AB.
16. Jane Hume is listed in both the 1816 and 1823 censuses, and in 1832 she headed a household with 36 slaves, together with her adult son James Hume Blake and two other children.
17. Anderson's graphic description of Perdomo's escape is quoted in Rogers 1885:25).
18. See R.79, p. 530, AB.
19. Belize Advertiser, September 14, 1839; Honduras Almanack, 1839; see Godfrey (1983:39) for Ambergris history.
20. Maclovio Alamilla was the largest absentee landowner in Douglas, near Corozal, until 1955, when lands were bought by a wealthy Texan, Mr. Vio (Birdwell 1979).
21. The history of the Goshen and Pembroke Hall estates is detailed in Cal (1984a; 1983), and see also Jones 1969 and MP S130, AB.
22. In 1919 Jesus Carmichael, reported to be John Carmichael's illegitimate son, petitioned for justice regarding Schofield's claim to the lands, maintaining the rents for three months alone were enough to repay Carmichael's debt of \$15,000. The Register General confirmed Schofield's title in 1920 (MP S130-18, AB). A history of Goshen and Pembroke Hall is detailed in Cal (1984b; 1983).
23. Colonial Guardian, October 13, October 20, 1894.
24. "Notes on Corozal District," Colonial Guardian, January 12, 1907.

25. An account of New River boat travel from 1925 speaks of taking on board "brown sugar in 100 pound sacks from the mill of J.W. Price" (Emond 1979:22).

26. Guardian editor Dr. Gahné, who was born in Omóa, possibly had a wider social network; he had worked in Orange Walk and Corozal and was governor of Roatán for five years.

27. Jones (1982) has argued that these patrons were partly responsible for the continuation of "traditional" festivals, which helped solidify an informal power base for large landowners.

28. A report from a Jesuit priest, Father Gillet, in 1872, described the mestizada as "a purely native affair," meaning Mayan. In Xaibé, he wrote, the mestizada had to be carried on without interruption for 24 hours ("Letter from Father Gillet," p.97).

29. On a New Years' visit the following year the governor and his entourage again attended a "Mestizada, or National Mestiza Dance," which continued throughout the next day.

30. "Statement (made in Nov 1892) shewing approximately the areas owned by the Chief land holders in the Colony. By Districts"; CO 123/23.

31. In 1851 he joined a petition by employers of large numbers of laborers requesting labor disputes be adjudicated locally instead of in Belize City (R39, p. 109, AB).

32. His role in these events is detailed in Colonial Guardian, February 12, 1898 and January 11, 1908.

33. The Clarion, December 4, 1902.

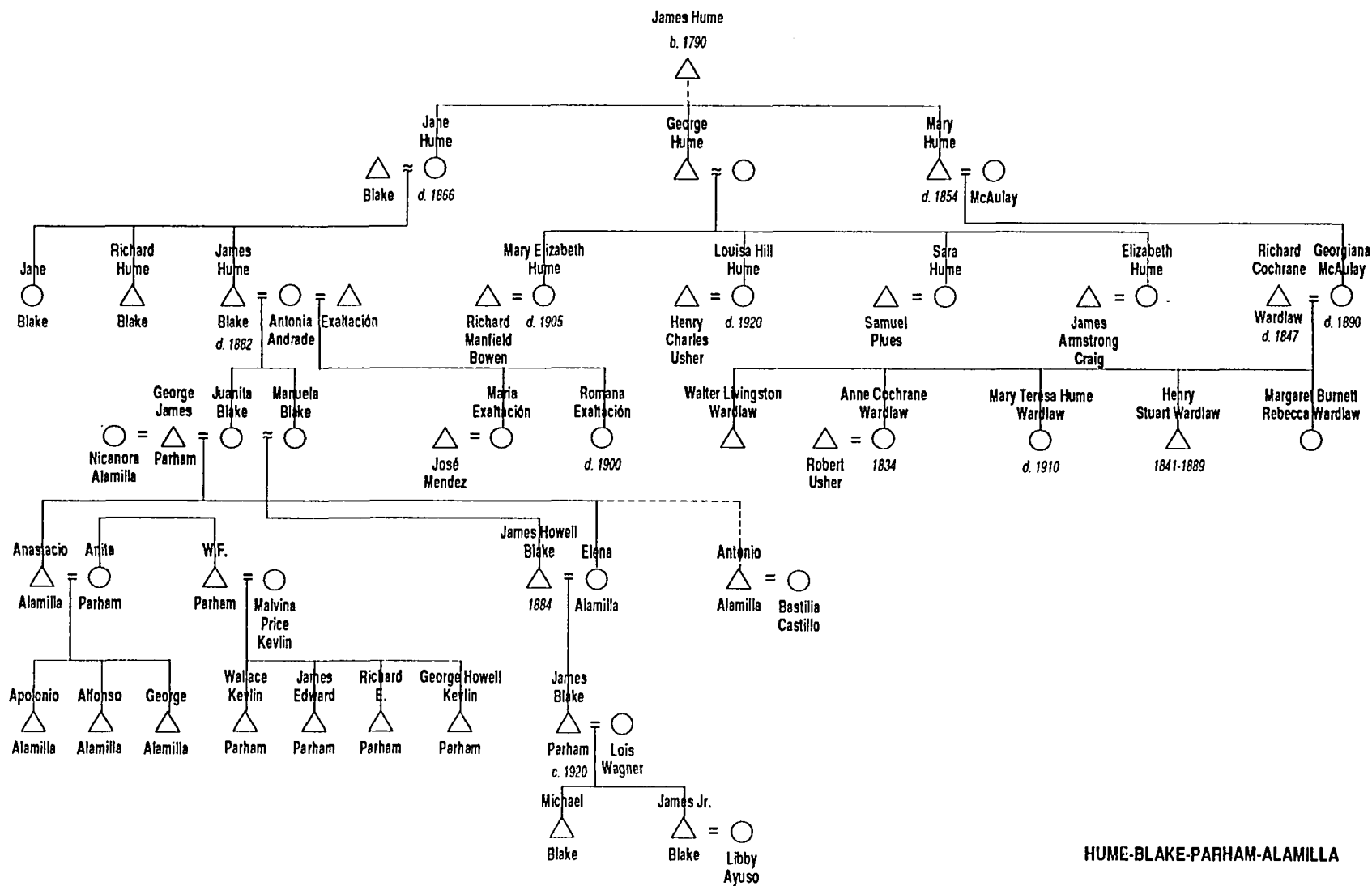
34. Godfrey 1983. Gibbs (1883:184) notes that 1,623,631 nuts were exported in 1880, averaging \$18 to \$20 per 1000.

35. The "rum" was mainly European whiskey, shipped from Cuba and the Bahamas as well as Belize. While prior to 1920 Belize imported about 6,000 gallons a year, by 1923 85,000 gallons were imported, of which 77,000 were shipped to the Bahamas (Ashdown 1980:15).

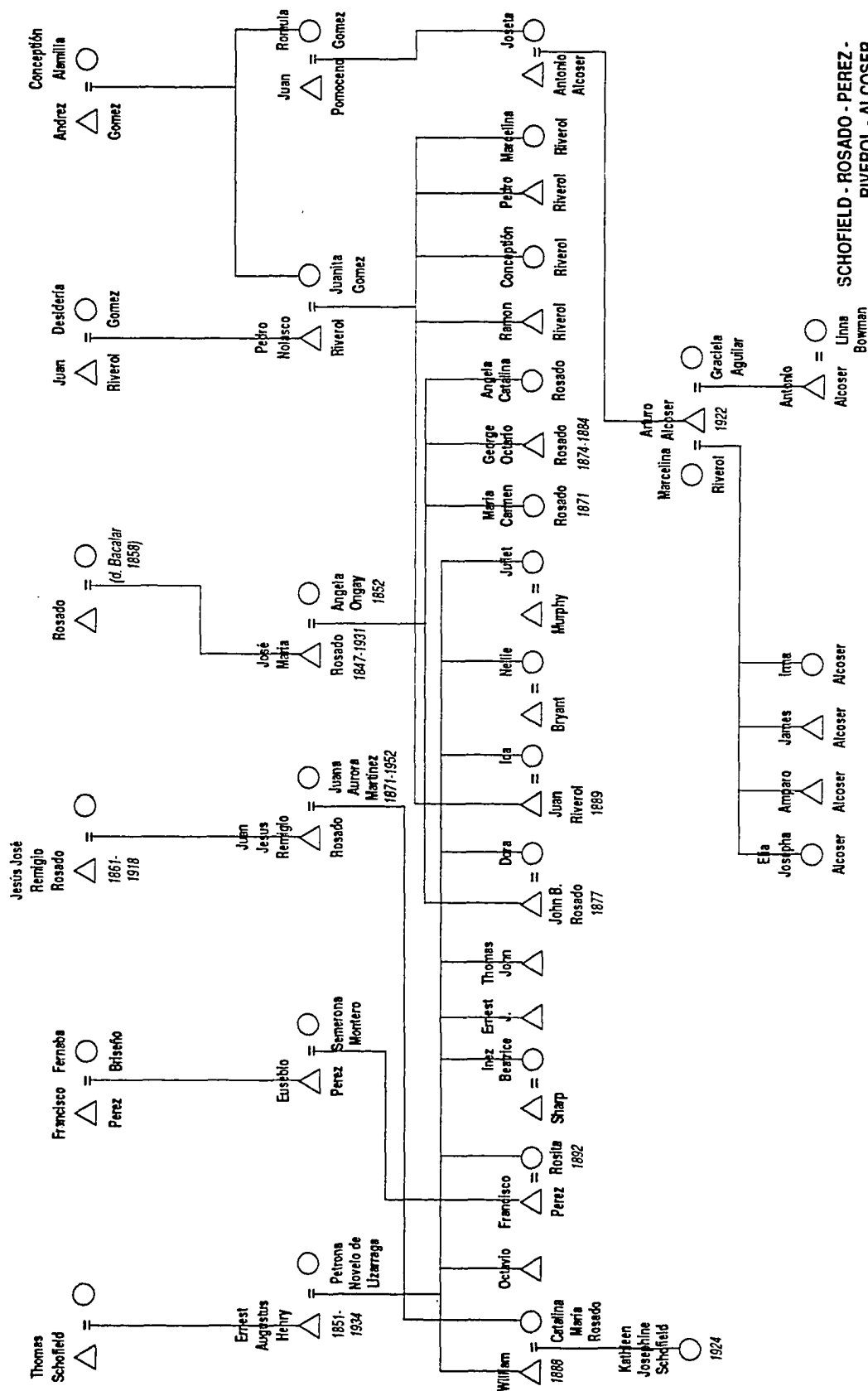
36. The 1960s saw a shift in migration patterns throughout the Caribbean, due to the imposition of immigration controls by Britain (under the Commonwealth Immigrants Act of 1962) and the elimination of small quotas by the U.S. Immigration legislation of 1965 (Foner 1983:13). Rutheiser (1991:22) reports that nearly half of respondents to a 1987-88 survey hoped to go abroad for college, and of these, 75 percent looked to the States, compared to 4 percent to Britain.

37. Reinforcing this tie was the Pickwick Club, "shared almost exclusively" by the mestizo business class (Grant 1976:100) Its founding members were mestizo businessmen L.P. Ayuso, Santiago Castillo, and two white creoles--Guy Nord and Alexander John Hunter, all St. John's graduates.

38. Even today, mestizos "look to their Spanish heritage and light skin color as marks of their superiority" (Brockmann 1979:164-65).



HUME-BLAKE-PARHAM-ALAMILLA



CHAPTER 4

Emancipation and After: Belize City Creoles

Creoles, once described broadly as descendants of the original woodcutters and their slaves (Setzekorn 1975:19), are now generally described as a racial and ethnic mixture, of which at least some element is African.¹ Currently one of two dominant ethnic groups, they regard themselves, along with the Mayas, as the country's "natives." Outnumbered for several decades by the influx of Yucatecan refugees in the mid 19th century, creoles had achieved numerical dominance by the turn of the century, a position they have held onto ever more tenuously in the last 20 years.² In 1970, creoles comprised an estimated 55 to 60 percent of the total population, compared to an estimated 20 percent mestizos.³ In 1980 they still comprised almost 40 percent, compared to 33.4 percent mestizos. But as Central American refugees enter Belize at an estimated 2000 each year, creoles continue to emigrate, primarily to the United States. As a result, by 1990 mestizos made up 43.6 percent while creoles made up only 29.8 percent of the Belize population.⁴

As important as the shifting ratios of ethnic groups in the overall population is their geographical distribution. Due to the tendency of each group to cluster in different districts, in 1980 creoles made up only 11 percent of the district of Orange Walk and 16 percent of Corozal, while they made up fully 75 percent of the capital, Belize City (Ministry of Education 1984). Like creoles throughout the

Caribbean and Central American Atlantic Coast, they occupy primarily urban occupations. Indeed, two stereotypes continue to describe the creole population: they disdain agriculture and they dominate the civil service, due to cultural and political affinity with the British rulers.

The largely untapped agricultural potential of Belize is obvious to all visitors. Throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries, British authorities explained this by virtue of a creole distaste for agriculture; Gibbs noted the "invincible distaste of the mass of native coloured labourers to the avocations connected with the cultivation of the soil, and their inherent preference for the life of the mahogany or logwood works..." (1883:175); Swayne stated that the mahogany cutter, "raised by his independent life to a privileged position, looked down upon the field labourer, and a distaste for paid plantation labour unfortunately exists" (1917:170), and Burns added: "he despises agriculture and has no knowledge of it (1962:127).⁵

Even a brief review of the colony's land and labor structure reveals the irony of this observation for a group that was forcibly imported to cut wood, prohibited from cultivation throughout the slave period, and after emancipation expressly prevented from owning land lest they prefer cultivation for themselves to working for the mahogany contractors; that was obliged to base itself in Belize City in order to obtain contracts for the work for which they had been trained; that had no capital and no

experience working the land at a time when Yucatecans, who had both, were encouraged by the same authorities to become tenants and smallholders.

More recently, as the creole woodcutting "avocations" have been shown to be the result of restricted opportunity rather than privilege, commentators refer to creole dominance of the civil service ranks as evidence of British preference and ask to what extent this will enable creoles to dominate the decolonization process and attach themselves to the new state (Bolland 1988:201-03). Belizeans wrote of "the sycophantic Creole bourgeoisie class" and "their supremacy in the civil service administrative circles of government" (Hyde 1969:i), and included civil service occupations as among the ways in which creoles are "the group most acculturated to the British" (Shoman 1987:10).

While Belizean political activists employed such stereotypes in an effort to discredit the conservative ideology of an older generation of creole nationalists, they derived originally from the dominant classes--expatriate landowners and the colonial authorities. The application of ethnic stereotypes by one dominated group to another that occurs throughout the Caribbean also occurs between generations or political or cultural factions in a single group, in both cases reflecting the continued power of the dominant class (Bartels 1977; B. Williams 1990). This power, which includes the ability to bestow meaning, arises within a specific economic context (Wolf 1982:388). Thus the

enduring myths of creole identity reflect the enduring context in which they are generated--a dependent capitalist economy born of the colonial relationship.

The economic stagnation and lack of development which has characterized Belize for 200 years are rooted in the determination of the British authorities to control a settler population as much as its major labor force, the former slaves (cf. Nash 1977:117). However, the consequences were very different for those with capital than for those without. Chapters 2 and 3 looked at the way in which this dependent mercantile relationship framed options and restrictions within which white and mestizo populations variously located themselves. This chapter will examine the way in which creole laborers endeavored to improve their occupational status in the post-emancipation period within the restrictions expressly laid out by the colonial rulers.

Occupation Structure under Slavery and Emancipation

A number of free coloured inhabitants acquired property before 1839. While there are no records of these as such, the 1832 census records 31 free coloured slaveowners, 17 of whom were women, compared to only 26 white slaveowners. By contrast, the large mass of newly freed slaves found their landowning and cultivation options severely limited.

Belize differed from the slave societies of the rest of the Caribbean in that the economy was based on woodcutting rather than sugar cultivation--and thus organized work into

very different domains. Rather than a large plantation with many workers, male and female, logging demanded small production units which could move frequently from camp to camp as wood was cut out in one location and another was claimed. Cutting was done exclusively by males, both masters and slaves, and both worked "in small, more or less temporary and isolated camps in the middle of an uncultivated and essentially uninhabited terrain" (Bolland 1977b:54). Captain George Henderson, who came to Belize with the Fifth West India Regiment and became a logger himself, is the source of most of what is known about the organization of this work. He states that mahogany was cut in two seasons, one beginning just after Christmas, the other about mid year. For both masters and slaves, "engaged in pursuits that lead to distant and in widely different directions, it seldom happens, perhaps not more than once in many months, that the settlers of Honduras have any kind of intercourse with each other, or for the same interval with their homes or families..."(quoted in Bolland 1977b:55).

Henderson's account indicates that timber extraction organized men's lives into two realms: work and family life. While at work in the camps, woodcutters kept fine houses in town, many installed with wives and families, which were maintained by domestic slaves. While woodcutters did not keep the large number of domestic slaves that typified Jamaican plantations, they had slaves to clean, sew, launder, and take care of children--and often took black or

coloured mistresses to supervise these activities (Bolland 1977b:57).

The 1834 Slave Register reveals a striking distinction in male and female occupations: woodcutting was the occupation of 794 out of 991 men over ten years old; while all but 26 of 547 female slaves over ten worked as washerwomen, housemaid, chambermaid, cook, seamstress, or drudge. Women were joined in the domestic realm by children under 20, who worked at the master's table, but as the boys grew older they went out to the camps, while the girls merely moved from one domestic task to another.

In addition, the practice of small-scale cultivation by slaves and former slaves alongside the plantation, which formed the basis of smallholder production in the post-abolition period elsewhere, was not widespread in Belize. The Slave Register of 1834, which gives slave occupations, records that 37 men and 11 women worked at these tasks. While agriculture was forbidden in the early days of the settlement by treaties with Spain, and indeed was not officially permitted until 1838, inhabitants freely disregarded treaty restrictions in other regards. Yet a lack of subsistence agriculture and internal marketing arrangements persisted throughout the colonial period--reflecting the fact that both were highly satisfactory to the forestry and merchant groups after emancipation (Ashcraft 1973:41-42; Bolland 1977b:123).

Abolition in 1834 was followed by a four-year period of

apprenticeship for former slaves, as specified by the terms of the Abolition Act of 1833, and modified by the Colonial Office in 1938.⁶ The Abolition Act specified that all newly freed slaves over six years old were to work without pay for the same masters. In Belize, this meant that the men continued to work on the mahogany gangs while the women worked as domestics. Magistrates, reporting on the apprentice system, noted that apprentices in all districts sought to purchase their discharge, but those who succeeded ended up working at the same occupations, the men as woodcutters, the women as seamstresses or domestics, either for their old masters or "those from whom they can obtain the most advantageous terms" (quoted in Bolland 1977b:115). Not only was there a demand for mahogany workers at the time owing to the popularity of mahogany for European railway coaches, the alternatives for freed slaves were few.

For one thing, they had few skills. Schools were concerned primarily with religious and moral values; this was true of the short-lived Anglican free schools as well as those set up by competing Methodist and Catholic denominations. Thus when the Public Meeting voted money for instruction for apprentices, it was for the same purpose.

Another problem was debt--specifically due to the existence of a pernicious debt peonage system, based on the practice of giving cash advances at Christmas, when it would be spent for holiday celebrations, and obliging workers to take at least half of their wages in supplies from expensive

company stores, a system known as "truck." Gibbs noted as late as 1883 that "the evil of his purchasing in the dearest market, instead of being allowed to take his money where he likes, is the lesser one only; the greater is that he receives these goods and the cash in the middle of a saturnalia of dissipation...."(1883:177). Holiday spending meant that workers not only spent the cash but sold the supplies (at "one half what he is charged for them") and took another advance. They thus began work already in debt:

On the works the same rule of half goods half cash is pursued, but he sees no more cash although he gets goods. It is hardly necessary to add that when his season's work is over he finds himself in debt when he comes down to Belize for his Christmas spree" (ibid.:177; cf. Morris 1883:122-23)

The fact that the largest mahogany cutters were also the largest merchants greatly favored the continuation of this system. It also restricted the development of local markets where small producers could sell their produce--a situation which remains true today.⁷ In order to forestall any local competition, moreover, merchant importers pushed a measure through the Public Meeting in 1838 which abolished Sunday markets (Burdon 1935; Bolland 1977b:116). While this was later reversed, planting was still discouraged, "in fear of its interference with the supply of labour" (Fowler 1879:48), and one report noted a 19th century tendency to disparage local agricultural efforts "lest success in this direction might reduce the profits from imported foodstuffs" (Romney et al. 1959:116).⁸

While criticism of the advance system intensified during the 1880s in an effort to encourage agriculture, the mahogany firms managed to pass the 1885 Labour Act, which formalized the colony's labor laws. The act was notable "not so much for its overt control of labor, but for its covert attempt to prevent a worker from seeking other waged work during potential slack times in the 11-month period-- especially if that work might be on an agricultural estate" (Ashcraft 1973:37; cf. Bolland 1977b:154).

Perhaps most importantly, freed slaves were deprived of the opportunity to buy land. Although the crown possessed "vast tracks of land" and had hitherto given grants of land without charge, the Colonial Office changed this policy almost immediately after emancipation, announcing that land would henceforth cost £1 an acre. The purpose of this change was precisely to prevent freed slaves from acquiring land, for this "tended to create indolent habits, to discourage labour for wages, and to leave large tracts of Territory in a wild & unimproved state" (quoted in Bolland 1977b:120).⁹

The measure was effective. While numerous grants were made between 1817 and 1839, "in consequence of this restrictive order no one would buy; and in 1855 the then superintendent reported that since the direction given in 1839 no grant for money had up to that time been made" (Bristowe and Wright 1888:86). Originally lands were claimed by rules set by the Public Meeting and were known as "locations"; these were prohibited in 1817 and land was

declared to belong to the crown. Thereafter grants of crown land depended on the superintendent, subject to confirmation by the Colonial Office. Location claims remained unclear until in 1855 the Laws in Force Act officially recognized the validity of location titles on lands occupied before 1817. Not until 1872 were crown lands regulated by legislative enactment (ibid.:86-87). In 1879 Fowler wrote: "It is estimated there are 5000 or 6000 settlers in the Colony, yet I cannot ascertain that there are more than about 250 who have any title to their holdings beyond a squatting possession or mere tenancy at will" (1879:49).

By mid century most of the best land had already been alienated; the fact that much of it was also uncleared and virtually inaccessible made it attractive only to large-scale woodcutters and land speculators (Romney et al. 1959:12). When land was sold, it was to larger landholders, who then sought more labor for woodcutting (Bolland 1977b:123). The years 1850 to 1880 were marked by major land sales, as large firms bought out almost all the original landowners.

Even so, former apprentices managed to obtain small plots of land, squatting or leasing on crown lands near the towns of Mullins River, Monkey River, and Belize City, which allowed them to pick up work as woodcutters and sell their produce in the town markets (Fowler 1879:49; Morris 1883:31,77). When challenged by the large landowners, however, they received no support from the colonial authorities, regardless of length of occupation or the terms

of the original grant. In 1868 the governor observed that without title, the land could be sold "over the heads of the present occupiers to large proprietors" (Bolland and Shoman 1977:93). An 1875 report on crown lands noted "numerous squatters" who "should be rooted out" (Fowler 1879:49).

The denial of secure tenure and restriction of marketing encouraged the practice of alternating small-scale cultivation with seasonal wage labor throughout the entire country. A Land Commission report in 1959 observed that farming was at best "a borderline existence and in many cases a farming life is only made possible by the opportunity offered in jobs away from the farm"; thus creoles still depended on mahogany work, mestizos and Mayas on chicle operations, and Caribs on citrus processing and pine sawing (Romney et al. 1959:40-42). "Farming alone has never paid and the rural dweller expects to have to engage in some form of casual or seasonal labour" (ibid.:40). The report noted that the average small farmer was likely to be "a Creole between 30 and 35 years old with a wife several years his junior and five children," living on land "rented each year anew from a private estate" (ibid.:39).

Out of the Woods: From Mahogany Cutters to Clerks

In spite of the restrictions, creoles constantly strove to get out of the mahogany forests. During slumps in the industry many of them left for Latin America. Others parlayed the skills acquired in the camps into commercial

services, and stayed in Belize City year round. By the end of the 19th century some had secured jobs in the low levels of the civil service. Although there is no clear picture of this occupational trajectory, several pieces of data sketch a tentative one.

In compiling elite creole family genealogies, I noted the occupations by which men (fathers) of these families were identified in baptismal records and birth registers. The former began in 1794 and continued with some gaps until about 1910; the latter began in 1885. My notations continued only through 1930, and were limited to those with creole surnames associated with the creole elite.¹⁰ Within this admittedly idiosyncratic sample, by far the two largest categories were laborers (mostly woodcutters) and fishermen/mariners (see Table 1). By the 1890s these occupational categories had become more differentiated internally--woodcutters broke down into foremen, carpenters, cattlemen (who tended the animals that hauled the cut tree trunks; see Bolland 1977b:55), and even some contractors, while mariners included lighthouse keepers and ships' pilots--and were nearly equaled by retail clerks. Finally, by the 1910s and 1920s, creole occupations included customs, tax, and other low-level civil service jobs.

The occupation of carpenter is a particularly interesting one. Within my sample, there were by the 1890s already 10 carpenters--along with 3 contractors, 3 cattlemen, and 1 foreman--compared to 11 mercantile clerks

and only 2 civil servants (of a total of 94). By 1910 the number of carpenters had doubled (of a total of 138), equaling the fishermen/mariners and only slightly fewer than laborers. Creole carpenters probably first acquired their skills while working on woodcutting crews, some even before the end of slavery. The 1834 Slave Register lists the occupations by age and sex; carpenters are itemized separately from woodcutters, as are cattlemen, but Bolland (1977b:109) points out that both were "closely associated with the business of mahogany extraction." Mahogany gangs averaged from 25 to 50 men, "with one or more captains, carpenters, foremen, book-keepers, and, over several works, a manager" (Gibbs 1883:119-20; cf. Naylor 1967:44), and apprenticeship to a blacksmith or carpenter was one of the few ways slaves--or freed men for that matter--could acquire a skill (Bolland 1977b:109).

