



The Making of Race and Place in Nineteenth-Century British Honduras

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MELISSA A. JOHNSON

the making of
RACE AND PLACE

IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY BRITISH HONDURAS

IN BELIZE, a small Central American nation on the Caribbean coast, different “racial” groups historically have been, and sometimes still are, constructed as better suited to some forms of labor-in-nature than others. The process of racial construction intensified in the nineteenth century, when Belize was a British colony and when slavery and an increasingly unequal distribution of land became the chief characteristics of this swampy colonial backwater. The racial discourse of colonial officers and apologists presumed particular relationships to the natural environment for each racial group. Belizean “Creoles” (people of mixed African and European descent) were cast as physiologically excellent woodcutters, but as averse to agriculture, the Maya as indolent and wasteful farmers, the Garifuna as consummate fishermen. Racially based socioecological ascriptions simultaneously became key markers of racial identity and a central component of the colonial apparatus for controlling who was able to benefit from the use and transformation of natural resources. While these racial-ecological categories were a dimension of colonial control, colonial subjects in Belize created relationships to the land that both built upon and challenged colonial racial constructions. Each ethnic group in Belize, both historically and currently, is associated with particular places within the country. Colonial racial discourse has been a critical part of the mutual constitution of place and identity for the different peoples who live in Belize, as well as a critical part of the ways in which each of the ethnic groups in Belize understand and interrelate with the natural environment.

In this essay, I explore the mutual constitution of the racial identity of Belizean Creoles and the natural landscapes that have been home to this population.¹ The essay focuses on the nineteenth century, when racial discourse sedimented and the Belizean economy was dominated by mahogany extraction. The racial formation of Belizean Creoles was tightly associated with the “bush” and

mahogany cutting, and with an “aversion” to agriculture, and served to limit the economic possibilities available for Belizean Creoles. I examine colonial racial discourse in descriptions of the colony at three different moments in the nineteenth century, at the height of slavery and the mahogany economy, shortly before abolition, and in the late-nineteenth century, when the mahogany economy waned. Despite this racial discourse, rural Belizean Creoles developed alternative systems of natural resource use based in part upon small-scale agricultural production. Colonial descriptions, some contained within the same documents used above, along with birth and death registries for the late-nineteenth century, reveal the varied ways in which rural Creole people lived in the natural environment. In some ways, by being excluded from control of large scale agricultural production, Belizean Creoles developed a relatively sustainable socioecology, which simultaneously conformed to the connections of Creoles with the “bush,” but refuted their status as consummate lumberjacks.² These racialized ecological associations have interesting implications for contemporary Belizean Creoles, as cultural identity movements take hold in the country and as Belize becomes a central player in the burgeoning industry of ecotourism.

Several key assumptions about race inform this essay. First, race is socially constructed and, as Roger Sanjek puts it, references “the framework of ranked categories segmenting the human population that was developed by Western Europeans following their global expansion beginning in the 1400s.”³ The global racial order classifies all humans into categories on a presumably biological basis, and is structured by the fundamental opposition of “black/African” and “white/Caucasian.” Second, “race” is and has been a fundamental principle of social organization throughout the globe, and racism, or the ideologies and discourses that congeal around that principle, are the justification and rationale for a social organization (made up of everyday practices and institutional structures) predicated on race. I do not mean to posit here that race is primary and other axes of social differentiation secondary. Rather, following Karen Brodtkin, I assert that, within a capitalist system like that which characterized British Honduras, race is a relation to the mode of production; or, put another way, race and class are always mutually constituting, and are further constituted by gender, nationality, and other indexes of identity.⁴ Third, race and racism are always locally and temporally specified—at any point in time and space the specific categories employed, and their meanings, might be different than at another, but these variations still are contained within an “international hierarchy of races, colors, religions and cultures.”⁵ Racial orders and formations are processes. They are unstable and decentered complexes of social meaning “constantly being transformed by political struggle,” political struggle here writ large and encompassing “weapons of the weak” and Antonio Gramsci’s war of position, for instance.⁶ The emergence of a rural Belizean Creole racial identity thus constitutes a particular racial formation that both accommodated and resisted hegemonic racial constructions.

This project thus contributes to our collective understanding of how “race” is implicated in human-environmental relations at different moments. My research

also joins a florescence of literature that interrogates the idea of “place” in increasingly sophisticated ways, and in keeping with this literature retains a simultaneous focus on the materiality and meanings of place, and how both of these dimensions of place are socially constructed. Edward Casey argues that place is a “phenomevent,” that it is always located in both time and space; and that the “self” (or identity) and place are always mutually constituting.⁷ Furthermore, as Margaret Rodman notes, places are always relational: the rural Belizean village of Crooked Tree can only be understood, can only have meaning, insofar as it is different from and/or comparable to other rural villages in the area, or the town of Orange Walk, or Belize City.⁸ Not only are they relational, but places always exist in a hierarchical relation to one another: rural to urban, periphery to center, or in this case “bushy” to “modern.”⁹

Belizean Creole identity is rooted to certain places and emerges out of particular material practices that transform these places, or out of particular modes of relationship to natural resources.¹⁰ By the same token, rural Belizean Creole raciality is shaped by this rootedness to certain places that have specific material characteristics. The watery, wooded, and swampy areas of central Belize—along the southern and eastern portions of the Belize River valley and along the edges of lagoons that dot the savanna plains just north of the Belize River—have been constitutive of a particular Belizean creoleness. At the same time, certain ideas about relationships to the natural environment were a part of the racial formation of Belizean Creoles. Thus racial categories and racial systems literally have shaped the environment, by limiting what was possible for certain groups to do in certain places.

The theories I have touched upon have helped me make sense out of the evidence that I have gathered from the Belize National Archives, secondary literature, and three years of ethnographic research (1993-1996) conducted primarily in the Belizean Creole community of Crooked Tree, but also in neighboring Creole villages, during which stories of working in mahogany camps in days past were foregrounded by the residents with whom I spoke. In fact, it was people’s frequent invocation of the past and their long historical roots in these places—their ancestral connection to the “Baymen”—that provoked this anthropologist into historical inquiry.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

I BEGIN with a consideration of the economic, political, and social milieu that gave rise to this intertwining of race and the environment.¹¹ What we today call Belize was in the seventeenth century a remote backwater that attracted British pirates and buccaneers as a base from which to raid ships headed to Spain with their valuable (and typically imaginary) cargoes of gold. The watery lowlands of central and northern Belize were also, however, home to dense stands of logwood, which in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries became a highly valuable commodity—a source of dye for the burgeoning textile industry in England. Some of the early privateers settled in these waterlogged plains, cutting and selling logwood as a means to generating wealth.

