Disputed Borderlands: Entangled Territories between the Spanish and British Empires in Colonial Central America, 1700-1787

Ben Fuggle

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of History

Department of History

University of Essex

May 2020

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements: p. 5

Abstract: p. 8

1. Introduction: p. 9

1.1 Historiographies: p. 14

1.2 Borderlands and Entanglement: p. 22

1.3 The Entangled Borderlands of Central America: p. 32

2. European and Indigenous Structures: The Context for Entanglement: p. 40

2.1 The Spanish Empire, the Kingdom of Guatemala and Reclaiming the Borderlands: p. 43

2.2 The Development of the Miskito: p. 58

2.3 Miskito Social Organisation: p. 63

2.4 The Miskito Kingdom: The Third Empire? p. 68

2.5 The British Empire, Jamaica and the Value of the Borderlands: p. 74

2.6 Conclusion: The Borderlands at Every Level: p.85

3. The Mosquito Coast: The Central Borderland: p. 88

3.1 An Imperial Flashpoint: p. 88

3.2 The Primacy of the Mosquito Coast: Geography of British Settlements: p. 91

3.3: The Contraband Trade: A Force for Development: p. 101

3.4: The Permanent Threat of War: Maintaining Security: p. 111

3.4.1 The Problems of Maintaining Security: p. 111

3.4.2 The Effect of Motivating War: p. 114

3.5 The Spanish Military Offensive against the Mosquito Coast: p. 118

3.6 The British Defence of the Mosquito Coast: p. 125

3.6.1 Jamaican Ambivalence: p. 126

3.6.2 Appealing to the Metropole: p. 128

3.6.3 The Problems of an Unclear Imperial Role: p. 136

3.7 Conclusions: Caught between Two Empires and a Kingdom: p. 140

4. Belize: Economic Opportunities and Spanish Pressure: p. 144

4.1 Belize: Explaining a Central American Anomaly: p. 144

4.2 Belize: Unknown Origins and Problems of Recognition: p. 147

4.3 The Economic Opportunities of a Borderland: Belize's Wooden Foundations: p. 151

4.3.1 The Lumber Trade as a Force for Development: p. 151

4.3.2 Supporting the Borderland Economy: Spanish Connivance and Contraband: p. 161

4.4 Pre-1763 Belize: Spanish Hostility and Dependence on the Mosquito Coast: p. 164

4.4.1 Limited Government at the Limits of Empire: The Early Organisation of Belize: p. 164

4.4.2 Dependence on the Miskito: The Role of the Mosquito Coast: p. 165

4.4.3 Jamaican Indifference: Governmental Neglect: p. 170

4.4.4 Spanish Suspicion and British Ignorance: Belize in the eyes of the Metropoles: p. 175

4.5 Post-1763 Belize: Diplomatic Recognition, Spanish Sabotage and Jamaican Expansion: p. 179

4.5.1 Tenuous Legal Existence: Article 17 of the Treaty of Paris: p. 179

4.5.2 Slow Development: The Continued Miskito Connection and Jamaican Failures: p. 182

4.5.3 Imperial Reactions: Sabotage and Planning for the Economy: p. 186

4.5.4 The End of a Borderland: Forming a Government and the Battle of Saint George's Cay: p. 189

4.6 Conclusion: Disentanglement and Formal Incorporation into the Empire: p. 192

5. Costa Rica: Opportunity, Violence and Fear on the Borderland: p. 196

5.1 Introduction: A Localised Borderland? p.196

5.2 Imperial Isolation: The Limits of Guatemala and Madrid: p. 198

5.3 Borderland Opportunities: The Matina Valley, Slavery and Contraband: p. 208

5.4 Borderland Violence: Entangled Relations and Clashes with the Miskito and British: p. 216

5.5 Borderland Fear: Talamanca and the Fear of Indigenous Power: p. 225

5.6 Conclusions: Development from the Pressures of Entanglement: p. 233

Conclusions: p. 236

Appendices: p. 251

Bibliography: p. 283

Acknowledgements

This project would not have been completed without the assistance of many people who have been instrumental to, not only the writing process, but numerous other aspects.

First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisor, Matthias Röhrig Assunção, whose comments and guidance have been invaluable for carrying out research as well as improving my writing over the course of this project, and whose support eased many of the stresses of working to deadlines. His supervision and high standards have been exacting, but have greatly improved the quality of the work. I would also like to thank the other members of my board, Brian Hamnett and Andrew Canessa, who have provided a lot of support and useful comments at boards and have always been contactable despite their own busy schedules. I would also like to thank them for giving me a considerable amount of history books, which has saved me a lot of hassle when it comes to library visits.

The other person who has contributed most to the completion of this thesis and deserves an inordinate amount of thanks is Helena Hughes, whose regular weekly meetings (sometimes more) were a tremendous source of stability and reassurance regarding overall progress; even if the sessions did end up meticulously picking apart my writing style for all the grammatical flaws they contained, and they were numerous, much like this sentence. It is safe to say this thesis would not have been completed without her assistance.

The numerous staff at Essex History department have been great in creating a friendly environment in which to work as well as providing useful tips, advice and organisational help and have been invaluable in staving off the isolation that almost set

in during some of the more intense writing periods. Special thanks to the administration team, and Lisa Willis especially, for being fonts of knowledge when it came to procedures, timetabling and general administration. I will miss the easy access to department events, the coffee mornings and the department whiteboard.

In addition to the staff, I would like to thank the student community at Essex - both postgrad and undergrad - for providing company and a social space in which to relax from writing this thesis, as well as providing unique and often very useful viewpoints, and sometimes just being good friends and willing to listen to me vent. Of this vast community, I would like to especially thank the now Doctors Ben Markham and Helen Kemp, who have provided valuable insight and were kind enough to take the time to proofread several parts of my thesis, as well as providing steady and engaging company during writing.

The assistance of staff at the numerous archives and libraries I have used has been invaluable and I would like to extend my sincerest thanks for ensuring the smooth operation of all the archives and libraries I've visited. This especially applies to the staff of the Archivo General de Indias, who were incredibly patient when dealing with my sub-par spoken Spanish and my constant requests that required them to adjust the microfilm machines. The staff of the Belize Archive and Record Service and Library of Belize should also be thanked for maintaining what I feel is a highly undervalued archive and allowing me to use their facilities during a maintenance day, allowing me to make the most of my limited time there. Also, thanks to the librarian in Belize who led me to some great literature about the country.

Finally, I’d like to thank my various other friends and family who have provided invaluable support and kept me sane over these four years and, especially, my parents who have helped support me financially and generally made this whole project possible in the first place.

Abstract

The intention of this thesis is to examine the history of eighteenth-century Central America as a borderland disputed by three major powers: the British, Spanish and the Miskito. Interactions between these three powers had a major impact on the region's development but were focused in three key areas. These areas, and the focus of the thesis, are the Mosquito Coast, Costa Rica and Belize. They were the main points of contact for the three major regional powers. The relations that formed in these areas were complicated by the limited influence of the imperial capitals, the conflicting aims of their nearby colonies, the capitals' dependency on these colonies to implement policy and the differing aims of those that lived in the borderlands. The other key aspect of this thesis is the inclusion of the Miskito as a major power in Central America. While their importance has been covered before, the complex interplay of the Miskito's role in borderland relations and their own cultural development has only been studied in ethnographic or anthropological works. These complicated relations have not been well explored in the existing historiography, which typically seeks to create clear distinctions between British, Spanish and Miskito activity. Through studying these cases, using an entangled approach, the intention is to show that they were deeply entwined, not only between empires, but also through different levels of imperial administration including the Miskito. Ultimately, the thesis seeks to analyse the impact of these myriad interactions in the Central American borderlands and prove the region's development was shaped by a combination of different groups and that historical analysis based on imperial frameworks often does not accurately portray the history of these areas.

Chapter 1. Introduction

On 3 August 2009, Hector Williams declared the independence of the 'Community Nation of Moskitia' on Nicaragua's Atlantic coast, creating a nation-state for the indigenous Miskito people.[1] This announcement was met with near-complete indifference around the world, and continues to be largely ignored by the international community and the Nicaraguan government. The motivation for this declaration has its origins in the region's long history of conflict in the borderlands and was most important from 1700 to 1787. The regional military supremacy of the indigenous Miskito led to the British and Spanish empires seeking their allegiance as they sought to control much of Central America's long Caribbean coastline. These interactions in pursuit of control were far from straightforward, the geographical isolation, conflicting aims within empires and small scale of settlement led to confusions and difficulty in implementing a blanket imperial policy. This resulted in individuals and small communities in the local area steering the region's development, with intrusions from distant colonies and metropoles either serving as an indirect impetus, through the provision of trade routes and political backing, or direct influence through military and legal intervention.

The development of Central America in the eighteenth century was strongly affected by the presence of three major regional powers: the Spanish Empire, the British Empire and the Miskito, who interacted in the borderlands of Central America. The interactions between these three actors had a profound impact on every major development that

[1] Stephen Gibbs, 'Nicaragua's Miskitos Seek Independence', *BBC News*, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/8181209.stm> [accessed 12 November 2017].

occurred in the region during this period, their impact spreading from the borderlands through formal imperial connections and informal relationships. These developments included the contraband trade, the Belizean lumber trade, developments in Spanish colonial governance, imperial conflict and the formation of the Miskito Kingdom. These three powers mainly interacted in the Central American borderlands, but previous historical approaches have concentrated on the Mosquito Coast and, to a lesser extent, Belize. The objective of this thesis is to analyse these interactions across all three borderlands, while accommodating the influence of Europeans that were based outside the borderlands. An expanded view can be attained by using the entangled approach.

Conflicts originating from these Central American borderlands were not limited to the eighteenth century. Twenty-five years before Hector William's declaration, the Miskito were allied with the Contra; fighting a Cold War era civil war against the ruling Sandinista government with backing from the United States; fighting for, among other things, a greater degree of independence from the government based on the Pacific coast. These struggles can also be seen in the nineteenth century as the Miskito jostled for regional power by playing the United States, the British Empire and the newly formed Central American republics against each other. These contests stemmed from the creation of the original Miskito kingdom that had largely taken shape by the end of the eighteenth century. Far from being ignored, as William's declaration in 2009 had been, the Miskito kingdom was the centre of large-scale diplomacy between several of the eighteenth century's largest empires; such as Britain, Spain, France as well as the Netherlands and the recently formed United States. The Convention of London and the Treaty of Paris hoped to resolve long standing issues that had caused international incidents. When studying the region before 1700, the region that this thesis treats as

borderlands slips into obscurity. Accounts that detail the region are mostly travellers' accounts describing flora and fauna, or complaints from minor colonial officials about how the unsettled coasts and hidden sandbars were providing havens for pirates, but, even then, officials couldn't confirm these reports. These borderlands did not appear to be the foundation of a territory warranting international attention, making the eighteenth century a crucial formative period for the region.

Central America's Caribbean coast was not like other areas characterised by inter-imperial and indigenous strife in the eighteenth century. The main Spanish imperial presence in the region, The Kingdom of Guatemala, lacked the immense mineral wealth or strategic port of other more prominent Spanish territories. The Miskito had prevented the few Spanish attempts to settle the Caribbean coast in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and allowed a handful of British settlers to move into the region. Even with these distinct populations, the large fleets and professional armies that characterised much of eighteenth-century warfare never reached Central America. In major imperial clashes, the indigenous groups in North and South America played very different roles in comparison to Central America. The isthmus was geographically small in comparison, the vast open spaces of North and South America were contrasted sharply with the narrow strips of coast that made up the Central American borderlands. The populations and resources in Central America were also at a much smaller scale than these other points of contact. This led to the interactions between indigenous and imperial powers taking distinctly separate forms as local conditions had profound effects on, not only what could be done, but also on what empires were willing to do.

These differences meant that Central America was not studied as a borderland until very recently. The region was largely treated solely as a part of Spanish history, in which the British and Miskito occasionally featured.[2] This began to change towards the end of the twentieth century, with a growing interest in foreign intervention in the region and new ideas about the history of the Miskito.[3] This increased depth of knowledge did not completely unify the multiple historical narratives. Studies of British intervention retained a British focus with allusions to Miskito and Spanish actions.[4] Studies of the Miskito were more nuanced, as historians and anthropologists analysed the way the Miskito handled having relations with two empires simultaneously.[5] They also studied the impact Miskito and European actions had on mutually constituting both the Miskito Kingdom and European policy in the area.[6] These studies still retained a focus on the Miskito rather than studying the area as a whole. Although borderland approaches began to be applied to individual aspects of Central America's history at their core, the subjects remained separate.

Studies of Central America have also been limited by the imposition of anachronistic borders to historical actors. In the eighteenth century, the British, Spanish and Miskito

---

[2] Hector Perez-Brignoli, *A Brief History of Central America* (Oxford, 1989). Ralph Lee Woodward, Jr., *Central America a Nation Divided* (Oxford, 1976).

[3] Mary W. Helms, *Middle America a Culture History of Heartland and Frontiers* (New York, 1982). Craig, Dozier, *Nicaragua's Mosquito Shore: The Years of British and American Presence* (Tuscaloosa, 1985).

[4] Robert A. Naylor, *Penny Ante Imperialism the Mosquito Shore and the Bay of Honduras A case study in British Informal Empire* (Cranbury, 1989). Frank Griffith Dawson, 'William Pitt's Settlement at Black River on the Mosquito Shore: A Challenge to Spain in Central America. 1732-87', *The Hispanic American Historical Review,* 63 (1983).

[5] Mary W. Helms, 'The Cultural Ecology of a Colonial Tribe', *Ethnology,* 8 (1969).
Mary W. Helms, 'Miskito Slaving and Culture Contact: Ethnicity and Opportunity in an Expanding Population', *Journal of Anthropological Research,* 39 (1983). Michael D. Olien, 'The Miskito Kings and the Line of Succession', *Journal of Anthropological Research,* 39 (1983). Michael D. Olien, 'General, Governor and Admiral: Three Lines of Miskito Succession', *Ethnohistory,* 45 (1998).

[6] Mary W. Helms, 'Of Kings and Contexts: Ethnohistorical Interpretations of Miskito Political Structure and Function', *American Ethnologist,* 13 (1986).

each operated across the length of Central America's Caribbean coast, which today consists of five separate countries. This has often led to focused studies centring on actions in a single area defined by modern-day borders.[7] The only exception again is regarding the Miskito, whose territory was in parts of both modern-day Honduras and Nicaragua, but, as these studies concentrate on the Miskito themselves, their impact on the wider area is often neglected.[8] In the eighteenth century, these areas were separate administrative districts, but, in many ways, they were so deeply connected that actions in one area would have profound affects across the others. The presence of two world-spanning empires, and multiple layers of actors within them with their own interests, meant that a single imperial policy would have ramification across multiple areas; whether it was intended or not.

This thesis will attempt to redress some these issues by classifying Central America's Caribbean coast as a borderland and reanalysing the interactions between the Miskito, the Spanish and British empires in this context. The focus will be on three key geographic areas: the Mosquito Coast, Belize and Costa Rica. Analysing the areas geographically will allow for all three powers to be analysed in a context that accommodates their varying aims and local conditions. By treating these areas as borderlands, it will focus on local actors and helps free the historical narratives from strict national or imperial narratives. This also enables the study of links between these three areas and will help illustrate their shared historical context.

---

[7] Acker, Alison, *Honduras the Making of a Banana Republic* (Toronto, 1988), pp.12-13. Linda A. Newson, 'Silver Mining in Honduras', *Revista de Historia de América,* 97 (1984), p.74. Luís Sánchez, 'Splitting the Country: The Case of the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua', *Journal of Latin American Geography,* 6 (2007), pp. 20-21.

[8] Wolfgang Gabbert, 'God Save the King of the Mosquito Nation! Indigenous Leaders on the Fringe of the Spanish Empire', *Ethnohistory: The Bulletin of the Ohio Valley Historic Indian Conference,* 63:1 (2016), pp.84-85.

This study will also include the wider European Empires and the internal workings and developments of the Miskito Kingdom in relation to events and developments in the borderlands themselves. This is not to say that this thesis will include a full history of the British and Spanish empires, or a full anthropological account of the Miskito, but the role of these entities was important to explaining events in the Central American borderlands. The focus will remain on the three main borderland areas and how the communities that existed in these areas developed over the course of the eighteenth century. This will also include their interactions with all three major powers and any immediate impacts they may have had. The intention is to show how these small fringe communities played a significant role in shaping both wider imperial policy and developments in Central America as a whole.

1.1 Historiographies

One of the chief aims of this thesis is to draw together three separate historiographies that are rarely studied together. The British, Spanish and indigenous presences in Central America have all been studied before, sometimes quite extensively. As huge political structures, the British and Spanish empires have received considerable historical attention, but analyses of them in relation in Central America are relatively rare, especially when the eighteenth century is concerned. While this is understandable for the British Empire as their official presence there was limited during the eighteenth century, the limited analysis of the Spanish Empire in Central America is harder to account for. The most likely reason is the simple fact that, in terms of wealth, population and empire-wide impact, the Kingdom of Guatemala is simply not as crucial as other Spanish colonies, especially New Spain and Peru. Despite these apparent deficiencies, many general works on these empires directly mention, or at least relate to,

Central America and the limited scope has not completely prevented focused works from being made.

The historiography of the eighteenth-century British Empire in the Americas concentrates heavily on North America due to the well-known dramatic events that took place.[9] The other major focus is on the British presence in the Caribbean, which is important for this thesis as it was Jamaica which (directly and indirectly) supported and affected the British presence in the Central American borderlands. While Jamaica was a part of a wider Atlantic community, and deeply connected to the slave trade, for this thesis the parts of its historiography that are most crucial are related to its political structures and its security concerns. While the Jamaican form of chattel slavery affected nearly all aspects of life on the island colony, there is no room to make any small contributions to the already existing vast and detailed literature on the topic.[10] Studies of Jamaican politics in this period, when not directly addressing issues caused by slavery, often focus on its oligarchic nature and the concentration of power in the hands of a few select families or individuals.[11] Earlier studies considered the relation between the royal-appointed Governor and the colonist-elected Jamaican assembly as a central part of the island's political life, often contributing to its chaotic and tense atmosphere.

---

[9] J.H. Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World Britain and Spain in the America 1492-1830* (New Haven, 2006).

[10] The literature on Jamaican slavery and the British slave trade is vast and is covered in numerous works, examples include Phillip D. Morgan, 'Slaves and Livestock in Eighteenth Century Jamaica: Vineyard Pen 1750-51', *The William and Mary Quarterly,* 52:1 (1995). Trevor Burnard and Kenneth Morgan, 'The Dynamics of the Slave Market and Slave Purchasing Patterns in Jamaica, 1655-1788', *The William and Mary Quarterly,* 58:1 (2001). Kathleen E.A. Monteith and Glen Richards (eds) *Jamaica in Slavery and Freedom History Heritage and Culture* (University of West Indies Press, 2002). Alexander X. Byrd, *Captives and Voyagers Black Migrants Across the eighteenth-century British Atlantic World* (Louisiana, 2010).

[11] James Robertson, 'A 1748 "Petition of Negro Slaves" and the local Politics of Slavery In Jamaica', *The William and Mary Quarterly,* 67:2 (2010), p.341. Christer Petley, *Slaveholders in Jamaica* (London, 2009).

Different political goals between these two key political institutions would have important ramifications for Central America that were often missed when a borderland or entangled perspective was not used. A few exceptions do exist, but they are often referred to as almost a sideshow that only affected the Governor, who either supported the borderland settlements or actively tried to limit or remove the British presence.[12] The economic history of Jamaica is also dominated by slavery, but other histories or the reference to its exclusionary nature are important to understanding Jamaica's relationship with the Central American borderlands. Studies agree that most people arriving in Jamaica found their options for economic advancement limited and so turned to other practices; these studies often concentrate on their role as overseers and other wage jobs, but the role of the borderlands in providing contraband opportunities and land for cultivation is also dismissed, or mentioned and not explored.[13] Other studies also examine the contraband trade in Jamaica before the eighteenth century, but few acknowledge it as a significant force after 1700, or at least do not examine in significant depth beyond its connections to slavery.[14] Historians have acknowledged Jamaica's connections to Central America in small ways, but, as the impact of these connections on slavery, cultural and social history are very limited, their impact on other aspects has not been fully considered.

[12] George Metcalf, *Royal Government and Political Conflict in Jamaica 1729-1783* (London, 1965). Kathleen Wilson, 'Rethinking the Colonial State: Family, Gender and Governmentality in Eighteenth-Century British Frontiers', *The American Historical Review,* 116:5 (2011), pp.1316-1317.

[13] James Robertson, 'The Best Poor Man's Country? Thomas Thistlewood in Eighteenth-Century Jamaica', *Caribbean Quarterly,* 52:4 (2006), p.77. Morgan, 'Slaves and livestock in Eighteenth-Century Jamaica', pp.67-69.

[14] Nuala Zahedieh, 'The Merchants of Port royal Jamaica, and the Spanish Contraband Trade, 1655-1692', *The William and Mary Quarterly,* 43:4 (1986), pp.592-593.

The impact and relationship between the Central American borderlands and the historiography of the Spanish Empire is far more substantial. Many general works on the Spanish Empire have detailed its political and economic structures, and, while not always directly referencing the Kingdom of Guatemala, many of the broad approaches they take can be applied to Central America. The inefficiencies of the Hapsburg administration and the efforts of the Bourbons to reform and professionalise these positions are a major part of the literature.[15] Disagreements abound on which groups were the most powerful and how effective reform attempts were, but a consensus agrees that local and regional variations had a major impact.[16] Attempts were largely seen as improving the economy, but undermining the loyalty of the elite classes, eventually resulting in the independence movements and civil wars of the early nineteenth century.[17]

This is demonstrative of a wider problem with the targeted studies of the Spanish Empire in Central America. Works are often focused on finding explanations for nineteenth- and twentieth-century events in the colonial period. This often leads to a concentration on the study of corruption and characterises Central America as poverty-

[15] Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World*, pp. 229. John Lynch, *Bourbon Spain 1700-1808* (Oxford, 1989), pp.150-155. Regina Grafe and Alejandra Irigoin, 'A Stakeholder Empire: The Political Economy of Spanish Imperial Rule in America', *The Economic History Review*, 65:2 (May 2012), pp.638-639. Robert Patch, 'Imperial Politics and Local Economy in Colonial Central America 1670–1770', *Past and Present*, 143 (1994), pp.101-103.

[16] James Mahoney, *Colonialism and Postcolonial Development Spanish America in Comparative Perspective* (New York, 2010). Richmond F. Brown, *Juan Fermín de Aycinena Central American Colonial Entrepreneur 1729-1796* (Norman, 1997). Troy S. Floyd, 'The Guatemalan merchants, the Government, and the Provincianos, 1750-1800', *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, 41:1 (1961), pp.99-101.