With the gradual introduction of sugar cultivation, creole carpenters found themselves able to get work as skilled laborers.¹¹ In the 1870s, the accounts of two of the largest sugar estates in the south, Regalia and Seven Hills, showed creoles to be both most numerous and, due to their skills, best paid. At Regalia,

there were four "Captains," three of them Creole and one Spanish, who received between ten and twenty dollars in cash per month, and four Creole carpenters who received from thirty to forty dollars in cash per month. The most highly paid employee was a Creole carpenter who received fifty-five dollars in cash per month, or about fourteen times as much as the Chinese laborers" (cited in Bolland 1977b:152).

There is also some evidence that as skilled laborers carpenters were able to move from job to job, and were thus less dependent on managers. In 1900 Governor Wilson denounced the efforts of Reginald Uter, representative of a so-called Labour Association, as "a worthless negro carpenter who has never remained at work any length of time in one place" and has "made it his business to do a great deal of talking amongst his race."¹² That carpenters were able to use their skills to set up in business is suggested in the commercial services listings published in the Handbooks of British Honduras, beginning in 1888. Table 2 shows that in both 1888-89 and 1892-93 carpenters far outnumbered any other trade.

By the middle of the 19th century a number of creoles had established themselves as small shopkeepers--grocers or publicans--and these urban petty bourgeois ranks increased by the 1870s with the addition of shoemakers, tailors, butchers, and even a few printers, as well as blacksmiths or motormen (primarily for boats) and shipwrights and sailmakers. Lewis (1968:295) points to "the continuation of a class of small tradesmen and craftsmen that elsewhere disappeared under the weight of the sugar plantation economy," and notes that this "semi-urban, semi-rural petit-bourgeoisie small merchant and trader element" was still prevalent in the 1940s.

In addition, there is evidence that some mahogany workers tried to become small producers, especially with the

efforts to promote banana cultivation in the 1880s and 1890s. Commenting on the small number of celebrants at Christmas 1886, the Guardian editor, Dr. Gahné, concluded that "since the establishment of the fruit trade many captains and labourers from mahogany gangs, and others have been able to invest their earnings on banana plantations, instead of spending them in Belize in riotous living."¹³ Even Governor Burns admitted that the growing of bananas was "popular with the Negro farmers"--despite their general "distaste" for cultivation (1962:128).

Construction of the Stann Creek railway in 1908 made banana planting more profitable for local landowners, and began to attract creole interest. The obstacles were great, however: the government obliged creole inhabitants to pay for newly opened land at \$3 to \$8 an acre, while United Fruit bought half the crown land in the valley (7,538 acres) for only \$1 per acre, and Garifuna settlers got land free (Colonial Guardian 9.25.1909). When a depression hit the mahogany trade in 1898-99 a deputation of workers appealed to the governor and were told to "go cultivate the soil." "Where are the men with no money going to get the capital to live?" asked the Colonial Guardian (4.29.1899). In 1914 a group of farmers wrote to the Colonial Secretary requesting a government loan to work the land, as private loans were not available due to the war, but they were turned down.¹⁴

Another problem was lack of training. Woodcutters who managed to save in good years--especially those who had

acquired a trade, such as carpentry--might eventually be able to buy some land. But the risks were great--not uncommonly those who tried to go into banana planting lost everything (Colonial Guardian 6.4.1904). Dr. Gahné regularly urged the government to set up a model farm to train mahogany workers for agriculture.¹⁵ But nothing was done, and by the first decade of the 20th century mahogany cutters were emigrating to surrounding countries for work.¹⁶ By then, however, those who aspired to leave the mahogany gangs were beginning to obtain low-level government jobs. My notes show 16 (of 138) in the 1910s, compared to 8 (of 133) in the 1900s, and 2 (of 94) in the 1890s.

Among families said to dominate the civil service, such positions are important occupational choices for only a handful, such as the Garbutts and Staines. While others, such as the Ushers, have also been prominent in the civil service, these large creole families dominate most categories. In such families, also, less well-off members have often found it useful to enter the civil service in order to finish their education and acquire some savings; by retiring at the compulsory age of 55 with a pension and some capital many have been able to then go into business for themselves.

In fact, for many creoles, this pension is precisely what enabled them to acquire land; Joseph Scott (1975), who worked as a mahogany cutter in Belize and Honduras before landing a job as a telephone linesman in 1903, worked for

the government for 31 years. With his pension he bought 20 acres on the Sibun River, about 20 miles outside of Belize City, where he planted fruit and vegetables. The problem, as he noted, was then getting the children to school, the only school being "four miles up river."

Women's Work: Seamstresses and Nurses and Teachers

The organization of labor under slavery that confined women to the domestic realm changed little with emancipation. While Dr. Gahné was concerned with making creole men fit for agricultural work, his colleague at The Observer noted women would be cheaper. Observing that labor scarcity "in civilized countries" is met by females, he wrote:

Employers of labour will readily admit that the work done by a female, for example, in cleaning a field, in proportion to her pay, is cheaper and better than that done by a man. And altho' the female population of this colony may be few, yet we hold that a large number of the sturdy women of the country could be induced to employ themselves in light agricultural work, which would tend to cheapen labour sufficiently....In this colony the employment of female labour is hardly ever thought of, and many young women when they leave school, with sufficient education to qualify them for positions of trust and usefulness, have no other employment than to sit down with their needle and thread, and

"Sing the song of the shirt" (6.27.1885)

The editor went on to commend a few urban employers, including the late Mr. Bowen, for employing female clerks, but urged the governor to look to women to increase the labor force, instead of importing foreign laborers. This recommendation was apparently soon followed on the sugar estates; a Guardian correspondent wrote (1.2.1886):

Both at Regalia and at Serpon the employment of women as field hands now obtains very extensively. Formerly a few females were occupied in picking cane tops during crop time, but now it is a common thing to see little coolie girls working away with the hoe, relieving, weeding, moulding and doing very clear work too.

The coolie girls were probably the children of time-expired East Indian workers imported from Jamaica in 1872 to work on the sugar estates Morris 1883:28,120). But for creole women, those that did not go with their husbands to the bush to keep house, which became more common toward the last decades of the 19th century (Gibbs 1883:120; cf. Ford 1991), the choice was between domestic service and needlework. This was a choice that dated from the time of apprenticeship: "The females many of them become sempstresses, bakers, or hire themselves as domestic servants."¹⁷ In an 1861 census sent by the U.S. Consul to his Secretary of State, the largest occupational category for women was "domestic duties"--comprising 2944--followed by seamstresses and milliners, 2014, and laundresses, 1154. In addition, there were 19 midwives and nurses.¹⁸

Seamstresses are not included in the Handbook commercial directories until 1925, at which time 31 are listed by name (compared to 17 tailors). Eight women are also included as piano teachers. By this time, however, a number of creole women had also managed to set up as grocers and hotelkeepers--this had been true also in 1919, but not in 1888 or 1892. It should be noted, moreover, that women were listed only for Belize City; district towns had no

women in "trade" (Sologaistoa 1919; Metzgen and Cain 1925).

The number of women in professions was even fewer; in 1925, opportunities were limited to nurses, midwives, and teachers (Metzgen and Cain 1925:198), and nurses had to resign upon getting married. Although nurses were included among the female occupations in the 1834 Slave Register, nursing thereafter became the responsibility of the household. Not until 1893, two years after the death of the governor's wife and secretary from yellow fever, did the colonial budget provide salary and passage for one British nurse, who was expected to be assisted by local volunteers. When these were not forthcoming, provisions were made for three pupil nurses at \$96 a year, reduced to \$84 in 1895. Between 1905 and 1912 the budget included posts for only five local nurses, responsible for hospitals in four different districts (Herrmann 1985:25-34). In 1927 there were 12 pupil nurses in Belize and one in each of the five districts (ibid:53).

Eleanor Krohn Herrmann points out that the system of foreign preference in all but the lowest civil service jobs was most pronounced in nursing, where "the few senior nursing positions were reserved for expatriate nurses who also controlled the upward mobility of the locally trained nurses" (1985:55). Not until 1966 was a Belizean woman named to the post of Principal Nursing Officer, a position equivalent to a department head.

Even so, the appointment was practically unique in the

civil service. In contrast to its ethnic composition, opportunity for women within the service has received scant attention (cf. Grant 1966, 1976; Ashdown 1979a). Women apparently worked at the same low-level jobs in the early years of the 20th century; a memoir by E.O.B. Barrow, for example, recalls his four years of service as third-class clerk in the Post Office, at which time stamp vendors were Misses Virginia Fairweather, Stella Victor, and J.C. Beaumont. Yet a survey of 70 senior officers from 1976 to 1983 found only two females, neither a permanent secretary (one was principal nursing officer, the other acting chief librarian (Price 1989:120). Only recently have the appeals to equal justice that once served creoles--and since the 1930s have been advanced by both mestizos and Garifuna--been raised on behalf of women; by the time of my own survey in 1987, there were six senior women, including two female permanent secretaries and four department heads.¹⁹

Finally, of course, there were teachers. Surprisingly, teachers are not included in the commercial directories of the 1880s and 1890s Handbooks, yet E.O.B. Barrow, in a memoir, talks about a neighbor, Julia Perez, who kept an infants' school at a house in the back of the yard, and of Miss Maud Frazer, daughter of a Wesleyan minister, who had a school upstairs in a shop in Albert Street.²⁰

The absence of women in the labor force reflects the fact that women's work has historically been incorporated into the household, rendering women all but invisible in

social and political analysis. A study of the class background of senior civil servants notes the majority of their mothers were not employed at wage jobs, suggesting to the author "a relatively low educational level" (Price 1989: 123). However, given that their fathers were mostly "working class or lower middle class"--fishermen, mahogany loggers, shopkeepers, trade unionists, teachers, works foremen--the mothers probably took in washing or sold baked goods to pay school fees, often for as many as ten children. Of the 15 I interviewed in 1987, three were raised by poor single mothers, yet only one specified his mother's work--waitressing and doing people's laundry. In Belize, as in Sierra Leone: "it is these women who enable Creole professionals to spend years of their lives continuing their university training, and permit them to be sufficiently mobile to take important jobs..." (A. Cohen 1981a:79).

Profiles in The Reporter's "Who's Who in British Honduras," compiled in 1968-70, present a similar picture; of 100 profiles, 30 are women; of these, 7 had been nurses, 11 teachers (7 of these moving up to school principal), and 4 worked in the church; 5 had had successful business or professional careers (ranging from administrator to beautician) and only 3, all white, were housewives. Only 2 were active in politics.²¹

Education under Church and Empire

Education was not a priority of the early woodcutters,

for themselves or their slaves, and from the beginning has been the province of religious denominations. The Honduras Free School was founded in 1816 (1829 Almanack; Gibbs 1883: 78), close on the heels of the Anglican church of St. John the Baptist, begun in 1812.²² Its funding was encouraged by Superintendant Cockburn, who desired to instill a "system of morality amongst the Inhabitants" by increasing attendance at the Public Schools as well as the Church of England; in 1833 he expressed concern that "dissenting ministers" were attracting children from "our Schools" (Bolland 1977b:111; Dobson 1973:162-63).²³ The same concern was expressed by the Catholics in the Northern District; letters to their Jesuit superiors reported concern that the Methodists had got the jump on them, especially in the rural areas.²⁴

The British Parliament rather belatedly recognized the need for education for the newly freed slaves, and in 1836 allocated a grant for this purpose. However, none of the money managed to reach British Honduras, and when in 1843 Superintendent MacDonald, at the urging of a local committee for the Honduras free school, requested £300, Lord Stanley replied that only £39 remained in the fund (Dobson 1973: 163). The Public Meeting voted £100 in 1836 for a school for apprentices, "for the purpose of receiving moral and religious Instruction" (Bolland 1977b:112).

Thereafter the government left education to the churches, and in 1868 the free schools were abolished along with the Board of Education, which had been set up in 1850.

The government granted money to elementary schools only, and only insofar as the amount could be matched by the same sum from the church. For their part, religious denominations were happy to take on the task, seeing it as part of their evangelical efforts. Catholics especially set up their own schools at every level, regardless of existing facilities or number of potential students (Ashcraft and Grant 1968:174).

The problem was attendance; in 1843 only 140 out of 211 eligible boys attended while only 60 of 130 girls did so (Dobson 1973:163). In 1885 the editor of The Observer, lamenting the "careless lives" of young girls and the boys "loafing at liquor-shops, and smoking cigars," opined: "Compulsory education is the only means by which this tide of ruin may be stemmed" (4.25.1885).

One creole parent inquired of The Observer readers, "Would a creole boy make a better logwood cutter because he could read Latin?" Given the policy of filling top jobs with "imported gentlemen," would more education enable creoles "to secure good situations in the colony commensurate with the same, or will they not be, as their fathers and forefathers, journeymen mechanics, logwood and mahogany cutters, and in a few instances, counter-jumpers"? He concluded that education counted for nothing unless it was received abroad; creoles who would educate their children "must send them to England or Scotland. Should a creole boy in Belize, by close application to his studies at one of these 'high schools' become a first class scholar, he is

nowhere, unless he can say I received my education at either of the above-mentioned places!" (Observer 4.25.1885).²⁵

By then St. Mary's (Anglican) primary school was operating--the first to prepare students for the Cambridge exams (Courtenay 1974:24) and denominations were competing for donations to set up high schools. Wesleyan High School, for boys only, was first in 1882, followed in 1883 by St. Catherine's Academy for girls, founded by the Sisters of Mercy. English Jesuits started a Select School for boys in 1887, and in 1896 American Jesuits (who replaced the English in 1893) completed St. John's College, a boys' boarding and day school. The Anglican Diocesan high schools, St. Michael's and St. Hilda's, opened soon after. The 1925 Handbook noted that none of the secondary schools were maintained by the government, nor were any subsidies made; there were no scholarships to places of higher education, no university colleges, no vocational schools, and no teacher training institutions (Metzgen and Cain 1925:364). By 1982 the number of children enrolled in secondary schools was about 6,000, compared to some 35,000 in primary school (Bolland 1986:48).

One consequence of denominational education was that employment in the field was monopolized by foreigners; all high schools and many primary schools appointed foreign clergymen as principals and even teachers (Grant 1976:88). As late as 1936 a report on the status of education in the colony condemned "the widespread opposition to using local

people as teachers" (Dobson 1973:321), a situation which was only slightly changed in 1968 (Ashcraft and Grant 1968:172). Over time this resulted in separate systems of education--one Catholic, dominated by American clergy and American curricula; one Protestant, staffed with British or West Indian clergy and British curricula. Since religious denominations also follow largely ethnic lines, the result has been that mestizos receive one education and creoles another (Ashcraft and Grant 1968:172), although creoles desirous of a Jesuit education have been converting to Catholicism since the turn of the century.²⁶

Moreover, as Ashcraft and Grant note, the two systems are unequal. The Catholic colleges have received far more aid from the United States than their counterparts have from their own affiliates. Their greater numbers, especially among the wealthy, allow them to raise more funds locally; and the fact that the Jesuits at St. John's College do not receive a salary, allows this institution to spend more on development. Since this in turn provides the basis for the government's matching financial contribution, the result is that the government "perpetuates the financial imbalance and contributes, though unwillingly, to the inequality of educational opportunity" (1968:178-79).²⁷

The dual education system created a dual career track system, with St. John's boys aspiring to, and educated for, careers in business, and Wesley and St. Michael's graduates educated for the professions--which given the lack of other

suitable employment (Grant 1966:48) meant the civil service.

Interviews with the 15 permanent secretaries in 1987 revealed that 10 had graduated from St. Michael's or Wesley, one from Belize Technical, and four from St. John's College; when asked who had encouraged them to pursue careers in government only one said their families; most said teachers, or classmates--"Oh yes, Cruz, he went to Wesley, good man." Few saw this as a form of privilege, and those over 40 all said it was what was available at the time. One department head, a St. Michael's graduate, said that 50 percent of his classmates joined the service, while 40 percent went abroad. Not surprisingly, almost all said they would not encourage their children to pursue the same career.

Creoles' determined pursuit of education and the promise of a profession reflects their longstanding belief that careers in business were closed to them. "In those days, in the 1930s and 1940s," one former permanent secretary told me, "to work in a bank you had to speak Spanish and be fair skinned and called Vasquez or something, even though you might be a brilliant accountant." The decentralized development of the colony, in which local capital took root away from the iron grip of the merchant/timber firms and the disdain of the colonial rulers, resulted in a form of regional enclave capitalism--with mestizos controlling sugar in the north, white creoles (with British and Americans) starting commercial agriculture in the south--that was reinforced by the denominationally

divided educational system and social networks it spawned.

This economic insecurity distinguishes Belize creoles from those studied by Cohen in Sierra Leone, who at one time dominated trade and commerce, and then invested in land and real estate. When they started to lose their commercial dominance after World War II, real estate provided the secure economic base from which to invest in education and the professions (A. Cohen 1981a:48-49). In Belize, as Grant (1976:98) acknowledges, mestizos could "more easily enter the family owned business as well as the commercial banks."

For many creoles, the investment paid off; those who themselves worked as mechanics or cooks or tailors could, by investing in education, see their children climb into the middle class. Grant (1976:88) writes of creole professionals in the 1940s that "their families were usually the lower or quasi-middle class Creoles who were sufficiently appreciative of the role of education as the key to social advancement to make the necessary financial sacrifice."

The financial sacrifice was made by the entire family; each child was obliged, on finishing high school, to go to work to pay for the next child's education. By joining the civil service as a messenger or a typist it was possible to earn a salary while getting credit toward a government subsidized diploma course, in education or agriculture or accountancy usually, which would in turn secure promotion. In 1987, the majority of the permanent secretaries I interviewed had obtained their education in this fashion.

As Grant makes clear (1976:88), the upper ranks of the civil service--along with the priesthood, teaching, and the medical profession, even more than the law, were expatriate preserves. Moreover, "the racial character of appointment to these posts" was evident: "cases in the 1930s and 1940s are not unknown where jobs were immediately found for financially ruined Britons who had arrived from one of the Central American Republics with little claim to a civil service appointment other than their origin" (1976:89). In fact, this practice had a long tradition: the Colonial Guardian fumed about it from the paper's founding in 1882. It was not until the 1930s, however, especially after 1933, when the salaries, always low, were reduced to a level below those of ten years earlier, that creoles were appointed to senior level positions at all, the salary reduction having placed the colony virtually "outside the competitive colonial world" (Grant 1976:89).

E.O.B. Barrow, son of a builder and carpenter, was apprenticed to a goldsmith at age 11, after primary school. From age 14 he worked as a messenger in a department store, attending classes at night at the home of a Mr. Bannister. He recalls the morning in 1907 when on Bannister's recommendation the colonial secretary came to suggest he interview for a job as acting assistant clerk in the civil service. From there he climbed to third-class clerk at the Post Office, second-class clerk at the Treasury, and after 10 years, a first-class clerk.

Barrow, whose great grandfather was a free-coloured immigrant from Barbados, a cooper, became acting district commissioner in 1938--the pinnacle to which a creole could aspire. The job paid half what foreign heads of departments earned (an amount which had not changed 10 years later) but entitled him to 20 acres of land on retirement.

Institutional Life: Clubs and Friendly Societies

Paralleling the growth of administrative and educational institutions in the late 19th century were institutions of civic life. June 1881 saw the founding of the Grand United Order of Oddfellows, a "charitable and benevolent institution"; members contributed to "a fund for the purposes of affording relief in sickness and distress, of granting funeral allowances in case of death, and for providing for the widows and orphans of deceased members" (Bristowe and Wright 1890). Thereafter white creoles and expatriates founded the Primrose League in 1888, while creole societies proliferated; by 1898 these included two branches of the Ancient Order of Foresters (Southern Cross and Empress Victoria); the Independent Order of Good Samaritans and Daughters of Samaria; two branches of the Loyal Order of Ancient Shepherds (Western Star and Star of Bethlehem); two branches of the British Order of Ancient Free Gardeners; the Belize Friendly Society; and the Oddfellows. In 1923 was added the Catholic Order of Foresters of British Honduras and in 1924 the Universal

Negro Improvement Association, dedicated to the "rights of the negro race" (Metzgen and Cain 1925:400-01).

Friendly societies had grown up in the 1860s and 1870s in Britain, reflecting the spread of the Victorian "independent ideal" to the lower middle and lower classes (Best 1972: 268). The parallel in Belize to "that brave army of evening and week-end adult educationists and mutual improvers" (ibid:169), scorned yet tolerated by the aristocracy (Hobsbaum and Ranger 1983:9), was the creole petty bourgeoisie--the shopkeepers and artisans and retail clerks--determined to show themselves as good as the "imported gentlemen" by then openly resented, if still imitated.²⁸ Providing places of self-education and cultural expression--each had a band that played at funerals and community events, and many had members' lending libraries--the friendly societies served to tie expatriates and educated creoles into the same institutional value system as their Victorian expatriate models.

Respect for British institutions was a mounting refrain in the last quarter of the century. Nothing so distinguished Belize from the autocratic and violence-prone republics of neighboring Central America as British institutions of government and social justice--as the press constantly pointed out.²⁹ Clubs and friendly societies as well as civil service occupations can be seen as a means by which creoles actively participated in this society. In the same way, the constant reiteration of this participation can be

seen as an effort to differentiate themselves from the "Spanish"--the mestizo population--in a way that emphasized dignity and self-respect (cf. O'Brien 1991:130). In this case, the "Spanish" were the imitators; in 1897 the Catholic Knights of British Honduras were founded "to provide for Catholics an organization giving similar helps in sickness and death to those which are afforded by the other non-Catholic fraternal bodies flourishing in Belize" (Buhler 1976:62).

Part and parcel of creole self-respect was the belief in themselves as true patriots--which entailed a commitment to "all classes of society." Drawing creoles of various social and economic strata, friendly societies provided a forum to discuss common interests, and drew members' attention to the conditions of the urban poor. By 1918 supporters of Marcus Garvey and the UNIA were consciously focusing on security as way to unify the black masses, in Belize and elsewhere (Cronon 1969:61). During the Depression and after the 1931 hurricane in Belize, which destroyed poor neighborhoods in the city, conditions for working people were desperate, yet there were no insurance or pension schemes, and no trade unions. In 1932 as a result there were some 14 friendly societies in Belize City (Grant 1976:103).

In addition, the situation of the emerging creole middle class was anything but secure. The fragility of this class is underlined by an 1896 public meeting resolution to approach the government to support the formation of a local

bank--to allow small shopkeepers access to credit as well as to keep the profits in the colony to use for local development. Wilfred Haylock, a small shopkeeper, pointed out that while the merchants "were always ready to help them out" they, the shopkeepers, wanted a uniform rate of interest" (Times of Central America 2.19.96).

Although the 1890 Handbook notes interest in forming a masonic lodge, friendly societies apparently were vital enough to limit the development of freemasonry that became such a central feature of creole social identity in Sierra Leone.³⁰ Many of the functions that Abner Cohen (1981a:101-25) elaborates for freemasonry in creole life there, including mutual aid, ethnic solidarity, and occupational networking, were performed by the societies in Belize. Thus freemasonry has been a fairly recent development, and in contrast to Sierra Leone, has appealed more to businessmen than civil servants, and has served to tie creoles and mestizos and even Garifuna together for mutual support.³¹

Walter Rodney writes of creole friendly societies in Guyana, which burgeoned in the 1880s, as the source of early creole organizing experiences; if on the one hand they took the burden of poor relief off government and landowners, at the same time they became "integral to the consciousness of workers and farmers," and provided the earliest forms of collective action for reform (1981:162-63). In Belize, rather than shoemakers' or bakers' guilds, what emerged was overlapping membership with the far less radical British

Honduras Civil Service Association, formed in 1922. Headed by expatriate officials, its lower officers came from the creole petty-bourgeoisie. All were explicitly prohibited from political participation.

Loyalty and patriotism were constant themes in creole institutions.³² In 1912 the Belize Literary and Debating Club was formed to promote "the social, moral and intellectual advancement of its members." Not only would it hold lectures and debates on "questions of public import and interest," but also "encourage local industries and enterprises, and foster loyalty and devotion to His Majesty the King and the British Empire" (Metzgen and Cain 1925). Soon after came the Wesley Old Boys Brigade Association, with similar goals (Laing 1974:6). The St. George's Club was inaugurated, "for respectable males over 21," in 1920 and in 1930 a new St. Andrew's Ladies Club revived the St. Andrew's Night banquet, complete with variety show and minstrel troupe.

Loyalty and patriotism were also evident in the pages of the Colonial Guardian, where the editor, Dr. Gahné, mixed nationalist and loyalist sentiments in equal measure until his death in 1913. While far from radical, these qualities emphasized self-respect as well as creole solidarity. In 1915 working-class creoles rallied behind a middle-class creole military officer, H.H. Vernon, snubbed by the governor on the eve of his departure overseas. Four years later, returning volunteers, who had experienced discrim-

ination in wages, pensions, and assignments overseas, incited a creole riot against white shopowners in Belize City.

After Gahné's death, the Independent, edited by Herbert H. Cain, provided a new rallying point. In 1919 Cain led a deputation to Government House demanding the end of the ban on circulation of The Negro World, the UNIA paper, on the grounds that the loyalty of British Honduran natives was unquestioned; the denial of this request was viewed as one of the causes of the riot (Ashdown 1981:45; cf. R.T. Smith 1988:163).