This was not the home of aristocratic plantation owners, using their British wealth to develop sugar plantations as were found in other parts of the Caribbean. The “fathers” of Belize were instead a set of rogue pirates who reckoned that cutting and selling logwood was more lucrative than raiding Spanish galleons. Logwood trees, though dense and heavy, are not very large, so cutting and hauling logwood was a task easily done by one or two men. Thus it was not until 1724 that there is mention of African slaves in British Honduras, and in these early days, the typical logwood-cutter probably did not own slaves. The wealthier wood-cutters who were able to own slaves probably owned only a small number.

By the late eighteenth century, logwood cutting was superseded in economic importance by mahogany extraction, which became the main industry in Belize during the nineteenth century. Mahogany cutting and removal were dramatically more labor-intensive than logwood. The trees were widely dispersed in Belize’s tropical forests, were enormous, and often were found quite far from the waterways that served as the settlement’s only transport routes. The mahogany industry was therefore profitable only because of slavery. Groups of between five and twenty slaves were employed by mahogany cutters to find the trees, fell them, and haul them out.

By the late 1700s, when mahogany dominated the economy, the number of slaves increased sharply, to two thousand, while the white population remained in the hundreds.¹² Significantly, from the earliest days onward there were substantial free colored and free black populations as well, typically outnumbering the white population, and rapidly growing because of the gender-race matrix: few white women lived in early Belize. Furthermore the white population itself was hugely diverse, with only a relatively small number constituting the economic and political elite. British Honduras at this stage was similar to other Caribbean colonies and settlements—a small wealthy white elite ruling a majority black population with a mid-sized free colored, free black and poor white population mediating between the two.¹³ Indeed, as Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker point out in *The Many-Headed Hydra*, the mixed population at the lowest rungs of this settlement in the late 1700s was part of the “motley crew” that, in its opposition and resistance to the “new order of conquest and expropriation” shaped the development of the Atlantic world.¹⁴ One of the key characteristics of this population was that differences in race, ethnicity, and national origin were less significant than the opposition of this group to the wealthy mahogany cutter’s expropriation of the lands that the “motley” crew had been using as a commons in years prior.

With emancipation in 1838, the fundamental social structure of British Honduras, rather than opening, became further entrenched and stratified. The ruling white elite swiftly enacted legislation to limit the ability of newly freed slaves and the growing population of free colored to acquire land, thus ensuring that a substantial population would be available for the hard labor of the mahogany camps. By the mid-nineteenth century, the mahogany industry began to decline as a result of a complex of factors—a boom in production that created a glut on the market, depletion of the trees closer to riverways (which were less

expensive to extract), and competition from other mahogany producing areas, such as Cuba.¹⁵ In response, various efforts were made to establish an agricultural base to the economy—bananas, citrus, sugar—though it was not until the mid-twentieth century that any of these industries became viable. Although these developments could have allowed social mobility for the lower classes, the economically elite mahogany companies and merchant houses retained control by shifting their interests to these newer agricultural pursuits. Furthermore, colonial policy encouraged large-scale investment from outside British Honduras rather than small-holder expansion to develop the agricultural sector.¹⁶ Today, forestry-related industries are relatively insignificant in an economy dominated by sugar, bananas, citrus, and tourism.

In the late nineteenth century as well, the small white population decreased in size, and the Belizean Creole population became racialized and socio-ecologically embedded. The Creole population arose from a mixture of African slaves and British settlers and slave owners. The process of the formation of a collective Creole identity was a long one. There were a variety of different groups that collectively were consolidated as “Belizean Creole” between 1650 and 1930: slaves brought to British Honduras from Africa (either directly, or, much more commonly, through Jamaica); “Creole” slaves (slaves born in the Caribbean); free black, free colored and European settlers, these latter three groups of freed people each encompassing an array of socioeconomic statuses, from wealthy slave-owners to poor renegades.

Critical to the development of a Creole racial identity was the historical linking of creoleness with the backbone of British Honduras’ economic history—woodcutting. Contemporary nationalist origin myths of Belize highlight the role of “English Wood-cutters”—racially white—in establishing the earliest settlements and working side by side with their racially black African slaves to generate wealth from the forests of Belize. The racially non-white, and black-in-some ways, Creole slave or worker came to be closely associated with mahogany camps and logwood cutting both in colonial texts and in contemporary textbook histories of the country.¹⁷

The nationalist myth of the origin of the Belizean Creole, and of the nation of Belize, has at its center woodcutting and the union of slave and master in a common fight against Spain’s imperial intentions.¹⁸ These early woodcutters are proudly hailed by contemporary Belizean Creoles as the forefathers of this *British* land, who, with their slaves at their sides, fought off the Spaniards and created a superior English royalist settlement. Thus the English ancestry of the Creole population—with its connection to woodcutting—are celebrated, while the African is only quietly acknowledged.¹⁹ For instance, in the Creole village of Crooked Tree, brochures put together by local tourism entrepreneurs in the mid-1990s advertised the residents as descendants of English woodcutters, the proud Baymen who founded the colony, masking their African heritage.

Although the racially white English forefathers are eulogized by contemporary Creoles and nationalist discourse as hardy, industrious, and clever woodcutting men, colonial accounts held up the Creole population that emerged out of the

union of woodcutter and slave or free person of African ancestry as ideal mahogany-cutters. The Creoles supposedly were “genetically” suited to the task of finding and cutting mahogany, and, critically, “genetically” averse to agriculture. European racial discourse, especially from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, posited African-ness as less than human, more instinctual, less rational. Thus people of African descent in these accounts were seen as most suited to the forest dwelling occupation of woodcutter (but not manager of a mahogany camp). The nobility of woodcutting and its concomitant centrality to British Honduras’ mission and existence became associated with the white European side. Current nationalist discourse celebrates English woodcutters establishing woodcutting camps and settling the colony, but the hard labor and living in the “bush” elements of this mode of production became associated with the black African “racial” roots of the Belizean Creole.

Gender, or more notably, its absence in colonial commentary and nationalist discourse, is of critical importance in the racial formation of the Belizean Creole. The memorializing of the English forefathers elides the contribution to the growth of “Belize” of women, and more particularly, women of African descent. The invisibility of women of color in accounts of the creation of colonial society is not unique to Belize or the Caribbean. But, in Belize, what also is hidden by the invisibility of women is how they contributed to a more complicated connection to the natural environment. The men working as mahogany cutters often were living with women (and others) in small households where the household members eked out a living through a variety of ways of using the natural environment—rarely were they only mahogany laborers. Indeed, they often practiced agriculture.