[17] Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World*, *p.376*. Lynch, *Bourbon Spain*, p.330. Ralph Lee Woodward Jr., 'The Guatemalan Merchants and national Defence 1810', *The Hispanic American Review*, 45:3 (1965), pp.453-454. Josep M. Fradera and Christopher Schmidt-Nowara, 'Spanish Colonial Historiography: Everyone in Their Place', *Social History*, 29:3 (2004), pp. 371-372.

stricken and isolated due to Spanish actions.[18] This has begun to change in recent years, for example the study of contraband has shown to have more than just a purely negative impact.[19] The focus has remained on the role of the Guatemalan merchants class, which had a disproportionate impact on both the politics and economy of the region through a monopolistic control of both.[20] How far this control extended when using a borderlands or entangled approach has been understudied until recently and new studies have begun to explore the complex relationship between these merchants and these fringes.[21] The overwhelming focus on official policy has limited the historical agency of many actors within Central America and the study of the region as a borderland serves as a direct challenge to many of these suppositions.

Outside of these large imperial histories, the individual countries of Central America have their own historiographies. A borderland approach has been used in the past, but their importance has varied considerably and their importance to national histories is often directly linked to twentieth-century events. National histories of Nicaragua and Honduras rarely consider a borderland perspective: when the geographical areas mentioned in this thesis are addressed, their inclusion is brief and dependent on another

[18] Perez-Brignoli, *A Brief History of Central America*. Miles L. Wortman, *Government and Society in Central America, 1680-1840* (New York, 1982). Woodward, *Central America A Nation Divided*. Miles Wortman, 'Government Revenue and Economic Trends in Central America, 1787-1819', *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, 55:2 (1975), pp.251-252.

[19] Jordana Dym, *From Sovereign Villages to National States City, State, and Federation in Central America 1759-1839* (Albuquerque, 2006). Jordana Dym, Christophe Belaubre, *Politics, Economy and Society in Bourbon Central America* (Boulder, 2007).

[20] Dym, *Politics, Economy and Society in Bourbon Central America*. Brown, *Juan Fermín de Aycinena*. Mahoney, *Colonialism and Postcolonial Development*. Robert M. Hill, 'Social organisation by Decree in Colonial Highland Guatemala, *Ethnohistory* 36:2 (1989), pp.191-192.

[21] Hector R. Feliciano Ramos, *El Contrabando Ingles en el Caribe y el Golfo de Mexico (1748-1778)* (Seville, 1990). Dym, *Politics, Economy and Society in Bourbon Central America*.

factor rather than being treated as a separate factor.[22] Instead, the borderland's impact during the colonial period is a part of the history of the Mosquito Coast. This territory, also known as 'Mosquitia' in some texts, covered the entirety of Nicaragua's Caribbean coast and large parts of eastern Honduras, but its eventual incorporation into Nicaragua and Honduras strongly affected historical analyses of it. The result was that the Mosquito Coast has its own historiography that ends up being kept separate from national narratives. This applies to works detailing the European presence and studies of the Miskito, who were largely based in this territory. Large works that analysed the coast emphasised it as a theatre for Anglo-Spanish imperial struggles and, although the events and processes were well documented, they concentrated on the eventual British removal rather than any wider impacts these interactions might have had.[23] These studies changed towards the end of the twentieth century; historians studied how the British presence was connected to wider imperial policy and aims in the region; new ideas about the economics of the Kingdom of Guatemala also brought more light to the economic impact that the Mosquito Coast might have had, but the most significant developments in historiography applied to the Miskito.[24]

As an indigenous group, the Miskito have been studied both anthropologically and historically since the nineteenth century. While many of the early assertions about the Miskito being little more than violent, drunk puppets of the British have been largely

[22] Acker, *Honduras the Making of a Banana Republic*, pp.34-35. James Dunkerly, *Power in the Isthmus* (London 1988), pp.312-315.
[23] Troy S. Floyd, *The Anglo Spanish Struggle for Mosquitia* (Albuquerque, 1967). William Shuman Sorsby, *The British Superintendency of the Mosquito Shore 1749–1787*, PHD thesis University College London, 1969.
[24] Nicholas Rogers, 'Caribbean Borderland: Empire, Ethnicity, and the Exotic on the Mosquito Coast', *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 26:3 (2002), pp.135-136. Taylor E. Mack, 'Contraband Trade through Trujillo, Honduras, 1720s–1782', *Yearbook conference of Latin Americanist Geographers*, 24 (1998), pp.52-53.

discredited, the question of European influence on Miskito society, politics and culture has loomed large on any discussion of their eighteenth-century development.[25] The exact structure of the Miskito Kingdom and to what extent the Miskito were a single unified people spawned considerable academic debate, with a range of articles contesting how strong the named leaders were, but they ultimately agreed on many aspects, such as the Miskito acting largely in their own interest while balancing the pressures from both the British and Spanish empires.[26] In this period of debate, there was a tacit agreement between historians of a general uniformity to Miskito aims and cultural background, but, as studies continued, long held assertions have been challenged. The ethnic divisions between different Miskito are now considered to be far more important than had been previously thought, and the role of European ideas and technology in helping assert their military dominance over other indigenous groups is no longer thought to be as crucial.[27] These highly focused studies have greatly enhanced understanding of the Miskito, but many of the implications of this deeper understanding have not been applied to the communities that regularly interacted with them: both the British and Spanish in the immediate vicinity and those further afield in the respective empires and other borderlands of Central America.

---

[25] Michael D. Olien, E.G. Squier, 'E.G. Squier and the Miskito: Anthropological scholarship and Political Propaganda', *Ethnohistory,* 32:2 (1985), pp.118-120. Daniel Mendiola, 'The Rise of the Mosquito Kingdom in Central America's Caribbean Borderlands: Sources, questions and Enduring Myths', *History Compass,* 16 (2018), pp. 1-3.

[26] Michael D. Olien, 'General, Governor and Admiral: Three Lines of Miskito succession', *Ethnohistory,* 45 (1998), p.313. Olien, 'The Miskito Kings and the Line of Succession' (1983), p.237. Helms, 'Of Kings and Contexts', pp.520-522.

[27] Eugenia Ibarra, *Del arco y la flecha a las armas de fuego. Los Indios Mosquitos hay la historia Centroamericana, 1633 – 1786* (San José, 2011), p.230. Matthew P. Dziennik, 'The Miskitu, Military Labour, and the San Juan Expedition of 1780', *The Historical Journal,* 61:1 (2018), pp.176-178. Karl H. Offen, 'The Sambo and Tawira Miskitu: The Colonial Origins and Geography of Intra-Miskitu Differentiation in Eastern Nicaragua and Honduras', *Ethnohistory,* 49:2 (2002), pp.352-354. Karl H. Offen, 'Mapping Amerinidan Captivity in Colonial Mosquitia', *Journal of Latin American Geography,* 14:3 (2015), pp.54-55.

Like many of the countries in Central America, the eighteenth-century historiography of Belize and Costa Rica is relatively small and heavily affected by specific developments in the twentieth century. As Belize was a British colony until 1981 and still has ongoing border disputes with Guatemala originating in the eighteenth century, there was a tendency for its history to be portrayed as one in which the eventual British victory at Saint George's Cay was almost predetermined. This also led to a focus on Belize's role in the British Empire and the impact of global wars and diplomacy on its development.[28] It was only towards the end of the twentieth century that Belize's social and cultural history was really examined, especially the unique features of its slave society and how its dependence on the lumber industry had profound effects on the area's residents, known by contemporaries as Baymen.[29] Attempts to analyse its social and cultural history are relatively new and often tie it to the Mosquito Coast as the two areas were closely connected.[30] These studies have spurred historians to look for more reasons as to why the area stayed British, but another angle yet to be studied is how Spanish efforts to influence the region could also have contributed to Britain's eventual control of the area.

The history of Costa Rica is shaped by the concept of 'Costa Rican exceptionalism', which was coined to illustrate Costa Rica's general peaceful stability, both politically

[28] Stephen L. Caiger, *British Honduras Past and Present* (Edinburgh, 1951). C.H. Grant, *The Making of Modern Belize Politics, Society & British Colonialism in Central America* (Bristol, 1976).
[29] Nigel O. Bolland, *Colonialism and resistance in Belize essays in Historical Sociology* (Benque Viejo del Carmen, 2003). Barbara Bulmer-Thomas, Victor Bulmer-Thomas, *The Economic History of Belize From the 17th Century to Post Independence* (Benque Viejo del Carmen, 2012).
[30] Mavis C. Campbell, *Becoming Belize a History of an Outpost of Empire Searching for Identity 1528-1823* (Kingston, 2011).

and economically, when compared to its neighbours.[31] This was initially ascribed to Costa Rica's poverty and small population, which prevented a large wealth gap that happened in other Spanish colonies, and its isolation, which created a small local economy that shielded Costa Rica from changes in international trade.[32] While many of these have been largely discredited, they remain prominent factors for analysing Costa Rica's history.[33] While Costa Rica did not experience direct foreign intervention, both the British and the Miskito regularly travelled to its Caribbean coast to both trade and raid. These interactions are now thought to have had a significant impact on Costa Rica's economic and social history through its effects on the economy and slavery.[34] These studies still focus on Costa Rica in isolation and don't necessarily treat it as a borderland or frontier, which it could be due to various factors. Many of these are a result of how borderlands and frontiers have been defined and used as historical terms.

1.2 Borderlands and Entanglement

The two essential concepts for framing these areas are that of 'borderlands' and 'entanglement'. 'Borderlands' and the term that preceded it, frontiers', are two concepts that have been used extensively when studying the history of North America, before being applied elsewhere. While they had applications and uses prior to the twentieth century, they were adopted as historical terms in the works of Frederick Jackson Turner

[31] Mitchell A. Seligson, *Peasants of Costa Rica and the Development of Agrarian Capitalism* (Wisconsin, 1980). Steven Palmer, Iván Molina, *The Costa Rica Reader History, Culture, Politics* (London, 2004).
[32] John P Augelli, 'Costa Rica's Frontier Legacy', *Geographical Review*, 77 (1987), pp.4-5. Víctor Hugo Ortega, V.H.A.O. Acuña, Manuel María de Peralta, 'Historia Económica Del Tabaco En Costa Rica: Época Colonial', *Anuario de Estudios de Centroamericanos,* 4 (1978), pp.284-287.
[33] Monica A. Rankin, *The History of Costa Rica* (Santa Barbara, 2012).
[34] , Russell Lohse, *Africans into Creoles: Slavery, Ethnicity and identity in Colonial Costa Rica* (Albuquerque, 2014), p.201-203. Juan Carlos Solórzano Fonseca, 'El Comercio de Costa Rica durante el declive del comercio Español y el desarrollo del contrabando inglés: periodo 1690-1750', *Anuario de Estudios Centroamericanos,* 20 (1994), pp. 58-59. María Eugenia Brenes Castillo, 'Matina Bastión del Contrabando en Costa Rica', *Anuario de Estudios Centroamericanos,* 4 (1978), pp. 439-440.

and Herbert Eugene Bolton.[35] The definitions the authors offered for these terms were notoriously unclear, vague and drew upon older usage of the words. While these terms were exclusively applied to the history of the United States, the issues this vagueness caused were minimal, but, as historians have sought to expand the applications of these frameworks, the issues and shortcomings sparked a long-running debate about the extent and validity of applying these terms to historical study.

The term 'frontier' was imagined as a historical term by Turner in his influential work *The Significance of the Frontier in American History.* While the core argument, that frontier conditions shaped American institutions, was generally clear, his definition on what constituted the frontier is vague. The few descriptions he did offer were demonstrative of many of the criticisms the thesis would later receive, and future definitions would seek to amend. Most notably, he describes them as "an area of free land and a continuous recession… the meeting point between savagery and civilisation".[36] These views came under stringent criticism for numerous reasons. The most obvious was the omission of indigenous people and the characterisation of them as 'savage', which was deemed to be incredibly inaccurate and unpalatable as more became known about these groups. The other major omission was the lack of other European empires with whom settlers dealt with, most notably the Spanish but also French, Russian and other English settlers from Canada. Turner's American-centric

[35] John T. Juricek, 'American Usage of the Word Frontier from Colonial Times to Frederick Jackson Turner', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society,* 110:1 (1966), p.10.

[36] Frederick Jackson Turner, 'The Significance of the Frontier in American History', in *The Turner Thesis Concerning the Role of the Frontier in American History: Problems in American Civilisation* ed. by George Rogers Taylor (Lexington, 1972), pp.1-2.

view also prevented the application of his theories to other geographic areas and limited the impact of regional variation.

While the use of the term 'borderlands' was created to try and solve some of these issues, 'frontier' remained a commonly used term and gained nuances and definitions to ensure it remained relevant. A key feature of frontiers became the interaction between indigenous groups and European empires and the role of geography. While the original definition had espoused a relentless march of European civilisation against hostile inhabitants, newer interpretations characterised frontiers as spaces where indigenous groups both fought and cooperated with the advancing empire.[37] This allowed for a degree of cultural intermixing, but not an unambiguous triumph, creating vague and permeable cultural boundaries between societies.[38] This emphasis on vague boundaries was extended to the geographical boundaries. Frontiers had unclear or sometimes completely unknown boundaries and, as a result, the geography of an area was significant as it was an unknown factor and a key obstacle to European settlement.[39] Frontiers became an area of indigenous-European interaction in a region typically inhospitable to European settlement.

Despite these advancements, the concept of frontiers is still thought to have theoretical issues related to their applicability both geographically and temporally. Temporal issues stem from frontiers being distinguished by difficult physical geography and the role of indigenous groups, which mean it can become difficult to establish when an area

[37] Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World*, p.274.

[38] Jay Donis, 'Imagining and Reimagining Kentucky: Turning Frontier and Borderland Concepts into a Frontier-Borderland', *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society,* 114:3&4 (2016), p.464.

[39] Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World*, p.274. Donis, 'Imagining and reimagining Kentucky', p.464.

becomes or ceases to be a frontier.[40] European and indigenous activity is a difficult thing to quantify and the potential for local variations is immense; it also frequently ties frontier histories into narratives of state formation as the formal acquisition of territory into a state is possibly the simplest way of marking the end of a frontier's existence, considered by some to be a positive element of Turner's definition of a frontier.[41] This can be a mixed blessing as it can lead to anachronistic views on the history of a region; the tendency to see developments leading to state formation as an obvious result of earlier action. It does, however, keep frontiers tied to overarching historical developments and prevents them from becoming totally isolated, allowing for, in some cases, a broader view of events.

Geographic issues emerged from the sheer size of many areas designated frontiers. Studying many of these areas as geographic regions can be unfeasible due to the sheer vastness of the landmass and the physical limitations of human experiences in these historical periods.[42] Limitations in communications mean that it is hard to be sure if all communities in one frontier area were in communication with each other and, thus, whether what affected one affected all of them. This makes reconciling small-scale micro-historical studies with overarching historical trends very difficult in the frontiers. It remains important as frontiers are all historically defined through their connection to a European state, and during the eighteenth-century American Frontiers were claimed by actors from multiple states.

---

[40] Pekka Hämäläinen and Samuel Truett, 'On Borderlands', *The Journal of American History*, 98:2 (2011), p.344.

[41] Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron, 'From Borderlands to Borders: Nation-States and the People in Between in North American History', *The American Historical Review*, 104:3 (1999), pp. 816-817.

[42] Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World*, pp. IV-XV, David J. Weber, Bárbaros, pp.13-14.

The term ‘borderlands’ has often been directly compared to ‘frontier’, chiefly because they have both been used to analyse similar, or in some cases the same, historical places and time periods. The use of the term as a method for historical analysis was popularised by Herbert Eugene Bolton in his article ‘The Epic of Greater America’ in which he pushed for a more encompassing view of United States history that accommodated the narratives of other European powers and American states, especially Spain and Mexico. He argued that borderland zones were important for international relations and the development of culture. A transnational view of American history would lead to a deeper level of analysis and he sought to expand the definition of borderlands beyond just geographic terms, pushing for a more abstract view that could include any point of contact between European states.[43]

The term ‘borderlands’ has generally been better received then Turner’s frontier and Bolton’s ideas have been more favourably received over the long term due to their more inclusive nature and broader appeal, though there are still considerable debates as to their exact definition and how they should be applied. The most agreed upon trait of a borderland is the presence of multiple European states or communities that are competing for some form of dominance in the area. This view was gradually expanded to include indigenous groups as the focus of historians on ‘cultural voices’ grew to include non-Europeans.[44] The interactions between these groups created unique communities and contributed to the regional variation between borderlands and other areas.

---

[43] Herbert E. Bolton, ‘The Epic of Greater America’, *The American Historical Review,* 38 (1933), pp. 473-474.
[44] Donis, ‘Imagining and Reimagining Kentucky’, p.464. James G. Cusick, ‘Creolization and the Borderlands’, *Historical Archaeology,* 34:3 (2000), pp.46-48.

The efforts to define borderlands were complicated by their similarity to frontiers, especially as the latter was further developed to include more actors. This led some historians to simply claim that the differences are so small as to be largely superficial.[45] One of the more noticeable differences is the emphasis on borders, where frontiers are exemplified by unknown or unclear borders, borderlands are territories that have distinct borders that have a large impact on local communities.[46] In some ways they were frontiers that were being squeezed on both sides by recognised states, or a border that was recognised by the communities that lived either side of it.[47] In this sense, borderlands are far more defined by their relation to recognised states and international agreements.

These close links to European states created some problems in differentiating them from the non-borderland or 'core' regions to which they were theoretically attached. These generally had to be solved on a case-by-case basis dependent on each empire's independent experience at a given time. This attachment did, however, partially remedy the geographic definition problems that 'frontiers' suffered from, as borderlands depend upon the existence of a boundary through which to frame their existence. Historically such boundaries, and their borderlands were closely connected to the recognised boundaries of European states. The temporal issues of defining borderlands were exceptionally pronounced, especially because of Bolton's original approach to borderlands and how many of these ideas persisted. The emphasis of borderland histories on cross-cultural mixing, social fluidity and societal formations that were

[45] Donis, 'Imagining and Reimagining Kentucky', pp.472-473.

[46] Michiel Baud and William Van Schendel, 'Toward a Comparative History of borderlands', *Journal of World History,* 8:2 (1997), pp. 215-216.

[47] Cusick, 'Creolization and the Borderlands', p.47.

syncretic or dependent on each other prevented any narrative that had profound changes. As the communities studied in borderland histories were so deeply enmeshed with each other, yet distant from larger state formations that typically act as conduits for wider historical trends and events, they only ever changed in small ways and were characterised by continuity.[48] It was argued that borderlands existed outside of other historical narratives and chronologies, except their own regional variant, ultimately meaning they could not have a significant impact on events or trends outside their own borders. Attempts to resolve this problem have suggested connecting borderland histories to state formation as, like frontiers, the recognised acquisition of a territory and hardening of a border helps to form firm temporal boundaries as the existence of a borderland at least has a firm end.[49] This idea was expanded on, suggesting that the supposed timelessness of borderlands be a benefit, as it combats traditional master American narratives by unravelling established trends.[50] Though this still meant that, when borderlands were included in national narratives, they often did not fully incorporate all the actors in a region to retain narrative focus. This was similar to frontiers, which were chiefly predecessors to national histories, but borderlands were far more disruptive and are better at illustrating the uncertainty of life in those areas.

'Frontiers' and 'borderlands' are both terms that have had complex usage as historical terms and, despite some differences, they suffered from many of the same limitations. They both have issues over where focus should be placed, whether it be geographic limits or on the communities associated with the said area. The latter also has the issue

[48] Adelman, 'From Borderlands to Borders', p.815.

[49] Ibid. p.816.

[50] Hämäläinen, 'On Borderlands', pp.338-339.

of determining which communities to focus on and to what extent some are more important than others. This last point links to wider problems with fitting frontiers and borderlands within wider historical trends and narratives. Despite the areas being defined by their relation to more recognised state formations, temporally, socially and geographically, they were often kept separate from wider narratives and the developments in the empires to which they were attached, due to their supposed differences. A new approach was formulated to reconcile these differences and was eventually called ‘entanglement’.

The entangled approach emerged out of scholarly tendencies that had been occurring in comparative and borderland histories, but the name was coined by Eliga Gould in his article ‘Entangled Histories, Entangled Worlds; the English-Speaking Atlantic as a Spanish Periphery’. Entanglement sought to overcome the limitations of comparative approaches when being applied to borderlands or frontiers. The issues and problems with using comparative approaches are well documented: the most notable one for studying the borderlands was the issues pertaining to the suitability of subjects for comparison. The careful balance of having two subjects that were similar enough that a comparison is achievable, while having enough differences to be worthwhile, is a common problem, but one that proves to be exceptionally difficult in borderlands and frontiers. A comparison requires that the two subjects be distinguishable, which requires them to be temporally or geographically separate. This is often not possible or can be counterproductive in areas where societies are so interconnected. Rather than seeking to distinguish subjects to compare them, the entangled approach is concerned with mutual influencing, reciprocal or asymmetric perceptions and intertwined processes of

constituting one another.[51] The intention is to study historical phenomena beyond the limits of national frameworks by studying community or cultural practices that were commonplace across multiple societies. The argument stems from the notion that the laws and regulations that are typically the focal point of many comparative histories of the Americas had only limited effects on colonial subjects and this was even further reduced in the borderlands and frontiers where the state and other official actors had severely reduced influence.[52]

The concentration on ideas and shared cultural practices removes the geographic constraints that were prevalent in borderland and frontier histories. It also allows for the study of entanglement between core areas of empires alongside interactions on the frontiers and borderlands without an implicit limitation on the number of actors involved. This divestment of imperial or national frameworks also allows for the full inclusion of indigenous groups in historical narratives as entangled histories are not preoccupied with the impacts of European empires, as they focused on the agency of actors and not eventual state formation. Some historians have argued this inclusion and promotion is a necessity for an accurate analysis and is one of the best approaches for studying the actions of indigenous groups in a historical context.[53]

Historians have been quick to point out problems with the entangled approach, with many issues stemming from its broad view. One of the first criticisms the entangled approach received is that it is so similar to borderland histories that it does not need to

[51] Eliga H. Gould, 'Entangled Worlds: The English-Speaking Atlantic as a Spanish Periphery', *The American Historical Review,* 112:3 (2007), p.766.

[52] Ibid. Guy Chet, *The Ocean is a Wilderness Atlantic Piracy and the Limits of State Authority, 1688-1856* (Amherst, 2014).

[53] Ralph Bauer, Marcy Norton, 'Introduction: Entangled Trajectories: Indigenous and European Histories', *Colonial Latin American Review,* 26:1 (2017), pp.9-11 .

be a separate school of thought. Beyond this problem stemming from definitions is a more serious issue that many of the areas cited as good opportunities to utilise the entangled approach are already considered borderlands, which arguably makes the efforts to elaborate entanglement as superfluous. Though a potential solution to this problem is to concentrate on entanglements at the core, concentrating on not just direct contact between entangled communities but intellectual entanglements, such as a shared literary or political entanglement.[54] One issue with this is that many of these entanglements are frequently implicit or unknown to contemporaries.