While Garveyite journalists emphasized the history and tradition of creole life since the time of slavery, loyal supporters of empire rallied behind the vision of unity promoted by Governor Sir John Burdon, one based on British institutions and a tradition of slave loyalty to their masters. These contradictory currents coexisted without friction, and for the most part they stressed the same themes. Only the lessons differed; while they united in insisting schoolchildren learn about the Battle of St. George's Cay, for example, the Independent editorialized that blacks deserved to inherit Belize by virtue of their loyalty in that conflict; the Literary and Debating Club, chaired by Monrad Metzgen, insisted that racial harmony was a gift of British rule. His colleague, E.E. Cain, vice president of the British Honduras Civil Service Association, was H.H. Cain's brother, and co-owner of the Independent.

Helping to tie these contradictory currents together

across class and political lines were creole women. The process of differentiating a creole institutional realm of middle-class respectability--social clubs and friendly societies, newspaper editorials and public lectures--that was exclusively male left the imprecisely delineated domain of the house, the yard, and the street, a domain that was variously occupied by the creole family. Some 500 women allegedly besieged the legislative council in 1882, when the governor issued an edict obliging people to bury their dead in above-ground vaults (Colonial Guardian 11.24.1894), and a crowd of women and children lined the shoreline and threw stones at the departing barge of the unpopular Governor Goldsworthy in November 1886.

While creole men formed a committee to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the end of apprenticeship in August 1888 with an institute and library, the following year there was only a "small procession of females trying to keep alive the idea of an emancipation institute" (Colonial Guardian 8.3.1889). While men emphasized loyalty of slave to master, exemplified in the Battle of St. George's Cay, women kept alive the memory of slavery.

To be sure, lower-middle-class and working-class men also claimed the street; the women were nowhere to be seen in the laborers' riots of December 1894, when about 500 men attacked the largest merchant establishments in town. In Barrow's diary, his father is recalled in terms of his work; it is his aunt who takes him to the streets and houses of

the neighborhood. (His mother is recalled only in terms of her family ancestry; she is never a character in his reminiscences.) As middle-class creole men increasingly articulated institutional values, women took over social welfare roles, founding the Anglican Women's Auxiliary in 1918.

By the 1920s middle-class creole women brought duty and public service back to the street, with the Black Cross nurses. Drawing on the UNIA tenet "to administer and assist the needy," the organization dedicated itself to "effective mass action" through community service (Herrmann 1985:40).

They were the first to go house to house to ascertain living and health conditions in Belize City, and in 1938 compiled a report on living conditions of the unemployed and working poor for a British Royal Commission (ibid.:44). When the Belize branch of the UNIA fell apart due to factional quarrels in the late 1920s, the Black Cross Nurses sustained creole solidarity, playing a major role in medical and relief efforts in poor communities after the 1931 hurricane. The appointment of its founder, Vivian Seay, as the first woman to the Belize Town Board in 1933 reinforced creole identification with the UNIA ideals of mutual improvement and racial solidarity.

Family Life and Ethnicity

Crucial to the viability of ethnic identity is its ability to endure over generations, imparting to the markers of ethnic identity "an aura of descent" (R. Cohen 1978;

Keyes 1976). Keyes called the "idea of shared descent, abstracted from the web of kinship" basic to the concept of ethnic identity, and Ronald Cohen (1978:387) observed that "once acquired by whatever process, such identity is then passed down through generations for as long as the group has some viable significance to members and non-members." The process by which ethnic identity is transmitted from generation to generation, like its creation, occurs simultaneously at the level of institutions and within the family or descent group. Moreover, at those times when institutional expressions of ethnic and cultural heritage are restricted or challenged, genealogies and their guardians within the family assume proportionately greater importance (see Mintz 1975:485-86). At such times ethnicity and shared descent are not so much abstracted from as embedded in the "web of kinship" (Keyes 1976), along with origin myths and shared experience; "we really are all related," as Belizean creoles point out.

For creoles in Belize, whose culture and physical aspects are so diffuse, and whose British-modeled institutions have lost viability in the postcolonial era, kinship and descent are accordingly important. Within the creole family, women are almost always guardians of the genealogy; for them, more important than shared language or experience are shared relatives. The principles of descent reckoning are very broad--they can go along the mother's or father's line or both--but who one's parents were is always

more important than what language one speaks or food one eats.

Unfortunately, while women are the guardians of family genealogies in creole families, they do not like to talk to outsiders, especially anthropologists snooping into families. Nevertheless, some did talk about family history, though less willingly than the men, who knew less.³³ And within elite creole families it was the women who talked about life within the family--in terms of the crowded houses, lack of indoor toilets, and above all, the constant sacrifice needed to put each child through first primary and then secondary school. And as such they are careful to delineate themselves from the local whites.

When we were coming up, "creoles" meant various things to various people, but it always meant some African ancestry. The local whites were one thing, but then there were other families, dirt poor, but very proud of the family, its ancestry, and its tradition of duty and public service. We thought of ourselves as blacks, not light brown; for us, it was either black or white and we were black.

In distinguishing themselves from local whites these women combined the fact of being poor with the idea of character, or commitment to duty, and self-improvement--by extension to all creoles. Brackette Williams (1990:116) talks about a similar distinction in Guyana as between those who take--the Europeans--and those who give--the non-Europeans, or various subordinated groups, whose status as givers derives from their suffering and betrayal as earliest producers in the colonial division of labor.

Among creole women, such distinctions always have a specific color dimension; these women raised their eyebrows when I tried to talk about the Hunters, or the Bowens, both of which families descended from a white settler and a coloured or black mistress. "So she's calling herself creole now?" they asked doubtfully; or "I thought you said creole; they are local white." The middle-class origin stereotype that obtains throughout the Caribbean--that of the original white master and his coloured or black slave mistress (R.T. Smith 1988:95; Alexander 1984:173)--informs the ancestries of local whites as well as creoles, though only creoles invest it with meaning (see Chapter 2).

Alexander (1977:432) argues that this origin myth is expressed in terms of race, through the medium of kinship and the family. Establishing a continuity with the known past, it fuses history with experience and as such functions in the present to explain the underlying social structure and ongoing power relationships in society. It is in this sense that identity and history become intertwined with kin and ancestry (see Sider 1987:21). Moreover, it is within families that racial solidarity resides (Alexander 1977:429). In Belize, as in Jamaica, contrary to the view that creoles seek to marry up--or white--especially in the middle class, the tendency is to prefer someone of the same color. Through families, the solidarity of kinship is extended to that of race (ibid.).

The concept of creole families as descent groups was

clearly articulated in the 1890s (see next chapter). However, it was greatly intensified during the process of nation-building following internal self government in 1964. Central to this process, especially after the election of the Peoples United Party, standard bearers of the nationalist movement, in 1969, was the insistence that people think of themselves as Belizeans, not as members of ethnic groups; "Do not say Creole, or Carib, or Mestizo. Use the expressions Afro-Belizean, Carib-Belizean, or Maya-Belizean. Or better still, use only the word Belizean," party leader George Price said often (Gregg 1968:59). Initiated by a group of indistinct ethnicity--Price for example could claim English and Mayan as well as mestizo and creole ancestry--this was perceived by the more prominent creole families not only as racist but as a direct attack on them. "They needed to get rid of the notion that they were the road to the Lord High Almighty," one PUP supporter explained. But to those families it looked different: "Price was always trying to decant the black out," one of them told me, explaining for example that the country's coat of arms, which displays a black man and a white man, both holding woodcutting tools, was itself the result of a change instituted by the PUP; originally both men were black. "Throughout all this my people have been resisters," she added; "black women holding ground, even when the men were passive, afraid to lose their jobs in the civil service."

Conclusion: Economic Location and Creole Identity

By the beginning of the 20th century, the creole investment in education and entry into the civil service allowed them to regard themselves as "professionals," an occupation previously occupied only by foreigners. Their occupations as such, and their participation in charity and benevolent organizations, provided the means by which they articulated the ideology of a new and upwardly mobile petty bourgeoisie. Not restricted to intellectuals, but conceived broadly to include nurses and teachers as well as civil servants, this ideology was passed on to subsequent generations in ethnic rather than class terms. Advancement by means of education and civic consciousness was seen as advancement for all creoles, and therefore defined in large part what it was to be creole (cf. Wright 1986 who describes a similar process among Garifuna intellectuals and cultural leaders today).

At the same time, the very basis of creole identity as educated professionals remained even more dependent on the colonial rulers. In an analysis of ethnic relations in Guyana, Bartels (1977:401) argues that the colonial government and foreign entrepreneurs deliberately allocated resources differently to Indo- and Afro-Guyanese populations; land, jobs, educational opportunities allocated to one group were often denied to the other. The dominant ideology then "explained" the resulting successes or failures in racial or ethnic terms. Dominated groups

subsequently explained or justified their own successes and failures in these terms, in large part because the continued mediator was the colonial government (ibid.). Brackette Williams (1984:2) argues further that because each group generated its own criteria for ranking and rejected the criteria posed by other groups, no clear-cut ranking emerged; rather groups remained in competition, which perpetuated the power of the mediating group, the Europeans.

In Belize, although the British did not introduce the mestizo immigrants, they encouraged their pursuit of agriculture, with both capital and experience, at the same time as apprentices were being denied land and channeled to wage labor on the mahogany gangs. Thus the stereotype of the brawny creole woodcutter who disdained agriculture was perpetuated by government and press, creating a situation in which creoles were obliged to seek advancement in terms mediated by the British. The following chapter will explore this process for a group of families that emerged from the lower middle class of artisans and traders and low-level civil servants to positions of influence in Belize City.

Table 1: Male Occupations, Creole Middle Class, 1870-1929

<u>Category</u>	<u>1870s</u>	<u>1880s</u>	<u>1890s</u>	<u>1900s</u>	<u>1910s</u>	<u>1920s</u>
Laborers	15	4	31	35	24	7
Foremen	-	1	1	2	3	1
Fishermen	8	2	4	8	5	1
Mariners	3	2	9	10	15	8
Cattlemen	1	-	3	4	3	-
Barbers	1	-	1	1	1	-
Blacksmiths	-	-	1	4	2	-
Carpenters	1	3	10	19	20	7
Shipwrights	1	-	1	2	2	1
Shoemaker	-	-	1	1	-	-
Sailmaker	-	-	-	1	1	1
Tailors	-	1	4	4	4	3
Mer clerks	2	3	11	12	15	11
Civil servts	1	2	2	8	16	12
Shopkeepers	1	1	5	4	4	2
Printer	-	-	1	2	2	3
Contractor	-	-	3	5	5	1
Planter	3	2	-	7	8	3
Merchant	-	-	1	-	2	3
Other	1	1	5	3	6	4
TOTAL	38	22	94	133	138	68

Note: based on the occupation of father at registration of child, for selected "elite creole families" (including white creoles) as discussed in the introduction of the dissertation.

Table 2: Creoles, Selected Trades, Belize City, 1888-1924

<u>Category</u>	<u>1888</u>	<u>1891</u>	<u>1924</u>
Import merchants/ commission houses	none	none	14
Contractors/mahogany	--	--	52*
Bakers	2	4	--
Barbers	5	5	--
Blacksmiths/tinsmiths	6	8	--
Boat rentals	12	16	12*
Boot/moccasin makers	7	10	--
Butchers	6	6	19
Carpenters/ cabinetmakers	17	25	38
Grocers/publicans	8	13	89
Lawyers	1*	2*	7*
Masons	2	5	--
Painters/artisans	6	9	3
Printers	3*	3*	3*
Sailmakers	2	2	--
Shipwrights	7	7	20
Tailors	7	10	14
Wood measurers	--	12	--

Sources: Commercial directories, Bristowe and Wright 1888; Bristowe 1892; Metzgen and Cain 1925. While expatriates and members of other ethnic groups were not included, white creoles were; an asterisk indicates the inclusion of white creoles in the total. Ethnic identification is imprecise, being done on the basis of names only, but is consistent over the time period.

Notes

1. This is the definition employed by Bradley (1976:8-9), and Gregg (1968:60), as well as that generally embraced by creoles in Belize. A number of authors also include whites, as one end of a racial or cultural continuum (Grant 1976:10-14; Young 1978:38; L. Vernon 1967:1; Dobson 1973:256).

2. The total population jumped from 9,809 in 1845 to 25,635 in 1861 (Bolland 1977b:3). The 1861 census was apparently confusing: Bolland estimated 38 percent mestizo compared to 31 percent black and coloured (1986:44), while Waddell estimated 37 percent white and mestizo with 32 percent white, coloured and negro (1961:18). Mestizos were still the most numerous in 1881, when the total "Spanish" element was 14,300; the black and colored population was 13,800; and the Europeans 282 (Times of Central America, December 7, 1894).

3. Racial breakdowns did not exist in the 1960 census, and the 1970 census did not identify a creole category as such; respondents could choose either "black" or "mixed"; while the former could also include Garifuna, the latter would also include mestizos. Grant (1976:11) estimated 55 percent creole and Dobson (1973:256) estimated almost 60 percent.

4. See Amandala, September 11, 1992. The government currently estimates the refugee population at 40,000 people, or 20 percent of the population (Government of Belize 1991). Estimates of creoles who have immigrated to the United States range from 50,000 to 80,000. D. Vernon (1988:41) estimated them at 65,000 in the mid 1980s.

5. Archibald Gibbs was a British newspaper proprietor; Sirs Eric Swayne and Alan Burns were governors (during 1906-13 and 1934-39, respectively).

6. In reality it was to be four years for nonfield workers and six years for field workers, but the entire system was abolished at the end of four years, in 1838.

7. Bolland (1977b:123) contrasts this with Jamaica, where development of an internal marketing system even during the period of slavery meant opportunities for freedmen who could get their hands on plots of land--and failure of sugar estates during that time meant land was often for sale cheap.

8. Romney et al. (1959:116) cite Squier 1855, who commented that the agriculture would come to nothing until mahogany cutters and merchants were harder up.

9. A slightly different situation obtained for the Garifuna, who had begun occupying lands and cultivating subsistence crops in the south as early as 1802. Rather than recognize their property rights under the Laws in Force Act of 1855, in 1857 the British declared they could cultivate the lands on a leasehold basis only. In 1872 Carib Reserves were established, again denying the right to freehold title.
10. Namely: Barrow, Bradley, Cain, Fairweather, Fuller, Gabb, Gabourel, Garbutt, Goff, Haylock, Hulse, Hyde, Leslie, Longworth, Meighan, Ottley, Pitts, Staine, Usher, Vernon, Wade, and Young.
11. The same was probably true of cattlemen, who worked on smaller sugar ranchos (Colonial Guardian 3.2.1907). In 1889 there were 8 sugarmills run by steam, and 40 smaller mills run by cattle (Bristowe and Wright 1888:182); a correspondent from Toledo district in the south noted that year that 4 mill owners had converted to steam, the rest used cattle (Colonial Guardian 11.9.1889).
12. Governor Wilson in the New Orleans Picayune, quoted in Colonial Guardian, August 25, 1900.
13. See Colonial Guardian, January 1, 1887; January 4, 1990.
14. The correspondence between the lawyers acting for these farmers and the government is published in the Clarion December 3 and 17, 1914.
15. See the Colonial Guardian January 18, 1908; January 25, 1908; and cf. March 30, 1907.
16. See Colonial Guardian, January 18, 1908. Agricultural stations were finally set up in 1933 (Dobson 1973:269).
17. Magistrate Williamson to Supt. Anderson, cited in Bolland (1977b:115).
18. Enclosed with Hempstead to Seward, March 5, 1862. U. S. Department of State, Despatches from U.S Consuls in Belize, 1847-1906; Film T-334, Reel 1.
19. The post of economic development officer was upgraded to permanent secretary in August 1987.
20. Later they became primary school teachers (see Courtenay 1974:24).
21. Not listed was Gwen Lizarraga, Minister of Education in the late 1960s, the only woman Cabinet member to date.

22. Although money was voted in 1807 for a free school and an ordained schoolmaster for 10 poor children, nothing came of it and in January 1816 the Public Meeting voted again to build the school (Hulse 1973:24; cf. Dobson 1973:162). Stephens (1843) visited this school in 1839 and noted it served 200 boys and an undetermined number of girls.

23. The Anglican church was not disestablished until 1872 in Belize. The Baptists founded a school as early as 1827 (Dellinger 1976:15) and Methodist missionaries--"assisted by their wives"--conducted schools "almost from the beginning" in 1825 (Laing 1974:5).

24. "Excerpts from Letters and Notices Concerning British Honduras, Compiled by Rt. Rev. Hopkins." Folder #102, AB.

25. In 1969 a column "On Education" by Rev. Gilbert Hulse observed that this was still true in the 1930s and 1940s. The Reporter, August 15, 1969.

26. Grant (1976:97) suggests that Protestant churches in part had themselves to blame for this; their resistance to a government-run secondary school in the late 1940s resulted in more and more creoles deciding to enrol their children in Catholic secondary schools, as creole interest in education outweighed religious loyalty.

27. These structural inequalities remain true today, though staff are now local, and even St. John's College appointed a Belizean principal in 1991. While government pays half of teachers' salaries and undertakes school construction, teachers are hired and fired by each denomination.

28. U.S. voluntary associations flourished somewhat earlier; Ryan (1981:105-08) ties their growth to the rapid increase in population, which was fast outpacing services such as the care of the poor, as well as to the growth of artisans and salaried office workers--freed from the home economy. Ryan dates their heyday between 1825 and 1845. Her research suggests that they were on the one hand more commercial and on the other more concerned with political reform than were associations in the Victorian era, and they involved women and children as well as men.

29. E.g., Seymour to Bell, July 16, 1857 quoted in Cleghern 1967:10; Morris 1883:1; Gibbs 1883:193; Colonial Guardian, October 4, 1889; May 28, 1898; Clarion, January 7, 1915.

30. As early as 1827, masons in Belize talked about building a lodge, where they might hold regular meetings (Honduras Gazette and Commercial Advertiser 3.17.1827).

31. A 1987 newsletter of the Steadfast Masonic Lodge #683 listed businesses owned or operated by brothers of the masonic family; these included 39 creoles, 16 mestizos, and at least 2 Garifuna, as well as 1 Lebanese. In addition, a grand lodge of the U.S. Independent United Order of Scottish Mechanics of the Universe, with three chapters in Belize City, two in Dangriga, two in Corozal, and one in Orange Walk, was reorganized in 1988 (Amandala 5.13.88).

32. In England, Hobsbaum (1983:302) suggests, it was "as the quintessential patriotic class that the new or aspiring middle class found it easiest to recognize itself collectively"

33. There were exceptions; in a letter to his children, one creole informant traced both his mother's and father's ancestry.

CHAPTER 5

Good Creole Families: Four Models

The disjunctions of capitalist development in Belize produced a succession of expatriate elites, mostly British and Scottish, centered in Belize City: 18th century woodcutters were bought out by merchant capitalists in the 1830s and 1840s who in turn were replaced by local managers of metropolitan firms by the 1870s. Meanwhile, the delayed development of agriculture resulted in the gradual emergence of regional elites in the north and west and south. Thus while it is possible to speak of a local elite over time, or even of a merchant elite, independent of specific ethnic components, it is impossible to talk about a creole elite without talking about creoles.

An examination of the educational and occupational trajectory of the creoles--beginning with the free coloureds and free blacks after emancipation--reveals the gradual creation of a broad category of lower-middle-class teachers, civil servants, nurses, and commercial agents (cf. R.T. Smith 1988:173), and their investment in education in an effort to enter the middle class. This, as Clive Thomas (1984) has argued, is precisely the class which underpins the continued dominance of foreign capital. But it is not by itself an elite. Did the same process--by means of racially allocated opportunities and restrictions--also promote the development and reproduction of a genuine creole elite? The present chapter will examine the occupational and social

history of four families that trace their ancestry back to the "old Baymen" of the late 18th century--the Hydes, Fairweathers, Haylocks, and Ushers.

These four families turn up on virtually all lists of "good creole families" in Belize. Ashdown (1979a:18), who examined the political power struggles between colonial administrators and succeeding merchant elites in Belize, identifies the creole elite of 1890 as "the senior and legitimate branches of the old Baymen families which, once creolised, retained their social status by virtue of their occupations as employers..." Though he is not explicit, "creolized" here means no longer white:

The Hydes, for example, could trace their origins back to James Hyde, a leading white settler and slave owner in 1790, whose creolisation of his family started when he produced a son, George Hyde, by a coloured woman; George then became an influential land and slaveowner in his own right. The Ushers, Fairweathers and Haylocks too could claim such a pedigree as James Usher and his slaves took part in the Battle in 1798 as did the grand-fathers of Benjamin Fairweather and Wilfred Haylock.

By 1890, however, only the Ushers could be considered employers. James Hyde's white descendants were back in England and Scotland, while George Hyde's son had mortgaged and subsequently lost the land; his grandson, Absalom Bartlett Hyde, was a mechanic and blacksmith and a cousin, Percy Herbert, was clerk in one of the large merchant firms. Wilfred Haylock was a small grocer and Benjamin Fairweather was a carpenter and undertaker. By contrast, Archibald Rhys Usher was local manager of the largest landowning and merchant firm, the Belize Estate and Produce Company, while

his cousins Charles Richard, a senior civil servant and John Purcell, a merchant, were both prominent landowners. Only the Ushers went to England to complete their education; the Hydes went to high school while Benjamin Fairweather and Wilfred Haylock completed only primary school, all locally.

The Hydes, Ushers, Haylocks, and Fairweathers were all descended from early settlers, and all claimed descent from the union of a white European man and a free coloured woman--the "origin myth" of elite creole identity (Alexander 1977; R.T. Smith 1988). As free coloureds in the early 19th century their petitions for greater rights in the settlement are part of the history of this group in Belize. As urban shopkeepers and artisans at the end of that century they spearheaded an effort to institutionalize the expression of creole culture and heritage (see Mintz 1975: 485). Their efforts to obtain "proper recognition" from the British authorities for what they began to recast as a creole heritage--the Battle of St. George's Cay--can be seen as what Brackette Williams (1989:413) calls "the ideological justifications that define cultural content in the civic arenas" and positioned them in the ongoing struggle to inherit the mantle of leadership in the post-colonial era (ibid.:439). Finally, as founders and promoters of the creole social clubs and friendly societies that flourished at the turn of the century, they created the basis of creole solidarity from which to sustain this struggle. Together they illustrate the cultural legacy of that struggle as well

as the limitations of the urban petty bourgeoisie, lacking any ties to the state, as a basis for a postcolonial elite.

"Shoulder to Shoulder": Claiming a Creole Heritage

The history of the Battle of St. George's Cay, when the Baymen repelled a Spanish attack from Yucatán in 1798, was first memorialized in 1823, in a document before the British Parliament entitled The Defence of the Settlers of Honduras Against the Unjust and Unfounded Representations of Col. George Arthur, Late Superintendent of the Settlement. The inhabitants, refuting Arthur's charges of slave cruelty, seized on the event: "One of the strongest proofs of...the contentment and good condition of the Slaves of this country, is evidenced by their conduct in the last descent made by the Spaniards on the Settlement in 1798." On that occasion, they wrote (1823:11):

Our Slaves armed themselves with an alacrity, which to every impartial mind must carry a conviction,... and, marshalling themselves under their respective Owners, cheerfully and manfully fought for and defended their Masters' lives and their Masters' property: with patience they bore the fatigues of military duty, and with a gallantry unparalleled they beat off an enemy double their number.

An appended item from the Royal Gazette, datelined Jamaica, November 3, 1798, included military despatches as well as unidentified letters from Belize. Commander Moss noted "the spirit of the Negro Slaves that manned our small crafts was wonderful" (ibid.:92), and a letter embellished as follows: "our Negro men (who manned the fleets) gave a hearty cheer,

and in the midst of a firing of grape, kept up upon them from the Spanish vessels that covered those which were aground, those Negroes in an undaunted manner rowed their boats, and used every exertion to board the enemy..." (ibid.:96).¹

From "this single glorious act" the settlers concluded that "there appeared a sacred tie between the Slave and the Master, which bound the one to the other"; the battle thus exonerated them "by clearly evincing the marked preference of these faithful Slaves to their state of bondage than to the freedom offered by the Spaniards" (ibid.:12)

Similarly, the Honduras Gazette and Commercial Advertiser, a pro-slavery paper, editorialized (9.23.1826): "September 10th. During the last week, this day passed over us--a day ever memorable to Baymen." As "few are those now left to rehearse the intrepidity of the masters, or the fidelity and noble conduct of the slaves on that occasion," the paper recounted the battle, in which the Spanish "fled before a few Settlers and their faithful slaves, and the Colony was then firmly secured, and has been since as firmly held by Great Britain." Singled out for particular mention was Thomas Paslow (among those Arthur had charged with slave cruelty), who allegedly "met the Spaniards at the head of his own slaves."

Paradoxically, the following year, a free coloured inhabitant, George Hyde, recalled this era, in which "men of colour had been allowed to hold commissions in the militia,

and serve in defence of the settlement." Hyde was endeavoring to obtain greater rights for the free coloured population of the settlement--efforts that came to nothing.²

Following emancipation, however, the battle fell into obscurity, until the late 1880s, when a group of expatriates took to celebrating, somewhat haphazardly, its anniversary.³ A Guardian columnist regretted their toasts to the memory of heroes killed at the battle, "when, as a matter of fact, the only ones who were killed on that day were the Spanish invaders, so that what was intended as a patriotic toast was, inadvertently, converted into a toast to the memory of the invaders!" (9.14.1888). The editor, noting that "some of the members of the Civil Service have commended the custom of commemorating the glorious 10th of September" decided it was "expedient that they should become acquainted with the events of the day they commemorated" and reprinted the account from the Royal Gazette published in "the Defence of the Settlers." The next year he described a "Poke-and-do-boy" Entertainment at the Colonial Club in which white creoles joined expatriate officers in reciting the Battle of Culloden and the Battle of Inkerman followed by songs sung by "gents dressed as cutters," which the next day was presented in a free matinee for the public (10.5.1889).⁴

Unlike the expatriate celebrants, however, a number of creoles actually were descendants of the Baymen thus

celebrated. They began to perceive the symbolism of this heritage for their representations of loyalty--as subjects to crown as well as slaves to masters--as well as longevity, and began to craft a myth of origin on which to center creole claims as Belize's oldest "natives," and their own claims to leadership in the struggle for representative government. Among them were Hydes, Ushers, Haylocks, and Fairweathers.