THE NATURE OF COLONIAL RACIAL DISCOURSE

THREE TEXTS, representing three key moments in Belizean history, exemplify the racial discourse that dominated colonial British Honduras: a description of the colony from the height of slavery and reign of “King Mahogany” in 1809, an almanac for the colony, close to the abolition of slavery in the 1830s, and a handbook of the colony in the late nineteenth century when the mahogany economy waned and the colony’s economic base expanded to include agricultural production.²⁰ The ways in which racialized identities were ecologized in each text served to legitimate socio-economic inequality in this specific case of British Honduras, but also built upon tropes of alterity and racial discourse deployed globally by European colonizers at the time.²¹ Furthermore the changes in which particular populations were described illustrate how the salient feature of Belizean creoleness was its African-ness, not its European ancestry.

The greatest proportion of available colonial commentary on and official description of the populations of British Honduras comes from the mid-nineteenth century. This peak of early Belizean “ethnology” accompanied the abolition of the slave trade and slavery and the establishment of post-emancipation society, which was effectively a reformulation of the social, economic, and political barriers that existed during slavery, without the legal

apparatus of slavery. Critical to the economic viability of British Honduras within the colonial context was the maintenance, without slavery, of a large and cheaply employable laboring population. A variety of legal institutions were put into place by colonial authorities at this time to ensure that such a population existed. Labor contracts that favored employers and land use policies that prevented most individuals from obtaining land for subsistence use were the most important institutions of this nature.²² The tailoring and ecological embedding of ethnic and racial identities were also a key component of the reformulation of a society stratified in order to benefit the white economic elite both in British Honduras and in Great Britain.

In 1809, just after the abolition of the slave trade but more than twenty years before emancipation, and when the colony's mahogany production was in full swing, Captain G. Henderson, of His Majesty's 5th West India Regiment, visited British Honduras, and shortly thereafter published a full description of the colony. Most of this text was devoted to a description of the area's natural history and the ways in which the settlers and slaves used natural resources. Henderson described the mahogany industry in detail, carefully noting the processes by which groups of slaves identified, cut down, and removed the huge mahogany trees. Though Henderson praised the abilities of the slaves working in the mahogany industry, his description also conformed to the dehumanizing and animalizing stereotypes that characterized colonial discourse on the "nature" of African slaves. Henderson was clearly struck by the abilities of the "hunter," the slave designated to locate mahogany trees. This man climbed high trees to "survey the country" for the yellow-reddish leaves of mahogany and then returned to the forest floor to find the trees he had seen from his high perch. Henderson described how the hunter "descends and to these [the yellow-reddish leaves] his steps are directed; and without compass, or other guide than what observation has imprinted on his recollection, he never fails to reach the exact point to which he aims."²³

The slave (either African or "Creole") in this passage was a passive, instinctual creature. It was not reason and deduction that led him to the mahogany tree, it was what "observation" has "imprinted" on him. In this passage, as in others, the African slaves were described as animal-like, or part and parcel of the tropical forested landscapes in which they labored. Henderson's description of the mahogany slave group more generally detailed how effectively and efficiently these slaves performed their tasks. Underlying these descriptions was a sense of "oneness" with the natural environment—a positing that the slave's appropriate post in life was being stationed out in the midst of the "bush."²⁴

As tension mounted around the question of the abolition of slavery, the 1830 *Honduras Almanack* offered descriptions of Belize's ethnic groups for potential visitors, investors, and colonial officials. In this volume, free blacks, free colored, and slaves were each described separately, though they were seen as having some fundamental similarities. Free blacks were described negatively while slaves were praised—the Almanack clearly suggested that African elements of the population were worthy to the future of the settlement only if they were yoked, or enslaved.

“Though there are many free blacks, yet for the most part they either are the children of slaves or have been slaves themselves; and few of them are to be found entirely exempt from those low propensities which are exhibited in a state of barbarism. ... They, however, possess upon the whole, but little intelligence, their dullness of comprehension, and the difficulty of picturing on the minds of others the ideas present in their own, are at once remarkable and distressing. They seem to perform everything they take in hand, less mechanically in their movements than in their notions; and generally contrive to effect their objects with as much instinct as of reason.”²⁵

In this description, the animal-like qualities of the free black stood out in sharp relief. The “dullness of mind,” the reliance on instinct rather than reason, the inability to communicate (a hallmark of humanity), and the awkwardness of their thinking in opposition to the apparent grace of their movements set these people up as not human. Rather they were most like deer or jaguar in the forest.

The authors of the *Almanack* were not reticent about their agenda in describing the classes of people in British Honduras. They wrote this part of the *Almanack* in order to convince readers that the state of slavery was the most morally appropriate for these populations of African descent: “[H]ere we would recommend the abolitionist to pause; to visit the people for whom he pleads; to reside twelve months among them to observe the mode in which their minds are habituated to work; to compare the comforts which they can command, in their present state of slavery, with the precarious existence, the absolute poverty that await their projected freedom; and let him lay his hand upon his heart, and say how far he can honestly proceed in those proposed measures, which have agitated and deceived minds unacquainted with the merits of the question, and rendered the slave himself discontented. The name of liberty is dear and precious, but unfortunately the negro’s notions of freedom are confined to that state in which idleness, sloth, poverty and vice may be indulged.”²⁶

Ascribing the conditions of “idleness, sloth, poverty and vice” to potentially liberated slaves was another dehumanizing move, and suggested that this population could not be expected to make a mark on the landscape, to transform a “backward” colony into a colonial treasure. Perhaps more to the point, their “species-being” was not the same as that of the white English authors.

Continuing on this theme of indolence and poverty as the key markers of African-descended identities, the *Almanack*’s authors, in discussing the availability of labor in the colony, described a typical representative of the free black and colored population as “equally ignorant of the value of time and responsibility for the improvement of (the country), is not alive to the duty of industry: clothes, he require none beyond a shirt and trousers, and a small quantity of powder and shot, a few hooks and line, will in half an hour, furnish him with sufficient to support his family for a day or two. The want of education leaves him void of inducements; and he seems happiest when settled in a swamp and surrounded by mosquitoes. Hence free labour is exorbitant ... very few industrious men can be found.”²⁷

This imagery again constructed a kind of human who was not at all far from the rest of the natural world. Yet a swamp surrounded by mosquitoes was as far

from the shackles of slavery as one could get in Belize—a fact that evidently did not occur to the *Almanack* authors.

These early colonial descriptions encoded two propositions about African populations at a time of great debate over the economic future of the colony: They were at their best as mahogany workers and they had no capacity to develop the colony. Thus racial constructions in Belize functioned in ways similar to stereotypes of African-descended populations in other slave-holding societies. People of African descent were understood to be capable of contributing economically to society only when they worked for others, and they must be forced to do so.