This further broadening of the scope creates an issue that the entangled approach seeks to study everything, all at once, which of course is unfeasible. This requires each entangled study to place firm boundaries on a subject, typically either by timeframe or by geography. As entangled history does not have an overarching framework and is bound by local conditions, these must be set on a case-by-case basis. These boundaries are limiting but are necessary and using geography or a timeframe prevents any historical actors from being side-lined. Concepts such as 'human' or 'created' geographies are useful for this as they provide a geographical limit that was defined by contemporaries, allowing for an accurate and concise boundary for a study.[55] All these factors will need to be considered when formulating an approach to the study of Central America's borderlands.

[54] Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, 'Entangled Histories: Borderland Historiographies in New Clothes?', *The American Historical Review,* 112 (2007), p.799.

[55] Ernesto Bassi, *An Aqueous Territory Sailor Geographies and New Granada's Transimperial Greater Caribbean World* (London, 2016), pp.78-80.

1.3 The Entangled Borderlands of Central America

The purpose of this thesis is to utilise the entangled approach to study the broad impact of the interactions between the three main powers by treating the areas they met as borderlands. The results of these interactions are most important for Central America, but also have important effects further afield that are relevant to this study. For this purpose, the definition of borderlands will be broadly similar to that used by Jay Donis as a region that "had contested borders between imperial powers and multiple cultural voices", which was in turn adapted from Adelman and Aron's definition of "the contested boundaries between colonial domains".[56] The emphasis on multiple "cultural voices" over recognised boundaries is more suitable for Central America as for much of the eighteenth century the British Empire avoided giving direct recognition to the European settlements along the isthmus's Caribbean coast. Officially, the superintendent of the Mosquito Coast was a contact point between colonial authorities and the Miskito not the European settlers. Similarly, although the government secured the rights of the Baymen to live and work in Belize, Spain was recognised as the sovereign power in the area. There were recognised boundaries between European empires in Central America at this time, but the British residents evidently did not follow Spanish laws and often actively fought against the Spanish as well as cooperating with them. This definition also allows for the easier inclusion of the Miskito who, as well as being a distinctive and important cultural voice in the region, did not have clear or recognised boundaries for their territory. This would have been complicated as the various Miskito headmen had concepts of what land was 'theirs' in addition to what constituted 'their country'. The area was thus contested between

[56] Donis, 'Imagining and Reimagining Kentucky', p.464. Adelman, 'From Borderlands to Borders', p.816.

imperial domains, with distinct cultural voices, but those representing the imperial domains were often not associated with those who were contesting them. This creates an issue of different levels of imperial actors that will be addressed in due course.

It is difficult to apply this definition to Costa Rica. This is because, although the area had multiple cultural voices and there were clashes between them, the area was not actively contested. The British and Miskito did not create settlements or directly challenge Spanish control of the region. Thus, while it has many of the features of a borderland, it was considerably different in important ways. It can be considered a frontier as per David Narret's definition mentioned in Donis's work "the cutting edge of borderlands where ethnicities overlapped, variously clashing and collaborating with each other".[57] It characterises the complex nature of relations and makes space for various ethnicities that played key roles in Costa Rica's history, not just the key three powers but also the unique experiences of Costa Rica's slave population and other indigenous groups that were in Talamanca. It also serves to illustrate Costa Rica's connection with the other borderlands as being 'on the edge of borderlands', considering that it was connected to events in the other borderlands. This makes it relevant to the wider study but illustrates that it needs to be treated slightly differently.

Using the entangled approach also presents problems due to definitions and the scope of a study. The intention with this thesis is to build upon Eliga Gould's original definitions of "interconnected societies… and the intertwined processes of constituting one another" with criticisms about the inclusion of core regions put forward by Cañizares to show that core regions of empires did become entangled as a result of events and

[57] Donis, 'Imagining and Reimagining Kentucky', p.472.

actions in the borderlands and vice versa.[58] This does run the risk of expanding the scope of the thesis to an unworkable size and, in order to compensate for this, the region for study will be framed using the concept of 'lived geographies'.[59] Deriving structure from the community of connections emerging from those that lived in the three principal borderlands, focusing on the connections that enabled these societies to function and how these connections drew different parts of the European empires and the indigenous communities together.

These different communities will be assigned to three different levels, which are determined by their geographical location and their official political distance, named the local, regional and metropolitan levels. The local level constitutes the borderlands themselves and is named the local as events are driven chiefly by local actors and small-scale political and economic factors; they are also far from the political centres of any empire. The regional level consists of firmly established colonial constructions such as Jamaica and the Kingdom of Guatemala: these were significant powers in the region but were still officially connected and were influenced by the metropole and other imperial concerns. They acted as a key official connection between the imperial capitals and the borderlands. The metropolitan level is made up of the capitals and the ruling institutions that governed the empires. This thesis will analyse how the relationships between these levels were shaped and what effect these connections had on the borderlands, demonstrating how the borderlands had such a large impact on Central America due to their capacity to draw in actors that were geographically and politically distant.

---

[58] Cañizares-Esguerra, 'Entangled Histories: Borderland Historiographies in New Clothes?', p.799. Gould, 'Entangled Worlds: The English-Speaking Atlantic as a Spanish Periphery', pp. 766-767.

[59] Bassi, *An Aqueous Territory*, pp.81-82.

In addition to these geographic and institutional boundaries, this study requires temporal limits and periodisation within those limits to demonstrate developments and provide a basis for common developments that occurred across several regions at once. The eighteenth century provides an overarching periodisation spanning from the death of the last Spanish Hapsburg in 1700, which marked a new phase of Spanish governance and imperial policy, to the Battle of Saint George's Cay in 1798. This battle ended many of the interactions that made treating areas of Central America as eighteenth-century borderlands viable and cemented a new status quo that would dictate future struggles in the nineteenth century. Within this span of ninety-eight years, the history of the Central American borderlands falls into four distinct phases of which three will make up most of the scope of this study.

The first phase consists of the period from 1700 until 1732 and can largely be a continuation of patterns of behaviour and development from the seventeenth century, with some small changes beginning to occur. These first thirty-two years in the borderlands were typified by small-scale conflicts, mostly between the Miskito and Spanish, as the latter raided settlements for goods and slaves, the British settlements remained small and fulfilled different roles depending on which borderland they were in. There were also few intrusions from the metropolitan or regional levels and few major wars of the period had a profound impact during this time. Broadly speaking, these roles were slight evolutions from functions that were prevalent in the seventeenth century and were linked to traditional piracy and buccaneering. Miskito raids increased partially because of a growth in trading opportunities facilitated by the growing British presence on the Mosquito Coast, though these settlements remained largely small trading outposts. These raids had profound impacts in Costa Rica, where the effects

were severe, but clashes across the Kingdom of Guatemala prompted the Spanish to formulate ways to combat the threat posed by the Miskito, who were perceived to be the principal threat rather than the British. The latter also began to engage in some illicit trade with Spanish settlements when opportunities arose. In Belize, settlers began to focus more on the opportunities provided by the lumber trade rather than piracy and the Spanish continued sporadic efforts to remove them. For the British and the Miskito, this period was characterised by a gradual shift from supporting pirate activities to establishing more localised, frequently aggressive, modes of interacting with the Spanish Empire. For the Spanish in Central America, it was a change from fending off attacks from pirates to those of indigenous groups and the early beginnings of illicit contact with the Caribbean coast's British residents.

1732 marked a pivotal turning point for Central America's borderland history as it was the year William Pitt founded the settlement of Black River and began dramatically expanding the contraband trade, which drew the attentions of the regional and metropolitan levels. This changed borderland relations dramatically as it engendered greater cooperation between the Spanish and the British at the local and regional levels as they sought to mutually profit from the illicit trade. It also began to strain Anglo-Miskito relations as Miskito activity was not always conducive to contraband trading, requiring further changes to the way they interacted as the British were still dependent on the Miskito for protection. This increased British presence made them more of a threat to the Spanish, leading to Diaz Navarro's survey of the Kingdom of Guatemala and the eventual construction of several forts, both on the Mosquito Coast and in Costa Rica. International rivalries had an increasing bearing on events in the borderlands as both the War of Jenkin's Ear and the Seven Year War played out in the borderlands.

British successes, thanks in large part to Miskito assistance, cemented the British presence and was formalised with the appointment of Robert Hodgson as the first superintendent of the Mosquito Coast in 1749 and partial recognition of British rights in Belize in the Treaty of Paris of 1763. Costa Rica's importance diminished during this period as international geopolitics began to play an increasingly large role, and the province's local concerns became less important to settlers in the other borderlands. This second period was marked by increasing contraband trade, which attracted broader attention from the upper levels of both empires and more opportunities for Miskito advancement.

The search for long-term settlements characterised Spanish and British actions between 1763 and 1787 as the agreements between London and Madrid were vague regarding the nuances of life on the borderlands and were difficult to enforce. The British settlers sought to secure their presence by formalising their incorporation into the British Empire. This was complicated by conflicts among the settlers and the presence of the Miskito, who were still recognised as independent and defended their autonomy and regional dominance despite some infighting. The Spanish, as a part of the wide-ranging Bourbon reforms, began a clampdown on contraband and lay the groundwork for a major military offensive, which included entreating with Miskito leaders, causing further internal strife among both the Miskito and the Miskito-British alliance. This culminated in a series of short military actions as a part of the American Revolutionary War, which saw the British removed from the Mosquito Coast despite recapturing Black River from an initially successful Spanish assault. The previously complex relationships came under strain as the metropolitan levels began to exert their influence on the borderlands in this period, resulting in clear-cut actions and a definitive enforcement of

international treaties, which had not occurred before. The period from the British removal in 1787 to the Battle of Saint George's Cay in 1798 will not be covered in great depth, due to lack of space, but it is characterised mostly by internal political conflicts in Belize and the Spanish failures to establish control over the Mosquito Coast.

In order to facilitate this analysis, the thesis chapters will be split up by geographic region, with one giving essential context on the broader developments and roles of the Miskito, the British and Spanish empires. The first chapter will detail actions taken by Jamaica and the Kingdom of Guatemala regarding the Central American borderlands and how developments in these regional levels were critical to events in the borderlands. Their role in connecting the borderlands to events in the metropole, as well as the regional level, are crucial and requires some explanation in order to better understand the different phases of development in the borderlands. This chapter will also detail many of the internal developments experienced by the Miskito during this period. The shifting form of organisation and cultural changes that occurred within the Miskito during this period often happened gradually in relation to broader events, but rarely as a direct cause, so it forms important context for the regional histories.

The following three chapters will each focus on one of the three borderlands and are divided geographically. The first chapter will concentrate on the Mosquito Coast as it was the largest of the three, both in terms of area and population, and had the most connections with the other two borderlands. This chapter will study the Mosquito Coast, not only for its developments at the local level and their impact, but also how it became the focus of conflict between the three powers, serving as important context for the studies of Belize and Costa Rica.

The studies of Belize will be significantly more localised due to their limited, but still important, connections to other areas. The chapter on Belize will concentrate on the role of the lumber trade and the persistent threat of armed invasion on the development of society there. It was also far more beholden to the impacts of the metropolitan level, allowing the chapter to be organised around the role of the Treaty of Paris in 1763, which was pivotal for its development in the eighteenth century. The study of Costa Rica will be significantly different from the other two regional studies due to how the role of the British and the Miskito differed there from the other borderlands. As they never posed a major threat to the permanent Spanish presence, they were a presence to be monitored and contained, but not actively destroyed or conquered. This arguably makes Costa Rica more of a frontier than a borderland: a question that can be addressed within the chapter itself.

Through this division of content, the thesis will aim to study the history of the Central American borderlands using the entangled approach. These three areas fit the definition of borderland sufficiently; Costa Rica's inclusion will be justified later, and the geographic borders give the study firm limits while still allowing for the full analysis of contemporary societies that operated across human and lived-in geographies. The use of the levels of interaction also allows for the relationship between the borderlands and wider imperial and regional structures to be explored, ensuring that both local and global events can be contained within a coherent historical narrative.

Chapter 2. European and Indigenous Structures: The Context for Entanglement

The Central American borderlands were in many ways dependent on their connections to the British and Spanish empires, as well as the inner workings of the Miskito. The connections to the European powers were not only important in a physical sense, methods of moving both people and objects to and from the borderlands, but they were also crucial for defining the areas both as borderlands and entangled in a historical context. It fell to the regional governments of Jamaica and the Kingdom of Guatemala to contest Central America on behalf of the imperial metropoles. The Kingdom of Guatemala officially claimed the entire isthmus as part of its territory, including Belize and the Mosquito Coast. Jamaica, although not officially claiming ownership of land in Central America, was essential in supporting the British who settled there and carried out trade in Costa Rica. The Governor was eventually made responsible for the settlements in Belize and, after 1749, the superintendent of the Mosquito coast officially reported to the Governor of Jamaica. Both European colonies were dependent on the Miskito, who, in many ways, acted as a third imperial force in the region. While closely tied to events in the isthmus, the Miskito had their own internal developments that drove their actions and determined their long-term goals in Central America. In order to fully study the entanglements in Central America, it is necessary to understand some of the internal developments of these three powers to comprehend how and why they interacted with each other in Central America.

Jamaica and the Kingdom of Guatemala were part of the regional levels of the Spanish and British empires, forming an essential conduit between the borderlands at the local level and the imperial governments at the metropolitan level. This ensured that concerns

and problems in these colonies inevitably shaped how the metropolitan and regional levels interacted with the borderlands and how important the borderlands were to the wider empires. The historiography of these regions can be used to illustrate prominent concerns that, while important at a regional level for the colonial governments, had a minimal effect on the borderlands.

Jamaica's eighteenth-century historiography is dominated by the issue of slavery, which seems to be an accurate depiction of contemporary concerns around the island. With one visitor describing it as "a vortex of chaos and social disorder", Jamaica had a reputation for being unstable and seeming to be on the brink of falling apart at any moment, while still producing vast riches for the British Empire and a select few plantation holders.[1] Many of the island's inhabitants were poor, mostly white, labourers who served as overseers or craftsmen, but the overwhelming majority of the island's population was made up of slaves, most of which were imported from Africa. The latter of these groups also frequently resisted and fought against their indenture indirectly through resistance within the plantation and sometimes directly through armed uprisings, most notably through the two Maroon Wars fought during the eighteenth century.[2] The threat of uprisings led to severe punishments, which, coupled with the harsh working conditions, resulted in staggeringly high death rates among slaves. The death rates among the free population was also high due to tropical diseases.[3] Jamaica was thus always attempting to resolve some internal problem and its interventions in the borderlands had to be

[1] Wilson, 'Rethinking the Colonial State', p.1313.

[2] Michael Craton, *Testing the Chains: Resistance to Slavery in the British West Indies* (London, 1982), p.53. Craton, *Searching for the Invisible Man: Slaves and Plantation Life in Jamaica* (Cambridge, 1978), pp.163-173. Mavis C. Campbell, *The Maroons of Jamaica 1655-1796: A History of Resistance, Collaboration & Betrayal* (Massachusetts, 1988), pp.60-61.

[3] Robertson, 'The Best Poor Man's Country?', pp.81-82.

conducive to securing the island, its system of slavery and its immense sugar profits, in some manner. These issues play a prominent role in histories of eighteenth-century Jamaica, to the extent that other features might be marginalised.

The Kingdom of Guatemala's historiography is similarly dominated by internal problems, many of which were linked to its ruling merchant class. Their grip on political and economic institutions frustrated Bourbon attempts to reform the colony, leading to a series of political conflicts and economic missteps.[4] Tied into these problems were issues caused by Spain's long-entrenched casta system, which was limiting the station of potentially wealthy merchants and complicating old encomienda agreements, causing further social strife as the strict ethnic definitions that organised Spanish colonial society became harder to enforce.[5] The continuing preference for peninsulares, Spanish subjects born in Spain, over creoles stirred resentment, at the same time rich and well-connected newcomers were married into prominent, local wealthy families, reinforcing established dominance.[6] The Kingdom of Guatemala was thus caught between efforts to modernise its structures in pursuit of economic development while retaining older features that preserved the traditional social fabric of society.

These are broad summaries of the problems that beset the Kingdom of Guatemala and Jamaica and, while there is far more depth to them than is stated here, they are not directly connected to developments in the borderlands. These colonies did have

[4] Mahoney, *Colonialism and Postcolonial Development*, p.186. Brown, *Juan Fermín de Aycinena*.

[5] Lynch, *Bourbon Spain*, pp.339-340. Brown, *Juan Fermin de Aycinena*, pp.54-55. Lynn V. Foster, *A Brief History of Central America* (New York, 2007), p.110.

[6] Lynch, *Bourbon Spain*, pp.339, 366; Grafe, 'A Stakeholder Empire', pp.630-631.

concerns and aims directly linked to the borderlands that informed and defined their connections and interaction in and with the borderlands. In contrast, the Miskito, being based wholly within the borderlands, were far more connected and far more important to developments. Their prominence was derived from their close connections and tremendous influence on both the Spanish and British at the local level. The Miskito did not face problems in the same way that Jamaica and Guatemala did as their cultural and societal development was heavily affected by events within the borderlands and their relations with both empires. Whereas Guatemala and Jamaica had internal issues that were often more important to their governments, events within the borderlands were of central importance to the Miskito. They, more than any other power, changed the most and had the greatest impact on events in Central America's eighteenth-century borderlands.

2.1 The Spanish Empire, the Kingdom of Guatemala and Reclaiming the Borderlands

To the Imperial Spanish Government in Madrid and the seat of regional power in Guatemala, the borderlands were fundamentally a multi-faceted threat to the Spanish Empire. The severity and type of threat changed during the eighteenth century, which made it difficult to combat. The borderlands posed an economic threat to Spain's mercantile imperial trading system through the contraband trade, which gave access to alternative, and illegal, revenues of trade for Spanish traders. This hurt the imperial coffers in Madrid and deprived the merchants of Guatemala of some of their income, which they depended on for their position and political strength in Guatemala's

audiencia.[7] The borderlands also represented a military threat to the Kingdom of Guatemala. The presence of the Miskito and the British so close to Spanish territory was a constant source of concern due to the regular raids launched by the Miskito on settlements and missions close to the border.[8] These had been happening since the seventeenth century, but acquired a new significance and greater threat as the Spanish became more aware of the Anglo-Miskito alliance. To the Spanish, the prospect of European backing turned the Miskito from a small, localised problem into a far greater threat; Spanish correspondence began to plan and call for efforts to exterminate the Miskito.[9] These reasons drove the metropolitan and regional levels to interact with the borderlands as the borderlands represented unknown, but tangible, dangers to Spanish aims at both levels.

For the Kingdom of Guatemala, the borderlands were not a separate territory that intruded into officially held lands but were a full part of the Kingdom that was being illegally occupied. Many of the reasons for the borderland's existence were a result of the Spanish Empire's policies in economics, infrastructure and their methods of entreating with indigenous groups. These practices tied the borderlands to the Kingdom of Guatemala, making events on the fringes fundamentally tied to political and economic decisions made in the regional capital. The prevalence of the contraband trade

[7] Gustavo Palma Murga, 'Between Fidelity and Pragmatism', in Dym, *Politics, Economy and Society in Bourbon Central America*, p.105. Patch, 'Imperial Politics and Local Economy in Colonial Central America', p.96.

[8] Helms, 'Miskito Slaving and Culture Contact', pp.183-184. Duplicado de Carta de D. Fray Benito Garret, Obispo de Nicaragua, 30 noviembre 1711, AGI Guatemala 299.

[9] Instrucción y extracto que da noticia de los parajes en que habitan los indios zambos mosquitos, que sabían para facilitar… su exterminio…, Don Franco Molinillo, noviembre 23 1742, AGI Guatemala 303. Expediente Sobre Hostilidades y exterminio de los Indios Zambos y Mosquitos, así como de los ingleses en Roatán, AGI Guatemala 302; Comercio ilícito de Comayagua, Guatemala 349, 350, 351.

demonstrated these issues and was endemic in the Kingdom of Guatemala. Its extent varied across the eighteenth century, but it remained a consistent threat.[10] 'Contraband' technically refers to any illegal trade, which, given stringent Spanish laws in this period, encompasses many economic transactions. In this thesis, 'contraband trade' refers exclusively to the trade conducted with the British and other settlers based in the Central American borderlands. Most goods traded out of the Kingdom of Guatemala in this manner were agricultural goods of some form, the most common being cacao, indigo as well as sarsaparilla. Other commonly traded goods were small amounts of silver, beef, hides and tallow.[11]

Part of the appeal of the contraband trade for the residents of the Kingdom of Guatemala were the comparative difficulties and costs of trading legally. The Guatemalan merchant class retained tight control of nearly all aspects of trade and economics in the Kingdom of Guatemala.[12] The creation of merchant networks linked to Spain and family connections across banks and trade fairs meant merchants could dictate the purchase and sale prices of exported and imported goods as well as the quantity imported into the colony.[13] The merchants were also the only readily available

[10] Archivo General de Indias, Seville (Herafter AGI): Comercio Ilícito de Comayagua, Guatemala 349; Cartas y Expedientes del presidente Y Oidores, Guatemala 234. Palma Murga, 'Between Fidelity and Pragmatism', pp.105-106.

[11] Palma Murga, 'Between Fidelity and Pragmatism', p.105. Patch, 'Imperial Politics and Local Economy in Colonial Central America, p.96. Troy S. Floyd, 'The Indigo Merchant: Promoter of Central American Economic Development 1750-1808', *The Business History Review*, 39:4 (1965), p.471. TNA, Colonial Office, CO 137/48, An account of what has been done at black river on the Moskito shore towards settling a commerce with the inhabitants of Guatemala, 19 December 1743.

[12] Mahoney, *Colonialism and Postcolonial Development*, p.186. Troy S Floyd, 'the Guatemalan Merchants, the Government, and the Provincianos, 1750-1800', *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, 41:1 (1961), pp. 107-109. Miles Wortman, 'Government revenue and Economic Trends in central America, 1787-1819', *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, 55:2 (1975), pp.255-257. Patch, 'Imperial Politics and Local Economy', pp.78-80.

[13] Wortman, *Government and Society in Central America*, p.163.

source of finance, giving them control of the loans required by farmers to plant crops. This control of prices allowed the Guatemalan merchants to expand their own landholdings at the expense of smaller landholders. It also ensured that, when the price of a commodity began to fall, the merchants could keep their personal revenues high by increasing costs elsewhere along the supply chain.[14] Despite their control and entrenched position, the rigid system also had negative effects on the merchants. The convoy system limited the amount of imports they could legally acquire as well as how much they could export on official ships. This economic system was complex, and its economic impacts were varied, but its economic limitations - supported by political oligarchy - encouraged traders to engage in contraband trading through the borderlands.[15] Legal trade was thus not always massively profitable for those trading in export crops and contraband was a direct challenge to these merchants, which was in turn an indirect challenge to the Spanish Empire.

The other key advantage the contraband trade had for Spanish traders was in terms of transportation. Communication networks across the Kingdom of Guatemala were often slow due to underdevelopment and the rough terrain that characterised the isthmus. The requirement of Spain's mercantilist system for goods to be exported from specific ports necessitated the transport of wares to the area immediately around Guatemala City before they could be sold abroad. Such transport was not cheap or easy, taking a long time across routes that were often just mule tracks over mountainous terrain, which

[14] Mahoney, *Colonialism and Postcolonial Development*, p.175.