By 1897, when inhabitants were enjoined to select an appropriate form of celebration for Queen Victoria's Silver Jubilee, creoles perceived a need to recognize and celebrate their own heritage as natives, and began to recast the history and legacy of the battle toward this end. Because their struggle was for acceptance and recognition of their rights as natives, not for independence or revolution, the symbols of their heritage required validation by the crown and the colonial authorities, still masters of creole political, social, and increasingly, ethnic identity.

Commercial interests certainly played a role as well--notably in the request for a commemorative stamp, first floated in late 1897. Supported by the governor, the request was turned down by the Colonial Office, who judged it "not so much to celebrate the victory as to make a little money by selling to stamp collectors." ⁵ The next year creole shopkeepers Wilfred Haylock and Percy Hyde resolved to renew the request on the grounds that the Colonial Office had that year allowed stamps in Trinidad and Grenada. They forwarded

a sketch of a black soldier and a white soldier clasping hands over a banner proclaiming "Shoulder to Shoulder."

It was a colonial officer, Dr. Eyles, who proposed the Committee adopt the phrase "Shoulder to Shoulder" as the colony's motto, adding, "Let us cheerfully and joyously yeild [sic] to our Creole brethren the first place and let us rally round them right loyally to do honour to their ancestors." But creoles eagerly took up the idea. Dr. Gahné first sounded the theme in 1890--on the occasion of Lord Knutsford's dismissal of Belize's demand for an elected legislature on the grounds that there were too few Europeans in the colony. Knutsford should study history, he wrote: "he would have been surprised to find that even in the days of slavery the men of European descent, those of mixed European blood and those of purely African descent, stood shoulder to shoulder to resist the Spaniard." Indeed, "the majority of the heroes of the battle of St. George's Caye--the sole title of the British Crown to the sovereignty of this Colony--were men of mixed European and of purely African descent..."(12.27.1890)

Thus when the stamp issue was turned down a second time in 1898, Gahné regretted "that the Imperial Government has not properly responded to this outburst of rejoicing on the part of the descendants of the people who fought for and won this Colony for the British Crown." Knowing that stamp issue "would have added a substantial amount to our revenue," he added, "we can only regard this refusal as part and parcel

of the systematic snubbing to which the Colony is continually being subjected" (9.2.1898).⁶

In the last analysis, the Colonial Office always came down on the side of foreign interests--even American ones--over those of local producers and entrepreneurs.⁷ As the authorities represented their actions "in the name of the people," the people, by the end of the 19th century, began to represent themselves as such. Observing the waves of fortune seekers come and go, investing nothing in the colony for the benefit of those left behind, creoles--by definition those left behind--began to stress their own long heritage, dating it back to the Battle of St. George's Cay.

The Hydes: Two Families, One Fortune

One of the most prominent families in Belize's early history is that of James Hyde. James Hyde & Co., which he founded with his son James Bartlett Hyde and James Hodge, was one of two largest landowners in the country by 1850 and the British Honduras Company, as it subsequently became, was the largest private landowner up until the mid 1980s. Hyde was born in Scotland in 1763. His mother was Ann Bartlett, sister of James Bartlett, an early magistrate in Belize, who was listed in 1787 as among those who "alone possess at least nine parts in twelve" of the territory.⁸ Hyde came to Belize in his early 20s and was included in the household of James Bartlett in Despard's Return of the Inhabitants in 1790: the household looked like a small firm, with four

white men, five free men and six free women, a free child, and 82 slaves.⁹

Though he lived in Belize from 1786 to 1830, and had a son with a free coloured woman named Ariadne Broaster in 1795, Hyde visited Canada some time around 1816, married and had a daughter, who was born in Scotland in 1817. His wife then joined him in Belize, where two more children were born: Elizabeth in 1818 and Margaret in 1819.¹⁰ Soon after, his wife returned to Scotland, where his son James Bartlett was born in 1820, and Helen Grace in 1823.

James Hyde returned to London around 1830, and in 1832 was appointed agent for the settlement of Belize. There he formally established the firm of Hyde, Hodge, and Co., which he directed at an office in Great St. Helen's, in the City of London. The three partners were James Hyde, John Hodge, and James Bartlett Hyde. By 1851 he had retired to the Isle of Wight, where he died December 23, 1858.

Hyde's free coloured son, George Hyde, also became a wealthy merchant and slaveowner. "James and George Hyde" are jointly listed as owners of 120 slaves in 1816, and of 104 in 1823. In addition, George owned 10 slaves in his own right in 1816 and five in 1823. This was important, since a law dating from 1805 required free coloured persons to own at least four male slaves before they could locate a logwood or mahogany works. James Hyde, elected magistrate in 1800 (where he served intermittently until 1822), intervened on behalf of a female slave owned by another inhabitant, who

wrote to remind him it was only out of "friendship for your son I soothed the irritated feelings of one of your Runaway Negroes so as to put him once more in your possession."¹¹

Thereafter, James and George appeared to set up separate companies. In 1826, James was a judge of the Supreme Court, at which point he owned only three slaves, while "George Hyde & Co" owned 81.¹² In 1832 the firm of Hyde & Forbes had three slaves while in 1834 George Hyde & Co had 70.

Accordingly, one of the first questions I asked Evan X. Hyde, an independent newspaper editor, was what happened to the family fortune. He directed me to his father, Charles Bartlett Hyde, great great grandson of George Hyde. "What happened to the money?" I asked. "Money?" "The money from Hyde & Co, when it became the British Honduras Company?" "I always assumed James took it with him," he said, "to his white family in England."

Obvious, perhaps, but not part of the textbook history. I looked up James Hyde in the Registry Office in London. His will, dated November 3, 1857, is duly recorded, along with that of his son, James Bartlett Hyde, dated August 13, 1873. Recorded also is the household at Apley, on the Isle of Wight, which in 1851 was headed by James Hyde, "mahogany merchant," his wife, Susan, plus their daughter Elizabeth, her husband Colin J. Campbell, Scotland-born commander in the Royal Navy, and their son Donald, aged 2; daughters Susan Campbell and Helen Grace, and five servants, including a cook, a ladies maid, three housemaids, and a nurse.¹³

Hyde bequeathed an annuity to his sister in Canada of £30 a year and one of £1000 a year to his wife, along with the Estate at Apley, while she remained. He left £10,000 each to his wife, son James Bartlett, daughter Helen, and son-in-law Colin Northe Campbell and "any money credit outstanding in the books of Messrs Hyde, Hodge and Co." went into trust for his daughter Susan.

James Bartlett Hyde, of Great St. Helen's, remained a partner in the firm with John Hodge, a British merchant resident in Belize; in 1859 they registered the firm as a joint stock company as the British Honduras Co, transferring all the lands in their names to this new firm.¹⁴ James Bartlett Hyde died May 30, 1876, leaving his house and effects to his wife and putting his assets into a trust administered by four trustees, all Scots, for his wife and children. At his wife's death in 1883 his son, Reverend James Bartlett Hyde, of Nottingham, became executor.

Nowhere in these documents is there a mention of George, James Hyde's coloured son by Ariadne Broaster. Ariadne, or Adney, was the daughter of Eve Broaster, a "native of Mandino, in Africa," according to the memorial erected by her daughter at her death in 1821.¹⁵ In 1816 Adney, a free woman, owned 47 slaves, making her one of the larger slaveowners at that time.¹⁶

In 1827 George, then 32, went to London, where he spent some months petitioning for greater rights. In February he sent a memorial to the Earl of Bathurst stating that he was

born of a white inhabitant of Belize and a person of a colour and "at a very early age" was brought to England "where he was brought up and educated"; that he thereafter returned to Belize where he worked hard and succeeded in trade, but though a successful merchant he "must still remain in a condition of comparative degradation, on the sole ground of his mother being a woman of colour. He is excluded from holding a Commission in the Militia, or from filling any Public Office of Trust, or Honor."

In what must be the first reference by a creole to the heroic Battle of St. George's Cay, George Hyde, an officer in the militia in 1824 (Fairweather 1977:9) pointed out that "during the Superintendence of the late Col Barrow at Honduras, men of colour had been allowed to hold Commissions in the Militia, and serve in defence of the Settlement, but that since the period of that officer's Superintendence, although compell'd to serve, they have been unjustly excluded from holding commissions." Hyde asked that Bathurst "take such steps as in your wisdom may appear just and proper, to relieve your Memorialist and his brethren in Honduras of the mix'd race from the impolitic and unjust exclusions and disabilities set forth and complained of."

After an unfavorable reply from Bathurst he wrote to Rt. Hon. R. Wilmott Horton, again pointing again to the free coloured role in the battle against the Spanish in 1798. Again he wrote "in behalf of myself and brethren of the mix'd race," and enclosed a petition of the "Freeholders of

the mixed race."¹⁷ Not until 1831 did Belize grant civil rights to free coloureds, by which time Hyde was involved in a bitter land dispute. In this he was supported by Superintendent Cockburn, who wrote: "a Person of colour, but a more loyal, zealous or intelligent Inhabitant, the Settlement does not possess" (quoted in Bolland 1977b:165). The jury divided, and the case was only resolved when Craig dropped his claim in 1836 (Dobson 1973:143; Bolland and Shoman 1977:43-44).

Thereafter little is known about George, although an 1832 census lists 93 slaves for the "family of George Hyde," and the 1834 slave register lists a total of 27 for the "families of George Hyde." According to Anglican baptismal records, George had a son David in 1818.¹⁸

Even less is known about David Hyde--with the exception of the records of mortgages, sales, and land transfers he made in the 1850s and 1860s. These included mahogany works on the New River sold to Antonio Mathé and Crisanto Carillo and both lots and wharfs in Belize City (Deed Bk 2)--even the house on West Canal Street, which his grandson reacquired in the 1930s.¹⁹ It is significant that after James Hyde returned to London, no member of the Hyde family ever served on the colonial Legislative Council, elected or nominated. John Hodge, the firm's Belize-based partner, was elected to the Council in 1862 and served until his death in 1868. Thereafter, local representatives of the Belize Estate and Produce Co. were nominated regularly. But the Hydes no

longer represented a British mercantile interest; thus it would be 100 years before a Hyde sat on the legislature.

This 100-year interval is ignored in the image--popular and textbook--of the Hydes as archetypes of a creole elite. Its reconstruction is made more difficult by the fact that the Hydes also drop from accounts of the social scene. According to his grandson, David Hyde fathered three children, including Adney, who married an Usher, Lucinda, who married Michael Garbutt (both members of "good creole families"), and Absalom Bartlett, born in 1853.

Absalom Bartlett Hyde became a blacksmith and mechanic. He had three children with a woman named Emily Rebecca, then married Margaret Gabourel, daughter of prominent mahogany contractor Austin Gabourel, and had five more. His eldest son, Oliver Cromwell Hyde, had 12 children while Hugh Duncan had four; half brother Henry Valancourt had three children, and James Bartlett had six; thus by Charles Bartlett's generation the family was already large--and, he suggested, their fortunes greatly attenuated.²⁰

Absalom Bartlett, who died in 1901, left his children some land at Seine Bight, which most probably came via his father-in-law, Austin Gabourel. He directed that his life insurance policies be sold in order to repair his house and leave his wife \$500. To this was added \$100 from the friendly society to which he belonged for many years--the Ancient Order of Foresters--on the condition she pay funeral expenses and educate his infant children. He left his

blacksmith shop and tools to his son Oliver and a lot in Cemetery Lane to Hugh Duncan. Arguably, the Hydés had gone from riches to rags in three generations. In fact, the advantages that obtained in free-coloured birth had played themselves out, and the Hydés had become another urban petty bourgeois creole family--for whom the civil service was the highest they could aspire to.

James was only six when his father died. His mother presumably carried out the terms of the will, since he attended Methodist schools, including Wesley College. He had just turned 90, and was happy to talk about the old days--about boats and motors and other men who worked on them, especially his half-brother Oliver, who like his father became a skilled blacksmith and motor mechanic, opening a machine shop and working for millionaire Robert Turton in the 1920s. He spoke a little about his aunts, mostly in terms of who they married. Mainly he talked about friends and co-workers, even employers, rather than his family--except for Oliver, who was in the same trade. In this he resembled his contemporary E.O.B. Barrow, who recalled stories and histories of boys who were his schoolmates, neighbors, fellow civil servants, even employers, but almost nothing about his family or home life--as child or adult.

Both say something about the terms in which creole men expressed identities; Hyde brought to life the world of boats and motors--he waited out the 1931 hurricane in a motor boat--while Barrow recalled the clerks and customs

inspectors and stamp vendors of the civil service. When some of these men got interested in family history after James Haley's Roots was shown on TV, they had to go to the women to work out the histories.

Comparing the neighborhood and social networks of both men, one can see that while different, they intersect at various points. Barrow was a civil servant throughout his life, while Hyde, a boat motorman, first worked for chicle and mahogany contractor Robert Turton ("logging, smuggling during Prohibition"), and only later joined the civil service, mostly for the pension. Still, they lived in the same neighborhoods and went to the same schools (Methodist) and interacted with the same people. Barrow's uncle, Austin Philips, worked all his life as a blacksmith next door, at the corner of Water Lane and East Canal and Barrow recalls when "our neighbor and well known blacksmith and engineer" Absalom Bartlett Hyde died in 1901. James Hyde got his job in the civil service through Wesley classmate John Garbutt, another East Canal Street neighbor. Almost never, however, do they interact with the white creole world of W.M.C. Bowen or Alexander Hunter or William Alexander Bowman.²¹

The Hydes are a large family, with several branches. While many assume they must all be related to George Hyde, others speak about a second line of Hydes, descended from a British sea captain Percy Hyde. Percy is said to have had a son Percy Herbert with a woman named Sally Wallace and two-- Captain George and Patrick Charles--with one named Sara.²²

Percy Herbert was a popular athlete, a cricketer and tennis player who left school to become a commercial clerk, reaching the point where he planned to set up in business with a partner named Guy Harbeck--but died in 1899 before this could be realized. Memorialized as "one of those kind, modest, unassuming men who make no great noise in the world, but whose influence is great amongst the people with whom they come in daily contact" by both the Clarion and the Guardian, he was a member of many clubs and societies, including the Apollo Band and La Union Orchestra, the Catholic Knights, and the Belize Rifle Club.²³ His eight children (six sons and two daughters) divided his property at his wife's death in 1936, 37 years after his own.²⁴

Percy Herbert's half brother Captain George, a mariner, had six children, and Patrick Charles, mariner and ship carpenter, had ten. Their descendants spread throughout the backyards of Belize City, the respectable poor who run small businesses and shops of various kinds. Percy's children for the most part went into business. His son Charles, known as "Jack," ran a successful motorcar and boat hire service (Sologaistao 1919) and is remembered as being first at everything--he had the first car and was always setting up new businesses.²⁵

Thus it is James Bartlett's family that is primarily associated with the civil service. James himself left his machine shop at age 39 and got a job as customs boatman, where he worked for eight years, when he moved to the Fire

Station, retiring as chief engineer. Raised a Methodist, he converted to Catholic and sent his children to Catholic schools. His oldest son, Charles Bartlett Hyde, entered the civil service at 18 and worked up through the ranks. In 1962, after 21 years, he became Post Master General, the equivalent of a department head. He retired in 1978 and the next year was elected Speaker of the House.

Charles' brother James entered the service with a university degree in 1953 and became a permanent secretary in 1982, age 49. He retired at 55 to head Northern Fisheries Coop, and was appointed ambassador to Washington in 1991. He is married to Charmyn Young, one of only two female permanent secretaries. His sister Grace married Albert Grant, one of the few creole district commissioners in the colonial system, and brother George worked with the Water Authority, then moved to New York City. Their cousins, Oliver's children, generally pursued careers in business; only Denholm followed James Hyde into the Fire Department.

Among the current generation, as with the Barrows, those with a university degree avoid the civil service, though some may do a short stint to put younger siblings through school. Once divorced from the state, the civil service offers little; thus with the exception of newspaper editor Evan X., who exhorts fellow creoles not to abandon Belize for the "good life" up north, most of them must seek outlets for their talents and ambitions in the States.

The Ushers: Fitting the Stereotype

When Belizeans think of a creole elite they think either of the senior civil servants, or they think of the Ushers. The Ushers certainly fit the image: the original white male ancestor and free coloured woman, a long line of creole children and grandchildren; the large landholdings, houses in town; the colonial government officials--the family who over time became "creolized" in the classic sense: light-skinned blacks; still landed and prominent, with extensive family commercial networks; and if not wealthy, still solidly in the upper middle class.

Thus when Henry Charles Usher spoke about his Baymen ancestors in 1898, specifically his grandfather James Usher, who with his slaves fought at the battle of St. George's Cay, he spoke with some certainty. James Usher was an Englishman who came out to Honduras and operated in both Belize and Black River, moving permanently to Belize in 1787. He is listed in Despard's Return as a white property holder and woodcutter of the second class (see Chapter 1), and head of a household with two free men (William Longsworth and Thomas Cushing), another white man (Thomas Kerr), a white child named William Usher, and 39 slaves. Heading another household was William Usher, white man, with a free woman named Suzannah Winter and three children; they owned 10 slaves and were among the third class (cutter of wood, of small property). According to a somewhat lyrical reconstruction by James' great grandson, James and William

were brothers who came out to Belize together with their sisters Sarah and Mary. Both had woodcutting operations in Black River in Honduras, and homes in Belize City as well as St. George's Cay. In 1826 William and Sarah, with a white child named William Charles, had 103 slaves.

In 1792 James formed a union with a free coloured woman named Jane Trapp, who with her brother Ephraim also headed a household in 1790, with 19 slaves. They had four children: Catherine Hume, Jane, James (Jr.), and John, who was born at St. George's Cay in 1795. James (Jr.) together with another free man of colour William jointly owned two slaves in 1823; in addition, James (Jr) had 13 slaves in 1816 and 12 in 1823, while William had 19 slaves in 1816 and 12 in 1823.

James Sr. was elected a magistrate in 1787 and served (with a gap from 1792 to 1797), until 1799. Thereafter, he campaigned in London for a declaration of sovereignty over Belize, which Britain was not to make for over 50 years. After his death Jane Trapp was listed as a household head in the censuses of 1816, 1823, and 1826 (with 12, 14, and 18 slaves respectively). She died in 1827 and is buried at Yarborough. William and Sarah stayed in Belize--in 1827 he was a major cutter on the Belize River and in 1832 they had 29 slaves. William had at least five children, baptized at St. John's, but they are lost to the family genealogy.

One of his sons, however, may have been William, the free man of colour first listed in 1816. According to his petition in 1815, he was born on the Mosquito coast, a

descendent of Miskito Indians, "but in the sixth generation removed from said Indians to White" and "the son of an Englishman," and sent to England, where he was brought up and educated. On coming out to Honduras as a young man in 1801, he was "made acquainted with a situation in life he was to fill, which, however respectable might be his circumstances, connexions and character would for ever deprive him of those dearest privileges of an Englishman..." Specifically, "not being considered White," he was unable to serve as juror or hold public office--though he became a member of the militia in 1824 (Fairweather 1977:9). Thus he asked the colonial authorities to lift the "mortifying and disgraceful distinctions" he suffered due to his origins.²⁶

The Secretary of State for the Colonies wrote to Superintendent Arthur regarding this memorial that he could see no grounds "for placing the coloured population of Honduras under greater restrictions than those to which the coloured populations of Jamaica are subject." But William Usher was to wait another 16 years.²⁷ And like George Hyde he suffered economic hardship in the 1830s. Thus in 1842 he wrote to Superintendent Macdonald that "after various changes in live [sic], losses & misfortunes in business," he was in "a very weak, and infirm state of health." Unable to attend to the "laborious calling of mahogany cutting and much reduced in pecuniary circumstances," he could no longer maintain a respectable footing and therefore solicited the appointment of "some respectable public situation."²⁸

James' family was more fortunate. John, his youngest child, was 21 in 1816 and head of a household with eight slaves. By 1827 he was cutting and exporting mahogany south of the Belize River.²⁹ When restrictions on free coloureds were lifted in 1831 he became assistant judge of the supreme and summary courts. He had a daughter with Eve Broaster, mother of Ariadne Broaster (see above) in 1816 and a son with a woman named Mary Bevins; then he established a permanent union with Sarah Purcell--who according to Usher records was the daughter of an American, Joseph Purcell and Elizabeth Tillet--and he and Sarah are listed with Rebecca and James Henry as well as two of their own children, Mary White and Edward, in the census of 1826. Together they had nine children, so by 1840 the household numbered 13.

These children expanded the Usher dynasty, creating ties with the Hunters, Wardlaws, Hulses, and Fairweathers. Rebecca married Walter Henry Fairweather (see below); Mary White (who is buried at St. George's Cay) had a child with C.T. Hunter; and Sara Ann married George Augustus Hulse, grandson of Nathaniel Hulse, a merchant and mahogany cutter, and son of George Nathaniel Hulse, born in Belize in 1829.³⁰ Robert, a merchant clerk, married Mary Anne Cochrane Wardlaw, daughter of Richard Cochrane Wardlaw and Georgiana McAulay, the daughter of free coloured landowner and slaveholder Mary Hume (see Chapter 3).³¹

Alfred had several children: one, Florence Ida, was with Victoria Camiano Bennett, the estranged wife of a son

of Marshall Bennett (see Chapter 1); she married her cousin Greville Hulse, son of her father's sister Sara Ann Usher Hulse. A son, John James, married Emma Stewart and they had 12 children; one daughter married Karl Heusner, Belize's first native doctor, while another had children for him.³² Henry Charles married Louisa Hill Hume, cousin of James Hume Blake (see Chapter 3), but their only child, Ethel Louise, died at age 16. A union with Lucinda Beaumont produced Amybell Usher, who married James Fairweather (see below), and Clarence, whose son, Henry Charles, married Jane Price, sister of Belize's first prime minister.

This generation of Ushers were the first creoles to obtain positions in the colonial government: Edward became a government surveyor; Alfred rose to be surveyor general of the country, while Henry Charles became Belize District Magistrate and a member of the Executive Council. Born in 1838, Henry Charles spent 43 years in the public service, beginning as clerk in the office of the Colonial Secretary in 1859. he served on the Currency Commision in 1894, as Supreme Court Commissioner from 1869, and as shipping surveyor from 1875. In 1890, as Acting Treasurer, he backed Governor Goldsworthy against the demands of the unofficials for a majority in the legislature. In fact, when after the unofficial walkout the governor filled their seats with officials, Usher was "the only one who promptly and unhesitatingly accepted," as the Guardian noted in a fury--the others, all British, declined--though in the end they

had no choice. With them, he thus had the dubious distinction of serving one year in an illegal legislature, as it was judged by the Supreme Court in July 1891.³³

As government surveyors both Alfred and Henry Charles were able to secure the early land claims by their father and grandfather, and they were in a position to estimate the value of newly opened lands. Edward, Robert, Henry Charles, and Alfred together owned enormous acreage in Victoria Park, Manatee (part of which Henry Charles bequeathed to Amybell Fairweather, his child with Lucinda Beaumont). Robert's wife, Anne Cochran Wardlaw, acquired land in Rowley's Bight from her grandmother, Mary Hume, and Henry Charles's wife, Louisa Hill Hume, inherited works in the same area from Jane Hume. In 1892 Mrs. L. H. Usher was one of the major landowners in the northern district (see Chapter 3), and as late as 1935 the lands in her estate were some 15,000 acres, while the estate of E.G. and A.L. Usher still had some 11,000. Ushers owned property on the sea on both the north and south sides of the city, and when the property was extended in the course of a harbor improvement scheme were allowed to claim new areas out to the coast. At one time the Ushers had five lots on St. George's Cay.

The next generation reached the peak of creole social prominence. Edward's son, Archibald Rhys Usher, became local manager of the Belize Estate Company. President of the Newtown Club and the Windovers Cricket club, he served on both the Legislative Council (from 1904) and the Executive

Council (from 1919)--"the highest post in the government of the Colony that a native can now aspire to," the Clarion wrote in 1931. In 1921 he was elected chairman of the British Honduras Taxpayers Association, a group that united political nationalism with economic self-interest. It raised money annually to celebrate the Battle of St. George's Cay and in 1938 joined the Chamber of Commerce to sponsor Usher's nephew Edward for election to the Legislative Council (Grant 1976:86). On leaving the company in 1911 he became a mahogany contractor in his own right.³⁴ His oldest daughter, Daisy, married Eric Woods, son of the Clarion editor; his son Ivan married Clarine Hulse, daughter of Stanley Ernest Hulse.

Robert's son Charles Richard, born in 1859, became in turn surveyor general. In 1892 he married Ellen Cecilia Price, sister of William Cadle Price--"of one of our leading creole families" (Clarion 7.31.1913)--and daughter of Alfred Cecil Price, member of the Legislative Council (1865-69). They had six children; the oldest, Gerald Eric, was killed in World War I. His brother John Purcell, employed by Belize Estate and Produce Co., was superintendent of the Diocesan Sunday School and justice of the peace. He married Ellen Woods, sister of Clarion editor Philip Stanley Woods; their two oldest sons, Hubert Wardlaw and Arthur Norman, were killed in World War I. His sister Lucinda had a child with Stanley Ernest Hulse, George Augustus' brother; though Hulse was by then one of the largest mahogany contractors in

Belize, family members said they did not marry because the Usher family disapproved of him.