High-level colonial officials and visiting government officers from London frequently expressed concern about the lack of agricultural development in the colony, especially given that the mahogany industry began to wane at mid-century.²⁸ Local economic elites, however, along with a number of colonial officers, were not interested in promoting agriculture. The profitability of their enterprises depended upon both the exclusive use of slaves, and any available other labor, in the mahogany “works” and the purchases of imported food-stuffs made by the local free population, often within the context of a truck-and-advance wage system in which wages were paid in the form of credit at the company store before the labor was performed.²⁹ The economic elite of British Honduras focused their energy simultaneously on mahogany extraction and the importation of goods from Europe to market to a non-food-producing people. Therefore the development of an agricultural export industry threatened their labor supply, while the development of locally based food production threatened their import market.

The colonial assumptions about people of African descent in Belize also shaped the pricing of slaves as commodities. Shortly after the abolition of slavery throughout the British Caribbean, slave-owners were compensated by the government for their slaves. Former slave owners in British Honduras earned £53.6.9 on average per slave, the highest amount paid in any British territory. By contrast, in most of the other British colonies, compensation ran in the teens and twenties.³⁰ Slaves in British Honduras were valued for their potentially superior abilities in the work of mahogany extraction. The position of being “extra special” slaves undergirded the early ascriptions of the capacities (and consequently limitations) of people of African descent in the colony.

As throughout the rest of the Caribbean, a key concern of the economic elite and colonial officials of British Honduras after emancipation was how to maintain the inexpensive labor force that made the colonies profitable. The mahogany works owners were well aware that newly freed slaves may well have wanted to be free of institutionalized labor (i.e. slavery or wage labor), and probably would have preferred trying to eke out a living on small pieces of land in out-of-the-way corners. Immediately following emancipation, then, a series of institutions were put in place to ensure the continued presence of a viable labor force. Some of these included greatly restricting the ability of individuals to obtain land, a debt-peonage system to organize the newly “free” laborers, and masters-and-servants-acts that criminalized the breaching of labor contracts.³¹ This basic socio-

economic structure persisted until the mid-twentieth century, and racial socioecological stereotyping sedimented shortly after emancipation to support this socio-economic system.

If early accounts stressed how well people of African descent performed the labor of mahogany extraction and how slavery in the woodcutting industries was the condition most appropriate for them, post-emancipation descriptions constructed a world in which it was unthinkable that the “Creole” population (now understood to encompass the non-Garifuna “African” and “mixed African” population in Belize) could do anything *but* work mahogany. Thus Bristowe wrote in 1888 for the *Handbook of British Honduras*: “The number of labourers in British Honduras may be roughly stated to be about 6400, being more than a fifth of the total population of the colony. Of these, about 2500 are ‘creoles’ of British Honduras of African and Anglo-African descent. These men are almost exclusively employed in the occupation of mahogany cutting—one which, besides the superior wages it offers is peculiarly attractive to men of such fine physique as are the majority of our lumbermen. Generally speaking the creoles of British Honduras are peculiarly suited to the laborious but attractive labour of the mahogany works, and nothing short of starvation will induce them to exchange it for plantation labour.”³²

This sentiment was repeated in a number of other documents of the time. Karen Judd, in a discussion of the Creole relationship with agriculture, notes Archibald Gibbs’s account of the settlement in 1883, in which he remarked upon 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.”³³ The contention persisted through time as demonstrated by a statement eighty years later by a former governor about the “Creole” distaste for agriculture: “he despises agriculture and has no knowledge of it.”³⁴

That this discourse informed material relations is underscored by the refusal of major landowners and mahogany cutters to consider Belizean Creoles as potential laborers in the agricultural pursuits to which they turned their energies in the 1860s. They instead sought any other source of labor, including newly freed African American slaves from the U.S. South, to work in the fields (a plan wisely nixed by President Abraham Lincoln).³⁵

These colonial testaments yield a picture of the Belizean Creole as the consummate lumberjack, who had found his true avocation in working mahogany. Furthermore, by virtue of being at least partially of African descent, i.e. more animal-like than humanlike, the Belizean Creole was quite well suited to this “bushy” occupation and was in his element as an animal in the wild. “Bush” is the Creole word for areas of the natural environment that have not been altered by humans, but it also refers to rural areas in general, taking on cultural connotations of rurality in opposition to urbanity, black as opposed to white, illiterate and “duncy” as opposed to educated and cosmopolitan. Likewise the present-day popular epithet “bushy” invokes an image of a dark-skinned, kinky-headed, half-dressed man who is more at home in a canoe in the “bush” than in

the city: Belize's "wilder" version of a country bumpkin. The racial content of this metaphor is the key. Unless otherwise qualified, a "bushy" person is dark-skinned and of obvious African descent. Again, this epithet encodes the longstanding and widespread association of Africans with "the wild," with "untamed nature" in direct opposition to the cosmopolitan, urban-oriented European.³⁶

The racial construction of the Belizean Creole suggested that members of this group had no ability or interest in agriculture, or other more domesticated ways of laboring in nature. This assertion shows up in numerous texts, and crosses the lips of contemporary officials concerned with the "development" of Belize.³⁷ The story of "the" Belizean Creole, then, is that "he" really is suited only to laboring in the mahogany camps, and living in the city in between woodcutting seasons. The Belizean Creole could not have helped to design the transformation of the Belizean landscape into a productive, developed, inhabited landscape. As the racialized ascriptions tell it, those transformative tasks were the purview of the white colonial elite.

Here the role of place in shaping racial identity emerges clearly. Some urban—and often lighter skinned—Belizean Creoles were large landowners and merchants in the early to mid-nineteenth century, having inherited property from their wealthy white fathers. Clearly, not all wealthy whites who fathered children with women of African descent treated their offspring as legal heirs, but some did. They manumitted them if they were children of slave women and deeded them property. The wealthiest of these free colored people maintained houses in Belize City from which they managed mahogany works in the out-districts. In the nineteenth century, however, large landholdings that had been in the hands of local elites became consolidated into the property of the Belize Estate Company, which by the 1880s owned over 1.5 million acres, or over half the privately held land in the colony.³⁸ Other metropolitan corporations assumed control of many other middle-level holdings. As a result of this consolidation, nearly all white elites left the colony at mid-century, and most of the wealthy urban Creole families lost landholdings and looked to government positions and subsidiary positions in colonial enterprises to maintain their relative status.³⁹ Rural dwellers, effectively squatters who occupied marginal lands, were left in the same economic position, but a distinction between the "bushy" rural Creole and the city dweller most likely took on more significance as differences in wealth diminished.