[15] Wortman, *Government and Society in Central America*, pp.146-147. Lynch, *Bourbon Spain*, pp. 231-233, 303-304, 342-343.

were often slowed by weather or natural disasters such as mudslides. [16] Travelling to the Atlantic coast was considerably easier due to various rivers and other waterways that flowed from the Pacific to the Atlantic coasts. This brought down costs and could be considerably quicker: there were risks involved, as the Miskito and other indigenous groups could occasionally disrupt shipments, but the Miskito and other indigenous groups also frequently became involved themselves.[17] These risks could be minimised through other means and the lower costs and ease were often large enough incentives to take the risks. The use of these routes accentuated the influence of unsubjugated indigenous groups, which contributed to the Spanish need to expand their control over them.

The contraband trade is the feature most indicative of the conflicting aims within one empire regarding the Central American borderlands. All three levels of interaction had a different relationship with it and, while there were some commonalities, the differences led to a significant amount of internal strife. At the local level, the contraband trade provided a beneficial, if not essential, economic link to global markets for both export and import. This led to the establishment of links that were not solely economic, though they were initially created to facilitate commerce. Given the tense and frequently dangerous nature of trading in the borderlands, Spanish traders made formal traditional European business arrangements with their British trading partners, creating deals and establishing promises of future revenue and commerce as if it was a regular exchange

[16] Mahoney, *Colonialism and Postcolonial Development*, pp.179, 181.

[17] Helms, 'Miskito Slaving and Culture Contact', p.183. Hodgson to Edward Trelawny, 1744, TNA, CO 137/48.

rather than a clandestine deal that crossed imperial lines.[18] With this came a tacit agreement that, despite the occasional violent incidents, there was ultimately an economic basis to proceedings. This meant that, throughout Central America, contraband carried on largely uninterrupted, though its volume likely changed, during the entire eighteenth century; even through wartime.[19] While actions by the Miskito could be disruptive to the contraband trade, this was partially cushioned by British efforts to limit the damage. A mutual understanding also emerged between the British and the Spanish that they could be trusted to uphold deals and that they controlled the borderlands, at least they thought they did.[20] The Spanish at the local level formed business and sometimes personal relationships with the British, which led to a degree of trust. Actions taken by the regional and metropolitan levels would strain these relationships, military action and the appointment of fiercely anti-contraband officials being the most common. The exact response varied across the three areas depending on what resources could be called on, but relations at the local level seemed to survive.

Despite broad opposition to the contraband trade at the regional level by the Guatemalan merchants, there was also significant support for it, support that was essential for it to function. Merchant involvement in contraband, as with any involvement in contraband, is often hard to directly discern, but the volume and value of goods received by British traders suggest a widespread involvement that could easily reach the higher echelons of society. Similarly, the variety of goods shipped into

[18] Description of the Bay of Honduras and the Mosquito Shore, 1765 TNA, ADM 7/837. TNA, Colonial Office, CO 137/48, An account of what has been done at Black River on the Moskito shore towards settling a commerce with the inhabitants of Guatemala, 19 December 1743.

[19] Sorsby, *The British Superintendency of the Mosquito Shore 1749-1787*, p.57.

[20] Description of the Bay of Honduras and the Mosquito Shore, 1765 TNA ADM 7/837. Edward Trelawny to the Duke of Newcastle, 16 March 1740 TNA CO 137/48.

Guatemala by British contraband traders implies that many benefitting from the trade were seeking to access luxury consumer goods that were hard to acquire, but not necessary to any economic pursuit.[21] It also made economic sense for many merchants to trade in contraband at various points. Although they were unable to exert the same type of control as they could over legal trade, their access to goods and capital meant they could also play a significant role in illegal trade, while avoiding severe repercussions through social networks that reached the courts. This was especially true for creole merchants who were more likely to have limited access to the legal and official merchant networks that spanned from Guatemala to Spain.[22] The contraband trade therefore acted as another source of revenue at all levels of society and a key way to circumvent Spanish economic policy. The latter was especially important for creole merchants who relied on wealth for social advancement through favourable marriages to peninsulares. As the local level used contraband to evade restrictions placed on them by the regional level, the regional level used contraband to circumvent limits enforced from the metropole.

The viability and success of the contraband trade is also explainable by the physical structures it used to move goods into the Spanish Empire. As rivers were used to move goods, physical roads and paths were not needed and trade routes could be maintained by the various settlements that were near rivers. Towns such as Olanchito, Yoro, Matina and even missions could serve as key storage and loading points between the borderlands and more core areas.[23] This usage of established towns and natural features

[21] Carta de inglés a Joseph Orbuna, 1776, AGI Guatemala 855.

[22] Brown, *Juan Fermín de Aycinena*, pp.54-55. Lynch, *Bourbon Spain*, pp.226-227.

[23] Testimonio de las diligencias practicadas por oficiales reales de Nicaragua …, AGI Guatemala 254.

not only made contraband easy to move unnoticed, but also reduced the amount of investment to make it viable. The only requirement was the creation of several storage and relay points for various smuggled wares. The distance of these towns from centres of Spanish control deterred royal officials from making regular visits and the adoption of existing structures that were used for legal regional commerce stopped unwanted attention.

These storage points still had to find ways to connect with wider legal commercial networks, not only for the physical movement of contraband wares, but also for the movement of funds. Given the size and value of the contraband trade, a significant quantity of money needed to be moved and invested in order to finance it. This was also necessary for contraband traders to sell illegal wares into legal markets, as they would need at least a veneer of legality to avoid cursory inspections. As with the transport of illegal items, those involved with the contraband trade often used existing systems to move illegal funds in a legal way. One of the most prominent methods was the use of strongboxes or accounts used in customs houses. During crackdowns on contraband, scrutiny by royal officials consistently reported that the recorded quantity was unrepresentative of the actual amount held in a box or an account.[24] Even in these cases, where the discrepancy was noticed the money was moved before a full investigation could occur, partly owing to the slow pace of Spanish administration. This was also assuming that they would ever be investigated: in some cases, reports of inconsistencies were never acted upon or acted upon so slowly as to make apprehending the culprits

[24] …Ordenes expedidas [por] Don Thomas de Rivera Santa Cruz… 1745, AGI Guatemala 349.

impossible or pointless.[25] Religious institutions were also incorporated into the trade, often with the full knowledge and involvement of local clergy. The links between missions in the borderlands and parish churches, convents or even cathedrals served as another way to move goods and money in the form of donations and other finances.[26] The involvement of established institutions allowed not only for the contraband trade to flourish, but helped all parts of society access it and acted as fundamental connection between core areas and the borderlands.

Contraband at the Spanish regional level displays the mixed reactions and involvement in the trade. It utilised inflexible existing structures for new purposes, moving illegal wares and finances through established institutions and towns. The minimal investment in infrastructure and the willingness of regional officials to collaborate showed a significant support for the trade. Despite that, it was still carried out in a clandestine manner, even if efforts to obfuscate parts of it were limited: some effort had to be made. This was indicative of a broad opposition to the trade at the regional level by the Guatemalan merchant elite, who preferred legal trade as it was easier to control and extract profit from. It also demonstrated the strength of connection with the metropolitan level and the extent of the pressure from Madrid could exert, which had a far more consistent opposition to contraband.

The metropolitan level's outright opposition to the contraband trade was a relatively straightforward stance when compared to the regional and local levels' more complex views. Contraband posed a threat to not only the Spanish Empire's economic system,

[25] Palma Murga, 'Between Fidelity and Pragmatism', p.112.

[26] Barbara Potthast-Jutkeit, 'Centroamérica y el Contrabando por la Costa de Mosquitos en el siglo XVIII', *Mesoamérica*, 36 (1998), p.511.

but also became a part of larger Spanish fears associated with British expansion. In this sense, it played a pivotal role in not only encouraging metropolitan intervention in what was a relatively small part of the empire, but also the form and direction of that intervention. These interventions had a profound effect on how the regional level affected the borderlands and demonstrates the ability of small localised actors in Central America to have significant influence on decisions made in distant imperial capitals.

This tendency to attract attention was more often due to contraband's perceived value and effects rather than direct or obvious outcomes. The nature of contraband in this period meant that the exact value of goods traded is hard to discern accurately. Regardless of its actual economic worth, contemporaries saw it as an important trade and, throughout the eighteenth century, Spanish officials consistently cited it as the main reason for wanting to remove the British settlements from the Central American coast. In 1745, Don Luis Machado commented broadly on the dangers it presented, suggesting that the presence of contraband traders had led to the creation of hostile fortified positions near Trujillo and on Roatan. While not dangerous during peacetime, these fortifications would be threats during the frequent wars of the eighteenth century. Machado also suggested that these communities would shelter "infidels and other persons of ill repute", likely referring to unsubjugated indigenous groups, escaped slaves and other criminals. The effect, he argued, would be "many harmful consequences for the colony".[27] While occurrences such as these did happen, they were caused by more than just the appeal of contraband, but its role as chief cause in official correspondence is indicative of the perceived threat it posed. It is difficult to tell how

[27] AGI, Comercio Ilícito de Comayagua, Carta del Gobernador Interino de Comayagua Don Luis Machado, 15 June 1745, Guatemala 351.

much the contraband trade cost the Spanish Empire in lost revenue but avoiding various taxes and shrinking the market for goods manufactured in Spain would have likely had a significant impact. The important aspect is that it was of enough scale to make the Spanish government intervene in Central America.

The threat posed by contraband to the metropolitan level and the entire empire was exemplified by the presence of other nationalities in the borderlands. Spanish reports were able to differentiate between trader's nationalities, identifying Dutch and French traders as well as merchants from British North American colonies. They could be found across all three Central American borderlands and their presence was considered a serious problem by Spanish authorities.[28] Dutch traders were found everywhere, merchants from the North American colonies (especially Boston) made regular trips to Belize and there was one incident where French privateers were hired to help combat contraband, only to be caught trading it.[29] The presence of so many different groups demonstrated the almost complete lack of control both Spain and Britain had over the borderlands. This harkened back to earlier Spanish fears of piracy in the Caribbean and a general sense of lawlessness that necessitated international agreements that could only be pursued at the metropolitan level. The metropolitan level urged for actions in Central America that would respond to international imperial concerns.

The chaotic nature of the settlements and events in the borderlands, coupled with the prevalence of the contraband trade, stoked security fears in the Spanish Empire across all levels. Although, as with contraband, the concerns varied across the empire and the

[28] Testimonio... de las embarcaciones extranjeras…, 30 Julio 1739, AGI Guatemala 232.

[29] Potthast-Jutkeit, 'Centroamérica y el Contrabando por la Costa de Mosquitos', p.510.

different aims and responses of the Spanish imperial structure caused some internal friction. This tension was far less substantial due to fact that disagreements over security were not as large as disagreements over contraband, but they demonstrate the conflicting nature of Spanish relationships with the borderlands. The geographical location of the borderlands was enough to cause consternation between the two empires. Situated between the Spanish-dominated mainland and the Caribbean, which was largely controlled by the British Empire and other European powers, it was an area through which their empire could potentially be cut in half.

The threats, or at least the perceived threats, coming from the borderlands varied during the eighteenth century, changing as the borderlands developed. Between 1700 and 1732, the main threat for Spain was presented by the Miskito and other unsubjugated indigenous groups. Spanish officials were aware of small communities of foreign pirates and other sailors camped in Belize and the Mosquito Coast, but they were considered less of a threat when compared to the Miskito. Despite persistent Miskito raids across Nicaragua, Honduras and, especially, Costa Rica, the response was organised chiefly at the local and regional level. They consisted of retaliatory raids into Miskito territory and missionary efforts to convert and settle smaller indigenous groups.[30] Indigenous resistance and a lack of funding stymied these efforts, with only the missions having some form of temporary success, every retaliatory raid launched into Miskito territory ended in disaster, with one expedition allegedly having a single

[30] Instrucción y extracto que da noticia de los parajes en que habitan los indios zambos mosquitos, que sabían para facilitar… su exterminio…, Don Franco Molinillo, noviembre 23 1742, AGI Guatemala 303. Correspondencia con los Gobernadores Presidentes Carta al Gobernador Don Alonso de Arcos Moreno, 16 Julio 1753, AGI Guatemala 448.

survivor.[31] The missions, while faring better initially, attracted Miskito raids and their inhabitants often fled during outbreaks of disease. The missionaries lacked the funding to either provide material incentives to convince indigenous people to stay or pay soldiers to physically coerce them into settling.[32]

The borderlands were not considered an existential threat to the Spanish Empire in Central America during the first thirty years of the eighteenth century; the Spanish thought the indigenous groups could damage the empire, but not destroy it. While actions did force regional and local institutions and actors to address the borderlands, they had little contact with the wider empire, except the occasional request for funding or personnel, which were often not forthcoming.

This perception changed when the founding of Black River led to an increased British presence in the borderlands. There was not an immediate change in Miskito raiding patterns or violence on the border, but the prospect of facing another European power supported by the local Miskito was far more threatening for Spain.[33] The Miskito had not expressed any discernible intent to expand territorially at the expense of the Spanish Empire, but the British certainly had; the loss of Jamaica and, more recently, Gibraltar were still prominent in Spanish thought.[34] This led to Spanish efforts to target the British settlements, believing them to be the ones orchestrating the Miskito raids through careful manipulation and offering gifts. The Spanish Empire reasoned that,

[31] An account comprising the Mosquito Shore, 1757 MS ADD 191.

[32] Floyd, *The Anglo Spanish Struggle for Mosquitia*, pp.96-100.

[33] Dawson, 'William Pitt's Settlement at Black River', p.684

[34] Floyd, *The Anglo Spanish Struggle for Mosquitia*, p.164.

without British backing, the Miskito could be controlled or eliminated, but to do this they required the full support of the metropolitan level and a new approach.[35]

The approach, which stayed largely the same until the eventual British evacuation in 1787, consisted of long-term military preparations and eventually expanded to include diplomatic pressure, both of which needed metropolitan support. The military preparations were broadly included in the sweeping Bourbon reforms that were carried out in Spanish America in the second half of the eighteenth century and included a reorganisation and strengthening of the militia.[36] The other crucial aspect of military preparation that happened throughout the eighteenth century was the construction of new forts, such as San Fernando de Omoa finished in 1774 and San Fernando de Matina finished in 1741, alongside the reinforcement and expansion of existing forts, such as Fort Bacalar and Inmaculada de Concepcion.[37] The costs involved in building these forts necessitated extra funds that only the metropolitan government could legally provide. The survey of Central America's defences that led to the construction of these forts was also commissioned by Madrid. The role of these forts was three-fold: to block any potential British or Miskito attack launched along key routes, to serve as bases to combat contraband and to act as staging points from which to launch attacks at British settlements.[38] Their success at fulfilling these roles during the eighteenth century was

[35] Testimonio de las diligencias secretas practicadas por oficiales… de provincia de Honduras, AGI Guatemala 349, 1745.

[36] Dym, *From Sovereign Villages to National States*, p.40. Floyd, *The Anglo Spanish Struggle for Mosquitia*, pp.120-123.

[37] Dym, *From Sovereign Villages to National States*, p.40. See Apéndices 18-25, San Fernando de Omoa; 29, San Phelipe de Bacalar; 15, San Fernando de Matina.

[38] Testimonio de las diligencias instruidas por Don Pedro Joll sobre el arribo de una balandra inglesa a puerto caballos, y trato ilícito de los vecinos de San pedro Sula 1776, AGI Guatemala 855. Description of the Bay of Honduras and the Mosquito Shore, 1765, TNA, ADM 7/837. Various plans for Omoa and details as to its function can be seen in appendices 17-28.

mixed as actors at the regional and local levels sometimes overrode metropolitan directives and several forts became key points for the contraband trade.

After 1749, Madrid began to make the borderlands a persistent subject at international conventions. This was an approach advocated by Spanish officials at the regional level insisting that the British presence was an international problem, not one that could be dealt with internally.[39] As a result, the borderlands feature prominently in both the treaties of Paris (1763 and 1783) and the convention of London, which had to be held after ambiguities from the 1783 treaty. Outside of major post-war treaties, it remained a topic of debate in diplomatic circles and the courts of Europe, occasionally causing embarrassment.[40]

The Spanish response to the borderlands was one of trying to reassert control they felt they had lost over claimed territory. The manner of and urgency of achieving this changed as the borderlands became more entangled between the three powers. Contraband remained a persistent problem across the eighteenth century and, although it was combatted persistently by the metropolitan and parts of the regional level, the revenue it cost the empire was limited due to the Kingdom of Guatemala's marginal economic position. Similarly, the Miskito raids in the early eighteenth century were a problem but did not pose a major threat to wider imperial aims. As a result, the local and regional levels were left to deal with them, which created a degree of conflict between the two sets of actors due to differences over contraband. The increased British presence changed this dynamic as, despite only minor changes, the Miskito raids and

[39] Informe sobre acciones de corso y guardacostas en América, respeto a los tratados internacionales y evacuación de los ingleses de Rio Tinto y otros puntos de la costa Honduras, 1754, AGS LEG, 6799, 65.

[40] Lord Harcourt to Earl of Rochford, 22 January1772, TNA, State Papers, SP 78/284.

the contraband trade could be actively benefitting British aims. The extent to which they helped the British is questionable as will be shown, but, in terms of Spain's role in the borderlands, the mere fact that Britain had a presence was enough reason to fully involve the metropolitan level. Madrid started exerting pressure and allocating resources to resolve problems that had been years in the making, in order to secure its empire in Central America. Despite the prominence of the British settlers in Spanish thoughts, it was the Miskito that would do the most to limit Spanish success.

2.2 The Development of the Miskito

Unlike the Spanish and the British, the Miskito were based entirely within Central America and so interacted with every level of each empire from their position at the local level. This did not diminish their impact on events in Central America as they remained an essential force and key power for controlling the region. Their military supremacy, influence over other indigenous groups and local knowledge of terrain made them essential to any European power wishing to influence the borderlands, especially the Mosquito Coast. The main result of them being fully based within the borderlands was that events and developments affected not only their actions and responses, but also the internal structures of their society, and had long term effects on Miskito culture. While these concepts are prone to change over long periods of time in any society, the changes the Miskito experienced in the eighteenth century were rapid and were directly tied to their interactions with European powers. Many of the changes they experienced were also a result of the Miskito seeking to achieve their own regional aims and having to change to carry this out.

The early history of the Miskito is essential to understanding the scale and type of change they underwent in the eighteenth century. Developments in the seventeenth

century, and in some cases even earlier, would have important implications for events in the eighteenth century. It will also serve to demonstrate how increased European contact and activity encouraged the Miskito to change faster and more dramatically.

Anthropologically, the Miskito were considered to be a part of the Caribbean lowlands and are thought to have more in common with indigenous groups living in the circum-Caribbean and South America rather than highland groups like the Maya.[41] These studies suggest a degree of uniformity in social, cultural and political practices between the Miskito and their immediate neighbours; some ethnologists and historians have suggested that the indigenous groups in lowland Central America could be considered subgroups of the Sumu (or Sumo), though this remains contentious.[42] This is not to suggest that they were the same: the Miskito had clear views on their own identity and differentiated between themselves and different groups. European observers were also able to note the difference between various indigenous groups in histories and reports of the borderlands.[43]

Miskito and indigenous society at the end of the seventeenth century was documented by an anonymous author known as M.W. and broader general traits have been discerned by anthropologists and ethnologists. Some of these features are worth considering as they did not seem to change significantly over the eighteenth century. These are

---

[41] *Native Peoples A to Z: A reference guide to native Peoples of the Western Hemisphere* (Hamburg, 2009), vol. 2, pp.400-401.

[42] Edward Long, *The History of Jamaica, or General Survey of the Ancient and Modern State of that Island with Reflections on its Situations, Settlements, Inhabitants, Climate, Products, Commerce, Laws and Government, new edition vol.1* (London, 1970), p.320. Kirchhoff, 'The Caribbean Lowland Tribes', in Julian H. Steward (ed.), *Handbook of South American Indians* (New York, 1963) p.219. Eugenia Ibarra Rojas, 'Exploring Warfare and Prisoner Capture in Indigenous Southern Central America', *Revista de Arquelogia Americana,* 30 (2012), pp.107-108.

[43] Long, *The History of Jamaica, new edition vol.1*, p.320.

important as they demonstrate cultural continuity among the Miskito and that developments in the eighteenth century were not simply foisted on them by Europeans, but instead were a gradual development. The Miskito and their neighbours engaged in slash-and-burn agriculture, growing beans, maize and other fruits while supplementing their diet with foraging, hunting and fishing. The weapons used in hunting and war consisted mostly of spears, bows and javelins; some other groups used blowguns and nets. The introduction of firearms and metal European tools improved the effectiveness of established techniques and practices but did not fundamentally change them at their core. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, some European commentators suggested that the ubiquity of European tools had caused the Miskito to forget traditional methods and they were now dependent on metal tools. This view is now somewhat disputed, and the continuing effectiveness of the Miskito after the British evacuation suggests they were still capable of fighting and maintaining their way of life with traditional methods.[44]

The religious beliefs of the Miskito and other indigenous groups played a significant role, not only as a central part of Miskito culture, but religious figures were also prominent members of indigenous society and were integral to its organisation. M.W. again gives a brief description of Miskito beliefs at the very end of the seventeenth century, saying of the Miskito:

> Most of them believe the immortality of the soul, that when they sleep or die their spirit goes to another place or world, but they say they do not know what sort of place they shall find of it, but believe they shall

[44] Mendiola, 'The rise of the Mosquito Kingdom', pp.5-10.

> be always amongst the English there and the *Spaniards* nor *Alboawinneys*… They make themselves no gods, nor consequently have no superstitious rites or ceremonies at all… they have a notion of the sun's assistance to them in their passage to the other world, and believe, that he goes thither every night to see those that have died already.[45]

While the Miskito and other nearby indigenous groups did not form religious hierarchies or pantheons as complex as the Aztec or Maya, there was still evidence of complex burial rites and religious apparel. Most common religious beliefs were centred around placating and banishing evil spirits by shamans or sukyas. The Miskito thought that the few deity-like figures that did exist did not pay them much attention. These beliefs helped the Miskito resist missionary efforts, which, when combined with the prominent leading role Sukyas played in Miskito society and governance, played a considerable role in limiting European influence.[46]

The Spanish and British tried to alter these beliefs, but the Miskito seemed hesitant to change their religious views, suggesting the Miskito retained a strong indigenous cultural identity despite other changes. Both government officials and individuals undertook missionary or evangelical activities to convert the Miskito, hoping for a variety of benefits. Despite M.W's claims the Miskito were "willing to believe the English on all matters of religion", they seemed to treat most missionaries and their attempts to convert them with a strong degree of

[45] M.W., *The Mosqueto Indian and His Golden River, being a familiar description of the Mosqueto Kingdom in America with a true Relation of the Strange Customs, Ways of Living, Divinations, Religion, Drinking Bouts, Wars, Marriages, Buryings &c. of those Heathenish People; Together with an Account of the Product of their country* (London, 1699), accessed via ECCO, p.295.