The Usher-Hulse ties are interesting because it is Hulses for the most part who recall the Usher lineage. Lucinda Usher and Stanley Ernest Hulse's child, Leigh Rodwell Hulse, who became colonial postmaster and diocesan treasurer, married Amy Coffin and they had eight children, one of whom, Gilbert Rodwell, an Anglican minister, was for years compiler of the Usher family history; asked about the Hulses, he usually talked about the Ushers. Greville and Ida Hulse had five children; their grandson, Mervyn Hulse, a government land surveyor, has written a history of the first Ushers in Belize. The Hulses joined the Ushers as senior civil servants--as postmaster Leigh Rodwell was the first to hire women in the civil service (including Virginia Fairweather)--and were staunch supporters of the Anglican church, with its woman's auxiliary and missionary work.

By the 1930s, government jobs alone were an inadequate basis for continued social standing. The family spread into business, but Belize's small economy offers few opportunities for purely local capital, and many have gone to work abroad. Of Charles Richard and Ellen Usher's six children, only one married--Charles Richard Wardlaw, a government customs officer. With his first wife Enid Gaynair--whose brother married his Aunt Lucy's granddaughter--he had three sons: Gerald is accountant at Central Drugs, Belize's largest pharmacy, owned by his half-brother

Victor; Michael is a government consultant, and Frederick Richard is a surveyor in Corozal; their daughter married and lives in Canada. With his second wife, Mary Goodrich, he had eight more children. The eldest, Alice Mae, married H.T.A. Bowman Jr., son of Stann Creek citrus magnate (see Chapter 2); Charles Richard is an airplane pilot, Victor Edward heads Central Drugs, and David is an accountant in Belize City. The rest live abroad.³⁵

Their cousins are the children of John Purcell and Ethel. Three sons died young (two in the war); eldest daughter Ina became principal of St. Hilda's College. The fourth son, John Maurice Gower Usher, moved to Stann Creek, where he extended the family's landholdings and became a successful merchant. Of his five children with his first wife, two live in the States, one in England, one in Jamaica, and one in Dandriga; the children from his second marriage mostly live abroad.

Also noteworthy are the children of Henry Charles, a senior civil servant--and Jane Price, sister of the prime minister and now president of the Senate. This generation's commercial links were extended with the marriage of one daughter to a prominent Belize city importer, José Matus, and of her sister to Anthony Zabaneh, a Salvadoran oligarch who with his two brothers owns virtually the entire banana industry and the port town of Big Creek, as well as large acres in citrus.

The Haylocks: Petty Bourgeois Elite

As creoles began to construct their Baymen heritage in the 1890s, the memory of their own loyalty--reified in the "shoulder to shoulder" theme--appeared to be matched only by continued neglect by an ungrateful empire. Resentment focused not only on the neglect of agriculture and transport but on the lack of educational and cultural institutions.

Thus in 1897, at a Public Meeting to decide how to commemorate Queen Victoria's Jubilee, Wilfred Alfred Haylock, member of the Belize District Board, joined his colleagues Henry Charles Usher and Benjamin Fairweather in lauding the proposed Victoria Institute, with museum and library. The Guardian summarized his remarks (2.27.1897):

If he had been sent to England and been educated there he would have been a star in this Colony; for he felt that the stuff was in him. He has often had to hold his peace because of not having had educational advantages, and he has been galled to the quick by this deficiency. ...For the want of educational advantages in the Colony he lays the blame on the old settlers who never endowed schools, but made their money and went away with it.

Haylock and his fellow speakers repeatedly linked the descendants of the Baymen with those natives of the colony who were perpetually ignored by the wealthy expatriates. This refrain was to reach a crescendo throughout the next year, as creoles strove for recognition of the Battle of St. George's Cay as the colony's national day.

Haylock joined Percy Herbert Hyde, Archibald Rhys Usher, John Purcell Usher, and Benjamin Fairweather on the Centennial Committee in April 1898. He repeatedly stated

that his "great grand uncle took part in the battle of St. George's Cay."³⁶ Indeed, so identified in the speeches and memorials, reprinted in the local press, was Haylock with his Bayman heritage he won a permanent place as a creole spokesman. Curiously, in view of that paper's tendency to extend rather than shorten the pedigree of prominent inhabitants, the obituary in the Daily Clarion (4.8.1940) referred to him as the son of George Emmanuel Haylock, "a Portuguese immigrant." Yet George Emmanuel was born in Belize in 1811, apparently a genuine Bayman son.

Though there is nowhere a list of those who went to battle, Haylock's great granduncle, Francis Jr. was as likely as anyone to have been among them. Among the inhabitants recorded by Superintendent Despard in 1790 was Francis Haylock, a white man, elsewhere described as a "turtler, possessed of no slaves"; he headed a household with a free woman of colour named Rebecca Haylock, two other free women, Katy and Becky Haylock, a free man named Francis Haylock Jr., and three free children--Nancy, Betsy, and Jonas. The youngest child, Jonas, was Wilfred Alexander's grandfather; the oldest, Francis Haylock Jr. would have been his great granduncle.³⁷

Rebecca Haylock died in 1798 and Francis Haylock is not listed in subsequent censuses, but Francis Haylock Jr. is in the 1826 census with a free coloured woman named Catherine. Baptismal records show he had six children with Catherine Coffle, and worked as a turtler, first in Belize City and

after 1829 at Sittee River.³⁸ His brother Jonas registered for baptism his two children with Elizabeth Sweasey: George Emmanuel in 1814, "aged about three years," and Ann Catharine in 1817.

George Emmanuel must have accumulated some property, as he was named a magistrate in 1839 and again in 1862, serving until 1865. He apparently converted to Catholicism: his children are not listed in the St. John's baptismal records and Wilfred Alexander spoke of attending Catholic primary school.³⁹ One son, Walter, became a mahogany contractor; two others reportedly worked in Roatán. A third, Wilfred Alexander, established himself as one of the growing group of small grocers and shopkeepers in Belize City. He went first into business with a merchant named Charles Nord, then set up on his own in the grocery and liquor business on Regent Street. By 1892 he was listed in the Commercial Directory as a grocer and publican.

Wilfred Haylock was a great supporter of the first native holiday: in 1898 he advertised imported "Shoulder to Shoulder Whiskey" along with "St. George's Caye Centenary Rum" and "Pork and Dough-Boy War Wine," both "specially prepared for the Great Great Granddaughters of the old Heroes," available at his shop on Regent Street.

Haylock was never among the large general merchants, however; he apparently tried to expand into mahogany and chiclé operations but these failed and he was obliged to sell the premises in Regent Street, reopening later from

premises in Daly Street.⁴⁰ He was no longer listed in the Commercial Directory in 1919, and in 1925 his daughters, the Misses Haylock, worked as seamstresses from this address.

A staunch creole advocate, Haylock early on promoted the agricultural development of the colony; in 1894 he joined the Committee for the Advancement of the Colony, along with Dr. Gahné, editor of the Colonial Guardian. The Committee, which included most of the banana growers of the colony, campaigned for telecommunications, improved roads and railroads, and a local bank. It also resolved that the mail contract should be given to a local company, the British Honduras Mutual Fruit and Steamship Company. Since the government supported shippers by way of the mail contract, taxpayers were in effect subsidizing foreign companies--notably United Fruit--who determined the rates on both shipping and banana contracts.⁴¹

Haylock also championed creole political participation, promoting the formation in 1904 of the British Honduras Union--"to bring about a new birth of patriotism and a closer union among creoles."⁴² He expanded creole social networks, which served as the basis for this participation: he was a founder of the local branch of the Ancient Order of Forresters in 1894, founder of Newtown Polo and Athletic Club, and treasurer of the Belize Jockey Club.

Haylock was thus one of the leaders of the creole effort to get a "more effective voice in the affairs of their town," as the Clarion noted in his obituary. With Dr.

Gahné he was a member of the first Belize District Board, advocated locally since 1882 and finally set up in 1895, and later campaigned for an elected board, which was finally established in 1911 with eight elected members and two nominees.⁴³ The Town Board, one of the few political institutions open to creoles, was also virtually the only political body not totally dominated by the expatriate mercantile elite (Grant 1976:90). As such, it irked the British authorities, and Governor Burns dissolved it in favor of his own nominees in 1938.

British administrators were never comfortable with the creole leaders nurtured in their image. Burns explained: "At present only the negro element, who are less than half the population, are politically inclined," and since the Maya and Garifuna, "if given the vote would exercise it according to the dictates of the priests," he concluded: "In effect the country would be run by and for the benefit of the negroes who would look after Belize and nothing else" (1941, quoted in Ashdown 1979a:244). Of "the Negroes," Burns (1962:137) wrote: "They are good workers on work they understand and like, such as forestry, but they have not the gift of perseverance and are inclined to blame others, and not their own shortcomings, for any lack of success." Thus he mocked the self-styled creole orators: "They used long words and catch phrases of which they seldom understood the meaning and reports of some of their speeches used to give me much amusement" (ibid.) A labor commission led by Major

Orde-Browne in 1938 attributed much of the colony's plight to the lack of moral and intellectual leadership, which was left to a petty-bourgeois small shopkeeper and tradesman element, who viewed "Latin grammer or pianoforte playing as the fine flower of education" (quoted in Lewis 1969:295).

In 1888 Haylock married Matilda Eliza Reyes and they had eight children, all of whom were educated at Catholic schools; his first two sons were even enrolled in St. John's College for a time (from 1899 to 1901). Lacking the capital for business ventures they became salaried professionals for the most part: his son Walter Stanley became an engineer, while his nephew Herbert Theodore, in the first class at St. John's in 1896, became a law clerk. Herbert Theodore's son Eric joined the civil service in 1936 but left to work on mahogany crews; his son Herbert, a St. John's alumnus and freemason, runs his own small customs brokerage operation.

A still more modest branch of the Haylock family descends from Henry, who may have been Wilfred Alfred's brother. His son Henry Nathaniel became a motorboat mechanic, like his contemporary James Bartlett Hyde, and worked as such for the Belize Estate and Produce Co. Thereafter Henry Nathaniel's son Hewitt, educated only through primary school, joined the civil service as a very young man, becoming a customs boatman in Corozal before he retired and moved to the United States. His seven children each worked to put the next child through school; after that they were on their own--with no family house or properties

to divide, no business to inherit, and little in the way of "kin and connections." Currently, only one child lives in Belize; a nationalist and feminist who eschews party affiliation, she works in community and women's organizations to extend political participation beyond the elites.

The Fairweathers: Civil Service Elite

When all five unofficial members of the Legislative Assembly walked out to protest the Hunter award in April 1890, their ranks included Benjamin Fairweather, the only nonwhite, non-merchant representative, who had served on the legislature since 1886.⁴⁴ Asked to rejoin after the concession of the unofficial majority in January 1892, he served until his death in 1904. Fairweather was the son of James Fairweather, born in 1795, who came to Belize from the Mosquito Coast. According to an obituary for Benjamin Fairweather in 1904, James Fairweather became a foreman of a mahogany works on the Belize River and died in 1850.

The name Fairweather is nowhere included in Despard's first Return of the Settlers in 1790, nor in the despatches concerning evacuees from the Mosquito Coast. Nor in the census of 1816. Only in 1823 does a Fairweather appear, attached to another family (Hadel 1974:20). If James' father owned slaves, as Benjamin claimed in 1898, neither he nor they are recorded.⁴⁵

Benjamin's own early history is consistent with more humble origins. Born in 1835 he attended the Anglican Free

School, as would be expected for the son of a foreman on a mahogany crew, and probably became apprenticed to a carpenter soon after. He certainly mastered his craft, and is listed as both a carpenter and an undertaker in the Handbooks of British Honduras of 1888-89 and 1892-93.

Perhaps more importantly, he joined the Volunteer Forces, formed in 1865 to repel Maya Indian attacks from neighboring Yucatán. It is not clear, however, when he did so: his obituary in the Clarion says he joined in 1866 and was sent to fight the Ycaiché Indians in 1866 and 1867. But there are no reports of his service--even his grandson, who compiled a history of the Volunteer Forces (1977), says nothing about his record at this time. Fairweather does say his grandfather was with the forces in 1878, when regulations were adopted authorizing a free grant of land to members after five years of efficient service (1977:19).

A distinguished service record may have played a role in his appointment to the Legislative Council nine years later in 1887. The Clarion obituary says he was elected member of the House of Assembly in 1866, and his grandson refers to him as MHA (Member of the House of Assembly) in 1878.⁴⁶ But Colonial Office records show that Fairweather was first appointed to the wholly nominated Legislative Council by Governor Goldsworthy in 1887. There for the most part he joined in the positions of his merchant colleagues. However, he was a champion of local government and local capital; where these interests conflicted with merchant

interests Fairweather usually dissented from the merchant views.

In 1894, when large exporters joined with the British officials in opposing a change from British to U.S. currency, Fairweather was part of a deputation to the governor to press for the change; in 1899 he approved the passage of an export tax rather than impose one on imports as advocated by his colleagues; in same year, he joined with all the unofficials in pointing out how large a portion of colony's revenue went to pay British salaries. Moreover, in the early 1900s, he consistently opposed the government's favoritism of the United Fruit Company: the Clarion, noting the colonial government had pushed through a subsidized mail contract with United Fruit despite a competing offer to handle it without a subsidy, concluded that of the five unofficials, "Fairweather, Cuthbert and Woods are the only stalwarts who have since their appointment consistently resisted every attempt made by the government to encroach on the rights of the people..." (3.6.02).

In 1897, on occasion of Victoria's Jubilee, Benjamin took an initial step in reconstructing his ancestry, declaring he was "proud to be the descendant of a Bayman"; unlike fellow creole Wilfred Haylock, he said nothing about the shortcomings of his education. And in April 1898, as plans and agitation about commemorating the battle's anniversary grew, he elaborated on this ancestry; following a speech by Henry Charles Usher referring to the role of his

grandfather James Usher and his slaves in the battle, Fairweather declared, according to the Colonial Guardian, "that his Grandfather had also fought in the battle. His Granduncle had also taken part in the battle and had often narrated to him the incidents of the struggle. He had told him that the Spaniards had counted on the slaves betraying their masters but in this they were mistaken" (4.8.1898).

Benjamin married Virginia Clarissa Theus, whose parents were listed as heads of household in the 1826 census, as free people of colour with no slaves. Both their sons, James Benjamin and Walter Henry, became carpenters. Both were members of the Volunteer Force and married into the Usher family--James married Anabel, and had 13 children, while Walter married Rebecca and had 3. Benjamin's own sister Jane married Patrick Sebastian from Mullins River, and their children married into the Barrow and Hulse families.

As Legislative Council member Fairweather was appointed to various civic positions, including the Quarantine Board, the Land Tax Commission, the Medical Registration board, and so on. By contrast he was not part of the then flourishing club scene, neither that of his European colleagues on the Council nor the creole friendly societies promoted by Haylock. He was, however, a staunch supporter of the Anglican church, and was a member of the synod and treasurer of the diocesan board of education.

Benjamin died in 1904, leaving his property to his wife during her lifetime and thereafter to his children,

including his daughters, three of whom were still living, free of control of their husbands. His property included a mahogany work on the Sibun River, the house and lot on Rectory Lane and the reclaimed foreshore, plus a house and lot on St. George's Cay. While socially prominent, his family was not wealthy; according to one granddaughter, his wife was obliged to sell the cay property to pay off his debts, and his eldest daughter had gone to work for the Post Office by 1906. She later married a tailor named Lucius Smith, while her two sisters remained spinsters, working in various ways to support the family.

The next generation, born in the 1890s and 1900s, consolidated the family standing. Of James and Anabel's children, Harold Austin became a mercantile clerk; Gerald James became an Anglican minister, and Henry Clifton became a government surveyor.⁴⁷ All of the daughters married: the oldest, Ethel, married R.F.H. Hinkson, brother of her brother Harold's wife.

Walter and Rebecca's sons also entered the public service--but in this case out of necessity. The oldest, Donald Norman, was only 12 years old when his father died in 1911; two years later he left school and went to work as a messenger, helping to put his younger brothers through school. From there he climbed the ranks: in 1937 he inaugurated Belize's first radio station from the wireless station at Newtown Barracks and in 1948 he became director of telecommunications.⁴⁸ He had a parallel career in the

military: he entered the Territorial Force in 1915 and in 1953 was appointed lieutenant colonel in the Home Guard, "the highest to be held by a Belizean."

Few of the Fairweathers became club members. Like his grandfather, Donald Norman devoted himself to the church, as a member of its corporate body and later the Board of Governors of St. Michael's College. However, in 1957 he was named by the governor to the Public Service Commission, which oversees the work of the civil service, and at the same time became honorary president of the Officers of the British Honduras Civil Service Association. There, with his cousin Carleton Lebrun, association vice president, he became an implacable opponent of the party and its leader, George Price.

By the 1930s conditions for the working class had become dire in Belize. The creole petty bourgeoisie of the friendly societies united in a "Natives First" group with more militant spokespeople of the same class to demand trade union rights as well as political authority. Their newspaper, The Independent, edited by H.H. Cain, supported the demands of workers as well as local self-government--much to the irritation of Governor Burns. The paper stressed "the injuries inflicted by whites upon blacks," he fumed: "The colour question clouds all references to local affairs and the language used is unrestricted and often offensive" (quoted in Ashdown 1979a:223). In 1939 the Belize Town Board was reconstituted as a totally elective body, and creoles

won all the seats. "Natives First" increased their political influence in the 1940s, despite continued opposition from Burns, who on leaving Belize became Assistant Under Secretary of State for the Colonies.⁴⁹

But by the 1950s a new force was competing within the "Natives First" movement--members of the St. John's College Alumni Association, including George Price, who as "the educated class" considered themselves "best suited to lead." Equally opposed to colonial rule and concerned with the condition of working people, they were less adamantly opposed to cooperation with Guatemala. In an effort to undermine creole hegemony of the nationalist movement, their first move was an attack on the "myth" of the Battle of St. George's Cay, with its exaggerated heroism and emphasis on loyalty to Britain as the cornerstone of creole heritage.

This attack, while it eventually drew more and more creoles into opposition, exposed their previously unquestioned right to inherit political leadership. By the 1950s and 1960s, as the PUP successfully took their campaign for working people to the rural mestizo peasants, opposition increasingly centered in the civil service. Henry Clifton Fairweather was a frequent orator at outdoor meetings--protesting any compromise with Guatemala. His sister's husband, Albert Cattouse, was instrumental in exposing Price's negotiations with the Guatemalans in 1957, and his niece, Nadia Cattouse, a popular entertainer, campaigned against the controversial proposals for negotiating a

solution in 1967, when the Public Officers' Union declared a protest strike.

In the 1950s, the civil service included no less than eight Fairweathers and senior officer ranks have had multiple Fairweathers ever since. They remain prominent too in civil society: Donald's daughter Barbara is local Peace Corps administrator and active in the YWCA while Henry Clifton's daughter Velda, who joined the civil service as a typist after high school, is director of the Council of Voluntary Social Services, a church based service provider organization which until recently controlled virtually all nongovernmental social services in the country.

The attacks on the creole civil service elite, intensified in the 1960s, have indelibly associated the Fairweathers with a creole elite in the public mind. Yet the prohibition on political activity made the civil service a poor basis to resist a political attack. Opposing the ruling party, they lost any connection with the state--which gained self-governing status in 1964. Since then, government has been conducted increasingly through political channels, bypassing the civil service (Brockmann 1977:255). Perhaps recognizing this, Henry Clifton's brother, Reverend Gerald James, became an active supporter of the political opposition. With his son Compton he formed the Freedom Committee in New York City, which campaigned among creoles abroad and from the early 1960s was a vital fundraiser for the newly consolidated opposition party.

Colonel Fairweather remained somewhat apart from these efforts, however, and when in the 1970s a group of young creole nationalists--including his son Norman--founded a new group, the United Black Association for Development (UBAD), he supported it. UBAD represented, in part, an effort to recapture creole control of the nationalist movement (Young 1978), but though it enjoyed enormous support from creoles of all classes, the old guard, still convinced that loyalty to Britain was the only counter to Price and Guatemala, were stronger; when UBAD leader Evan X. Hyde ran for National Assembly in 1979, he lost badly.

In 1984, the victory of the United Democratic Party provided a brief turnaround; Eric Fairweather, by then a permanent secretary, was joined by his cousin Douglas; their cousin Marjory's husband, Edward Laing, was appointed ambassador to the UN. But the old guard creole leadership quickly lost support of the more progressive creoles--including Norman Fairweather and Evan X. Hyde--and the PUP returned to power in 1989.

The Free Coloured and the Creole Middle Class

Despite their differences, what these four families shared, along with the other "good creole families" in Belize City, was their status, in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, as free coloured rather than slaves. All traced their ancestry back to the original white male and his heroism in the Battle of St. George's Cay--and his union

with a black or free coloured woman. This union formed the basis of their social and legal status, which was below the whites but above the slaves.

The position of the free coloured is a subject of considerable interest in the Caribbean literature. As British subjects intermediate in status between the white rulers and the black slaves, their social identity is viewed as reflecting their ambiguous position in the social structure, and thus as itself ambivalent (Handler 1974; Brathwaite 1971). They are regarded as essential to the perpetuation of a color-class hierarchy, seeking to maintain their intermediate status long after slavery (M.G.Smith 1965; Patterson 1975). Other scholars have pointed to considerable variability in their position, in different colonies and within this group itself (Cohen and Greene 1972; Heuman 1981).

If Belize lacked the precise legal categories based on degree of racial descent found elsewhere in the Caribbean, certainly the British were at pains to distinguish social status in strict racial terms. In 1831, they conceded equal rights to the free coloured while denying them to free blacks. The Colonial Office praised the "patient submission" with which the free coloured had borne the denial of these rights for so long, and in extending full rights stated free coloured "shall be entitled to have hold and enjoy all Rights, Privileges, Immunities and advantages whatsoever as if they were Born and descended of White Ancestors."

By this time, Bolland writes: "The racist ideology of

the whites had so permeated the free colored sense of identity that the free colored were glad to have finally achieved social differentiation from the blacks" (1977b:94) Yet it is hard to find evidence of this pleasure. The belief that coloured masters were harsher than white (Hall 1972: 211) does not seem to have been true in Belize--perhaps because this differential carried fewer benefits. In general opportunities for the free coloured depended ultimately on economic conditions, at times offering opportunities to this middle group and at other times effecting their displacement (Cohen and Greene 1972:17). Nor is it clear that race was the basis for their social differentiation; in Jamaica the superior status of free coloured was marked not by race and skin color but by "their freedom and claim to equality with whites" (Hall 1972:212). While some in Belize, notably William Usher, stressed their white ancestry in appeals for equal rights, others stressed their achievements: George Hyde deplored racial ancestry as a basis for distinction, appealing for the extension of rights to all free coloured.

That the free coloured did not make common cause with slaves (or later free blacks) certainly reflects their assessment of the utility of this course in a society where white ancestry was the source of all privileges; it may be less reflective of their opinion of such a society. Indeed, as Bolland notes, "there is no evidence from Belize that they viewed the African-born with the degree of contempt that was a characteristic of their fellows in some of the

plantation societies." He quotes the observation of Acting Superintendent Anderson in 1836:

"No Antipathy however exists on the part of the Creole Women to the Native African Men every thing depending upon the degree of Civilization at which the Africans shall arrive, and his competency to support the Woman in Comfort. It is no uncommon occurrence for the free Creole of Color to marry the African Soldier of the West India Regiment" (1977b:101).

Unlike Jamaica, where opportunities for free coloured expanded greatly after emancipation (Heuman 1981:61), the small population and lack of local capital in Belize left few opportunities even for whites. Absentee ownership, rather than decreasing, increased: after mid century land as well as commerce was increasingly in the hands of London firms--who with one exception--Archibald Usher--appointed white managers.⁵⁰ Similarly, the local and municipal levels of government that developed in Jamaica were virtually non-existent in Belize until the end of the century. Creoles, regardless of social standing, were rarely considered for government jobs, a fact they protested into the present century.

Again there were exceptions, but again generally Ushers. Typically, the achievements of the free coloured were limited to individuals, in Belize as elsewhere (Cohen and Greene 1972:12). The coloured militias offered one of few opportunities for more collective solidarity (cf. Russell-Wood 1972:130). But few managed to transcend the individual to advance either the family or the group as a whole; Benjamin Fairweather, for example, left as many debts

as honors to future generations. To translate individual achievement into middle-class status requires an ability to convert respect into property and influence.

The social identity of the free coloured finally appears less ambivalent than precarious, intensifying the concern with status and acceptance. It is this concern which has endured throughout the history of these families, shaping the early expression of creoles as pillars of the community--the "givers" of Brackette Williams' (1989;1990) dichotomy--as well as the struggle to find new forms of expression in a postcolonial era.

Conclusion: Political Elites and the State

In the 1960s and 1970s it was argued that the breakdown of colonial social categories had combined with the determination of new nation-states to direct national development to produce a strong bureaucratic elite (Bottomore 1964; Scott 1967; Thomas 1984:60-61). Emerging from a broad middle class of intellectuals, professionals, civil servants, and salaried workers, whose dominance resulted from the lack of opportunities for an indigenous business class, planners and technocrats prospered at independence with the creation of a large state sector, central planning, and public spending for economic development (Bottomore 1964:98; cf. Thomas 1984). Yet an examination of creole family history in Belize, and most probably elsewhere, reveals the inherent limitations of

civil service occupations as a basis for a self-perpetuating elite.

With opportunities for both increased prestige and personal enrichment, state experts appeared in many ways analogous to the entrepreneurs of early capitalist development in the West. But while the latter were an autonomous class who spread their influence throughout government and administration, the former are totally dependent on the politicians, who in recent decades have been recruited as often from the business as the professional sectors (Bottomore 1964:98-99). While Weber viewed bureaucrats as controlling politicians, through their control of information and efficient hierarchy (Parry 1969: 80-81), critics argue that he and others were confusing state bureaucrats with a "party political bureaucracy," those who are able to use their political power to get control of the means of production in society (Bottomore 1964:86; Parry 1969:82).