FROM RACE TO PLACE: RURAL CREOLE LANDSCAPES

THOUGH COLONIAL discourse and economic interests created a lumberjack identity for the Belizean Creole, the reality of how rural Creole people used the land was much more varied. It is clear that local economic elite and metropolitan firms (especially the extraordinarily powerful and influential Belize Estate Company) had a profound impact on the Belizean environment, removing almost all of the mahogany, and beginning to clear large tracts of land for early agribusiness experimentation at the end of the nineteenth century. But the role of the emergent rural and non-elite Creole population in transforming Belize's

landscape throughout the nineteenth century is less clear. Certainly the slave populations and later the Creole laborers in the mahogany camps contributed to the removal of mahogany from the forests of British Honduras, but they did not control this transformation, with the exception of a few wealthy Creole mahogany owners early in the nineteenth century. Yet, rural Creoles not only worked as woodcutters in the mahogany industry, but also engaged in a wide variety of economic activities in the Belizean landscape, carving out an agricultural niche for themselves despite the colonial regime's discursive moves to limit that possibility. Legal institutions, economic options, and racial ideologies made it impossible for Creole people to occupy the most productive lands, but they were able to settle more marginal areas in the center of the country.

O. Nigel Bolland, whose work on Belize is foundational, asserts that after emancipation Belizean people of color primarily worked in the mahogany camps during the cutting season and spent the off-season in Belize City, the place he argues is the crucible of Belizean Creole culture. From archival evidence I have been able to obtain and from oral histories and lore told to me during my years of ethnographic research in Belize, it appears that a Belizean "Creole" identity and socio-ecological niche emerged as much in the rural, marginal areas of Belize as in Belize City. Bolland's own analysis of the census of 1790 indicates that 84 percent of the population was living along the rivers and lagoons in the settlement.⁴⁰ Similarly, the birth and death records of Orange Walk District from the late nineteenth century suggest a large portion of the population was distributed among rural settlements along the lagoons and rivers of this critical wood-producing district.⁴¹ Interestingly, elite urban Creoles have created organizations in the late twentieth century to promote a Belizean Creole cultural identity, and they are referring to and building upon senses of rural Creole "village" life in that promotion.⁴²

The relationship with the natural world that the rural Belizean Creole population established was multi-faceted, befitting its Afro-Caribbean context and the "occupational multiplicity" that so well characterizes Afro-Caribbean economies.⁴³ The available archival evidence indicates that the motley crew who melded together to become Belizean Creoles were engaged in many pursuits, including an array of agricultural activities other than mahogany labor. Thus, through the ways in which they produced and transformed the natural environment along the rivers, creeks, and lagoons of Central Belize, rural Creoles resisted hegemonic racial discourse.

Bolland cites a letter written in 1787 concerning skirmishes between Spanish forces and British logwood settlers: "The Spaniards have very lately cut down the Plantain Walks and Provision Grounds of the Settlers, particularly in the New River, upon which the individuals residing there have at all times had their Chief, or Sole dependence, This has greatly injured the Owners and given great disgust to the Negroes employed in that River, whose subsistence depends upon their little Plantations: And the negroes disgust in that Country being a prelude to their desertion, will, in proportion as it extends, enrich the Spaniards, and ruin the English Settlers."⁴⁴ Similarly, in 1788, a settler described how the slaves were

“ever accustomed to make Plantation as they term it, by which means they support their Wives and Children, raise a little Stock and so furnish themselves with necessaries, etc.”⁴⁵

Cultivation, though not agricultural production for export, clearly was a critical aspect of slaves’ lives from early on, and presumably of the free colored and free black populations that lived in the settlement’s interior. An enumeration of occupation and racial statuses in 1786 indicates that as many as one-quarter of the free laboring population likely would have been subsistence settlers, with an additional one-quarter in the employ of woodcutters and probably also farming, fishing, and hunting on the side.⁴⁶

Even Henderson’s 1809 account of British Honduras offers evidence of Creole cultivators. “Every settlement at Honduras has its plantain-walk,” he wrote, “and many of these comprehend an extent of, at least, an hundred acres: nor can anything exceed the beauty and richness which the continued groves of these trees display, as the traveller pursues his course up the different rivers. The pineapple and melon, being very commonly interspersed between the rows of plantains, contribute to heighten the luxuriance of the scene; and the mountain-cabbages occasionally roaring its lofty head far above the whole, adds no inconsiderable share of grandeur to the general effect.”⁴⁷

This passage is particularly ironic given Henderson’s lamentations elsewhere in his account about how no one in the colony is pursuing cultivation. Obviously people were cultivating to a great extent, but cultivating for subsistence and local consumption, and employing a variety of methods that were unfamiliar to the eyes of the Europeans and colonial officers who only occasionally visited the colony’s outposts.

In the *Honduras Almanack* of 1830, in a description of how dutifully and contentedly slaves labored in the mahogany works, the authors suggested that even after working mahogany, slaves engaged in agricultural pursuits either for their own benefit or as part of contracts with their masters: “In many cases he contracts with his master for the supplies of the gangs which supplies he cultivates by his own labour: and invariably meets with that encouragement which animates his industry.”⁴⁸

By the mid-1800s, rural Creole settlements seem to have been well established. In a detailed account of life in rural British Honduras in the village of Crooked Tree after emancipation, Frederick Crowe described settlements based upon cultivation, cattle-raising, fishing, and hunting: He found a well developed subsistence lifestyle for most, with the wealthier members of these communities selling cattle and crops and moving easily between Belize City and the rural outposts.⁴⁹

Despite the existence of a number of rural Creole communities in the mid-1800s, Lindsay Bristowe claimed in his 1888 account of the colony that Creole men were “almost exclusively” employed in the mahogany industry—but he provided no source for this claim. The birth and death registry of 1888 to 1913 for Orange Walk District tells a very different story. At that time, the Orange Walk District encompassed a large portion of the northern part of the earliest

boundaries of the settlement, and thus included a number of rural Creole settlements, such as Crooked Tree. It also had the most extensive mahogany industry encampments: Much of this northern district was devoted to mahogany extraction. Yet nearly half of the occupations listed at the turn of the century in the Orange Walk Birth Registry for people with Creole surnames are not mahogany jobs. They were farmers and cattlemen and they claimed as well a wide variety of other occupations, ranging from carpenters to logwood cutters.⁵⁰ The large discrepancy between colonial commentary and description such as Bristowe's and other archival data (as well as oral history in Creole communities) may be partly a function of the seasonal and temporary nature of the mahogany industry—the mahogany camps only operated for several months during the year.⁵¹ A Creole man could decide not to work mahogany one year and instead “make plantashe” or tend to a herd of cattle and then work mahogany the following year. While away at the mahogany works, our hypothetical Creole man may have left either an elderly or young male relation to tend to the plantashe and cattle for that year, returning between the mahogany seasons to assist. People often engaged in a wide variety of occupations, and that variety marked the rural Belizean Creole landscape. In this way, rural Creole Belize is similar to other rural Afro-Caribbean communities, in which “occupational multiplicity” has long been recognized as a primary adaptive strategy to varying economic and ecological conditions.⁵²