[46] Kirchhoff, 'The Caribbean Lowland Tribes', p.228. An account comprising the Mosquito Shore, 1757, MS ADD191

scepticism.[47] The most notable incident occurred when Gustavus Vassa attempted to convert a Miskito 'prince' to Christianity during a voyage from London to the Mosquito Coast. Despite some initial success, the prince's observations of the crew's swearing, lying and drinking despite being Christians, coupled with his compatriots mocking him for believing in the devil, ensured he returned to the coast a non-Christian.[48] The efforts of other evangelists on the coast also seemed to yield few discernible results: The Society For The Propagation Of The Gospel regularly sent members to the coast from 1747 to little effect.[49] Spanish attempts were famously unsuccessful and were often accompanied by attempts to get Miskito rulers to swear allegiance to the King of Spain in return for assurance and gifts. The already slim chance of convincing Miskito leaders to adopt Catholicism was heavily reduced by a persistent anti- Spanish feeling among other Miskito leaders. The Miskito were not above deposing or murdering prominent individuals if they advocated Catholic teachings and closer ties with Spain, which were often seen as part of the same agreement.[50]

These aspects ensured that Miskito society continued to function regardless of other developments. The tools and know-how ensured that their settlements could be maintained, and their traditional way of life would persist. The maintenance of their religious or spiritual practices also ensured a degree of cultural continuity. Beyond these two aspects Miskito society underwent profound changes. Their social organisation changed, which caused a reassessment of their own role in events and how they conducted themselves when dealing with Europeans and other indigenous groups.

---

[47] M.W., *The Mosqueto Indian and His Golden River*, p.295.

[48] Gustavus Vassa, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano* (London, 1794), p.195.

[49] C.F. Pascoe, *Two hundred Years of the SPG: An Historical account of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts 1701–1900 (based on a digest of the society's records) by C.F. Pascoe (Keeper of the Society's records)* (London, 1901), p.235.

[50] Olien, 'General Governor and Admiral', pp.300-301.

2.3 Miskito Social Organisation

The most dramatic changes the Miskito experienced were shifts in their social organisation. Changes in social relations had profound knock-on effects, altering the way they organised both themselves and traditional activities. These changes were largely implemented by the Miskito as a response to pressures and opportunities arising from their interactions with the European powers in the borderlands.

The most important change for the Miskito was the evolution of leadership positions during the eighteenth century. Over the course of the eighteenth century, four principal positions emerged, each with a title: being King, Governor, General and Admiral. The four individuals that held these positions theoretically controlled the entire Miskito nation, but their actual influence was considerably more limited. The origin of these positions can be traced back to the seventeenth century, when contemporaries assert that the first Miskito King 'Oldman' was crowned by the British in Jamaica in 1688.[51] M.W. also commented on similar naming practices for the Miskito leader during his visit in 1699. Several of the headmen of both families and larger groups of Miskito took British-style military titles, such as captain and colonel. At the end of the seventeenth century, these titles seemed to be a way for an individual Miskito to increase their prestige, but the social influence they wielded appeared to be largely unchanged from earlier periods.[52] This would change dramatically in the eighteenth century.

While many individuals retained influence over small groups or their immediate families, the four key positions rose to significant prominence due to new ways to

[51] Olien, 'The Miskito Kings and the Line of Succession', pp.201-203. M.W., *The Mosqueto Indian and His Golden River*, p.288.

[52] M.W., *The Mosqueto Indian and His Golden River*.

acquire prestige. As the British practice of giving gifts to the Miskito became increasingly commonplace, those that acted as distributors of European goods became important. This was actively encouraged by Europeans, as it was easier to contact only a handful of Miskito leaders rather than every individual group, relying on established indigenous practices to disperse goods.[53] These aspirations, however, fell far short of expectations and it was internal Miskito politics that ultimately dictated who rose to these positions.[54] Access to these goods helped the leaders galvanise larger groups of men for raids and military excursions, which of course led to greater quantities of loot and a higher degree of individual prestige for those that led such raids. Prior to this, raids had been organised and led by temporary leaders who, at the cessation of hostilities, returned to being average members of society.[55] The establishment of the four positions led to a much greater degree of consistency in Miskito leadership, allowing the accumulation of both prestige and wealth, which was kept stable by the positions being hereditary.[56] This cycle was an extension of traditional systems of prestige and organisation, but had been accelerated by the presence of Europeans. The Miskito took advantage of the supply of British goods, which improved their effectiveness and made use of the Spanish as a common external enemy to ensure a degree of internal cohesion and to limit infighting. The presence of Europeans enabled Miskito practices to operate at a larger scale.

[53] Caroline Williams, 'If you want Slaves go to Guinea: Civilisation and Savagery in the "Spanish" Mosquitia, 1787-1800', *Slavery and Abolition*, 35 (2014), p.121.

[54] Olien, 'General, Governor and Admiral', p.313.

[55] Helms, 'Miskito Slaving and Culture Contact', pp.183-184.

[56] Olien, 'General, Governor and Admiral', p.278. Olien, 'The Miskito Kings and the Line of Succession', p.99. An account comprising the Mosquito Shore, 1757, MS ADD191.

A crucial development and a key underpinning for the formation of the 'Miskito Kingdom' was the importance of the four leaders outside of wartime. The continued importance of the four leaders outside of purely military matters demonstrates a growing cohesiveness between the Miskito. One notable development was witnessed by Robert Hodgson, who described a meeting between Miskito leaders:

> The power of these principal Men (which is hereditary) is nearly equal; a very small difference only being in favour of the King who is a little supported by the whites for the sake of his name: but none of these chiefs have much more than a negative voice and never attempt anything without a council of such old men as have influence among those of their countrymen who live round about them. When anything of importance is to be done, the people of consequence meet and argue, each as he pleases; but are seldom unanimous, except where they think their country is immediately concerned.[57]

The four principal leaders were still dependent on other influential members of society in order to exert power over the rest of the Miskito, which was similar in many ways to how they had been organised in earlier centuries. The council, however, was called by one of the principal leaders and, as limited as their 'negative voice' may have been, it still represents a development and the accrual of at least a small amount of power. More importantly, these councils were called for reasons other than just military matters, something that had not occurred before. This suggests that the leaders were trying to make decisions or push developments within the Miskito that required the approval and support of influential individuals beyond military matters. Their

[57]A Narrative comprising the Mosquito Shore and the Bay of Honduras, 1757, p.60, Kew, UCL special Collections, MS ADD191.

success at the time of Hodgson's report appears limited, but it shows that some attempts were being made. This importance was demonstrated later in the century by the tendency of the Miskito leaders to entreat with Europeans accompanied by large retinues of their followers, music and dressed in a combination of European and indigenous clothes and weapons.[58]

In addition to change in social organisation, several traditional Miskito activities also changed. These changes affected almost everything: raids, hunting, fishing, farming and gathering were all changed by the introduction of European tools simply by the benefits of metal tools. The objective of these activities also shifted as the Miskito targeted goods and slaves that could be traded with the British rather than just their own use.[59] While this had been done before, the scale and reach of the Miskito expanded, especially in the early eighteenth century, which saw a wave of Miskito raids at a much higher intensity than had been seen before.[60] The growing wealth of the British and Spanish empires and the Miskito's ability to maintain their position in the borderlands enabled them to benefit from the growing populations and increase their capacity to trade. This position was maintained through military strength and by changing the organisation of their society to better take advantage.

Internal Miskito divisions grew alongside these developments, acquiring new facets and, in some cases, additional complexity. Long-standing ethnic divisions between the 'sambo' and 'tawira' Miskito continued to play a role and, in some cases, became even more pronounced with the division of territory between the four principal leaders.[61] The tendency to pass the positions through family units meant that the positions were typically controlled by a specific ethnicity of Miskito, with the King and General usually being identified as sambo and the

[58] Williams, 'If you want Slaves go to Guinea', p.121.

[59] Duplicado de Carta de D. Fray Benito Garret, Obispo de Nicaragua, 30 noviembre 1711, AGI Guatemala 299.

[60] Duplicado de Carta de D. Fray Benito Garret, Obispo de Nicaragua, 30 noviembre 1711, AGI Guatemala 299. Helms, 'Miskito Slaving and Culture Contact', p.194.

[61] Offen, 'The Sambo and Tawira Miskitu', pp.348-351.

Admiral and Governor being Tawira. While a conventional civil war did not break out until the very end of the eighteenth century after the British evacuation, the formation of specific territories and access to different resources to opportunities helped create distinctive identities and hardened internal divisions.[62] The pressures of interacting across a wider geographical space alongside the British and Spanish also forced the various groups of Miskito to interact due to the larger manpower demands. This gave further opportunities for internal division as leaders could identify themselves and their followers as different to their rivals, which was also more likely as these meetings came to include subjects that were less likely to have a unanimous response, such as trade or tribute agreements with Europeans and other indigenous groups.

This ongoing contact and need to agree on courses of action, alongside the creation of these four principal positions, also created political conflicts. The loose nature of Miskito organisation led to the four leaders often being insecure in their position and constantly seeking to stop any attempts to remove them, often pre-emptively. Rumours spread by the Miskito or European traders came close to triggering conflicts on several occasions.[63] The unity provided by having the Spanish as a common enemy was also undermined at several occasions when the Spanish made diplomatic entreaties to the Miskito. While never successful in the long term, perceived favouritism shown to other Miskito leaders made the Governor and Admiral occasionally willing to listen and even cooperate with Spanish envoys.[64] It became increasingly difficult to preserve any form of unity between the Miskito leaders as they had more at stake by losing their position, as a loss of position often meant death.

[62] Offen, 'The Sambo and Tawira Miskito', pp.348-351.

[63] An account of the late expected insurrections of the Indians on the Mosquito shore, Richard Jones, 1768, Kew, TNA, T1, 467.

[64] Olien, 'General Governor and Admiral', pp.300-301. Description of the Bay of Honduras and the Mosquito Shore, 1765, TNA, ADM 7/837. Expediente sobre la obediencia hecha a su majestad, por Aníbal Mestizo, Gobernador Mosquito, 21 May 1722, AGI Guatemala 301.

Miskito society thus changed considerably, not at the behest of Europeans but certainly as a result of prolonged contact with them. The Miskito Kingdom, regardless of its actual form, changed considerably; broadly speaking, it concentrated more power into fewer hands. This was done to organise larger and larger groups of Miskito to take advantage of the opportunities for prestige and plunder through raiding and to better accommodate and cope with the practices of their European allies and enemies. Core cultural practices and social activities stayed largely the same but grew in scale and became more efficient with access to European goods. Already established methods of acquiring prestige, and therefore social position, were supplemented by new opportunities for trading and raiding. The Miskito, therefore, changed and formed their 'Kingdom' to extract greater benefits from the ongoing conflicts around them.

2.4 The Miskito Kingdom: The Third Empire?

The Miskito Kingdom has sparked considerable debate as to its precise form, function, whether it can even be called a kingdom and if it was an important consideration during the eighteenth century.[65] While social and cultural practices developed from existing indigenous practices, the creation of the Miskito Kingdom and the crowning of a King was something heavily assisted by Europeans, especially the British. As the Miskito became increasingly important in borderland relations, it also became the main structure through which the Europeans sought to contact the Miskito and vice versa. This is despite many contemporary commentators suggesting the role of the King was rather limited, and modern historians and anthropologists suggesting the Miskito continued to act as independent small groups as opposed to a unified kingdom.[66] The function and

[65] Mendiola, 'The rise of the Mosquito kingdom in Central America's Caribbean Borderlands'. Offen, 'The Sambo and Tawira Miskitu'. Rogers, 'Caribbean Borderland'. These are some of the more recent works dealing with this long-running argument, but many more works have addressed these questions.

[66] A Narrative comprising the Mosquito Shore and the Bay of Honduras, 1757, p.60, Kew, UCL special Collections, MS ADD191. Helms, 'Of Kings and Contexts', p.518. Philip A. Dennis, Michael D. Olien, 'Kingship among the Miskito', *American Ethnologist*, 11:4 (1984), p.735.

role of the Miskito Kingdom was important as, if it was somewhat united, it essentially forms the third empire, or political unit, between the British and Spanish. If the Miskito continued to act as small independent groups, then they fulfil the role of skilled indigenous intermediaries that were present in other European borderlands and acted independently and played European empires against each other.[67]

Almost since its creation, the role and power of the Miskito King has been questioned, which might significantly undermine any pretence to the Miskito forming one cohesive political unit. Contemporary British observers did not seem to consider it a particularly credible institution, at least when writing to a European audience. The coronation of the first Miskito King was mentioned by M.W. in 1699, who called the commission he was granted "a ridiculous piece of writing".[68] This was supported by Hodgson's comments fifty years later suggesting that Europeans treated the King with slightly more deference only because of his name, but that their power was essentially equal, suggesting views on the title had not changed much.[69] Incidents later in the century also suggest the King had limited influence over the other three leaders. Richard Jones reported one incident where the Miskito King, reacting to rumours of the General's plans to assassinate him, sought the support of the Admiral and Governor to prevent the British settlers from supporting the General. The situation ended peacefully, with British threats to commission a new King, but the threat only held weight when the Governor and Admiral refused to support the King, not wanting to risk their own alliances with the British. This was something the British seemed aware of and so treated each of the four

[67] Weber, *Bárbaros*, pp.12-15.

[68] M.W., *The Mosqueto Indian and His Golden River*, p.288.

[69] An account comprising the Mosquito Shore, 1757, MS ADD191.

leaders almost as separate entities.[70] This was mirrored by the Spanish, who would entreat with the leaders on an individual basis, usually the Admiral, when trying to form an alliance with the Miskito.[71] At the local level, the Miskito Kingdom was four loosely aligned territories each with a single leader, on the borderlands inhabitants ultimately had to contact an individual leader as the King's authority over any Miskito outside of his immediate territory was tenuous at best.

This lack of a single authority made the Miskito Kingdom function like the European empires in terms of how they operated in the Central American borderlands. Geographic distance and institutional limitations prevented the European empires from pursuing a single course of action, as resources and political will were split between competing interests at the metropolitan, regional and local levels. In comparison, the Miskito were split principally by their four leaders and the competing interests of other prominent community leaders. The Miskito, therefore, faced the same problems of geographic distance and institutional weakness (arguably lacking institutions entirely), but on a smaller geographic scale, being based solely in the borderlands. It, therefore, may be more pertinent to consider them more as a small and very fractious empire, as opposed to a kingdom.

Despite the seeming fragility of the Miskito's organisation, they maintained formalised relationships with the wider British and Spanish empires. The recognition of the Miskito Kingdom existing, in whatever form, allowed the Miskito to be presented or described as a cohesive whole at the regional and metropolitan levels. This was chiefly done

[70] An account of the late expected insurrections of the Indians on the Mosquito shore, Richard Jones, 1768, Kew, TNA, T1, 467.

[71] Offen, 'The Sambo and Tawira Miskito', pp.322-323.

through visits and messages that were a part of wider efforts from the Miskito leaders to establish themselves as the facilitators of European contact. Hence why many of the leaders spoke as if they represented the entirety of the Miskito nation.[72] Most of the Miskito's focus was on controlling the immediate local level through leveraging their military superiority over Spanish and British inhabitants. As their aims were centred on Central America, it was not often necessary to contact higher ranking imperial officials directly. Their concentration on local goals was demonstrated by how they usually sent messages through local borderland residents, like the superintendent or visiting officers and officials, to be passed on to their superiors. In-person visits were considerably rarer given the difficulties of long-distance travel and, in the case of visiting the Spanish, the perceived risks either on the trip or upon their return. Such visits were often orchestrated by Spain, who were typically trying to get the Miskito to agree to an alliance. The British organised visits in the seventeenth century when crowning the first Miskito King and several visits occurred in the eighteenth century.[73] The Spanish offered such visits throughout the eighteenth century, but they were not often taken up, though one Miskito Admiral travelled as far as Cartagena.[74] These methods demonstrate a willingness to acquiesce to European imperial structures and communicate through official channels.

[72] Attachment to Governor Dallings Letter to W.R., 9 February 1770, TNA CO 137 77. An account of the late expected insurrections of the Indians on the Mosquito shore, Richard Jones, 1768, Kew, TNA, T1, 467.

[73] The Duke of Bedford to Robert Hodgson 5 October 1749, TNA, Treasury Papers, T1/335. Memorials and other papers concerning Jeremiah Terry's bringing over two deputies of the Mosquito Indians, 1776, TNA, T1, 524.

[74] Olien, 'General Governor and Admiral', pp.300-301.

These communications with the upper levels of imperial governance were a part of the prestige that was so important to retaining authority in the Miskito Kingdom. The Miskito's insistence on referring to the British monarch as their "friend and ally" insinuated an equal footing.[75] Whether the British Empire agreed with this view was irrelevant, it was important among the Miskito and helped maintain a degree of stability and continuity in Miskito leadership, which the British residents of the coast depended on for their security. This ability to maintain relationships with the British was an essential leadership quality, mainly because the alternative was an alliance with Spain. The few leaders that did try to create an alliance with Spain were either quickly dissuaded by other Miskito, with British backing, or simply killed.[76] This did not necessitate the closing of all communications with the Spanish Empire as several Miskito leaders tried to create agreements to open trade routes and secure access to turtling grounds.[77] Which, given the centrality of resource distribution to Miskito leadership roles, was another way to secure a leadership position without jeopardising their alliance with the British.[78] In this sense, Miskito communications with the other imperial powers were not only important to secure political and economic benefits, but were also essential to shoring up internal Miskito structures. The efficacy of this was shown through the failure of Spanish attempts to create alliances with Miskito leaders. The internal coherence of maintaining broad opposition to the Spanish and alliance with

[75] Attachment to Governor Dallings Letter to W.R., 9 February 1770, TNA CO 137 77.

[76] Olien, 'General Governor and Admiral', pp.300-301. Description of the Bay of Honduras and the Mosquito Shore, 1765, TNA, ADM 7/837. An account of the late expected insurrections of the Indians on the Mosquito shore, Richard Jones, 1768, Kew, TNA, T1, 467.

[77] Description of the Bay of Honduras and the Mosquito Shore, 1765, TNA, ADM 7/837.

[78] Helms, 'The Cultural Ecology of a Colonial Tribe', p.81. Helms, 'Of Kings and Contexts', pp.506-507. Gabbert, 'God Save the King of the Mosquito Nation!', pp.77-79.

the British, despite having four essentially independent leaders, suggest there were internal pressures that kept the Miskito Kingdom acting as a single entity.

The other key set of connections the Miskito maintained were with the other unsubjugated indigenous groups in Central America. These groups acted as an important cultural counterpoint through which the Miskito could identify themselves. The Miskito called these other groups 'alboawineys' and considered themselves vastly different, despite some cultural and social similarities, from as early as 1699.[79] Their close connection with European empires and their military prowess likely provided the foundation for these views. This military superiority was especially crucial as it allowed the Miskito to overturn long established trading and raiding relations that had existed at least until the end of the seventeenth century.[80] The Miskito's new dominance allowed them to collect tributes from the smaller indigenous groups in return for not being raided and allowed them to save more resources and accrue more wealth.[81] This new balance of power also helps explain the necessity of a larger enemy, such as the Spanish Empire, as a source of military prestige. This influence over the indigenous groups also made the Miskito essential to the smooth operation of the contraband trade, as, in many areas, the indigenous groups were essential to its function as intermediaries.[82]

---

[79] M.W., *The Mosqueto Indian and His Golden River*, p.286.

[80] M.W., *The Mosqueto Indian and his Golden River*, p.290.

[81] Description of the Bay of Honduras and the Mosquito Shore, 1765, TNA, ADM 7/837. Helms, 'The Cultural Ecology of a Colonial Tribe', p.80. An account comprising the Mosquito Shore, 1757, MS ADD191.

[82] Obispo de Nicaragua…del origen de los zambos llamados mosquitos y de las bárbaras crueldades que han ejecutado…30 de noviembre de 1711, in Héctor M. Leyva (ed.), *Documentos Coloniales de Honduras* (Tegucigalpa, 1991), pp.220-221. TNA, Admiralty Papers, ADM 7/837, Description of the Bay of Honduras and the Mosquito Shore, 1765 by Joseph Smith Speer, 1765.

The Miskito, therefore, formed an essential power in the Central American borderlands. In terms of power and function, the four leaders and a variety of constructed and managed cultural and social developments allowed the Miskito 'Kingdom' to function as one coherent unit when interacting with the Spanish and British empires. Internally, the Miskito were not organised very differently from how they had been decades earlier: a few small developments had taken place, but they had all been done through gradual transformation rather than external European imposition. In terms of development and shaping the wider borderlands, Central America, the British and Spanish empires, it did not matter if they were not an empire internally. If the Miskito could present themselves as a single coherent organisation, state or nation, they could leverage far more benefits from the European empires than any other indigenous group.

2.5 The British Empire, Jamaica and the Value of the Borderlands

The British Empire constituted the third major power in the Central American borderlands. Much like the Spanish, the British had a complex and multi-layered relationship with the settlements in Central America, where the local, regional and Metropolitan aims for the region were all different and often contradicted each other. Unlike the Spanish Empire, the British Empire's presence at the local level was established without any kind of official state backing. British sailors, especially pirates, had established small temporary encampments along Central America's Caribbean coast since the sixteenth century as repair and resupplying points. In the eighteenth century, as piracy declined, some ex-buccaneers sought alternate means of sustaining themselves, so many of these re-supply points became more permanent settlements to facilitate small-scale agriculture and trade. Most of the people in these settlements were British, benefitting from early alliances tentatively created with the Miskito by the

Providence Island Company in the seventeenth century.[83] The British Empire's involvement in the borderlands would be dominated by the development and actions of these small settlements, and how they connected themselves to the wider British Empire. Whereas the Spanish Empire sought to re-establish control over the borderlands, the British sought to use the borderland settlements for the benefits of the wider empire at both the regional and metropolitan level and, in doing so, had to determine whether it was worth supporting these legally complex settlements.

As the settlements did not have official backing when they were created, the connections between the local level and other parts of the British Empire were often based on the relationships of individuals or short-term economic and strategic benefits. The metropolitan and regional levels only interacted with the borderlands when seeking to advance more concrete and identifiable imperial aspirations. Most of these cases were in relation to Britain's ongoing relationship with the Spanish Empire. The borderland's geographic location made it a sensitive area of contention for Anglo-Spanish relations, which proved to be both a benefit and a hindrance for the British Empire politically. The settlements could be useful as a threat to Spain, but they could also be a hindrance as the lack of official control over the settlements meant that they could breach agreements and antagonise Spain during ostensibly peaceful periods. Their limited economic value also meant that Britain could grant Spain concessions over the borderlands with limited political consequences. Shifts in international diplomacy and changing British goals meant the British government's stance on the borderland settlements changed regularly, preventing the creation of any coherent formalised

[83] Arthur Newton, 'The Colonising Activities of the English Puritans', in Jean Preston, *The Mosquito Indians and Anglo-Spanish Rivalry in Central America, 1630-1821* (Glasgow, 1988), pp.3-4.

relationship. [84] The result was that any relationship or connection that was created was based heavily on the personality of the individuals involved, even when administrative positions were implemented from the mid-century onwards.