While usefully distinguishing bureaucratic from political elites, Bottomore implies that party political power is still a source of economic accumulation. Yet in most peripheral countries, as Thomas (1984) and Schneider and Schneider (1983b) point out, the meager accumulation of capital over the last 200 years has left foreigners in control of the means of production. Thus politicians are themselves dependent on good will of an external capitalist class, whose interests they must continually support. Even

patronage, the basis of political power, does not remain in the same hands long enough to be handed on from one generation to another (Schneider and Schneider 1983b:180). Moreover, patronage is itself dependent on continued state spending and economic growth, both of which have declined in recent decades (ibid.:185). Lacking this, "competing groups of local and regional leaders have so little to lead, and so small a chance of altering the current path of change, that it seems a mistake to think of them as elites" (ibid.:172).

Civil service bureaucrats, commanding no patronage and unable to mobilize directly, have even less autonomy from which to build enduring power. While they may be able to use their prestige as professionals to mobilize some popular support, they cannot do so in opposition to politicians (Parry 1969:74). As the case of the Fairweathers makes clear, prestige itself is dependent on some kind of social validation; with the departure of the British as mediating agents, and lacking ties to political leaders, civil servants have no source of autonomous strength. Even their jobs become vulnerable in the absence of an alliance with the party in power, who increasingly recruit aides and consultants from the business and professional groups, both local and foreign. The challenges that have contributed to a degree of ethnic solidarity have not sustained political unity; facing opposition from governing politicians, creoles have increasingly sought better employment opportunities in the States.

Pointing to continued creole dominance of the state in Sierra Leone, Abner Cohen (1981b:317) concludes that covert organization within freemasonic orders created the "consciousness, cohesion, and conspiracy" necessary to maintain elite status. He describes the creole ability to advance their group interests by manipulating cultural forms--including kinship, religion, origin myths, and ceremonials of all sorts. Even so, in the last analysis their ability to sustain themselves as an elite depended on their ownership of land and urban housing, which experienced a dramatic rise in value in the postindependence era (ibid.:319).⁵¹ In the absence of such economic support, it is doubtful whether cohesion and conspiracy would have been sufficient to maintain elite status from one generation to the next.

Increasingly, as third world countries are compelled to abandon state-led development plans and large-scale public spending programs, the idea of a self-sustaining political elite, allied with but separate from the ownership of capital, must be subject to scrutiny. While the state may remain the largest employer, as in Belize, what it provides is an avenue of mobility that is upward and ultimately out, rather than a basis for an independent class that can reproduce itself from generation to generation.

Notes

1. The appendix was added by the London printer, A.J. Valpy, "without the knowlege and sanction of the Magistrates" as "so honorable a testimony, not only to the gallantry of the small band of White Settlers, but also to the devotion and zeal of the Negroes in the defence of their Masters' lives and properties, ought to be rescued from oblivion...."

2. George Hyde to Earl of Bathurst, 3 February 1827; CO123/38.

3. An item on "St. George's Kaye" in The New Era, September 9, 1871, opined that this history was "rapidly fading into the shadowy indistinctness of unrecorded incident," and should be rescued from oblivion, but did not try so to do.

4. "Poke-and-do-boy" was a reference to the rations of pork and flour allotted to slave woodcutters.

5. This opinion, opposed by Stanley Olivier, was endorsed by the Colonial Agents, who opined that such an issue would bring the colony "down to the level of the worst of the South American countries," and ultimately prevailed. See notes on Wilson to Chamberlain 22 November 1897; CO123/229.

6. Merchants large and small lost no time capitalizing on the theme. Krug and Oswald, large importers, ran ads for "Shoulder to Shoulder" whiskey bottled by Findlater & Co. in Glasgow, along with buttons with the same inscription.

7. At the turn of the century, local producers struggled in vain against the growing power of the United Fruit Company--first to buy newly opened government land cheaply and then to determine the recipients of the government-subsidized mail contracts.

8. Despard to Sydney, 31 October 1787; CO123/6. Described in his will, dated 1784, as a merchant of Black River Bartlett claimed new lands as an evacuee. He died in 1800.

9. At this point only one man, James Pitt Lawrie, had over 100 slaves; General Return, 22 October 1790; CO 123/9.

10. The births of Elisabeth and Margaret to James and Susan Hyde are both recorded in the baptismal records of St. John's Church in Belize; both are indicated as being white.

11. Douglas to Hyde 1 January 1820; R2, p.9, AB.

12. 1826 Census, AB; see also Codd to Bathurst, 13 May 1827, enclosing a Return of Public Functionaries who are Proprietors of Slaves, compiled by George Westby, December 31, 1826. Marshall Bennett, another Supreme Court judge, has a total of 271 slaves.

13. HO 107; 1664, p. 312.

14. A claim notice in the Honduras Gazette (2.10.1866) registered a claim by them as late as 1866.

15. Eve and Adney, free women of color, are listed in 1790 with two free men, including a Joe Broaster, in a household headed by two white men, Marcus Belisle and Nicolas Croft. Her father may have been Absalom Broaster, a white mahogany cutter and property owner. See Despard, General Return of Inhabitants, 22 October 1790; C0123/9.

16. By 1823 Adney had established a household with William Alexandre France, another large landowner; in 1832 they still had 76 slaves, and registered 9 apprentices in 1839. Hyde and Hodge later bought much of the land held by W. Alexandre France (see Bolland and Shoman 1977:79).

17. Hyde to Bathurst 2 March 1827 and Hyde to Horton 11 June 1827; C0123/38.

18. It is not known when he died or dissolved his company. A sale of mahogany works in New River in 1863 locates them next to that of "Messrs. Geo. Hyde & Co" (Deed Bk 2, p.152).

19. David apparently sold this house and lot to a Mr, Cunningham, who in turn sold it to Mr. J.B. Smith. When Smith could not pay the interest, James Bartlett Hyde, David's grandson, borrowed the money from millionaire Robert Turton and bought it for his own large family.

20. Owing to some sharp practices by his lawyer, Col. W.J. Slack, and his clerk Thomas Barker, Austin Gabourel's money did not go to his children, but ended up in the hands of logging contractor Ben Stewart. Slack and Barker were later shot when they pressed too hard for payment on a man named Johnston, to whom Slack had sold a boat.

21. James' son Charles was careful to distinguish the Hydes from local whites--Burns, Hunters, Bradleys, Bowens--though his father looked as white as any of them.

22. Sally and Sara could of course be the same woman, since one is a diminutive of the other and registry officials often spelled names different ways. But two Hyde women, a daughter of Captain George, and one of Patrick Charles, both spoke of their fathers as half brothers to Percy Herbert.

23. The words are from the Colonial Guardian (1.21.1899); the Clarion (1.18.1899) called him "one of those quiet unassuming men," adding "although he was not a prominent public man yet there can be no doubt that he exercised a beneficial influence on many of his countrymen in public matters."

24. This included land at Seine Bight and a house in Albert Street. Both spinsters, they inherited other property in Albert Street from their godmother.

25. With the exception of small grants to his grandchildren and other small legacies, he left his business and house on Vernon Street to his friend, Avis Leacock.

26. William Usher to Prince of Wales, 20 January 1815; CO123/24.26.2228.

27. Bathurst to Arthur, 20 November, 1815; R1, p. 219, AB.

28. Usher to Macdonald, 27 June, 1842; R17, p. 71, AB.

29. Honduras Gazette and Commercial Advertizer, June 16, 1827.

30. Of the other two girls, Jane Elizabeth remained a spinster; she died in 1867 at age 41. Caroline had a daughter, Lily, named in her brother Henry's will, but the father is not named.

31. Two sons died young: Charles Beach at age 5 and John Hume, who "was cruelly murdered" at age 19 at Manatee; his tombstone at Yarborough tells the story.

32. These Ushers are not part of the family history. Rev. Hulse noted that "Alfred had other illegitimate children-- John James Usher whose progeny we need not relate..."

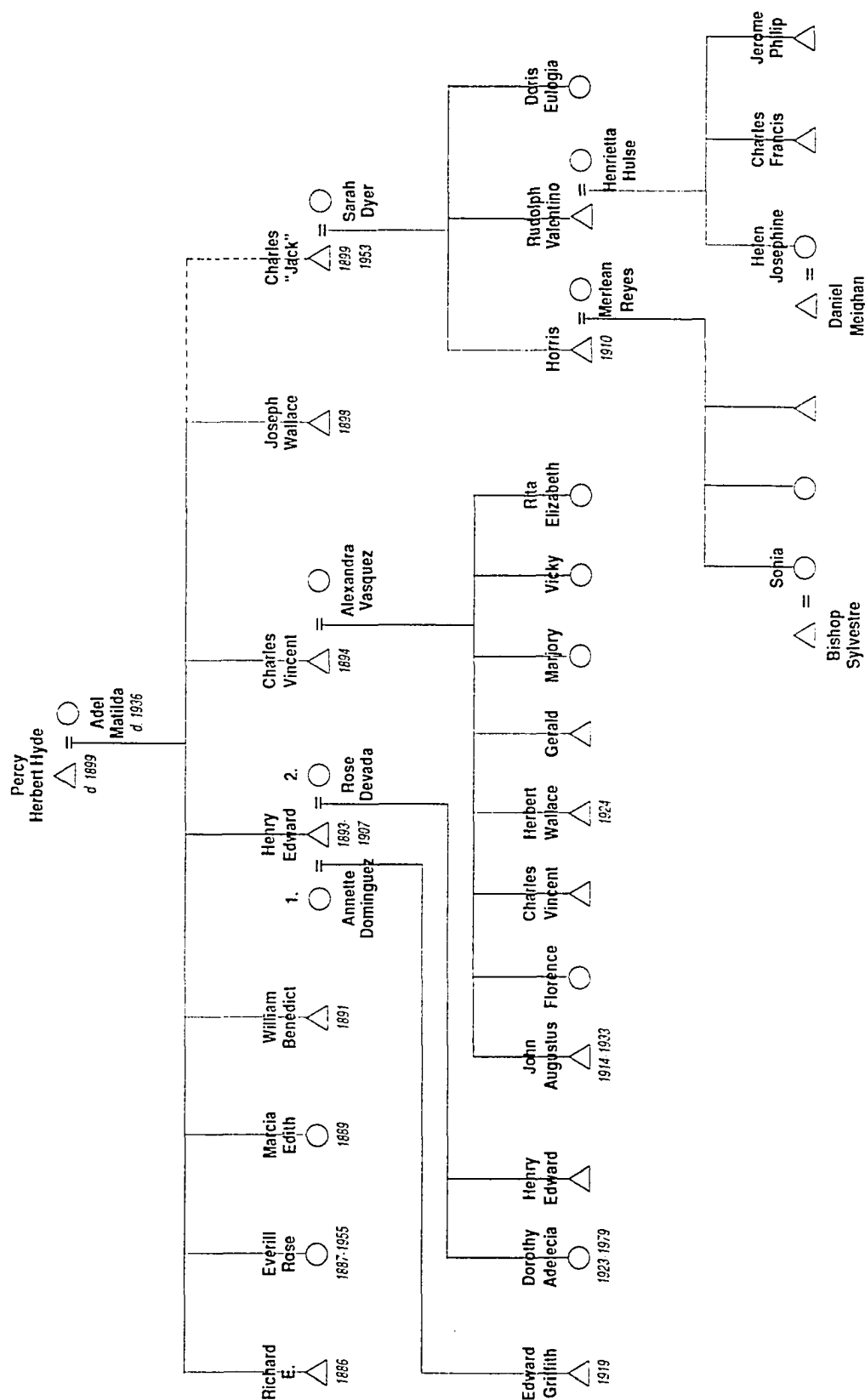
33. Gahné added: "this officer is one never likely to run any risk in prejudicing his promotion or displeasing the powers that be, particularly when it is to put "Honourable" before his name" (Colonial Guardian 2.28.1891).

34. Though noted in his Clarion obituary for his help to the poor (as chair of the Belize Permanent Building Society), as manager of the Belize Estate Company he continually opposed proposed labor reforms (Ashdown 1979a:119).

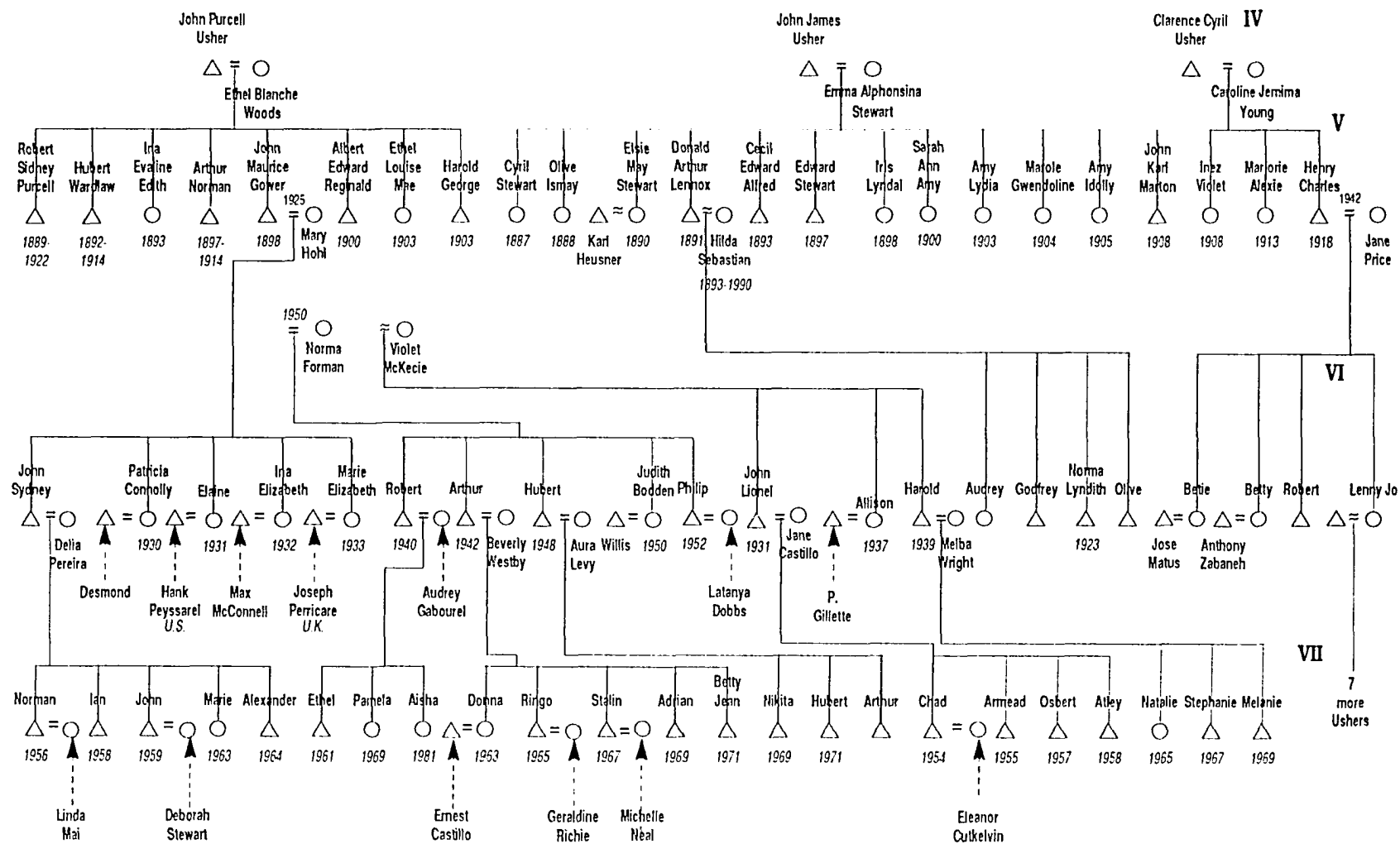
35. Annie Marian married an American and lives in the States; Robert Wardlaw married an American and lives in England; Helen and Shirley are married and live in Canada.

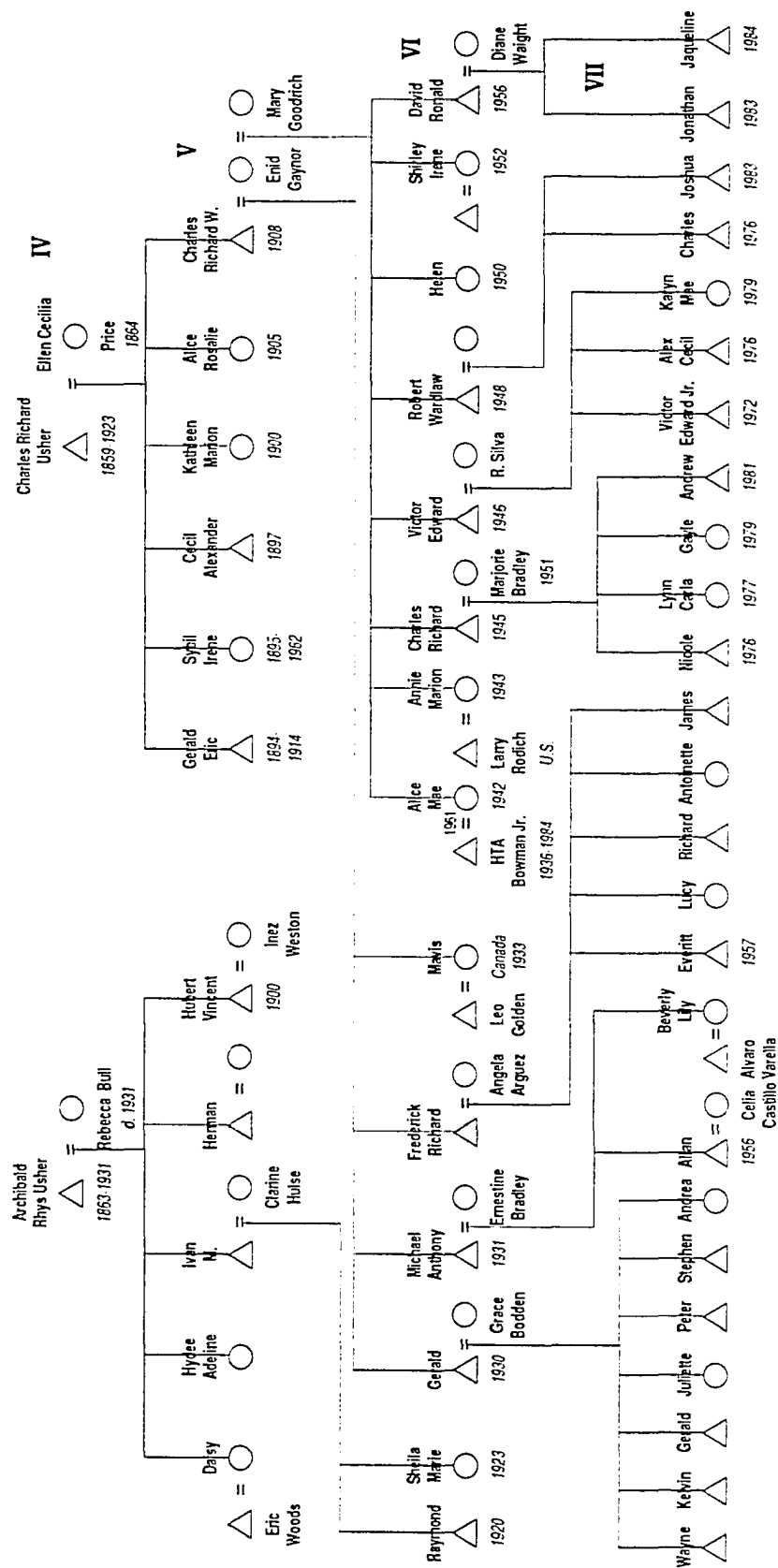
36. See for example the Clarion, April 8, 1898.

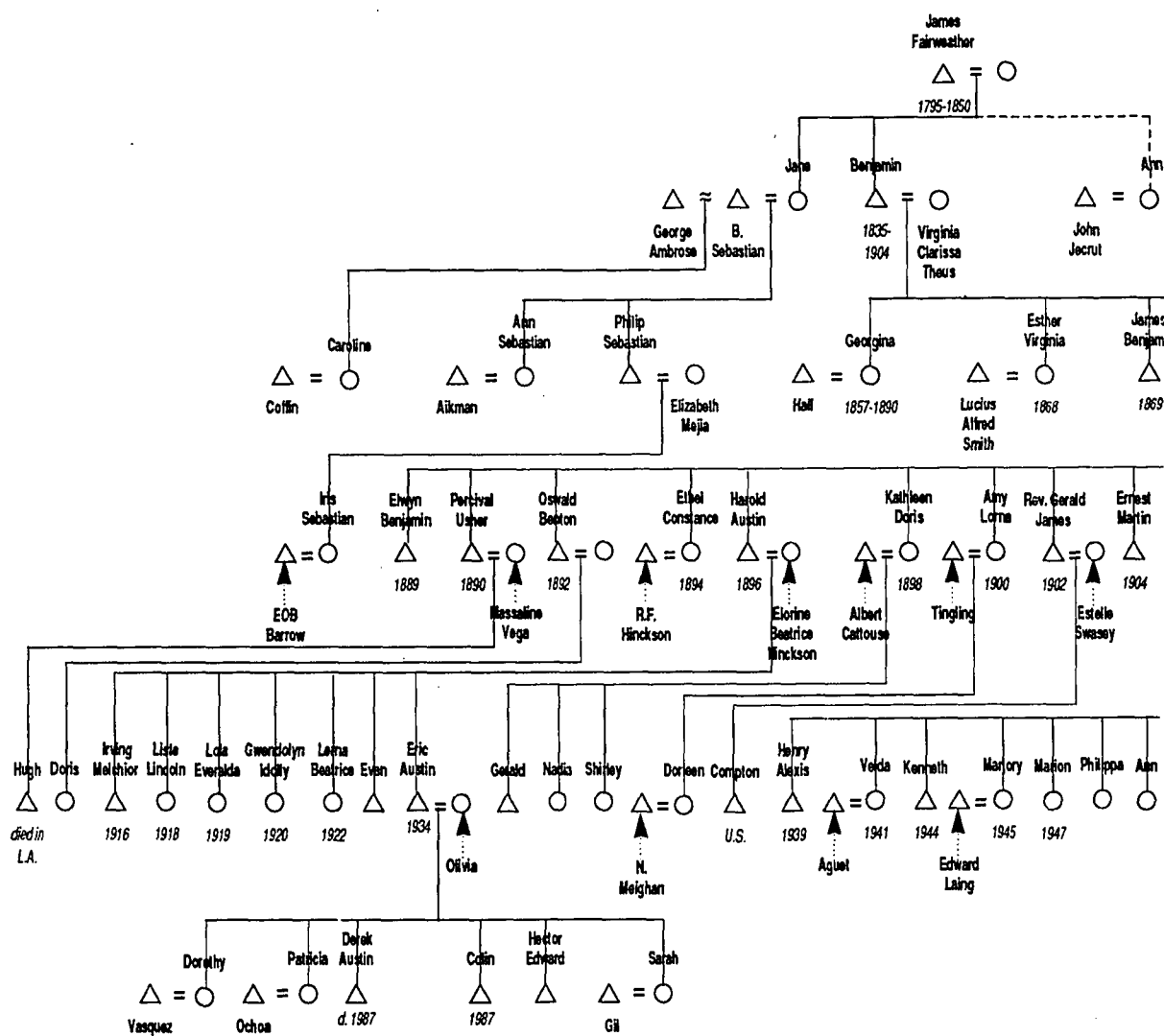
37. Francis Haylock Jr. is himself listed in Despard's 12th class: "people of mixed colour possessed of no property."
38. The Honduras Almanack for 1830 includes Francis Haylock as the owner of a small schooner Ocean Piper.
39. See Colonial Guardian, February 27, 1897.
40. The Daily Clarion, April 8, 1940.
41. See Colonial Guardian, December 7, 1895, February 8, 1896; Times of Central America, February 7, 1896.
42. See Colonial Guardian December 17 and 31, 1904; January 7, 1905. Largely middle-class creoles, their politics ranged from pro-empire Philip Woods to Garveyite Isaiah Morter.
43. Though Haylock himself never ran for the new Belize Town Board, Gahné received the most votes in the first elections. See Colonial Guardian, March 19, 1887, May 12, 1894, April 9, 1909; Clarion April 8, 1940; cf. Ashdown 1979a:122-23.
44. His obituary in the Clarion in 1901 states that he was a member of the Legislative Council in 1867, but the Government Blue Books of that and subsequent years show no record of his membership before 1886.
45. Fairweathers state that James' wife was Miskito Indian, while a local historian says James himself was Miskito, and came to Belize in 1848 with the Miskito king's entourage.
46. Fairweather may have taken the information from Benjamin's obituary, which appeared in the Clarion in 1904.
47. His first son went to Barbados, his second son moved to Cayo, and his third son died young.
48. One of his grandfather's firm beliefs was that telegraphic communication was vital for the colony (Clarion 2.4.1904).
49. As such, he refused a proposal for adult suffrage in 1945 (Ashdown 1979a:245).
50. Jamaica may have been atypical in opportunities for free coloured after emancipation. Trouillot (1992b) narrates how lack of capital and the refusal of former slaves to work on plantations restricted opportunities for this group in both Dominica and Haiti, propelling it into the political arena.
51. It also resulted from lack of unity among "tribal" political groups, who turned to creoles to run the state (A. Cohen 1981b:319).