The birth records also reveal that there were many women in this district. Indeed, many couples stayed in the same settlement. Between 1888 and 1898, two or more births (up to thirty for some locations) were recorded for people with Creole surnames at thirty-five camps or settlements in the Orange Walk District. Although the archetypal Belizean Creole of colonial commentary was male, women also were contributing to the development of rural Belizean Creole places. Some of these women were employed as washerwomen or cooks, but most were not listed with an occupation. These women did the work of maintaining households in these settlements, effectively building the settlements.

CONCLUSION

PUSHED TO the very margins of an already marginal territory, the free coloreds and blacks and then the newly emancipated slaves found ways to survive and thrive in the most oppressive of conditions in nineteenth century British Honduras. They cleverly cast wide nets of economic activities in order to ensure their material well-being. At the same time, because they were on the margins of areas of rich wood and because critical infrastructure was not supplied to areas dominated by Creole people, they were not able to radically alter the landscape—at least not in the ways in which sugar and citrus plantations have altered northern Belize and the Stann Creek Valley. Thus the place where rural Creole people have dwelled bears a relatively gentle mark of human transformation: reduced numbers of oak trees (harvested for charcoal), occasional dips and recoveries in heavily exploited species (crocodiles, fish, deer), and large numbers

of jaguars, yellow headed parrots, howler monkeys, and other animals seriously endangered elsewhere in Central America.⁵³

Thus, as much as the colonial white elite engineered the transformation of British Honduras's landscape, the large numbers of Creoles established a rural Creole social ecology at the edges of the mahogany forests and distant from the large tracts of lands with rich agricultural potential. The local economies established by rural Creoles have characterized these communities for over two hundred years and have altered the landscape in noticeable, but not destructive ways. These economies have not generated great wealth, but rather have constituted relatively sustainable small-scale ways of living. Furthermore, in these communities, as much as in the dense neighborhoods of Belize City, a "Creole" culture that has intimate ties to nature emerged and has been continuously modified over the centuries. Thus, in contrast to the claims of many Caribbeanist scholars, rural Belizean Creoles have a strong attachment to their land, land they have transformed in active, creative, and sustainable ways.⁵⁴

Nonetheless in the national rhetoric and development discourse prevalent in contemporary Belize, stereotypes of Belizean Creoles as agriculturally averse, consummate woodsmen are still pervasive. People still joke that rural Creoles are "bushy." These socio-ecological stereotypes and the deeply embedded racism that they encode have operated as an obstacle to Afro-Belizeans wishing to initiate commodity production, primarily by ensuring their alienation from productive lands, but also in a number of more subtle ways. In a recently politically independent nation in which timber resources were historically depleted by colonial powers, and which has turned its productive interests to export agriculture, the consequence of these stereotypes—and the elisions they support—increasingly has been to disenfranchise the rural Belizean Creole population. Only elite and predominantly urban Creoles who exerted influence in the commercial sector of the economy are economically successful. The increasingly important citrus, banana, and sugar industries are dominated by foreigners (typically white) or *Mestizos*: The white bias of the colonial Caribbean has been well-maintained.

In recent years, different ethnic groups in Belize have begun to mobilize to "retrieve" and promote their "identities." Thus a group of Belizean Creoles established in the mid-1990s the National Kriol Council. This surge of ethnic pride is not unique to Belize. As David Harvey has suggested, the reclaiming of difference is encouraged by the "postmodern condition."⁵⁵ But in Belize, the emphasis on ethnic differences is arising at the same time that the country is experiencing, and encouraging, a rapidly growing ecotourism industry.

That ecotourism is one of Belize's tickets to development is at least partially a result of the environmental history of Belize. The rural Creole social ecology that developed over the past two centuries, along with the decline of the mahogany industry and the relative marginality of Belize, have meant that the Belizean environment is relatively "healthy," containing high biodiversity and plentiful forest cover, especially in comparison to its Central American neighbors.⁵⁶ How Creole identity in Belize will play out in the ecotourism industry is still an open

question. Within Belize, being Creole carries with it “bushy,” environmentally linked associations that in the past have served to limit Belizean Creoles’ use of the natural world. Yet outside of Belize, people of African descent are presumed to be hostile to their natural environment—too impoverished and alienated from it to care about “environmentalist” concerns.⁵⁷ Advertisements highlighting Belize as an ecotourist destination are dominated by images of “untouched nature”—vistas of undisturbed rainforests and portraits of jaguars. In the few advertisements that include people, the people usually are Mayan rather than Creole, in keeping with global discourses of the ecologically noble savage.⁵⁸ Yet the National Kriol Council of Belize is developing a sense of Creole identity highlighting rural Creole life that could serve as platform for making “creoleness” an attraction for the ecotourist. This would be especially effective considering that rural Creole villages are the sites of some major ecotourist attractions, such as the birding destination of Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary which flanks the Creole village of Crooked Tree, and the Community Baboon Sanctuary, a reserve for howler monkeys voluntarily set aside and maintained by the residents of the Creole village of Bermudian Landing.⁵⁹ A careful reconsideration of Belizean Creole history and the emergence of racially embedded socioecological stereotypes of Creole people may aid Afro-Belizeans in their quest to promote a positive and productive ethnic identity and socio-ecological position.

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NOTES

This essay has benefitted from comments from Thomas McClendon, Adam Rome, and the anonymous reviewers for *Environmental History*.