This emphasis on personal relationships to govern a territory was especially true of the economic connections with the rest of the British Empire. Lacking formal customs houses or courts for much of the century, the basis of most trading agreements between individual merchants was little more than reputation.[85] The varied and small-scale nature of trading with the borderlands also stymied any attempts to form wide-ranging trade agreements.[86] The only exception was Belize's lumber trade, which was traded in large volumes, but the lack of any overall control or stable settlement ensured that it was personal reputation that controlled prices and who traded with who. This lack of control and legislation was enough to entice foreign merchants to trade with British settlers and raised concerns about contraband, the notion being that Britain's other European rivals were profiting from their investments and creating potential competition within the British Empire.[87] While responses were varied, as many saw the potential of using this trade to impoverish Spain, officials would seek to avoid any disruption to established systems.

---

[84] Metcalf, *Royal Government and Political Conflict in Jamaica 1729-1783*, p.230. Chet, *The Ocean is a Wilderness*, pp.33-35.

[85] Smail, 'Credit, Risk, and Honour in Eighteenth-Century Commerce', *Journal of British Studies*, 44:3 (July 2005), p.446.

[86] Description of the Bay of Honduras and the Mosquito Shore, 1765, TNA, ADM 7/837. A description of the Logwood trade, 25 September 1717, TNA, PRO 30/47/17.

[87] Description of the Bay of Honduras and the Mosquito Shore, 1765, TNA, ADM 7/837. An account comprising the Mosquito Shore, 1757 MS ADD 191.

These concerns meant that contraband was not seen as completely beneficial to the British, which complicated its role within the British Empire. As a result, contraband was officially illegal in Jamaica as it was in Guatemala, the main difference being that the laws were loosely enforced.[88] The Jamaicans that were involved in the contraband trade were typically poorer whites, as most of the sugar trade in Jamaica was controlled by a few large plantation owners.[89] The prohibitive costs of setting up a sugar plantation forced many to take jobs as overseers or craftsmen on the island, but others took advantage of the contraband trade developing in the borderlands. Those that did traded manufactured goods for agricultural produce, raw materials and slaves, while serving as key links between the borderlands and the formalised imperial system. This trade was especially risky as typical market risks and the insecure and unknown production capacities of the Spanish Empire and Miskito could be disrupted by Spanish customs officials or violence between the conflicting Central American groups. In the case of Costa Rica, some Jamaican traders forewent the services of borderland residents and sent their own ships to carry out illegal trade directly with the Spanish.[90] The contraband trade was thus able to diversify the goods shipped into Jamaica and then on to the rest of the British Empire. The quantities did not seem to be huge but was enough to attract the attention of several commentators who saw potential in developing the trade for the benefit of the British and Jamaican economy and to weaken Spain.[91]

[88] Chet, *The Ocean is a Wilderness,* pp.66-67.

[89] James Robertson, 'The Best Poor Man's Country?', p.77. Frank Moya Pons, *History of the Caribbean: Plantations Trade and War in the Atlantic World* (Princeton, 2007), pp.95-100.

[90] Carta del Gobernador de Costa Rica sobre procesos contra él, 10 Desembre 1724, AGI Guatemala 302.

[91] Description of the Bay of Honduras and the Mosquito Shore, 1765, TNA, ADM 7/837. Long, *The History of Jamaica, new edition vol.1*, p.321.

The support of actors outside of the local level is demonstrable in how the contraband trade in Central America functioned. The fact that settlers at the local level did not exist at a subsistence level and frequently operated using cash suggests they were closely connected to merchants and traders at the regional level. These traders had more ready access to cash and other essential supplies. In the first two phases of their development, residents at the local level had few, if any, productive industries and functioned as traders, negotiating with the Spanish or the Miskito.[92] In the period after 1763, the scale of investment and formality of the settlements became increasingly apparent. There are numerous cases of wills being settled and, in some cases, attorneys being sent from Jamaica to the borderlands to settle debts and retrieve specific goods that were owed to business partners as far as away as London.[93] These business agents were tolerated and frequently allowed to carry out their duties and only in some cases were proceedings challenged in courts.[94] Investment also increased as settlers in the borderlands, especially the Mosquito Coast, began to invest in more conventional colonial industries and ways of supporting themselves. In Belize, the use of slavery expanded, and conventional farming became more common to support communities. A similar trend occurred on the Mosquito Coast, but their residents also began to build sugar mills and started sugar plantations, likely making use of expertise from nearby Jamaica based on

[92] An account comprising the Mosquito Shore, 1757 MS ADD 191.

[93] Mosquito Shore Records, Recorded by the Desire of John Potts, BARS Mosquito Shore Papers 1773-1780 4th April 1779. Christopher Simnoll of the Bay of Honduras appoints Robert Kaye of Black River to be his attorney to recover sums of money debts and demands owed, 5 April 1777 BARS Mosquito Shore Records. Inventory and appraisement of the negroes and other effects the property of the estate of Geoffrey Walker deceased, Mosquito Shore Papers, 1 October 1776, BARS.

[94] The report of the council of Jamaica respecting the Mosquito Shore to his honour lieutenant governor Dalling in the year 1774, Mosquito Shore Papers, 16 July 1777, BARS.

similarities in machinery and techniques.[95] The formation and evolution of these fixed economic pursuits suggests close relations with Jamaica.

Jamaica also utilised connections to the borderlands to alleviate some of its own internal problems. During the Maroon Wars, Jamaica received military aid from the Miskito, who travelled to the island and provided military personnel in the form of scouts and trackers. According to one contemporary witness, they were incredibly effective and the author even credits them with helping to bring an end to the war in 1738.[96] The opportunities presented in the borderlands also provided alternate employment for Jamaica's inhabitants: if they were willing take the necessary risks, they could maintain a livelihood. This proved useful to reduce pressure for employment and funds on the island, to the extent that one historian referred to the Central American borderlands as the open frontier of plantation Jamaica.[97] They also provided an additional market for slaves. While most were needed in Jamaica to accommodate the island's brutal death rate, Jamaican slaveowners sold on slaves to the borderlands in some cases too. There were also attempts to send prisoners to the Mosquito Coast.[98] Jamaica did actively seek some connections with the borderlands in order to help assuage its own internal problems.

---

[95] Evidence of sugar mill machinery and large-scale agriculture has been found in archaeological digs; Catherine M. Clark, Frank G. Dawson, Jonathan Drake, *Archaeology on the Mosquito Coast: a reconnaissance of the pre-Columbian and historic settlement along the Rio Tinto* (Cambridge, 1982).

[96] Bolland, *Colonialism and Resistance in Belize*, p.69.

[97] Robertson, 'The Best Poor Man's Country?', p.77.

[98] Mosquito Shore Records, "Andrew Riddel to Robert Hodgson" 2 April 1776 BARS. Mosquito Shore Records, "Letter from the board to Francis Hickey Esquire and others the inhabitants at Cape Gracias a Dios and along the Southern Coast", 14 Feb 1786, BARS.

The political support, security assistance and the economic benefits did not fully convince Jamaica or London of the borderlands' value. The presence of British settlers in the borderlands caused significant problems and complications for both the regional and metropolitan levels, which strained relations within the British Empire. Most of these complications became apparent later in the eighteenth century, after 1763, as the borderlands' British population grew and questions began to arise over the potential future of the Central American settlements. Later developments put more pressure on the settlements to justify their existence. The loss of the thirteen colonies in 1784 and the decline of Spain as a major rival reduced the borderlands' strategic and economic value, while they continued to antagonise Spain and acted as a haven for contraband and criminals. At the regional level, the costs of maintaining a presence in Central America began to outweigh the benefits in the views of some people. The difficulty of controlling the borderlands began to outweigh the benefits, straining the relationships between the local, regional and metropolitan levels. Developments at the local level began to encroach on actions that were traditionally the purview of the regional level, and Jamaica had proven to be a valuable and reliable colony, especially when compared to North America; to the metropolitan level the choice was very clear.

The contraband trade was not a benefit to everyone and had strained economic relations with many in Jamaica for much of the eighteenth century, especially the elite. Some traders were able to avoid repaying investments by taking advantage of the lack of official British presence in the first half of the eighteenth century. One practice described how potential merchants would acquire a ship full of cargo as a part of a business arrangement and then, upon arriving at the Mosquito Coast, would simply sink

the ship and use the cargo to set themselves up as contraband traders.[99] This lack of control fed other fears or complaints about the contraband trade in regards to the presence of other European powers such as the Dutch and French.[100] Their involvement, while not provoking the same security fears they did in Spain, antagonised those who sought to try and profit from the contraband trade. As antagonising Spain became an increasing threat for Jamaica, it appeared frustrating that the source of so much Spanish ire towards Britain was not actively benefitting the British Empire as much as it could. This antagonism towards Spain served as the basis for a lot of Jamaica's criticisms and general negative view of the borderlands.[101] It was doubtful whatever profits could be extracted from the borderlands could compensate for any loss in the vast sugar revenues incurred by Spanish naval action; or, in the worst case, the possible seizure of the island.

As the British population of the Mosquito Coast rose, they increasingly resembled an economic competitor to Jamaica. Not simply because a larger population increased their economic output, but the eventual construction of sugar mills and plantations made them a direct competitor. This threat of competition grew as the borderlands pushed to assert their political rights and trading status within the British Empire. A petition in 1777 sent on behalf of the Mosquito Coast demanded that the borderlands be granted the same trading rights as Jamaica, claiming they were a part of that island's government jurisdiction.[102] If the government in London agreed to the settlers'

[99] TNA, ADM 7/837, 1765.

[100] Trelawny to the Board of Trade, 1743 TNA, CO137/48. Long, *The History of Jamaica, new edition vol.1*, p.321.

[101] Metcalf, *Royal Government and Political Conflict*, pp.115-116.

[102] Robert White to the Lords Commissioners, 16 March 1779, TNA T1 549.

demands, they would have the same tariff as sugar shipped from Jamaica; however, despite what the settlers claimed, Jamaica's control over the borderlands was tentative at best. Jamaica would potentially face another rival and one with fewer restrictions on where it sold its wares. Economic developments in the borderlands thus seemed actively threatening to the established and comparatively reliable revenues Jamaica could generate and the revenues of its wealthiest, and politically influential, settlers.

Beyond these economic stresses, efforts by the regional and Metropolitan level to exert control over the borderlands produced further strains. Due to geographic distance, London was dependent on Jamaica to enforce any policy on the borderlands. This was theoretically very simple after the appointment of the superintendent in 1749, who served directly under the Governor of Jamaica.[103] In practice, the settlers on the borderlands were largely self-governing, invoking their position as a dependency of Jamaica only when it suited them.[104] When the settlers complained that the superintendent was overstepping their powers and trying to govern them, London and Jamaica bowed to pressure and recalled him. The official representative of the British Empire on the coast therefore seemed relatively weak, or at least not crucial to wider British intentions for the region.

The weakness of these connections was at its most prevalent when the metropole tried to enforce peace terms. The most notorious of these terms was the caveat in the Treaty Paris stating that "his Britannic majesty shall cause to be demolished the fortifications

[103] Duke of Bedford to Governor Trelawny, 1749, TNA, T1/335.

[104] TNA T1 549; Robert White to the Lords Commissioners, 16 March 1779; Robert White, *The Case of His Majesty's Subjects having Property in and Lately established upon the Mosquito Shore in America most Humbly Submitted to the kings Most excellent Majesty in Council The Lords and Commons in Parliament and the Nation of Great Britain at Large* (London, 1789); Description of the Bay of Honduras and the Mosquito Shore, 1765, TNA, ADM 7/837.

which his subjects shall have erected in the bay of Honduras".[105] When this was agreed by British and Spanish diplomats, it was thought to include both the Mosquito Coast and Belize, but, although the lone block house in Belize was pulled down, the residents of the Mosquito Coast refused to tear down their fortifications. The settlers argued that their territory was never Spanish, so they were exempt from the treaty. The settlers then, with the backing of their Miskito allies, persuaded the British ship sent to enforce the terms to leave. The naval captain in charge forwarded the appeal to Jamaica to resolve it, but it got lost in colonial administration and was never resolved. [106] When the Spanish noticed, relations soured between the two empires. It ultimately reinforced exisiting Spanish views that the settlers would have to be removed by force and that the British government was not to be trusted on the matter.[107] This meant that the borderland settlement would provoke further conflicts with Spain, much to London and Jamaica's frustration.

While the Treaty of Paris was the most notable single failure of the metropolitan and regional levels to control the borderlands, there were many other examples after 1763. These failures occur as the regional and metropolitan levels were forced to make interventions to resolve empire-wide or regional problems that were being exacerbated by actions on the borderlands. Tighter control was needed to fulfil agreements with Spain, assuage Jamaican concerns and even respond to the concerns of British people in

[105] The Treaty of Paris 1763. Jose Luis Mendoza, *Britain and her Treaties on Belize*, trans. Lilly de Jongh Osborne (Guatemala, 1946), pp.30-31.

[106] Campbell, *Becoming Belize*, pp.215, 243. White, *The Case of His Majesty's Subjects having Property in and Lately on established upon the Mosquito Shore*, pp.5-6. Description of the Bay of Honduras and the Mosquito Shore, 1765 TNA, ADM 7/837.

[107] Informe sobre acciones de corso y guardacostas en América, respeto a los tratados internacionales y evacuación de los ingleses de Rio Tinto y otros puntos de la costa Honduras, 1754, AGS LEG, 6799, 65.

the colonies and in Great Britain, which were becoming more prominent due to the appearance of the borderlands in more and more publications and as their economic expansion continued. Examples of these interventions included: the limited impact of Burnaby's code in Belize when it was first introduced, the British practice of taking indigenous Americans as slaves or holding them in a kind of debt slavery despite British laws prohibiting such practices, continuing to trade with other European powers and ongoing disagreements between the government-appointed superintendent and the Mosquito Coast's self-appointed council.[108] The interventions launched to resolve these problems had a limited immediate effect and took a long time to resolve the issues, if they were ever resolved at all.

A key part of the reason these interventions failed was that the regional and metropolitan levels were still dependent on residents at the local level to retain a British influence. Part of the appeal of the borderlands was their cheap running cost, that through a yearly payment they could retain the military support of the Miskito and that the British government did not need to invest any significant sum into the settlers' wellbeing. To strengthen control over the borderlands, and turn them into fully fledged colonies, would require the movement of more officials and likely their imposition with the backing of an armed force. Limited, but cheap, attempts fell prey to local interests as laws enforced by distant or temporary authoritative bodies were subsumed by

[108] White, *The Case of His Majesty's Subjects having Property in and Lately on established upon the Mosquito Shore*. White, *To the Right Honourable The Lords of Trade and Plantations The Reply of His Majesty's Subjects, The Principal Inhabitants of the Mosquito-Shore, In America For themselves and on behalf of all other residing there, under the direction control and government of his majesty's subject of Jamaica to the printed pamphlet entitled 'The defence of Robert Hodgson, Esq. Late superintendent agent and commander in chief of the mosquito shore, humbly inscribed to the right honourable the lords of trade and plantations in answer to the complaints against him from sundry inhabitants of the British settlement there'* (London, 1780).

immediate local interests. The eventual evacuation of the Mosquito Coast to Belize demonstrates that, with enough will and resources, the metropole, through Jamaica, could control the borderlands, but, even then, protests from the settlers delayed their removal by several years.

Overall, the British connections between the borderlands to the regional and metropolitan levels were largely based on the connections between individuals. They had largely developed from previous relationships formed in the seventeenth century and the limited formalised structures formed prior to 1763 were a result of efforts to save money and exploit the borderlands for wider imperial benefit. The development of the borderlands into large, more prominent settlements placed a strain on British imperial structures. The metropole and Jamaica needed to exert control on the larger settlements, but they had formed their own systems of governance that prevented the limited efforts from having any significant effect. The local level was thus connected to the British Empire almost solely by personal connections, with official communication channels producing mostly antagonism or limited benefits.

2.6 Conclusion: The Borderlands at Every Level

The borderlands at the local level were closely linked to the regional and metropolitan levels of both the Spanish and British empires, which had a considerable influence on events that took place. These influences also had to contend with the Miskito, a third power that acted independently of the Europeans, but still created connections with the other levels of the European empires as well as having its own internal developments. The ability of the European metropolitan and regional levels to utilise these connections, however, appeared to be rather limited. Despite the presence of nearby officials and the possibility of deploying armies and navies to the local level, they still

relied on local actors to enforce wider imperial policy. These local European actors were often dependent on the Miskito but were unwilling or unable to cajole the Miskito to any specific course of action as the Miskito pursued their own goals. The supremacy of Miskito in the local level meant that any local European actors would be unwilling to antagonise them. This ultimately ensured that connections that only affected the European inhabitants would be largely useless for enforcing any kind of policy on the borderlands that contravened Miskito aspirations.

This was why, at the end of the eighteenth century, it was the Miskito that were left in control of the Mosquito Coast and wielding considerable military influence across the borderlands. Spanish attempts to take control of the borderlands could not succeed while the Miskito remained ascendant and on the side of the British. This meant that military operations could not permanently remove them, and ending the contraband trade was made considerably harder thanks to close British support. Internal efforts and increased inspections failed to disrupt the close connections between contraband traders and removing the source proved impossible, ensuring contraband thrived during the eighteenth century. Similarly, British efforts to formalise or control the borderland settlements could not be achieved without significant expenditure as it was not the settlers they needed to control; it was the Miskito. British settlers depended on the Miskito for security and so the benefits London and Jamaica could provide were of limited value as the costs of providing security were too high for the value the borderlands added to wider imperial aims. It was a combination of British failure to prove their value to the empire, while proving to be a severe problem to the Spanish, that led to the metropolitan level negotiating the closing settlement in 1787. The metropolitan level resolved problems in the borderlands by effectively cutting them out

of the resolution, something they had tried to achieve previously but eventually gave up on.

In contrast, the Miskito, being solely focused on the local level, were able to concentrate solely on their own development and enriching themselves at the expense of their various European neighbours. With immediate achievable goals, they were able to retain an importance that allowed them to extract concessions and goods from Europeans. They were then able to use these resources to enhance traditional practices of gathering and raiding, which led to an accelerated development of their cultural and societal practices. Their continued independence essentially limited the efforts of the regional and metropolitan levels to influence the borderlands. Although they still needed the presence of Europeans at the local level in order to directly influence actors beyond the local level, their military supremacy allowed them to wield great influence over their immediate neighbours. Internal Miskito developments allowed them to take better advantage of these opportunities and combining traditional practices with European technology allowed them to operate at larger scale, which stimulated further developments that accentuated their advantages. This proved effective during the eighteenth century but proved to be unsustainable in the long term.

Chapter 3. The Mosquito Coast: The Central Borderland

3.1 An Imperial Flashpoint

The most significant of the Central American borderlands was the Mosquito Coast in modern-day eastern Nicaragua and Honduras. The coast had the largest population of British, Spanish and Miskito inhabitants and they interacted a great deal. The geography of the region helped indigenous resistance and the creation of British settlements, which in turn helped develop the contraband trade that would prove so lucrative to the three major powers and required all three to function. While beneficial to the local levels, this trade prompted a response from the regional and metropolitan levels of both empires. Spain, as a part of a wider series of reforms, made plans to overcome the Miskito-British alliance and remove the rival Europeans from the Isthmus, which they hoped would allow them to control the Miskito. In response, the British settlers sought to strengthen their connections with the Miskito and the British Empire, forcing the government in London to make a firm decision about the future of the settlements and whether to support their indigenous allies. The Miskito used the conflict and their own military prowess to leverage benefits for wealth, power and to protect their independence. The Mosquito Coast was the borderland most entangled between all the levels of interaction and became heavily involved in both local and international struggles.

The Mosquito Coast was most prominent during the second and third periods of Central America's borderland history. Prior to 1732, it played an important role as the home of the Miskito and small groups of early British settlers. The lack of European settlement led the Spanish to view the borderland as a limited threat that could be resolved through

negotiation and religious conversion, as Spain was attempting in other borderlands. The founding of Black River in 1732, and the ensuing growth of the British population, fundamentally altered the borderland over the remaining two periods. Contraband trading became the primary activity and Miskito raiding became less important as the British sought to employ them as a defensive military force. British and Miskito aspirations led to attempts to formalise the borderland's position within the British Empire. The settlers sought security and the Miskito tried to extract more benefits from the alliance, these struggles strained relations between for the British and the Miskito. Spain made efforts to take back the coast with a military offensive. While it ultimately failed, it helped exert enough pressure to convince London to evacuate the shore in 1787. The Mosquito Coast was ultimately left in the hands of the Miskito, with a tentative truce with Spain, allowing an abortive Spanish attempt to settle the area.[1]

The history of the Mosquito Coast can be interpreted as one connected to state formation with its entangled nature emerging from the uncertainty of which of three powers would ultimately succeed. The three major powers were all competing to incorporate the Mosquito Coast into some form of state, albeit in different ways. Spanish efforts were led by the metropolitan and regional levels, who saw the area as a threat. Miskito and British efforts were driven by the local level ultimately, as a solution to security issues. The British were fearful of a Spanish offensive and thought a firmer place within the British Empire would provide reliable protection. The Miskito were undergoing their own development and, in between the personal struggles of various Miskito leaders, sought to retain their independence. While these struggles for coherent

[1] The attempt is covered in depth in: Frank Griffith Dawson, 'The Evacuation of the Mosquito Shore and the English who stayed behind', *The Americas,* 55:1 (1998). Williams, 'If you want Slaves go to Guinea'.

organisation only manifested in the third period after 1763, the way they were fought was heavily informed by preceding events.

The historiography of the Mosquito Coast has received considerable academic attention and has been included or used as an example in many wider-ranging historical works. Broad works focusing on the Mosquito coast concentrated on the clash of European empires, later more focused works written in the 1980s added more depth by discussing the direction of imperial action and the experience of smaller actors.[2] With studies beginning to explore the legacies of the eighteenth century's history, articles began to challenge established narratives of regular imperial competition and the importance of the Miskito.[3] The emphasis on this importance was driven by numerous articles analysing the inner working of the Miskito, and re-examining long-held theories as to their organisation, culture and social practices.[4] The main shortcoming of these studies is that they often studied the Miskito in isolation. This reassessment of their importance did not go unnoticed and they featured in several wide-ranging works of indigenous groups in the Americas as important actors.[5] While any history of the Mosquito Coast is very much a history of the Miskito, a re-examination of British and Spanish activity in the area should not be dismissed, even if it is to verify that established narratives remain

[2] Floyd, *The Anglo Spanish Struggle for Mosquitia;* Sorsby, *The British Superintendency of the Mosquito Shore 1749 – 1787*. Naylor, *Penny Ante Imperialism*, Preston, *The Mosquito Indians and Anglo-Spanish Rivalry in Central America, 1630-1821*, Dawson, 'William Pitt's Settlement at Black River on the Mosquito Shore'.