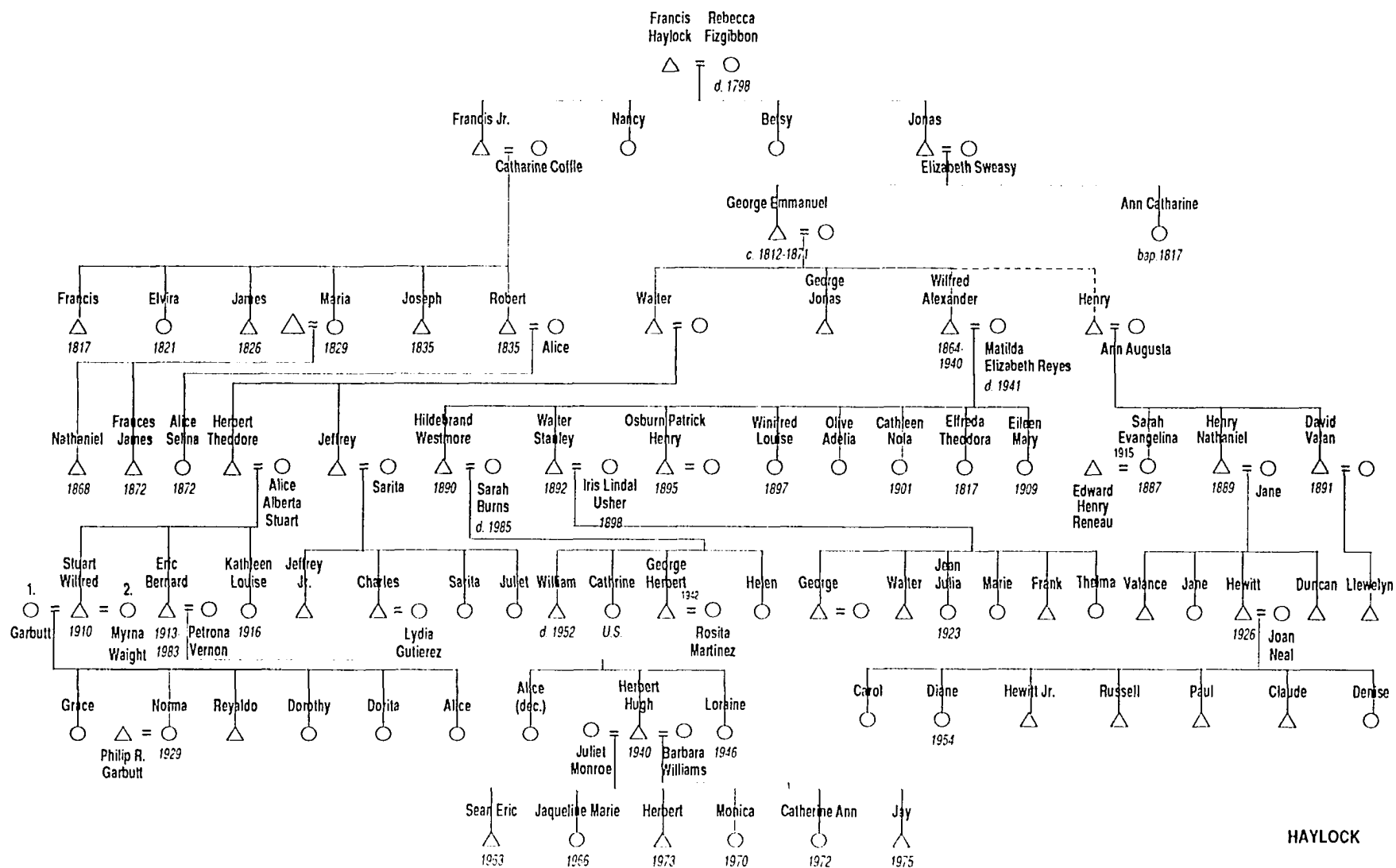


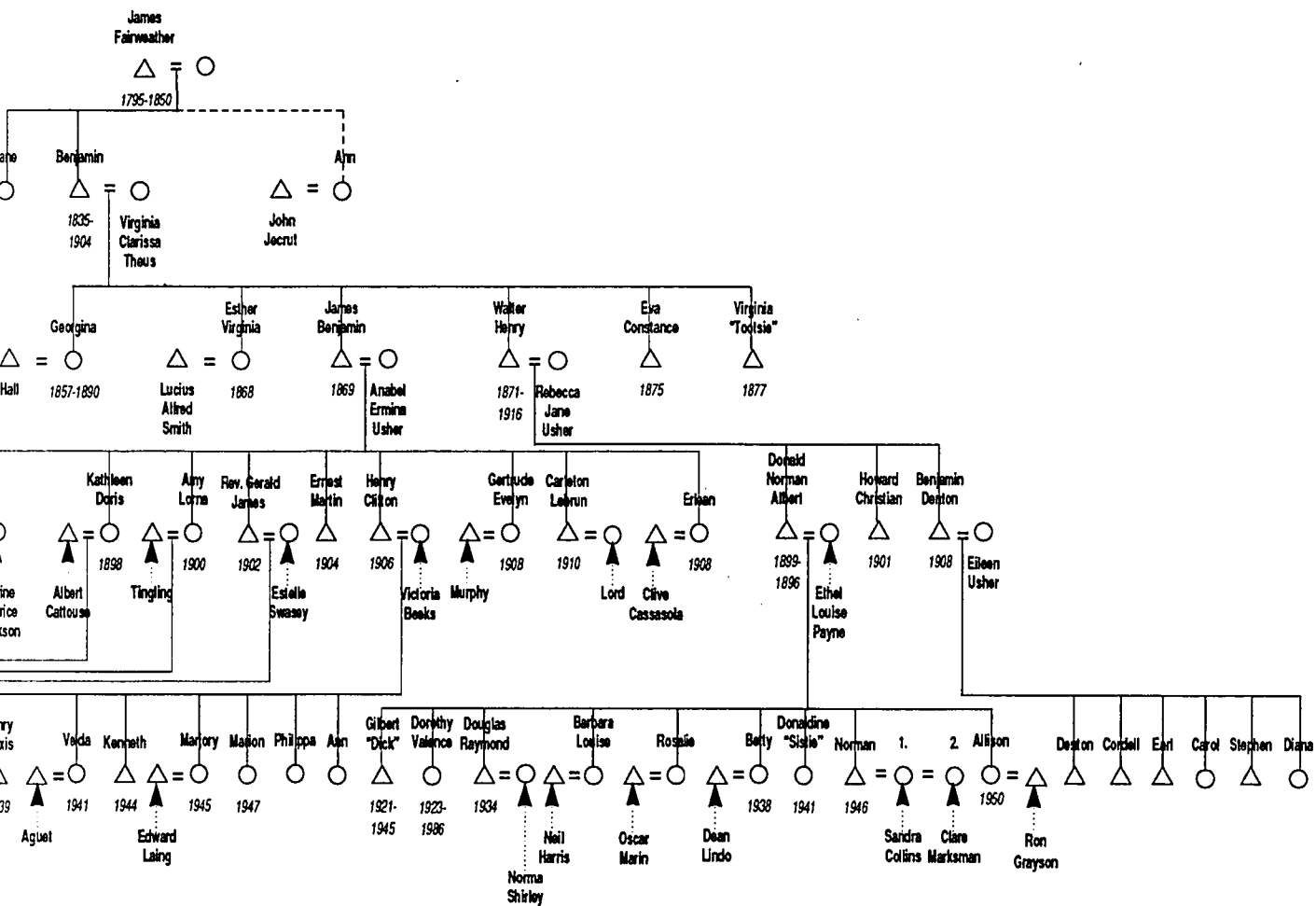
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CHAPTER 6

Arena and Agency in Elite Reproduction and Ethnic Identity

Class and ethnicity can be seen as alternative ways of mobilizing for economic or political goals in society. Necessary to both forms of mobilizing is a relationship, subjective as well as objective, to an other, which is what gives group boundaries their salience (Barth 1969). Ethnic boundaries, as Barth defines them, require at least two groups, allowing the formulation of insiders and outsiders for each. Thus people's perception of the other, constructed in historical circumstances, determines the way in which people perceive themselves vis à vis that other, and accordingly mobilize along that crucial perception. But while such a perception, as Orlando Patterson has pointed out, is essential to ethnicity, it is not necessary in the determination of class position (1975:309-10).

This point is useful in understanding the apparent primacy of ethnicity in people's day-to-day consciousness, a point noted by a number of anthropologists in the field. Philippe Bourgois (1989), in a study of class and ethnicity on a banana plantation on the Atlantic coast of Costa Rica and Panama, early on confronted the fact that ethnicity rather than class formed the primary basis of identity, despite the fact that the struggle for power and resources provided the framework for ethnic differentiation. He attributes this to the salience of the ideological over the material dimension in peoples' everyday lives and concludes

that "ideology and political mobilization are what render ethnicity significant and, to a large extent, define ethnicity" (1989:xii).

While class is defined analytically as an economic relationship, the relationship takes on meaning for its members in the process of class formation, that is, the historical process that gives rise to consciousness of this objective relationship and mobilization to deal with it (Marx 1851; Thompson 1966; Nash 1977; cf. R. Williams 1976). Thus class can be used in two ways at once: both in the analytic sense, based on the objective criteria of the analyst--namely, the relation to the means of production--and in the sense of a consciously identified group. Classes are defined as "economic groups determined by the productive forces of the society which, consciously or unconsciously, behave in such a way as to optimize their economic interests and position in the society" (Patterson 1975:310). The same is not true of ethnic allegiance, for which unconscious allegiance and action is not possible. Rather, as DeVos (1975:16) points out, "the ethnic identity of a group of people consists of their subjective, symbolic or emblematic use of any aspect of culture in order to differentiate themselves from other groups."

The production of cultural difference, which determines how and where ethnic boundaries are drawn, occurs within a specific field of power relations. People are constructed as "the other" in an historical process within an inter-

connected world, a process which functions to "differentiate the world as it connects it" (Gupta and Ferguson 1992:16). The intensely conscious representation of empire which characterized the last decade of the 19th century ensured that awareness of power relations would be a conscious part of class and ethnic group formation (Trouillot 1990; R.T. Smith 1988).

However, the arenas in which such differentiation occurs are various, as the history of elite families in Belize demonstrates. They include not only colonies and nations, but also geographical regions and occupational and conceptual domains. Each in turn define its appropriate agents: old and young, male and female, givers and takers, authentic or inauthentic representatives. In concluding this dissertation, this chapter will look more generally at the treatment of arenas and agency in analyses of elite formation and reproduction. Focusing on the role of generational change, it will try to identify a measure of elite status that is applicable in different situations. It will then look more closely at creole identity, as it has been defined and contested in different arenas, public and private, national and international. As the public has increasingly become an international arena, a final section will look at the shifting context of dependency and its implications for the production of creole identity in post-independence era.

Kinship and Elites in the Study of Ethnicity

The examination of elite formation and reproduction in Belize demonstrates that processes of economic location and capital accumulation, occupational mobility, and family reproduction occur in ethnically separate worlds. Thus whites and mestizos have consolidated elite status based on separate family networks in the process of capital accumulation and agricultural development in different regions of the country, while creoles have followed a path of occupational mobility leading ultimately out of the country--a path embarked upon more recently by Garifuna. A preference for endogamous marriage within each is reproduced in the choice of business partners and professional associations. This reality, I have argued, is necessarily obscured by a focus on the "creolization" of Caribbean society, or the identification of a "creole" elite, independent of ethnic components, at any given time.

Although the literature on elite families in Latin America avoids the confusion inherent in the notion of a creole elite, a similar difficulty resides in the tendency to look at generational change both as a dynamic within specific kin units and as a consequence of externally generated historical change. A comparison of two studies--upwardly mobile blacks in a poor rural region of Ecuador (Whitten 1965) and national family oligarchies in Central America (Balmori et al. 1982)--reveals this contradiction, raising the question of how to render a model of elite

reproduction comparable across widely different degrees of wealth and power. At the same time, the studies present two points of comparison for the creole elite in Belize, which while constituted at a national level nevertheless comprises petty bourgeois families with very little in the way of capital accumulation.

Whitten's model is limited to a 50-year time period. Families in the first generation, which began small-scale cash farming in the 1920s, maximized kin ties in order to practice village-wide reciprocity. Those in second generation, benefiting from a postwar economic boom, inserted themselves as a middle class between the lower and upper classes. They narrowed their kin ties, severing links with rural relatives while intensifying links with local kin. The third generation consolidated the gains of the second, moving from middlemen traders to suppliers of lower-class labor to upper-class employers in the mid-1960s. This generation adopted "respectability symbols"-- behavior and values suitable to the middle class, especially with regard to women. Young women tried to marry up, which often meant moving into town. The stem kindred, defined as a self-perpetuating unit with shared interests and obligations, consolidated its interests in order to reproduce itself. By the fourth generation, however, elite families gradually lost ground, as the kin expanded faster than the economy, making contractual obligations impossible to fulfill. Members of this generation held onto their economic and

social position, but they were unable to pass it on to their children.

Whitten's generations each span approximately 25 years; families include parents, children, and often grandparents and cooperate as a unit, adapting to the demands imposed by expanding numbers. Changing opportunities within the wider sphere are not central to this dynamic. In addition, the activities--including ideological production--of the "ambitious young men of the fourth generation" are not detailed. Thus the model leaves unexamined the way in which the newly educated generation might find an alternative identity within the broader process of nation-building, as happened with middle-class creoles in the 1960s in Belize.

However, these Ecuadoran families share a number of features with elite creole families in Belize. For example, despite their middle-class status, they are by most standards poor; as petty government officials, small shopkeepers, and fishermen, carpenters, or mechanics, they live in houses without indoor plumbing. The upper class is a small group of outside whites and mestizos--primarily sawmill owners and government officials. Moreover, as for Belizean creoles, the importance of community values and respectability to members of the black middle class derives from their need to retain the favor of the white upper class; such favor was key in obtaining employment and reciprocal obligations that enabled them to move into the middle class. Such behavior, moreover, was most commonly

exhibited by "the men responsible for dealing with the upper class," rather than all kin members.

By contrast to this petty-bourgeois village "elite," the notable Central American families analyzed by Balmori et al. (1982) are wealthy by any standards: their economic and political power was built from the local to national and international levels, to the point that the state itself depended on an alliance with wealthy families. They formed marriage alliances as a kind of business association--allying power and money; they intermarried with other wealthy families and with more wealthy foreigners; they started off with property and expanded it into corporations.

The generations here each span 50 years, extending from the Bourbon reforms of the 1780s to the corporations of the 1930s. Intergenerational mobility within these families dates from the mid 18th century, when resident landowners married entrepreneurial outsiders. The second generation increased marriage alliances, further diversified, and began to enter the professions, forming social clubs and fraternal orders. The third generation, still better educated, expanded into political careers, enjoying the fruits of the earlier expansion. Thereafter, however, families failed to expand alliances and lost ground to the new corporate organization of the 20th century.

The selection process wrought by historical change is analyzed by Balmori et al. in generational terms; family, fortune, and intellectual point of view were all defined by

the era in which they were formed. The authors conclude: "The most important variation among the notable families was generational" (1932:74). However, the analysis does not try to locate an internal generational mechanism, such as succession management or competing economic expansion strategies, but looks at the historical factors that enabled certain families to do well in each period.

The study of elite formation in Belize by means of specific family histories points to the need to look at generational change both in terms of internal family processes and external, historical processes (Hareven 1982). My research suggests that family dynamics varied less, from one generation to the next, than they did between different ethnic groups. A tendency to marry up, for example, to expand or contract family units, or to enter political life, to the extent these could be observed in genealogical and occupational data, depended more on the ethnic group than on different generations within each. Similarly, while the power inequalities of the larger society defined different opportunities in different historical eras, these were less important than the continuation of very different types of opportunities at any given time for different ethnic groups. This is because kinship dynamics, as McDonough (1986:4) points out, derive from economic status, which in turn depends on the wider context. Writing of elite families in Barcelon, he concludes: "It was not through a particularly fortuitous model of the family that this group triumphed but

rather through the ability of power groups to adapt the family to new settings and problems."

The absence of a ruling class in Caribbean societies, as R.T. Smith (1988) points out, has resulted in a focus on elites in the analysis of social structure. This focus runs the risk of using kinship organization and social behavior to identify a local elite and substitute it for a ruling class. The most recognizable characteristics of elites--their organization by kin and connections, their membership in elite clubs and community organizations, and the "acts of charity, philanthropy, patronage, and hospitality" that characterize their behavior (Schneider and Schneider 1983a), while they may describe a dominant economic class, are by no means exclusive to it. The result of failing to clarify these distinctions is a conflating of elite status based on social behavior or political status with that based on class. This tendency is reproduced by local observers, with the consequence that the nature of power and privilege in society may become needlessly mystified.

How then should we identify an elite? Hansen and Parrish (1983:268) have proposed a definition combining means of organization--via "kin and connections"--with a class-specific relationship to the means of production: the ability of the family organization to control sufficient capital "to become a market factor in at least one sector of economic endeavor." This, however, would on the face of it totally eliminate the applicability of the term to most

countries of the third world, and certainly to those of the periphery, including the Caribbean. More generally applicable is their second measure, that the control of economic and political resources by an elite must extend over several generations (ibid.; cf. McDonough 1986:6). Thus if the key to elite status is its organization by "kin and connections," a further consideration--how this status is maintained over generations--returns us to class: those families unable to reproduce their control of resources over time, regardless of their social networks and behavior, or political or moral vision, are not properly called elites.

Such a distinction would avoid entirely the problematic category of political elite and the debate concerning its autonomy. According to the Schneiders (1983a:159):

Generally speaking, the term elite implies that economic power and political power are analytically separate, and that political institutions such as those of the state have autonomy from, if not control over, economic process. Most, if not all, authorities on political elites thus insist that the minorities they study derive a significant portion of their power from 'extraeconomic' sources."

The distinction, however, is more analytical than empirical, as considerable overlap characterizes the members of political and economic elites. Elites, they conclude, "must always have some relationship to concentrated wealth and power, whether the concentration is familial, communal, or institutional" (1983a:160). McDonough (1986:5) agrees, noting that while elite power is exercised in different arenas, no one single arena is sufficient; rather, he

concludes, "over time, economic and political domination become linked to prestige, cultural expertise, and ideological dominance through the group and individuals who are powerholders."

The Schneiders also specify the direction of this overlap, stating that elite behavior results from an effort to justify its relationship to wealth and power, often by obscuring the class interests that underlie it. Orlove (1979), looking at late 19th-century Peru, concludes that it was to consolidate, rather than justify, its economic position that a new merchant class created a number of social institutions, including social and literary clubs, kin and compadrazgo links, and educational institutions. Genuine elite status thus derives from wealth and power.

If by this retrospective test elites are distinguished in terms of their relationship to resources over time, the patterns of organization and ideological justifications they share with nonelites can be examined for their impact on other forms of identity, such as ethnicity. A focus on the efforts of families to reproduce themselves as elites over generations may shed light on how the frequently observed class/color hierarchy actually operates. In Belize, the true elite, those who have held onto land or capital or both, are and have been, white over generations; while they maintain strong ties to the state, via the two major political parties, and some have even occupied political office, they are distinct from politicians as well as top-

level civil servants. These latter two groups are in turn distinct from each other; politicians are for the most part middle-class creole lawyers or mestizo businessmen with roughly equal economic status, though one that is both much less notable and much less permanent than those in the first group. At yet another, lower economic level are the civil servants, once predominantly middle-class creoles, and now typically mestizos and Garifuna as well. The clear correspondence of brown skin with the second group and dark skin with the third is much harder to distinguish today than it was 50 or even 30 or 20 years ago, as dark-skinned creoles increasingly enter law and politics and mestizos choose careers in the civil service. Nevertheless, the exclusivity that characterizes the local white business elite has historically defined the parameters of choice for creoles and mestizos alike.

Gender, Ideology, and the Construction of Arenas

Belizean creole identity as it is constructed in the historical record is both public and male. Accounts of the late 19th century which provided the material for this study describe an all-male world. This was true not only of official dispatches and newspaper columns but also of diaries and personal papers. While white women were relegated to the society columns, creole women rarely appeared at all in the papers before the turn of the century. Moreover, while professional and social ties were

possible among middle-class white men and the better-off coloured and even black men, they did not extend to families; women remained more completely within class and ethnic communities.¹ The construction of separate spheres has had enduring consequences for creole ethnic identity. The gendered division has to this day differentiated creole ethnic consciousness into public and private realms.

Explanations that depend on a public/private dichotomy are always problematic--particularly those which locate the origin of the subordination of women in this dichotomy, hypothesizing that women's childbearing and childrearing functions which kept them at home in their productive years (Rosaldo 1974). Feminists have criticized this formulation as generalizing from the history of gender divisions under capitalism to the status of universal truth. Many objected to the assumption that the private or domestic sphere was always devalued vis à vis the public, arguing that devaluation derived from the capitalist division of labor (Leacock 1978; see Yanagisako and Collier 1987). Others argued that the dichotomy itself, where it existed, was the product of specific historical circumstances, namely the development of state societies and capitalist economies (see Mukhopadhyay and Higgins 1988). According to Marx, "The state is based on the contradiction between public and private life, between general interest and private interest," while Jameson (1986:69) asserts that the split between private and public is in fact "one of the

determinants of capitalist culture."

The very idea of a separate public sphere did not arise in England and Europe until the emergence of national states in the 17th and 18th centuries. At this point, according to Habermas (1985:52): "society had become a concern of public interest to the degree that the reproduction of life in the wake of the developing market economy had grown beyond the bounds of private domestic authority."

More recently a number of authors have argued that the way in which capitalism has structured public and private realms of production and reproduction does not restrict the existence of such realms to capitalist economies, or even to state societies (Comaroff 1987). This is particularly true with regard to the arenas in which ethnic identity takes shape. Any polity--settlement, colony, nation-state--presents changing forms of imposed identity--slave, subject, citizen--into which ethnicity is fitted, or within which it takes shape (see Beckett 1988).

Rapp (1979) argues that the public/private concept is essentially ideological, comprising "powerful cultural statements which simultaneously mask and reveal contradictions that grow out of necessary productive social relations." As such, these contradictions are not limited to capitalist or state formations but are "created in historically specific times and places when resource relations between households and larger political economic arenas become problematic" (1979:510). Any discussion of

public and private realms thus requires an examination of the specific conditions in which they emerge.

The construction and representation of creole ethnic identity in Belize took shape in a colonial outpost of empire during the period of British capitalist expansion--and the export to the colonies of a self-conscious British middle class. The men who administered the less important corners of empire in the late 19th century were the crusaders of the new middle class. Many of them had their roots in the Anglican evangelical movement, which was at once "intensely public and intensely private" (Hall 1979:24). A letter from a prominent member of the London evangelical movement to Governor Macaulay began: "You have been a grave and active African governor, surrounded by business and difficulties and dangers, and enjoying little affectionate and no female society." Your wife, it added, "must endeavour to assimilate herself to you, and you to her, without either of you departing from your proper sphere..." (quoted in *ibid.*:26).

The predominant view of the rise of the middle class limits its perspective to male actors. Briggs (1956:68-69) describes the emergence of this class in the 19th century as one able to articulate "responsible middle-class demands" in contrast to the "revolutionary claims of the people." Authority and respectability thus came to characterize the self-perception of the middle ranks, who saw themselves as an opinion-making group in a changing society (*ibid.*).

Such analyses, "structured around a series of events in which women played no part," derive from the fact that they take as a given the separation between the public and domestic realm (Hall 1981:165). Hall argues that in Britain this separation reflected the new organization of production and was part and parcel of the way the new middle class viewed itself: "the ideology of separate spheres played a crucial part in the construction of a specifically middle-class culture," she writes, "separating them off from both the aristocracy and gentry above them and the working class below them" (ibid.).

The ideological construction of an all-male public arena in the period 1780 to 1850, "built on the basis of those who are defined as individuals--men with property" (Hall 1981:170), found particular resonance in Belize, where women did not figure in the economic, political, or social construction of society. The Public Meeting, begun in 1760, was a political realm open to men of property only. Over time, as free people of colour and later free blacks claimed equal political rights, women were still not counted. In the late 19th century, voluntary societies gave creole males the same opportunities they gave the British middle classes--both "learnt the skills of local government and established their rights to political leadership" (ibid.)--while women performed the domestic tasks that made this possible.

As the articulation of separate spheres in middle-class life was particularly pronounced at the ideological level,

newspapers played an essential role in this process. These accordingly changed from vendors of news to dealers in public opinion--both "mediator and intensifier of public discussion" (Habermas 1985). In the United States as well, a virtual cult of domesticity emerged in the late 19th century, generated by a flood of religious and literary publications devoted to the doctrine of private and public spheres (Ryan 1981:146ff). Ryan analyzes this production as the end-product of a profound cultural and social rift along gender lines, which started from the sexual division of labor outside the home (ibid.:191). This division was of longer standing in Belize and accordingly did not require the same ideological buttressing. Nevertheless, the late 19th century saw a proliferation of newspapers, all dedicated to the issues that concerned middle-class males, white and coloured, who considered themselves "natives." Their critique involved the articulation of the worthy qualities of the native people, the constant reiteration of their loyalty, and their dedication to the British values and institutions that distinguished Belize from the surrounding "Spanish" republics in Central America.

Creoles took the lead in all of these efforts. British values of justice and fair play, and British institutions of learning, law, and government, formed part of the language in which creoles proclaimed their right to self-government and later, independence. Despite challenges, this tradition has endured in the creole public presentation, and forms the

basis of the oft-remarked affinity of middle-class creoles for the culture and values of the British (Ashdown 1979a; Grant 1976; Shoman 1987). Creoles thus articulated respect for British "traditions" of education, justice, and social harmony, as a way to claim recognition from the empire. At the same time they have remained far more open in their use of language or choice of marriage partner than either whites or middle-class mestizos (Brockmann 1977; Ashcraft and Grant 1966).² Creoles in Spanish-speaking towns learn rudimentary Spanish, while creole is looked down upon by mestizos (Brockmann 1977), and creoles are the only ethnic group that regularly intermarry with all other groups.