1. For the history of the emergence of the Belizean Creole, see Michael Stone, “Caribbean Nation, Central American State: Ethnicity, Race and National Formation in Belize, 1798-1990” (Ph.D. diss., University of Texas at Austin, 1994); Karen Judd, “Elite Reproduction and Ethnic Identity in Belize” (Ph.D. diss., City University of New York, 1992); Karen Judd, “Cultural Synthesis or Ethnic Struggle? Creolization in Belize” *Cimarron* 2 (1990) 103-18; and Melissa Johnson, “Nature and Progress in Rural Creole Belize: Rethinking Sustainable Development” (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1998). Belize is also home to three other significant ethnic groups, Mestizos, Garifuna, and three linguistically distinct groups of Maya. For Mestizo and Maya history, see the following works by Grant Jones: *Anthropology and History in the Yucatan* (Austin: University of Texas, 1976); *The Conquest of the Last Maya Kingdom* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998); and *Maya Resistance to Spanish Rule: Time and History on a Colonial Frontier* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998). Also see Angel Cal, “Capital-Labor Relations on a Colonial Frontier: Nineteenth Century Belize,” in *Land, Labor and Capital in Modern Yucatan: Essays in Regional History and Political Economy*, ed. Jeffrey Brannon and Gilbert M. Joseph (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1991). In recent years, Belize has witnessed a large influx

- of refugees and other migrants from throughout Central America, swelling the number of Mestizos in the country, so that they now outnumber the Creole, who had been both numerically and culturally dominant for the past one hundred to two hundred years (see Stone, *Caribbean Nation, Central American State*). For Garifuna history and its links to Belize, see Nancie Gonzalez, *Sojourners of the Caribbean: Ethnogenesis and Ethnohistory of the Garifuna* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988); Nancie Gonzalez, *Black Carib Household Structure* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1969); and Douglas McRae Taylor, *The Black Carib of British Honduras* (New York: Wenner-Gren Foundation, 1951).
2. While the land is arguably ecologically rich, and while a wide variety of ecosystems are represented in Belize, the land has of course been modified, to a great extent during the Mayan civilization, but also again with British settlement. For natural historical description of Belize, see Gary Hartshorn et al., *Belize, Country Environmental Profile: A Field Study* (Belize City: Robert Nicolait & Associates, 1984); Robert Horwich and Jonathan Lyons, *A Belizean Rainforest: The Community Baboon Sanctuary* (Gays Mills, Wis.: Orang Utan Press, 1990); Robert Mackler and Osmany Salas, *Management Plan: Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary* (Belize City: Belize Audubon Society, 1994); A. S. Wright, *Land in British Honduras: A Report of the British Honduras Land Use Survey Team* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1959); and Peter A. Furley, *Advances in Environmental and Biogeographical Research in Belize* (Edinburgh: Biogeographical Research Group, University of Edinburgh, 1989).
 3. Roger Sanjek, "The Enduring Inequalities of Race," in *Race*, ed. Steven Gregory and Roger Sanjek (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1996), 1.
 4. Karen Brodtkin, "Global Capitalism: What's Race Got to Do With It?" *American Ethnologist* 27 (2000): 237-56.
 5. Michel-Rolph Trouillot, "Culture, Color and Politics in Haiti," in Gregory and Sanjek, *Race*, 149.
 6. Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States from the 1960s to the 1980s*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 1994).
 7. Edward Casey, "How to Get from Space to Place in a Fairly Short Stretch of Time: Phenomenological Prolegomena," in *Senses of Place*, ed. Stephen Feld and Keith Basso (Santa Fe, N.M.: School of American Research Press, 1996) 13-52.
 8. Margaret Rodman, "Empowering Place: Multilocality and Multivocality," *American Anthropologist* 94 (1992): 640-56.
 9. Barbara Ching and Gerald Creed, eds., *Knowing Your Place: Rural Identity and Cultural Hierarchy* (New York: Routledge, 1997).
 10. My formulation here is similar to Mart Stewart's use of the idea of "landscape." See Mart Stewart, *What Nature Suffers to Groe: Life, Labor and Landscape on the Georgia Coast, 1680-1920* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996). Although the landscapes I am considering do not bear the mark of agriculture in the same way as the Georgia coastal plain, the stamp of human activity is indeed present and visible.
 11. For the general history of Belize, see O. Nigel Bolland, *The Formation of a Colonial Society: Belize, from Conquest to Crown Colony* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977); O. Nigel Bolland and Assad Shoman, *Land in Belize: 1763-1871* (Kingston, Jamaica: Institute of Social and Economic Research, 1977); Assad Shoman, *Thirteen Chapters of A History of Belize* (Belize City: Angelus Press, 1994); Cedric H. Grant, *The Making of Modern Belize: Politics, Society and British Colonialism in Central America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976); Narda A. Dobson, *History of Belize* (Trinidad: Longman Press, 1973); Norman Ashcraft, *Colonialism and Underdevelopment: Processes of Political and Economic Change in British Honduras* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1973).

12. Bolland, *The Formation of a Colonial Society*, 51; National Archives of Belize, (Belmopan, Belize) CO 123/9, "General Return of the Inhabitants in the Bay of Honduras," 22 October 1790. These numbers were shifting enormously at this time, however, because of the evacuation of British subjects and slaves from the Mosquito Coast and the settlement of many of these individuals in British Honduras in 1787.
13. Exactly how these categories were defined, and who belonged to which, was highly variable and charged. See Judd, "Elite Reproduction and Ethnic Identity in Belize." Also, at this point groups of Maya remained on the perimeter of the settlement—there are numerous references in a variety of archival materials to "incursions" into the settlement of "wild" Indians, but Mayan communities were not yet counted as part of "the settlement." Nor had the Garifuna yet arrived to British Honduras. See O.Nigel Bolland, "The Maya and the Colonization of Belize in the 19th C.," in *Colonialism and Resistance in Belize: Essays in Historical Sociology* (Benque Viejo del Carmen, Belize: Cubola Productions, 1988), 91-124; the works of Grant Jones; and Cal, "Capital-Labor Relations on a Colonial Frontier."
14. Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000). 6.
15. Shoman, *Thirteen Chapters of A History of Belize*, 102.
16. For a discussion of the continuation of this policy into the present day, see Laurie Kroshus Medina, "Development Policies and Identity Politics: Class and Collectivity in Belize" *American Ethnologist* 24 (1997): 148-69.
17. The connection between racial ideology and labor in the history of Belize has been noted before by several scholars, whose work has informed my own. See Bolland, *Formation of a Colonial Society*; and Mark Moberg, *Myths of Ethnicity and Nation: Immigration, Work and Identity in the Belize Banana Industry* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1997).
18. Shoman, *Thirteen Chapters of A History of Belize*, 149-57; Richard Wilk, "Beauty and the Feast: Official and Visceral Nationalism in Belize" *Ethnos* 53 (1993), 1-25; Stone, "Caribbean Nation, Central American State," 236-48; Evan X. Hyde, *X Communications, Selected Writings* (Belize City: Angelus Press, 1995), 279-84.
19. The central distinction that Creoles make is between the Spanish threat and their English bravery. The implications of this distinction in a small country whose population is now predominantly Mestizo (or as Creoles call them "Spanish" or "Pania") and whose independence and autonomy remain under the threat of Guatemalan claims on what it calls its "territory," are significant. For more on this point, see Laurie Kroshus Medina, "Defining Difference, Forging Unity: The Co-construction of Race, Ethnicity and Nation in Belize" *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 20 (1997), 758-79; and Stone, "Caribbean Nation, Central American State."
20. Capt. George Henderson, *An Account of the British Settlement of Honduras; Being a Brief View of its Commercial and Agricultural Resources, Soil, Climate, Natural History, Etc. To Which Are Added, Sketches of the Manners and Customs of the Mosquito Indians, Preceded by the Journal of a Voyage to the Mosquito Shore. Illustrated by a Map.* (London: C. and R. Baldwin, 1809); *The Honduras Almanack, for the Year of our Lord* (Belize: Legislative Assembly, 1830); Lindsay W. Bristowe and Philip B. Wright, *The Handbook of British Honduras for 1888-89, Comprising Historical, Statistical, and General Information Concerning the Colony, Compiled from Official and Other Reliable Records* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1888).
21. Gustav Jahoda, *Images of Savages: Ancient Roots of Modern Prejudice in Western Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1999); George H. Fredrickson, *Racism: A Short History* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002).