[3] Sánchez, 'Splitting the Country'. Wolfgang Gabbert, 'In the Shadow of the Empire - The Emergence of Afro-Creole Societies in Belize and Nicaragua', *Indiana*, 24 (2007). Mack, 'Contraband Trade through Trujillo, Honduras, 1720s–1782'. Rogers, 'Caribbean Borderland'.

[4] Offen, 'The Sambo and Tawira Miskitu'. Offen, ´Creating Mosquitia mapping Amerinidan Spatial Practices in eastern Central America, 1629 – 1779´, *Journal of Historical Geography*, 33:2 (2007). Offen, 'Mapping Amerindian captivity in Colonial Mosquitia'. John K. Thornton, 'The Zambos and the Transformation of the Miskitu Kingdom 1636-1740', *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 97:1 (2017).

[5] Weber, *Bárbaros*. Campbell, *Becoming Belize*.

accurate. A more complete entangled history of the coast can be completed now that knowledge of the Miskito is far more detailed, but the British and Spanish presence needs to be re-evaluated in this new context. The Miskito have been well documented in numerous other works, which allows for more space to analyse the British and Spanish presence at the local level in the Mosquito Coast.

The Mosquito Coast is therefore essential to the study of the Central American borderlands as a major point of convergence for the three major powers. As an almost classic borderland, albeit one that is geographically smaller than many in North America, the entangled approach can be used to great effect. Benefitting from the recent re-evaluations of the Miskito, wider processes involving all three major powers and the overall course of the Mosquito Coast's history can be analysed. This will reveal a struggle over state formation that was inconsistent across the levels of interaction and does not split evenly across imperial lines. The Miskito dominated events in the region and ensured that the conflict was fought and resolved using methods developed for borderlands and not recognised colonies.

3.2 The Primacy of the Mosquito Coast: Geography of the British Settlements

The geography of the Mosquito Coast facilitated the creation of a borderland and shaped the interactions between the empires and the Miskito. The geography helped the Miskito deter Spanish settlement and the British settlements that emerged in the eighteenth century took further advantage of the region's geographical features. These settlements developed over the course of the eighteenth century and took a unique form. The structures created by the European inhabitants, both physical and political, were

internal developments that had a profound impact on wider connections and were heavily dependent on the internal developments of the Miskito discussed in the previous chapter.

The pre-eighteenth-century history of the Mosquito Coast is essential to explain its development. The Spanish conquest of Central America was chaotic and riven by disputes between conquistadors. Expeditions to subjugate the isthmus were launched from New Spain in the north and from Panama in the south. There is no space to fully recount the decades of expeditions, rebellions and indigenous wars; suffice it to say that political organisation only started to stabilise in the latter half of the sixteenth century, almost thirty years after the first expeditions were launched.[6] Only the Pacific coast was under full Spanish control; the Atlantic coast had few Spanish settlements, despite some initial efforts. As Spanish control slowly strengthened in their Pacific holdings, the Atlantic coast remained largely unconquered, unexplored and would eventually become the Mosquito Coast. The resistance of the Miskito and other indigenous groups repelled the few Spanish expeditions that were launched. The first British settlement on the Mosquito Coast was created in the 1630s, under the auspices of the Providence Island Company. It was little more than a trading post, established near the mouth of the Wanks River.[7] Over the next two decades, other small British settlements sprang up across the shore as Providence was seized by the Spanish and pirates sought an alternate refuges.

[6] Perez-Brignoli, *A Brief History of Central America*, p.37.

[7] Naylor, *Penny Ante Imperialism*, p.30.

For the rest of the seventeenth century, the coast provided a series of bases for pirates and privateers, as well as trade with the indigenous peoples for various natural products. The reason it flourished as a series of piratical bases was due to the geography and limited Spanish presence. The coast was low-lying and prone to heavy wet seasons and crossing from the Atlantic to the Pacific was difficult due to the dense jungle and the chain of mountains that divides the isthmus. Without the incentives of precious metals or a large native population, the Mosquito Coast went largely ignored during the Spanish conquest, barring a few abortive attempts to penetrate the jungle by missionaries that and they were repulsed by the indigenous groups. The closest Spanish settlement was Trujillo, which was founded in 1524; it was raided and almost destroyed persistently by pirates over the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to the extent that the Spanish listed it as officially abandoned in 1683, though some of its populace remained nearby.[8] The Mosquito Coast was already known and connected to wider international networks due to the presence of pirates and sailors of different nationalities, as well as having connections to Jamaica, itself tied into commerce networks. The Mosquito Coast also lacked an official Spanish presence, which created opportunities for various non-Spanish settlers. The region was not unknown to the Spanish but was considered a dangerous area with the Miskito already having a reputation for assisting pirates and repelling any attempts to penetrate the region. This meant, when the Bourbons sought to secure their American possessions in the eighteenth century, the British and Miskito presence would be targeted.

[8] Mack, 'Contraband Trade through Trujillo', p.48.

Many of the small European settlements persisted into the eighteenth century but the most influential, Black River, was relatively new, founded in 1732 by inhabitants of the Bay of Honduras, in the north-western part of the Mosquito Coast. The Baymen had fled the Spanish and, rather than returning to the bay after the Spanish withdrew, elected to stay on the coast. William Pitt, a distant relation of the prime minister of the same name, is widely credited with founding the settlement and quickly became its *de facto* leader and remained a prominent administrator after the arrival of the superintendent.[9] Over the course of the eighteenth century, Black River became the largest British settlement on the coast and the centre of the contraband trade and other industries. The founding of Black River marks a noticeable shift in the development of Central America; the contraband trade became a principal concern for the Spanish and the British began to create a basic government led by a few wealthy residents. The presence of a formal town concerned the Spanish, as it suggested a more permanent and organised British presence as opposed to the small traders and raiders who had existed earlier. The founding of Black River was a pivotal step as it opened the way for a formalisation of British governance on the coast and attracted Spanish attention.

The geography of the region is essential to explaining the presence of a borderland. The low altitude made the area prone to heavy rains that swelled rivers and covered the region in dense jungle. The terrain and the mountain range that divided the isthmus, that had helped deter earlier settlement, formed an impressive set of natural defences

[9] Dawson, 'William Pitt's Settlement at Black River', p.691.

between the Atlantic and Pacific coasts that are mentioned in numerous documents.[10] For example, Black River was only accessible by land via two paths through highly defensible narrow mountain passes.[11] Terrain was mountainous and the only quick way to navigate was by using the numerous rivers, which presented their own challenges. For the Spanish, they passed through hostile Miskito territory, and for the British they would be travelling upstream. Additionally, many rivers had rapids that were difficult to navigate unless the pilot was familiar with them, creating a dependence on the Miskito and other indigenous groups. The sea near the Mosquito Coast was notorious for shallow waters and numerous sandbars, meaning that large European ships could not get close to many areas without assistance from the shore. There were other aspects of the terrain that exclusively applied to the furthering of contraband, as it was impossible for the royal officers of Spain to adequately police the nearby savannah and jungle due to the amount of routes into and out of the area.[12] These features made the Mosquito Coast exceptionally easy to defend from the Spanish and are essential to explaining why, despite being heavily outnumbered, the British, the Miskito and the contraband trade survived fifty years of Spanish attempts to drive them from the coast with minimal investment in defences.

The protection afforded by the terrain and the Miskito gave the British settlers an opportunity to develop and build defences to augment its natural advantages; settlements became permanent, unlike those in Belize or Costa Rica. In the latter half of

[10] They are referenced in documents such as ADM 7/837, Description of the Bay of Honduras and the Mosquito Shore, 1765, as well as CO 137/48 An account of what has been done at Black River on the Moskito shore towards settling a commerce with the inhabitants of Guatemala.

[11] Description of the Bay of Honduras and the Mosquito Shore, 1765, TNA, ADM 7/837.

[12] Ibid.

the century, many of the buildings were of considerable quality. Structures in Black River were described as being of European manner, made of wood and thatch with sides of lathe and plaster; they were white washed and some of them were two storeys high.[13] The estimated cost of the house used by the superintendent after 1767 was just over £1,169 and it was described as cheap yet appropriate, giving some indication of the quality of the structures.[14] Such structures were not limited to Black River; a resident of Pearl Key Lagoon, John Potts, had a structure built that was described as:

> One good stout and sufficient dwelling house well thatched to be fifty feet in length without piazzas and twenty-eight feet in width without front and back piazzas the sills of the house to be eight feet above the ground to have a partition at each end of the hall, fourteen feet from each end and afore and aft petition in the centre of each to have doors to each chamber and a front and back door.[15]

Other building projects took place around the Mosquito Coast in the form of fortifications. Batteries for cannon were relatively common in times of war to defend rivers, though some were permanent. Black River, due to its considerable wealth, was able to build a fortification around 1757 that was "somewhere between a small fort and Blockhouse" in size, at the cost of £500.[16] Other significant structures had been built by

[13] An account comprising the Mosquito Shore, 1757 MS ADD 191.

[14] Memorial of Robert Hodgson asking for reimbursement for a sloop, used to put down an Indian rising, presents made to Indians, rebuilding a house destroyed by flood, loss of another sloop because of storm, and salary unpaid, 2 July 1778, TNA T1/544 310.

[15] Recorded by desire of John Potts, 15 September 1775, Mosquito Shore records 1770-1783, BARS.

[16] An account comprising the Mosquito Shore, 1757 MS ADD 191. There are also two Spanish maps of Black River in which the fortifications can be seen; see Appendices 11 and 12.

the British; several accounts attest to the presence of sugar works on the coast towards the end of the century, at least as early as 1777.[17] The presence of permanent well-made structures made the British appear to be a threat to the Spanish, especially when allied with the Miskito, but more importantly it demonstrated a will and desire of the inhabitants to stay and settle the region, unlike other British settlements in Central America.

The people who inhabited the settlements were also a part of its characteristics. In a report made by the superintendent in 1757, Hodgson states that the population of the coast consisted of 1,124 individuals, of whom 154 were white, 170 were 'mulatto and mestizo' and 800 were slaves, both African and indigenous.[18] This population seems typical of many British Caribbean territories, with the whites as a minority and a large slave population. The population seems to have grown by 1765 to 1,888 individuals, with a report stating that the coast had 193 white inhabitants, '232 free mustees and mulattoes' and '1463 negro slaves'; showing steady growth, albeit a large influx of slaves.[19] These demographics, however, seemed to undergo a major change over the next five years; in 1770 the population had not only risen dramatically to 3,400 persons, but 2,300 of them are listed as white, 200 of mixed blood and 900 as slaves.[20] The proportion of such demographics were unheard of elsewhere in the British Caribbean; although these proportions were a late development that was cut short by the surrendering of British sovereignty in 1783. In comparison, Jamaica had a population of

[17] Advertisement, 1777, Mosquito Shore records 1776 to 1778, BARS.

[18] An account comprising the Mosquito Shore, 1757 MS ADD 191.

[19] Description of the Bay of Honduras and the Mosquito Shore, 1765, TNA, ADM 7/837.

[20] The Report of the Council of Jamaica respecting the Mosquito Shore to his honour Lieutenant Governor Dalling in the year 1774, Mosquito Shore papers 1776-1778, BARS.

291,400 in 1788 with 250,000 slaves, 30,000 whites, 10,000 'free blacks' and 1,400 'Maroons'.[21] Of the temperament of the settlers, an observer remarked that they were considerably more refined than the settlers in Belize. Speer suggested that this was due to them being 'tempered by ill fortune in the past'.[22] The population of the Mosquito Coast was of considerable size (especially as the statistics do not count the indigenous Miskito population) and was rising. Its slave population, while a threat to internal stability, was kept in check by its small size and the presence of the Miskito. It also seemed to be moving towards a higher standard of settlement when compared to other similar borderland communities around the Caribbean, further reinforcing the importance of the region and the permanence of the British settlement.

Another crucial reason for the Mosquito Coast's importance to the British were its links with other borderlands. The Mosquito Coast was known to have numerous connections with the settlers in Belize. Its most prominent role was in providing security for the Baymen by ensuring they had a haven to retreat to in the case of Spanish attack. It was also common for expeditions that were sent to assist the Baymen to gather provisions and, on some occasions, personnel to assist in the operation from the Mosquito Coast.[23] The Mosquito Coast also acted as a base that supported British and Miskito expeditions into Costa Rica, which would have profound effects. The British and Miskito who travelled to trade for cacao and hunt turtle relied on the presence of the coast. The settlements provided a nearby area they could retreat to in case of Spanish reprisals, but it was also an area where goods could be stored and could enter wider trade networks.

[21] R.C. Dallas, *The History of the Maroons: From their Origin to the Establishment of their chief Tribe at Sierra Leone, Volume 1* (London, 1803), pp.9-10.

[22] Description of the Bay of Honduras and the Mosquito Shore, 1765, TNA, ADM 7/837.

[23] Ibid.

The development of the Mosquito Coast was essential to supporting and enabling events in other borderlands by providing security and a supply of personnel.

The centrality of the Mosquito Coast was due to its official links and recognition by the British Empire and the presence of the Miskito. The British settlers on the Mosquito Coast had not been recognised since their landing in the seventeenth century, considered the same as the various buccaneers that inhabited the unoccupied coasts of the Caribbean. This started to change with the founding of Black River and the arrival of William Pitt. Governor Trelawney empowered Pitt to grant plots of 500 acres on the island of Roatán and asked the Board of Trade to expand this right to include the area around Black River.[24] Pitt was also sent presents to distribute among the Miskito to maintain their alliance, essentially becoming the chief intermediary and a key part of the British presence due to the essential military assistance provided by the Miskito .[25] This quasi-official role was superseded in 1749 when, after leading raids against the Spanish, Robert Hodgson was made superintendent of the Mosquito Coast and put under the direction of the Jamaican Governor to strengthen and maintain the alliance with the Miskito among other vaguely defined duties.[26] As a result, the first official link to the coast was created, and was further demonstrated by the full title of the Governor being 'His Majesty's Governor of Jamaica and other dependent territories'.[27] This structure placed the superintendent directly under the command of the Governor, meaning that the effectiveness of the role was often dependent on the personal qualities of the

[24] Trelawny to the Board of Trade, 1743, TNA, CO 137/48.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Duke of Bedford to Governor Trelawny, 1749, TNA, T1/335.

[27] As seen in many examples of British correspondence in CO 137/48.

postholder. These three positions of headman, superintendent and Jamaican Governor remained crucial to British governance on the coast throughout the eighteenth century. Pitt was replaced by an elected council in 1773, shortly after his death, as there seemed to be no single adequate replacement.[28] The change from a single headman to a council did create issues, but the need to have a representative for the people of the coast remained constant. Despite this evolution of governing structures, the British presence was never officially recognised by Spain. The Mosquito Coast's official connections with other territories were quite limited but, nevertheless, important to its development. The Miskito also underpinned the entire British presence as their military strength kept the British settlement safe; additionally, their settlements served as bases to launch raids into the neighbouring borderlands.

The Mosquito Coast was well established by 1749, and it continued to grow and develop stronger institutions over the course of the century. Its growing population and the presence of firmly established settlements, as opposed to the temporary camps of earlier centuries, enabled the British to support ventures in other borderland areas with the assistance of the Miskito. It even had the potential to become a formal colony after 1763, having become largely independent in economic matters, and it was moving towards greater political power. It did, however, remain dependent on Jamaica and especially the Miskito for protection from the Spanish. Although the coast's British settlements never reached the size (in either population or economic output) of more prominent Caribbean colonies, such as Jamaica or Barbados, it remained an important

[28] Proclamation of the King, 23 November 1773, Mosquito Shore Records 1773-1780, BARS.

location for British aims in the region, a prime threat to for the Spanish and provided tremendous opportunities for the Miskito, forcing them all to interact.

3.3 The Contraband Trade: A Force for Development

The main industry, not only in terms of generating wealth but also in terms of wider impact, was the contraband trade. The trade was enabled by the Mosquito Coast's geographical position; it was accessible for Spanish traders and the indigenous intermediaries, while being defensible enough to deter Spanish efforts to remove it.[29] It also suited the structures of small British settlements as it required little initial development, unlike agricultural exports. Contraband fuelled the coast's development, had a major impact on the development of Spanish Central America and altered the relationship with the Miskito through enabling interactions between all three powers.

While the Coast was not originally settled to trade contraband, by the eighteenth century this was considered by many to be its principal purpose. British colonial officials recognised the potential and recommended an expansion of the trade. In 1743, Governor Trelawney, in one of his correspondences to the Board of Trade, attached 'an account of a road that has been opened from Black River on the Mosquito shore backwards into the country which many sensible men imagine will be a means of carrying on a beneficial commerce with the Spaniards of Nicaragua and Guatemala'.[30] It was also considered that the economic benefits of the trade could extend beyond the Mosquito Coast to Jamaica. In 1765, Lieutenant Joseph Smith Speer argued for the development of the contraband trade, focusing on the economic damage that could be done to Spain: 'The

[29] Hodgson to Edward Trelawny, 1744, TNA, CO 137/48.

[30] Trelawny to the Board of Trade, 19 December 1743, TNA, CO 137/48/89.

vast and advantageous trade would be felt in England and North America. They could draw off money and the most valuable produce from the main Spanish colonies Mexico, Peru, Chile, Panama and principal inland towns.'[31] Edward Long echoed these sentiments in 1774, but emphasised the benefits to the regional level, pushing for a 'well-regulated and extensive inland trade'. He argued that it 'would highly benefit the commercial towns of this island [Jamaica], and of course augment its population and wealth'.[32] The potential and varied value of the contraband trade was not lost on British officials, who argued for its expansion to strengthen and enrich the British presence in the Caribbean, as a response to potential British weakness, or to build strength to strike at Spain.

Despite this attention from officials, it was the settlers on the Mosquito Coast who contributed most to its expansion on the British side. The residents of the coast invested in the contraband trade, establishing infrastructure and formalising connections. After the founding of Black River, Spanish officials learnt of the presence of a contraband trade fair in 1743.[33] This suggests not only a sophisticated method of trading goods, but also the presence of a variety of vendors and customers. This system of contraband trade had developed and clearly received significant investment as, by 1746, Spanish contraband traders were known to use a path that had been cut through the jungle likely with the help of indigenous groups.[34] The contraband trade was a dynamic industry that

[31] Description of the Bay of Honduras and the Mosquito Shore, 1765, TNA, ADM 7/837.

[32] Long, *The History of Jamaica, new edition vol.1*, p.321.

[33] Testimonio de autos y la consulta de que es duplicado el adjunto sobre el estado en que se hallan los sambos mosquitos que infestan algunas de estas provincias, 10 May 1737, AGI Guatemala 302.

[34] Del que conta en esta real caja… de las ocho cargas de ropa de ilícito comercio en el partido de Olancho, Carta de oficiales de Comayagua, 18 August 1746, AGI Guatemala 350.

the settlers actively participated and invested in, giving them influence through the impacts of contraband.

The contraband trade also influenced the British Empire and was not necessarily seen as a complete boon; Speer, who had seen the potential of the trade, was aware of some of its negative repercussions. His account also provides a good insight into how individuals entered the contraband trade:

> When others of a different stamp chose to sink or cast away in some convenient place the vessel they were entrusted with and convert the cargo to the use of themselves and associates which qualified and set them up for Baymen ever afterwards. This practice for a while succeeding, encouraged others of the same stamp to get for considerable cargoes under pretence of selling them on commission for their creditors … This by degrees brought greater quantities of European goods to this place than the inhabitants had occasion for, which induced them to open an inland trade with the neighbouring Spaniards, who readily embraced the opportunity of this illicit trade, which has ever since been carried on and sometime especially since there have been some of a different stamp.[35]

Speer claimed that these practices were damaging to merchants in both Jamaica and North America. Interestingly, he makes a distinction between the ages of the smugglers, criticising only the newer smugglers while claiming the original settlers apparently lived

[35] Description of the Bay of Honduras and the Mosquito Shore, 1765, TNA, ADM 7/837.

'in some degree of tolerable decency'.[36] Other methods for individuals setting themselves up as contraband traders are not well detailed. Considering the Mosquito Coast's long history of harbouring any (non-Spanish) ship and the relative lack of official presence for most of the eighteenth century, it could not have been difficult for any enterprising merchant to trade with those already established on the coast.[37]

While the contraband trade was very much created and maintained by the British and indigenous residents of the Mosquito Coast, multiple actors in Jamaica were involved. Through these connections Jamaica was tied closely to events on the coast. While Jamaica focused on sugar there were merchants that dealt, at least partially, in contraband. As early as 1757, but also likely earlier, the Mosquito Coast residents are described as 'having nine vessels that are continually going to Jamaica'.[38] Jamaicans themselves also furnished ships to trade with the Mosquito Coast, with Edward Long describing 'several small vessels belonging to Jamaica' as trading with the coast.[39] The regional level was directly entangled in opportunities created and maintained by the borderland.

In addition to private economic ventures, actions by the Jamaican government, especially the Governor, improved the trade. The establishment of the superintendence on the coast indirectly assisted the contraband trade, as it brought a degree of stability that reduced the dangers of trading illegally. Additionally, Governor Trelawney, while

[36] Ibid.

[37] Several accounts refer to ships from as far as North America making the trip to trade with the Mosquito Coast, as well as the presence of Dutch traders at certain times. See Long, *The History of Jamaica*, pp.319, 327.

[38] UCL Special Collections, MS ADD 191, p.18.

[39] Long, *The History of Jamaica,* p.318.

pursuing his own anti-Spanish policy, had requested Robert Hodgson, the first superintendent, to examine the merit of expanding the contraband trade from Black River.[40] Hodgson's response reports on efforts to create a road and contraband trade post at Trujillo, which became a major contraband centre. Trelawney hoped contraband would give Britain access to the resources of the Spanish mainland, which 'the Dutch and French could not share'.[41] Although keeping foreign traders out of the contraband trade proved to be largely impossible, and later Governors were known to have been less supportive of the coastal settlers, Jamaica remained pivotal. It provided another avenue for contraband to enter and leave the coast and ensured that Jamaica was connected to events in the borderland, giving the trade an image of imperial backing.

The contraband trade required the assistance of the indigenous groups described earlier, but also both imperial sides to be complicit, and this required Spanish involvement. Officially, the contraband trade was seen as a threat to the Kingdom of Guatemala's economy, as it competed with the monopolistic trade system created and defended by Guatemala's elite merchants. Widespread participation in the contraband trade permitted a large trade, which caused alarm and had a major impact.

The prominence of contraband is due to its sheer scale, both in terms of people involved and its geographical reach. The successful apprehension of a contraband trader, Juan de Niga, near the town of Olancho, Honduras, indicated the extent of official involvement. The intercepted contraband comprised of eight loads of clothes that required thirteen people to transport. Further investigation revealed that Juan and his twelve-year-old son

[40] As evidenced in TNA, CO137/48, Hodgson's report, 'What has been done to expand the contraband trade at Black River' to Governor Trelawny, 1744.