The Family and Private Life

While the division of home and work engendered a private as well as a public sphere, the private sphere did not take on a set of separate meanings until somewhat later—largely due to the separation of home and workplace and the shift from the family as a productive unit (Shattuck 1990; Ryan 1981:147). The idea of privacy as "a valued condition related to individualism" came into its own in the 19th century, both in England and the United States, where the family became the focus of middle-class private life (Shattuck 1990). The "cult of domesticity" like the notion of the "self-made man," Ryan (1981:147) points out, were based on the assumption that the household was no longer the place of production.

While the development of the family, as both productive and reproductive unit, was very different under slavery, slavery in the Caribbean was not separate from the development of capitalism, but an integral part of capitalist expansion. Slavery, as a "capitalist harnessing of an archaic form of economy" (Reddock 1985:63-64), uniquely shaped the way in which both work and family life was organized.

Recent analyses of women and slavery assert that while slavery separated productive activity from other aspects of social life, as under capitalism, the slave plantation differed from other forms of capitalist organization in that men and women were not themselves separated into productive and domestic spheres. In Barbados, women and men were equally involved in the "public world of work, and both were equally exploited" (Sutton and Makiesky-Barrow 1977:293), while in Jamaica "among slaves the housewife did not exist" and "women outnumbered men in the fields because of their lower mortality rates" (Reddock 1985:64). Only after emancipation, with the introduction of wage labor, and, significantly, differential wage rates for men and women, did women's economic function change from the production of commodities to the "reproduction of labor-power" (ibid.:76).

This becomes problematic in looking at slavery in Belize, where a woodcutting economy organized work into very separate domains, albeit based, as argued in Chapter 4, on the production activity of men, not the reproduction

capacity of women.³ While both men and women may have been exploited equally, they were exploited separately. Even the punishments doled out to laborers differed by sex: the archives reveal a disproportionate number of women slaves who suffered tortures barbaric enough to be commented upon, and reports on the apprentice system reveal that women were more often punished than men, most often for absenteeism or disobedience (Bolland 1977b:113).

Also problematic is the argument, which Sutton and Makiesky-Barrow (1977:297-98) make for Barbados, that "the domestic arena was the one area of life that for both sexes was associated with human freedom and autonomy." Domestic life for slaves in Belize became visible only at Christmas, when first slaves and later free laborers returned to Belize Town from the logging camps. Descriptions of the holiday "saturnalia" abound--when street celebrations and sporting competitions continued for days in an atmosphere of "relaxation and license"--some of which was not only allowed but even encouraged (Bolland 1977b:99). All of the activities took place in the street or yard, not in the home; nowhere in these descriptions are women mentioned. Doubtless this is in part the result of a lack of interest in slaves as anything beyond a general category; since descriptions of dancing are frequent it is possible that women participated in equal numbers. But since slaveowners as well as slaves returned to the city at this time, much of the year's entertaining was squeezed into this period, which

would have greatly increased the domestic tasks of female slaves. Relaxation and license may not have loomed so large in the slave woman's holiday activities.

During the second half of the 19th century, as Belize City creoles began to present themselves as a middle class, men articulated institutional identity while women articulated family and ethnic identity. However, they did not thereby experience these identities separately. Unlike Wilson (1973), who regards women's relationship to the family as sentimental or existential and men's as economic and jural, the analysis here is confined to the articulation of values and identities, not the way they are experienced or felt. Looked at over time, men's involvement with the family is as existential as women's, while women are equally if not more involved in economic and legal matters--especially in middle-class families.

The two modes of articulation, however, can be seen as contributing to what Weaver (1984:184-85) views as public and private ethnicity; public ethnicity is that articulated and validated within the context of the colony or nation-state and private ethnicity is that expressed and validated by families and communities in their daily lives. This distinction is useful, moreover, in conceptualizing the process by which ethnic identity takes shape and is passed on from one generation to another. In the late 19th century, middle-class creole men began to articulate a heritage of loyalty and independence, publicly symbolized in the

celebration of the Battle of St. George's Cay. At the same time, creole women articulated and passed on the values that distinguish them from whites--civic duty and giving to the colony rather than taking from it. This is true today, among poor as well as middle-class families; the reiteration of blackness and its association with poverty and ugliness is made by the women in poor creole families (Lundgren 1987), just as the association of blackness with civic consciousness and self-improvement is made by women in better off families.

The need for validation by the colonial rulers, so essential within the public arena, was not at issue within the home or neighborhood. Nor therefore was it subject to the same challenge by future generations; the essence of private ethnicity is that "its content and use are not dependent upon public...debate and determination" (Weaver 1984:184).

Ethnic Identity in Changing Arenas: Local, National, Global

At another level, the arena in which claims to creole identity were made and mediated by different actors, in public as well as private, was always Belize City, the center of government and empire, of political as well as social life. There, as creoles slowly climbed the occupational ladder from woodcutter to blacksmith to civil service clerk, they began to demand greater recognition of their rights as "natives" and participated in the discourse

of political superiority which at once implied both an acceptance and a rejection of British institutions and values. As against a colonial view of "natives" as non-European, or nonwhite, and thus unfit to govern themselves, they projected a view of native or "creole" identity that encompassed master and slave, white, coloured, and black, and emphasized their shared history and traditions.

This kind of broad-based appeal to a common identity is frequently found in independence movements, which generally rely on one of two representations of "native identity" in mobilizing efforts. One insists on the essential differences between the two cultures, the rulers and rule, positing that "they" will never recognize "us" voluntarily, and we must rely on force; the other stresses the essential sameness of the two, appealing to common humanity and a sense of justice as the basis of recognition. Most often, the second is tried first, and only when this fails is the first called upon. However, while broader based, this nonrevolutionary approach loses its potential to unify once its goals are achieved, giving rise to contradictions along class, color, or generational lines.

The lack of closure that initially defined creole identity can be seen in representations of the Battle of St. George's Cay, starting in the late 19th century and continuing for 40 years. Although the British acknowledged the holiday in 1898, its celebration thereafter apparently languished due to lack of resources.⁴ Then in the 1920s,

Monrad Metzgen, light-skinned creole civil servant and loyal subject of empire, took up the "Shoulder to Shoulder" cry with renewed enthusiasm. His booklet of that name, published in 1928, contained not only the dispatches and letters originally published in the 1823 Defence of the Settlers, but a further glorification of the event, entitled "A Little Known But Gallant Episode in Empire History," by the then governor, Sir John Burdon. Metzgen's booklet became a set text for the creole literary society's annual September 10th holiday competitions, and when the Belize Defence Force was formed later that year, with Metzgen one of its first officers, it took the slogan as its motto (Humphreys 1979:9).

Metzgen and Burdon's renewed interest in the tradition of loyalty and unity were to be expected: Marcus Garvey had come to Belize not long before, in 1921, to welcome the formation of a local chapter of the United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), which coming as it did on the heels of a rebellion by returned black servicemen in 1919, no doubt encouraged appeals to racial unity in government and civil service circles. While it might be supposed that the new UNIA chapter would undertake a reexamination of this tradition, however, Garveyites and their paper, the Belize Independent, instead endorsed it heartily. An article on September 12, 1934, entitled "The Spirit of Simon Lamb," reminded readers that it was Lamb, described as "a freeborn black," who kept alive the spirit of "the Tenth"; his at times almost solitary expressions of loyalty, the article

maintained, were the reason the government had finally recognized the anniversary as a permanent public holiday. The paper's editor, Herbert H. Cain, exhorted readers to honor the battle, in which Baymen and slaves stood shoulder to shoulder, and see that the history and legacy were taught in the colony's schools.⁵

In subsequent years, however, this broad vision of creole solidarity began to fracture, as the majority of Belize City's creoles suffered rising unemployment and poverty. Antonio Soberanis, leader of the Workers and Unemployed Movement, who in 1934 had actually led the loyalty parade on horseback, joined Independent columnist Luke Kemp in denouncing the "objectionable concept" of master-slave unity. The glorification of this notion, they argued, had brought them nothing but servitude, when in fact their role in the Battle of St. George's Cay had already won them their freedom and secured Belize for its "natives": "Just why a peculiar type seeks to 'foster loyalty and devotion to His Majesty the King and British Empire' rather than unite in a native claim to self-determination," they wrote, "is another real problem to justify in the face of the facts of history" (1949:8).

In fact, loyalty and devotion to empire had for over 50 years been the basis around which creoles had been called to unite for a "native claim"--to representative government if not "self-determination." But to Soberanis and Kemp this tradition had run its course. They were not alone: the

previous year a letter to the Daily Clarion (7.20.1948), by Lloyd Griffith, son of a respected schoolmaster, lamented the fact that creoles regarded the Baymen as black, arguing that the Baymen were in fact white, and the slaves fought with their masters because they had no alternative. And for what? he asked:

Today the negroes (the descendants of the slaves) are in nearly the same position as they were 150 years ago. The Latin elements are given priority in all jobs, while the Negro (the loyal fool who waves more flags than any one else and sings the English National anthem at the top of his voice), gets the dirty and manual jobs when they are to be had.

Kemp and Soberanis went further, however, challenging the origin myth of the creole middle class. The Baymen, they asserted, were neither British nor white: "Native tradition always made out that Moskito [sic] Indians in this area were the first to be called "Beymen," and next the Africans," they wrote; "White settlers merely called themselves 'Beymen' when the expediency arose" (1949:5).

By the 1960s, however, leaders of the independence movement had begun to mobilize beyond Belize City, and thus beyond creoles. In an effort to obtain support of mestizos, who had in large measure remained on the periphery of political struggle, the People's United Party, and its leader George Price, tried to play down the significance of the Battle of St. George's Cay. Following Price's suggestion that the battle had been little more than a skirmish, Herbert Cain's brother, Ernest, tried to rally creoles around the harmonious "native tradition." In a story called

"Baymania" written for a BBC competition in 1965, he asserted that the role of Belizean slaves in the "repulse of the Spanish invasion of 1798" supplies "the basis for the Negroes' claim to occupational rights to the territory" (Cain 1965b). By then, however, younger creoles had begun to awaken to the calls of black consciousness and national liberation then current in the region. Though they shared the resentment of the attacks on the battle, perceiving it as part of a wider effort to de-emphasize Belize City and its creoles in the process of nation-building, calls to loyalty and patriotism no longer resonated with this generation, educated in the civil rights era of the 1960s. Younger creole nationalists increasingly began to articulate a view of creole identity as synonymous with black identity. Accordingly, they sought a new understanding of the battle. Black consciousness leader Evan X. Hyde, for example, citing the oft-quoted story that the loyal slaves had refused a Spanish offer of money and freedom if they would mutiny, suggested that the slaves had in fact taken this offer to their masters and parlayed it into a better one: the promise of freedom and land if they stayed loyal (Hyde 1969).

The ongoing wrangle among creoles over the "truth" of history reflects the success of the 19th-century creole middle class in linking their own identity as creoles with the history of the colony.⁶ Succeeding generations were thus obliged to reinterpret this history in order to differentiate themselves as creoles from the colonial past.

As Bentley (1987:45) writes: "Young and old are always separated by different conceptions of the possible, the reasonable, and the desirable." Changes in the structures of possibility precipitate changes in identity, which once evolved "are assumed to define for people who they truly are as descendants of their ancestors or forebears" (DeVos 1975: 28). History, even personal history, becomes part of the changed representation.

While different ethnic agents have taken up different themes, however, the arena in which they have been played out has remained Belize City, center of creole politics.⁷ Indeed, the generational struggle over creole identity is in part a result of the nature of Belize City as a colonial capital. In the 19th century, the power to legitimize public ethnicity rested with the colony's rulers; those who articulated creole identity within the Belize City arena had to negotiate their own definitions with the British. While at one time the colonial authorities "were the only significant agents in the defining process" (Weaver 1985:185), during the course of the 19th century creoles succeeded in inserting themselves in the process. However, the power of validation remained with the British. Today, in the absence of the colonial rulers, the terms must be redefined, renegotiated, and fought over. Each year in September the battle over the significance of the Battle of St. George's Cay is replayed in the press and political arena among the nation's creoles. Each year, those who draw

upon the themes of loyalty and institutional heritage elicit charges of "colonial mentality": they are called "mimic men," in "funny three-piece suits," as "more British than the British" by a new generation of creole nationalists.

The issue of authenticity which such charges raise has a long history in former colonies. Bastide (1978:68-69) discusses it in terms of "acculturation," noting that the acceptance of white institutions and the value placed on light skin was a pragmatic response to the power relationships of colonialism: "there was no other way to rise socially in a society shaped and controlled by the white man." More specifically, he writes (ibid.:69):

The African's ambition to be a bureaucrat, an intellectual, or a civil servant, to wear a pince-nez and carry a ministerial portfolio, did not reflect idealistic aspirations or hatred of the machine or of manual work. It was simply a recognition of the superior social status the white man accorded to certain professions at the expense of others.

This pragmatism did not rule out rebellion--but only when conditions were right. More often, it included trickery--the embrace of European values while holding on to older forms of knowledge--the "weapon of the weak" which is always ambiguous and never what it seems. Bastide (ibid.:71-73) points out that the structure of the family, with the white patriarch and black mother, itself perpetuated this system of dual values.

Changes in the political economic context accordingly require new forms of adaptation, to new "structures of possibility" and ways to exploit them (Bentley 1987:43): "As

individuals develop new ways of dealing with a changing world, old truths erode; as what was formerly inconceivable becomes commonplace, degrees of sharing and affinity, hence ethnic identities, become problematic." As a result, symbols of ethnicity take on different meanings for a generation which has experienced the world differently, and "conflict over the meaning of ethnicity is likely to place members of senior and junior generations in opposition to each other" (ibid.)

Such generational conflicts are largely a phenomenon of the public construction of ethnicity. Collective representation must remain viable not only as an interpretation of the past but also as a vision of the future, and are thus vulnerable to historical events. Jameson (1986:77-78) explains that cultural postures and attitudes that were once "vital responses" to economic and geographic realities, especially in the third world, become outdated.

[These] then outlive the situations for which they were devised, and survive, in reified forms, as "cultural patterns." Those patterns themselves then become part of the objective situation confronted by later generations, and... having once been part of the solution to a dilemma, then become part of the new problem.

That part of the problem, he might have added, which is most easily assailed by the younger generation. Powerless to change the larger structural inequalities in dependent capitalist societies, they attack the local elite response to those inequalities with particular gusto. In the process,

they attack the ethnic elite's conception of itself and its struggles, and its right to hand on that conception to future generations.

Creoles (especially the older generation) in Belize are currently accused of holding the nation back in its effort to achieve genuine national sovereignty. But all ethnic groups, as Brackette Williams (1989:434) points out, "must guard [their] gains and insist on all credit due." In addition, "they must also insist that the rules and standards of competition against which their accomplishments have been judged do not change so that other groups or new entrants to established groups get an unfair competitive advantage" (ibid.:435-36). When this happens, Williams writes, those who see themselves losing ground to those "they believe have made lesser contributions, they are forced to reassess both the prizes of sacrifice and the cultural construction of self upon which their unequal right to material and symbolic rewards was based" (ibid.:437).

Part of their vulnerability in this situation arises from the exposure of the contradictory nature of the rules, which were set by the rulers; while on the one hand they identified "givers and takers" in terms of their contributions to economic and social development, and were thus potentially counterhegemonic, they were nevertheless evaluated in terms of "European modes of conduct." With the end of colonial rule, while the automatic view of "things English" as superior is "no longer unambiguously accepted"

creoles have not succeeded in replacing English culture with their own, equating its own interests with those of the "national interest" (B. Williams 1984:46-48; cf. Bolland 1991).

Nationalism and the process of nation-building have changed the rules in Belize. Above all, loyalty and sacrifice, on which much of creole claim to be only true Belizeans was based, are viewed as products of a colonial mentality, and inappropriate for a sovereign third world nation. In the 1960s, moreover, with the rise of black consciousness movements in Belize as elsewhere, it was also viewed as inappropriate for a black population. Thus those who articulated creole identity in these terms are seen not only as apologists by advocates of nation but as inauthentic by more militant members of their own group. Finally, since independence in 1981, as a vision of the future has become more important than a place in history, creoles have been increasingly unable to articulate a vision that includes them.

Brackette Williams (1990) rightly locates current ethnic identity crises in the Caribbean as impelled by the process of nationalism and nation-building. But as Gupta and Ferguson (1992) point out, cultures and peoples are less than ever coterminous with national boundaries. Just as the U.S. civil rights movement influenced the rise of black consciousness and the formation of UBAD, a new awareness of "what it means to be black in the 1990s" in the United

States--engendered by the resurgence of racism-- contributes to the rethinking of creole identity in an increasingly mestizo Belize.⁸ Such instances put a premium on youth and militancy; as young black creoles accuse their parents of "colonial mentality" and narrow the basis of creole identity, they render all representations risky.⁹

The issue of authenticity, part and parcel of the struggle over ethnicity between generations, is explosive precisely because of the way in which it blurs the boundaries between public and private ethnicity--between public or symbolic representation and private consciousness. The republication in the PUP party paper of an old article on "The Creole Elite and Its Power Base," which links the interests of middle-class creole families with the British rulers, in September 1987 engendered a heated exchange among creole supporters of both parties. I was in a bar one night when two creole men came to blows over the article and who was calling whom elitist.

Moreover, because of the way in which ethnic dynamics interact with the Guatemalan claim to Belize, it is those creoles who already experience discrimination in an increasingly mestizo country--those who could not conveniently become mestizo or Mayan when the occasion requires--who most favor continued British protection--and thus are most vulnerable to charges of "colonial mentality." These are as likely if not more likely to be dark skinned. If the prime minister, who is light, chooses to stress his

mestizo/Mayan ancestry over his creole ancestry, this is not an option for others. Such people regard charges of colonial mentality, which moves from an attack on public representation to one on private consciousness, as an outrage.

Cultural Imperialism: A New Arena

The public arena in the late 20th century is constituted not only on a national but a world level. Thus the new "structures of possibility" provoking a redefinition of creole ethnic identity in Belize include not only a shift to independent status but also a shift in the dominant external power--from Britain to the United States. The increase in American capital and capitalists has generated a new ethic of strictly business-related values combined with an overt preference for light-skinned employees and managers--in which creole knowledge of British values and institutions are far less valuable than light skins and MBAs; there is simply no one left to approve or commend the respect for tradition and contribution to national political culture that creoles claimed as their own. A parallel change involves the increasing influence of American culture, first by means of trade, then immigration, and most recently via satellite television, which has enabled nonelite members of society--creole and mestizo alike--to acquire cultural knowledge without the benefit of elite mediation.

While the commercial shift was formalized when the Belize dollar shifted from parity with sterling to parity

with the U.S. dollar in 1976, it had in fact started long before.¹⁰ Governor Sir Eric Swayne complained in 1917 of the Americans securing "the lion's share' of imports and exports to the colony" (1917:174), a result of U.S. mahogany and chiclé interests entering the colony at the beginning of the century. The backing of these companies encouraged the growth of creole merchants who challenged British monopolization of production and trade, especially during the war years, 1914-18, when British trade was cut off. Typical was Robert Turton, chiclé merchant and local Wrigley representative (Ashdown 1979a:181-83).

Restrictions on British immigration beginning in 1960 and the subsequent opening of U.S. immigration to Caribbean residents in 1965 has created a shift in migration that parallels the shift in trade relations; it was estimated that some 65,000 Belizeans lived in the States in the mid 1980s, representing about 38 percent of the country's population (D. Vernon 1988:41). This change in migration is related to a further shift--from British to U.S. educational opportunities. Even in 1917 Swayne mentioned the higher educational opportunities offered in the States. He noted that "American magazines and newspapers enter the colony more freely than English literature, and even American books of instruction have been used in our schools" (1917:174-75). Informants now in their 50s tell me that whereas they aspired to university in England, they did so in order to advance their positions when they returned; their children,

by contrast, are as likely to go to college in the States as a way of gaining permanent entree--and coming back only to visit. Whereas the older generation acquired British cultural lifestyles as a way of demonstrating their superiority on their return, the new generation adapts to the American way of life as a way of beginning a new life in the States.

Informants who sighed wistfully over this change were lamenting not only the loss of a son or daughter, but also the loss of their ability to identify and interpret "culture" to the masses. Early inroads on the hegemonic role of British institutional life soon followed. One arena was the sports world, as softball and basketball, as well as cycling, replaced cricket and horseracing in Belize. Excelling in these sports requires neither money nor association with a British public school; the champions are not subjected to outside rules, standards, or judges.

The shift in educational opportunities facilitated a challenge to British political hegemony as well. In addition to a generation of creoles educated in U.S. universities during the civil rights era, the creole professional strata, including doctors and especially lawyers, as lawyers have been the ones to enter the political arena, has been greatly increased with the opportunity to pursue medical and legal training at the University of the West Indies, especially since the 1970s. Anti-imperialist politics combined with the politics of black nationalism at UWI in the 1970s and 1980s

to influence a new generation of creole political leaders.

An equally dramatic change is in the medium of cultural transmission--once dominated by foreign newspapers and imported books, then by government-controlled radio. The first local government, mindful of the importance of cultural and ideological production and naming, concentrated on the production of national and anti-imperialist textbooks and tasteful radio production. In vain did the opposition try to get a foot into the broadcast world. Then in the early 1980s, television sneaked in the back door--via video cassettes and later satellite dishes--and suddenly there were televisions everywhere; a 1985 UNESCO survey estimated some 50 percent of all households had televisions, roughly equal to the percentage that had electricity (Petch 1987).¹¹

All of these changes provide the context for a profound change in "historical time," and the beginning of a new era of ethnic contestation in the 1990s. The impact of unedited, unmediated American television--complete with ads and weather--has only just begun to unfold. The late 1980s saw the proliferation of studies, all predicting the destruction of "traditional" Belizean culture and detecting the beginnings of this devastation already (Bolland 1987; Jamail 1986; Shoman 1986). Wilk (1989) has challenged this almost uniform interpretation, arguing that by making the current scene--which includes everything from current event sound bites to popular and consumer culture--available to

Belizeans simultaneously as it is available in the metropolis, satellite television has in fact collapsed Western and colonial time. Without the gap in time of consumption in the metropolis and the colony, a gap that differentiates the cultural and political as well as developmental "modern" from "backwardness," the elites, both white and creole, who have historically interpreted metropolitan culture to the masses, in societies and clubs, as well as the press, have lost a great deal of their ideological power. This has enormous implications for ethnic identity, at least among creoles, as street creoles are suddenly as informed and "with it" as the educated elite, rendering their representations of self as valid as those of the elite in the vastly more open public arena. The struggle over Crown Colony rule, in which the creole middle class began to present itself in its claim to represent the people has given way to a struggle in which the people will more and more present and represent themselves.

If among creoles, no class or generational interests have yet managed to put forth a vision of identity shared by all, at a wider level, no ethnic group has been able to identify itself with the nation as a whole. Even among elite families, no group has succeeded in linking family names with the nation, as the "true" Belizeans. Indeed, there is no longer any agreement on which names constitute an elite; Ushers and Fairweathers no longer have a monopoly on the civil service, and while Bowens and Bowmans and Castillos

are still included among the wealthy elite, so too are Indians and Chinese and Lebanese. The ability to inherit the mantle of leadership in the post-colonial era (B. Williams 1989:439) may ultimately depend on the ability to articulate a vision that includes all Belizeans.

Notes

1. This was true of creole bands and friendly societies as well as white clubs. E.O.B. Barrow recalls two female pianists who were incorporated into the Amalgamated Musicians Association in 1917, but for the most part women's musical entertainment took place in private homes or the churches, and so were also separate ethnically. The Colonial Guardian reports an At Home at the governor's house in 1894, where colonial officials and their wives and the wives of merchants played musical instruments.

2. All children learn English in school; thus depending on their level of education, creoles are usually bilingual in creole and English, while mestizos are bilingual in Spanish and English.

3. As in Jamaica, slave women in Belize did not bear many children. Data on the slave population of Belize from 1790 til 1835 makes clear that slaves were unable to reproduce themselves; in only one year were there more slave children than slave women, suggesting an extremely low rate of reproduction (Bolland 1977b:51-52).

4. Though the governor annually proclaimed the celebration of the anniversary after 1898, both the Colonial Guardian and the Clarion regretted the voluntary nature of the celebrations, arguing that the tradition of standing "shoulder to shoulder" deserved more enthusiastic participation as well as a public statue or monument (see e.g., Clarion 9.10.1900; Colonial Guardian 9.11.1902).

5. R.T. Smith (1982:115) points out that such contradictions characterized the Garvey movement itself, which emphasized racial pride within "the culture and symbolism of colonial society" with which it was imbued.

6. Domínguez (1986:188), discussing the interplay of possibility and choice in Louisiana creoles' ability to manipulate ethnic identity, points out that identity includes criteria other than ancestry, such as appearance, language, or behavior. Thus when creoles began to claim the label as their own, it applied to other members of the group, as "characteristics of members of the group began to affect the meaning of the term by affecting the connotations of the category."

7. As discussed in Chapter 3, mestizos have historically sought validation in community and family terms--communities and families which did not include the British.

8. See Lena Williams, "In a 90's Quest for Black Identity, Intense Doubts and Disagreement," New York Times, November 30, 1991.

9. As Lisa Kennedy writes, "if we misrepresent it for the sake of ourselves we will be expelled, we will not exist? We will be 'Toms,' or 'house negroes,' or 'not black,' when clearly we remain in our skins" ("The Body in Question," Village Voice, September 17, 1991).

10. The British Honduras dollar was tied to the U.S. dollar from 1894 until December 31, 1949, when the British devalued the British Honduras dollar following a devaluation of sterling three months before.

11. In areas without electricity, or with an erratic supply, televisions were run by car batteries (Oliviera 1986:38).

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