22. For details, see Shoman, *Thirteen Chapters of A History of Belize*, 111-36; Bolland and Shoman, *Land in Belize*; and O. Nigel Bolland, "Labour Control and Resistance in Colonial British Honduras," in *Colonialism and Resistance in Belize: Essays in Historical Sociology* (Benque Viejo del Carmen, Belize: Cubola Productions, 1988).
23. Henderson, *An Account of the British Settlement of Honduras*, 49.
24. The "bush" is a culturally and racially weighted term that describes parts of the natural environment that display little human alteration. See discussion below.
25. *Honduras Almanack*, 7-8.
26. *Ibid.*, 16.
27. *Ibid.*, 37.
28. Shoman, *Thirteen Chapters of A History of Belize*, 112.
29. Bolland, *Formation of a Colonial Society*, 120-24.
30. Dobson, *History of Belize*, 175.
31. Bolland, *Labour Control*.
32. Bristowe and Wright, *Handbook of British Honduras for 1888-89*, 196.
33. For a discussion of this quote, see Judd, "Elite Reproduction and Ethnic Identity in Belize," 173, citing Archibald Richardson Gibbs, *British Honduras: A Historical and Descriptive Account of the Colony from Its Settlement, 1670. (Compiled from Original and Authentic Sources)* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle and Rivington, 1883). Also noted in Bolland, *Formation of a Colonial Society*, 124.
34. Judd, "Elite Reproduction and Ethnic Identity in Belize," 173, citing Burns, *Colonial Servant* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1962), 127. Sir Alan Burns served as Governor of British Honduras from 1934 through 1939.
35. Wayne M. Clegern, *British Honduras: Colonial Dead End, 1859-1900* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1967), 34.
36. For an analysis of a similar situation in Trinidad, see Aisha Khan, "Rurality and 'Racial' Landscapes in Trinidad," in Ching and Creed, *Knowing Your Place*, 39-70.
37. For examples of this, see Grant, *The Making of Modern Belize*; and Ashcraft, *Colonialism and Underdevelopment*. For discussions of how national development ideology casts Creoles, see Bolland, *Formation of a Colonial Society*; and Medina, "Development Policies and Identity Politics."
38. Judd, "Elite Reproduction and Ethnic Identity in Belize," 73.
39. *Ibid.*
40. Bolland, *Formation of a Colonial Society*, 41-42.
41. *Birth and Death Records of Orange Walk District, 1885-1913*, National Archives of Belize, Belmopan, Belize.
42. This is a complicated phenomenon, and also one that is occurring in many other similar kinds of contexts around the world—as the urban becomes glossed as global, the rural becomes local, and the putative source of resistance against global hegemony. There are many problematic assumptions held within these positionings, and there is a wealth of theory trying to make sense of this. See, in particular, David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Social Change* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989); Ching and Creed, *Knowing Your Place*; Timothy Oakes, "Place and the Paradox of Modernity," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 87 (1997): 509-31.
43. Lambros Comitas, "Occupational Multiplicity in Rural Jamaica," in *Work and Family Life: West Indian Perspectives*, ed. Lambros Comitas and David Lowenthal (New York: Doubleday, 1964), 163-4.
44. Letter to Evan Napean from George Dyer (CO 123/5), cited in Bolland, *Formation of a Colonial Society*, 58.
45. Bolland, *Formation of a Colonial Society*, 59.

46. *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* (CO 123/9, 146).
47. Henderson, *An Account of the British Settlement of Honduras*, 33.
48. Bolland, *Formation of a Colonial Society*, 58.
49. Frederick Crowe, *The Gospel in Central America, Containing a History of the Baptist Mission in British Honduras* (London: Charles Gilpin, 1850).
50. *Birth Records of Orange Walk District, 1888-1913*, National Archives of Belize (Belmopan, Belize).
51. Other histories and commentary that include this perspective are Grant, *The Making of Modern Belize*; D.A.G. Waddell, *British Honduras: An Historical and Contemporary Survey* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1961); and Clegern, *British Honduras*.
52. Comitas, "Occupational Multiplicity in Rural Jamaica."
53. Mackler and Salas, *Management Plan*.
54. For a discussion of this debate among Caribbeanists, see David Lowenthal, "Caribbean Views of Caribbean Land," *Canadian Geographer* 5 (1961): 1-9; and Jean Besson and Janet Momsen, eds., *Land and Development in the Caribbean* (London: MacMillan Caribbean, 1987).
55. Harvey, *Condition of Postmodernity*.
56. For a clear visual representation of the status of the environment in Central America, see Center for the Support of Native Lands, *Indigenous Peoples and Natural Ecosystems in Central America and Southern Mexico* (Washington, D.C.: National Geographic Society and Center for Support of Native Lands, 2002).
57. Of course this is yet another erroneous set of stereotypes about people of African descent in the United States and arguably throughout the Caribbean, as well. For one perspective on this, see Emmet R. Jones and Lewis F. Carter, "Concern for the Environment Among Black Americans: An Assessment of Common Assumptions" *Social Science Quarterly* 75 (1994): 560-79.
58. A key critique and discussion of this discourse is Kent Redford, "The Ecologically Noble Savage," *Cultural Survival Quarterly* 15 (1991): 46-48.
59. See the website of the National Kriol Project at <http://www.kriol.org.bz>. The ironies and dangers of linking ecotourism with a racialized rural Creole identity are many. The African as less than human is not the least of these: Is this potentially as limiting and oppressive as the stereotype of the Creole as the consummate lumberjack?