[41] Trelawny to the Board of Trade, 1743 TNA, CO137/48.

were due to take the goods to Tegucigalpa, where they were to be placed in a specific place, where a commissioner would sign for them, ensuring they could then be traded and an individual would be paid for them.[42] Although this is just one case, it demonstrates that a considerable number of people and investments were involved. The distance between Olancho and Tegucigalpa alone was significant; over 100 miles in a straight line. Such a trip would require provisions and would involve several rests or multiple transporters in relay, all necessitating individuals who were either complicit, unaware or receptive to bribes. The use of such paths was not limited to a single town, and other routes and locations had been known for several years. Most towns situated between the Atlantic coast and the Pacific heartlands made use of the contraband networks. As early as 1737, the major towns of San Pedro de Sula, Yoro, Olancho and Olanchillo were all known to have regular connections with the contraband trading centre in and near Trujillo.[43]

The widespread involvement extended into the upper levels of regional government. A letter from Franco de Hoves and Domingo de Arana Salazar, a pair of royal officials, written in 1748, claimed that nearly all levels of colonial government were involved in some form. They implicated the judges and president of the *audiencia*, regional Governors, treasury officials and even members of the clergy.[44] These accusations varied from incompetence, wilful negligence in implementing anti-smuggling measures

[42] Del que contar en la aprehensión y da caminó de ocho cargas de ropa de ilícito comercio. Carta de oficiales de Comayagua, 18 August 1746 AGI Guatemala 350.

[43] Testimonio de autos y la consulta de que es duplicado el adjunto sobre el estado en que se hallan los sambos mosquitos que infestan algunas de estas provincias, 10 May 1737, AGI Guatemala 302.

[44] Franco De Hoves y Domingo de Arana Salazar, Dan Cuenta de los medios que han puesto para evitar el comercio ilícito a aquellos habitadores y el aborrecimiento que por ello se les sigue, 17 April 1748, AGI Guatemala 351.

and direct conscious involvement.[45] Such a broad involvement in the contraband trade is the key reason it was so profitable and hard to remove, as those involved defended their mutual interests and could tap a large network for transport and acquisition of goods. It also tied the individuals into a global market, allowing them to be influenced indirectly by the British.

Despite this widespread acceptance of the contraband trade, it was opposed by parts of the Spanish Empire. Some of the nearest opponents of the trade were the merchants and other elites of Guatemala City, who saw the contraband trade as a drain on their profits.[46] It's staunchest opponent was the imperial government in Madrid as the contraband trade contributed to the already low tax revenues from the Kingdom of Guatemala; as one Spanish official claimed, 'S.M. haya tomado de presente nuevas meditas que promuevan, y faciliten la total ruina de este Comercio Extranjero develando enteramente de él, y de su raíz a los que le hacen'.[47] The exact cost to the Spanish and Guatemalan governments is unclear, as the revenue of the contraband trade was not accurately recorded. However, references in government correspondence imply its importance to Spanish policy. Letters, reports and other writings written by investigators that mention the contraband trade often noted the loss in revenue.[48] This created a point of agreement in the occasionally antagonistic relationship between the

[45] Franco De Hoves y Domingo de Arana Salazar, Dan Cuenta de los medios que han puesto para evitar el comercio ilícito a aquellos habitadores y el aborrecimiento que por ello se les sigue, 17 April 1748, AGI Guatemala 351; Potthast-Jutkeit, 'Centroamérica y el Contrabando por la Costa de Mosquitos', pp.512-513.

[46]Honduras Británico. Colonias Inglesas, Medidas para expulsar a los ingleses, 1752, AGS SGU 6799,41.

[47] Proyecto para impedir el establecimiento de ingleses en la costa de Honduras, 1752, SGU, LEG, 6799, 33.

[48] Expediente sobre hostilidades y exterminio de los indios zambos y mosquitos, así como de los ingleses en Roatán, AGI Guatemala 302; Comercio ilícito de Comayagua, Guatemala 349, 350, 351.

governments of Guatemala and Madrid.[49] Opposition to the trade could also be found in the lower branches of the administration. Hodgson noted that, despite the assistance of Spaniards, they still had to find ways to prevent smugglers being accosted by Spanish treasury officers, suggesting that there was significant opposition.[50] Although acceptance of contraband was widespread, it was not fully condoned by the Spanish, exacerbating divisions as an indirect result of British influence.

The existence of the contraband trade was well known, and attempts were made to curb it and punish those who were involved.[51] These efforts were often the main actions the regional and metropolitan levels took regarding the borderland. It did not appear to be an impossible task, as not all colonial officials acquiesced to the trade. The British themselves were wary of expanding the contraband trade. They could only use certain areas to trade if Spanish royal officials agreed to allow it, suggesting there were officials who would stop smugglers if caught in the act.[52] However, when the government in Spain did take measures to prevent it, they were very unsuccessful, the scale of those involved made it very difficult to police. A commission sent in 1744 attempted to establish the exact value of the trade and end it through rigorous control. The result was a tremendous failure; the only arrested individual, Governor Hermendiglio de Arana, was eventually acquitted as no one wished to testify against him and the investigators became 'the most hated people in Honduras'.[53] Another measure implemented to try to

[49] Miles Wortman, 'Bourbon Reforms in Central America: 1750-1786', *The Americas*, 32 (1975), pp.225-226.

[50] Hodgson to Edward Trelawny, 1744 TNA, CO 137/48.

[51] Potthast-Jutkeit, 'Centroamérica y el Contraband', pp. 510-511.

[52] Hodgson to Edward Trelawny, 1744, TNA, CO 137/48.

[53] Potthast-Jutkeit, 'Centroamérica y el Contraband', p.511.

curtail the trade was to impose fines on those employed in the government who were suspected of being involved in the trade.[54] This was done when removing them from office was not possible or desired, possibly because of lack of evidence or the individual's value as an administrator. It seems that it was a measure that was implemented to try to recoup the financial loss that contraband inflicted on the crown, at least until a more permanent solution could be found.[55] Despite will from the metropolitan government and officials in the Kingdom of Guatemala, contraband seemed impossible to curb in a significant way as long as individuals in the local level continued to support it. The metropolitan and regional levels were unable to remove the practice so long as the Spanish Empire was deeply entangled with the British.

One of the most prominent examples of contraband's importance and diverse impact was the settlement at Trujillo, which became an important location for mediating social contacts and the contraband trade. The town and a few surrounding villages were situated on the north coast of Honduras; it was the closest town to Black River and was only nominally under Spanish control. Its remote location left it out of the reach of Spanish colonial Governors and limited its threat to Black River.[56] Trujillo had a small permanent population that lived in scattered and unmapped settlements; this limited the local support officials could call on and the distance made it difficult to send either troops or tax inspectors from elsewhere on a regular basis.[57] This made it an ideal

[54] Guerra Gutiérrez, Testimonio del… Don Pedro Joll Comandante Interino que fue de Omoa Sobre complicidad en el trato Ilícito y mal vejaciones de real hacienda, 19 January 1779, AGI Guatemala 855.

[55] Consulta de la Junta sobre la evacuación de Rio Tinto e ingleses y otros puntos la componía, March 1754 AGS SGU 6799, 65.

[56] TNA, Colonial Office, CO 137/48, An account of what has been done at Black River on the Moskito shore towards settling a commerce with the inhabitants of Guatemala, 19 December 1743.

[57] Mack, 'Contraband Trade through Trujillo', p.48.

location for contraband trading and it soon expanded to take the form of full blown trade fairs attended by both Spanish and British traders.[58] Spanish observers reported that residents spoke English from a young age, suggesting close connections between residents of the two empires. This close relationship manifested in other ways, with direct trade without the need for intermediaries and when Trujillo's residents provided materials for the British to build a fort on the nearby island of Roatán.[59] When a settlement was fully outside the reach of the regional and metropolitan levels, the residents of the borderlands were able to create important connections across borders using the contraband trade as a basis.

The contraband trade can be seen as the underpinning factor that maintained the various networks that crossed the Mosquito Coast and imperial boundaries. It provided the impetus for the British to settle on the Mosquito Coast, a source of revenue for indigenous groups as well as the motivation for Spain to exert pressure on what was a marginal territory in its empire. A more direct impact was that it provided an alternative economic system in Central America and an alternative occupation from planting for the British Caribbean. It connected the economies of two empires and created opportunities for the British, Miskito and Spanish. The efforts to expand or curtail this trade, and their effects, are a result of this interaction facilitated by the entanglement of economic systems in the borderland.

[58] Mack, 'Contraband Trade through Trujillo', p.48.

[59] Testimonio de las oficiales reales de las cajas de provincia de Honduras sobre la averiguación del trato ilícito con enemigos ingleses de la real corona por el puerto de Trujillo, septiembre 1745, Seville, AGI Guatemala 349.

3.4 The Permanent Threat of War: Maintaining Security

As amicable as relations had to be for a contraband trade network to exist, the ongoing hostility between Britain, the Miskito and Spain over the course of the eighteenth century made life on the Mosquito Coast dangerous and uncertain. While, for the European inhabitants of the borderland, the needs of security were already complex, the pressures from Jamaica, Guatemala and the Miskito added further difficulties. Security was always at the forefront of the Miskito's concerns and underpinned many of their actions.

3.4.1 The Problems of Maintaining Security

The British settlers were deeply concerned about their security due to their marginal position, small population and proximity to the Spanish Empire. The British settlers' preferred form of securing themselves would have been to build fortifications manned by regular British troops. When this was not possible, they instead turned to trying to maintain peace with the Spanish, while hiding behind their Miskito allies who also saw the Spanish as a threat. The British tried to ensure the contraband trade could be carried out with minimal risk, balancing having enough security to be safe from reprisal but not having so much that they attracted too much attention. This tension is best exemplified by the requested removal of troops in 1750; the British settlers were concerned that the small number of disease-ridden troops would goad the Spanish into action.[60] The most important part that the British inhabitants played in this respect was tempering the actions of the Miskito. The British predilection for giving the Miskito gifts helped

[60] Sorsby, 'The British Superintendency of the Mosquito Shore 1749-1787', p.64.

reduce raids in peacetime.[61] William Pitt also allegedly played a significant personal role in curtailing Miskito raids, as it was claimed he had 'greatly softened their barbarous spirit through humane remonstrances'.[62] To what extent this is true is debateable, but his good rapport with the Miskito is likely due to the respect gained as the main distributor of gifts prior to the arrival of the superintendent. It was also in the British interest to try to limit Miskito aggression as it was harmful to the contraband trade. Both the Spanish and other indigenous groups, such as the Picaro and Pawyer, with whom the Europeans traded, were frequently raided by the Miskito to the point where many were driven away from the trade.[63] These efforts did seem to yield some results, as Spanish reports of raids from the Miskito do seem to decrease after 1732, though they were not enough to completely convince the Miskito to cease raiding.[64] Regardless of their actions, Spanish officials consistently believed that the British were responsible for provoking the Miskito raids. This was contrary to the stance held by many on the coast who sought to minimise conflict with the Spanish, and who were more likely to try restraining the Miskito than provoke them, at least in peacetime.

This conciliatory British stance towards the Spanish extended to individuals who found themselves on the coast. On several occasions, the settlers at Black River sheltered shipwrecked Spanish sailors before assisting them in returning to Spanish territory, free from Miskito harassment. Such actions also occurred when the Spanish were at Black River for less benign reasons, such as when Diego Alvarado was sent to demand that

[61] Description of the Bay of Honduras and the Mosquito Shore, 1765 TNA, ADM 7/837.

[62] Long, *The History of Jamaica*, p.317.

[63] Description of the Bay of Honduras and the Mosquito Shore, 1765 TNA, ADM 7/837.

[64] Helms, 'Miskito Slaving and Culture Contact', p.184.

the British tear down their fortifications. Alvarado and his men were almost killed, only to be saved by Pitt, who hid them in his house until they could sneak out of the settlement.[65] Pitt was further lauded for his entreaties with the Miskito; Edward Long claimed he 'exerted himself in rescuing a number of the Spaniards from execution, and often prevailed on the Indians to accept a ransom for a part of their number'.[66] Pitt's friendliness towards the Spanish is probably best exemplified by his marriage to the Spanish woman Elisabeth Santa Clara, who bore him four children.[67] Other records indicate that several Spanish deserters moved to the shore and surrendered military information willingly, suggesting that it was not unknown for Spanish residents to settle on the coast.[68] These interactions suggest that the British inhabitants were not necessarily hostile towards the Spanish, and in fact would support them against the pressures of their official Miskito allies; there appeared to be a bond based on a shared European, or at least non-indigenous, heritage.

There was an aspect of cooperation between the Spanish and the British on the Mosquito Coast. One piece of evidence of this, it can be argued, is simple demographics. The British and the Miskito were heavily outnumbered by the Spanish population of Central America. If the British presence on the coast had been a greater threat, or more hostile, it would suggest that a much larger mobilisation of Spanish troops should have occurred, but this failed to happen. Troops did not appear even in the

[65] White, *The Case of His Majesty's Subjects having Property in and Lately on established upon the Mosquito Shore*, pp.5-6.

[66] Long, *The History of Jamaica*, p. 317.

[67] Will of William Pitt, Gentleman of Black River on the Mosquito Shore, North America, 12 October 1776, TNA Records of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, 11/1024/93.

[68] Edward Trelawny to the Board of Trade, 19 December 1743, TNA, CO 137/48.

face of frequent Miskito raids on Spanish settlements.[69] These trends indicate that the Europeans who lived on or close to the Mosquito Coast cooperated on numerous issues, or at least tried to foster an atmosphere of amicability, one that was persistently disrupted by the Miskito, who benefitted from the disruption.

3.4.2 The Effect of Motivating War

At the metropolitan and regional levels, the British and the Spanish only had vague information about their opponent's presence on the Mosquito Coast and the surrounding territories, though both knew of the importance of the Miskito. Despite this, both sides saw the region as a prime spot for military action, regardless of what was actually there; for the British it was a potential base to attack the Spanish Empire, and Spanish military action aimed to remove this threat. These proposals led to the creation of numerous plans or ideas, which, although not always implemented fully, laid the groundwork for later developments or caused interactions in the borderland.

The Spanish especially saw the region as a disproportionately large threat as it was the only British possession on the American mainland south of the North American colonies and was backed by one of many indigenous groups that resisted on the edges of their empire.[70]The British presence was considered to be not only a grave insult, but also dangerous due to its proximity to key Spanish shipping routes, reminiscent of the raids undertaken during the height of piracy.[71] It also directly threatened Guatemala's

[69] Consulta de la Junta sobre la evacuación de Rio Tinto e ingleses y otros puntos la componía, March 1754, SGU, LEG, 6799 65.

[70] Until the capture of Demerara (later British Guiana) in 1796. See Weber, *Bárbaros* for a discussion on wider Spanish issues with independent indigenous groups.

[71] Corso. Colonias inglesas, Consulta de la Junta sobre la evacuación de Rio Tinto e ingleses y otros puntos la componía, March 1754, SGU, LEG, 6799 65.

only Caribbean deep-water port, Santo Tomás, as it was close to Black River.[72] This threat, alongside Miskito raids, was felt by the metropolitan and regional levels of the Spanish Empire. The settlers at Black River did not seem to aspire for territorial expansion and indeed gave little indication that they would actively try to attack Spanish ships or the port itself.[73] The Spanish presence in the area was a significant deterrent; the *guardacostas*, while not being able to completely stop contraband trading, still seemed very capable of harassing and capturing the settlers' ships. This is likely as the ships owned by the Mosquito Coast settlers are always described as trading vessels, and the *guardacosta* ships are typically described as being heavily armed.[74] In official correspondence, Guatemalan officials seemed to share Madrid's vexation with Black River, seeing it as an impingement on sovereignty and encouraging the Miskito to raid Spanish settlements, although in reality encouragement was only given to the Miskito in times of war.[75] The support of Guatemalan elites towards expeditions certainly seemed extensive. They involved not only the captain general and Governor of Guatemala, but also the Governors of Nicaragua and Costa Rica, as well as the mobilisation of resources from New Spain and even Havana.[76] The scale of the operation suggests a

[72] Medidas para expulsar a los ingleses, 1752, AGS SGU, LEG, 6799, 41.

[73] Documents written by Black River's inhabitants do not often mention military matters; and when they do it is only ever regarding defence.

[74] An account comprising the mosquito shore, 1757 MS ADD 191; Description of the Bay of Honduras and the Mosquito Shore, 1765 TNA ADM 7/837; Robert White, for mentions of British trading vessels; An act for raising the sum of money for delaying the expenses of sending an express to Jamaica to acquaint the governor and admiral of the late act of hostility and other purposes, passed 30 May 1776 BARS, Mosquito Shore Records 1776-1787; For a description of Guardacosta Ships see Recorded by desire of William Reed Esquire, 29 April 1778, Mosquito coast Papers 1773–1780 BARS.

[75] Admiralty to Archibald Campbell, 1782, TNA, CO 137/82.

[76] 'Pues desde la Habana y cuba es muy fácil de todo al golfo dulce y nada difícil el que vaya una buena porción de tropa y milicias de aquella isla para auxiliar la expedición', 1752 AGS SGU, LEG, 6799, 41.

significant desire across several levels of Spanish colonial government to remove the British.

The symbolic presence of the Mosquito Coast settlements should not be underestimated. Black River represented the most direct challenge to Spanish claims over the entire American mainland. Much of the language used in Spanish correspondence referred to the British establishments on the coast as an insult, as they occupied the region without the king's permission and in violation of several treaties. Spanish colonial officials argued that 'ingleses en la costa de Honduras, pues es tan clara, y tan notoria la infracción de los tratados en haberse introducido en aquellos territorios, y quererse mantener en ellos, intentando la corte británica sostener, y defender una ocupación, y detentación tan injusta'.[77] Its status was under threat, as a result of Spain's gradual decline in the face of the rise of Britain and France.[78] Thus, Black River was a problem for the Spanish government in Madrid. The British presence on the Mosquito Coast was a direct challenge to the sovereignty Spain claimed over the entirety of Central America.

For the British who lived on the coast, and for the government in London, the coast was not seen as a particularly good point from which to launch an invasion. The residents of the coast lacked the resources for a large-scale invasion and, in terms of global strategy, London preferred other, more immediately valuable targets such as the sugar islands or territories in North America. At the regional level, however, several commentators extolled the coast as the prime launch base to strike at Spain. Accompanying Speer's detailed account of the coast is a fanciful plan with the aim of eventually seizing the

[77] Consulta de la Junta sobre la evacuación de Rio Tinto, March 1754, AGS SGU, LEG, 6799, 65.

[78] The decline is well documented in several works, see: Lynch, *Bourbon Spain*; Elliot, *Empires of the Atlantic World*.

entire Central American isthmus through the placement of, among other things, strategic factories.[79] His idea was that they could simply crush Spanish economic presence, drawing the inhabitants to the British. This echoed the sentiments of Trelawney, the Jamaican Governor. He proposed ambitious plans to destroy the Spanish Empire from within using creole and indigenous rebellions, of which he thought the Miskito would play an essential role.[80] There was a significant difference in the perceived strategic and geopolitical value of the Mosquito Coast between the regional and metropolitan levels of administration, as Jamaica pursued a sub-imperial expansion.

Security was a major concern for the inhabitants of the coast. The British and Spanish Empires were generally hostile, fighting each other in numerous wars across the eighteenth century such as the War of the Quadruple Alliance, the War of Spanish Succession and the Seven Years War; the fear of military action was constant, especially for the British. The Miskito's pursuit of their own goals could also threaten any peace between the European powers. These local concerns were complicated by the entanglements with the metropolitan and regional levels. Jamaica and London ultimately dictated the level of security available to the British settlements, necessitating negotiations. Those on the local level also wanted to avoid too much security as it would attract attention from Madrid and Guatemala. The need to consider the outside levels when solving local issues illustrates the entangled nature of the borderlands and the role of the three main groups in fostering the tense situation. Ultimately, the inhabitants of the region failed to avoid the attention of the Spanish, who began concerted efforts to remove the British permanently.

[79] Description of the Bay of Honduras and the Mosquito Shore, 1765, TNA, ADM 7/837.

[80] Metcalf, *Royal Government and Political Conflict in Jamaica 1729-1783*, pp.65-66.

3.5 The Spanish Military Offensive against the Mosquito Coast

The Spanish used other methods to try removing the British before carrying out the military offensive that finally succeeded, but with diplomacy having been seen to fail by 1763, the next period would be spent on military preparation. Attempts early in the century had proven largely unsuccessful, as an attempt to avenge Miskito raids in 1709 showed; the Spanish force had been ambushed and killed to a man by the Miskito.[81]Another approach was to win the support of the Miskito, thereby securing the region, but these attempts were also unsuccessful.[82] These reflect methods similar to those used during the conquest, admittedly brought about more by necessity due to limited resources. Attempting to use small numbers of troops to intimidate and take control of an area, or entreating select regional elites, would not have appeared out of place almost 200 years earlier. The realities of the eighteenth century and staunch Miskito resistance, however, made these methods considerably less effective and encouraged the large-scale offensive in 1782. Having committed to a large-scale offensive, Spanish plans were still disrupted by the British and the Miskito.

Spanish planning had to accommodate ongoing developments on the coast. The perception of Black River as the centre of British power and chief Miskito agitator on the coast gave the settlements a menacing form of legitimacy in Spanish eyes, and it became the focus of the Spanish offensive.[83] Correspondence that addressed the attempts to drive out the British specifically mentioned Black River, before mentioning

[81], A narrative of the Mosquito shore, 1757 MS ADD 191.

[82] Expediente sobre la obediencia hecha a su majestad, por Aníbal Mestizo, Gobernador Mosquito, 21 May 1722, AGI Guatemala 301.

[83] Consulta de la Junta sobre la evacuación de Rio Tinto e ingleses y otros puntos la componía, March 1754, AGS SGU, LEG, 6799, 65.

'other places in Honduras in which they had settled'. The only other named location that appears to receive as much attention is the Island of Roatán.[84] Even then it was often referred to in conjunction with operations to capture Black River. Black River was crucial to the borderland as it held most of the British population, many of their industries and was the administrative centre; holding all records and the residence of the superintendent. In their efforts to develop their settlements, the inhabitants had attracted Spanish attention and what was once a secure location had become the main target.

Removing the British remained the principal aim as it was believed it would be easier to ally with the Miskito afterwards; how to achieve it changed over the century, reflecting ongoing developments in the region. Until the middle of the century, it seems that the intention was to destroy the British settlements completely. They had the intention to 'tear down their fortifications and houses', as well as expelling the inhabitants permanently from the coast.[85] Their goals changed in the latter half of the century as the settlement's value and the necessity of maintaining some form of agreement with the Miskito after the British departed became apparent.[86] With this change in long-term planning, the Spanish turned to capturing the settlements rather than destroying them. Such a change demonstrated the development and implicit legitimacy of the settlement; the controversy surrounding it was now about its ownership, rather than its existence. This was most evident when the Spanish offered to incorporate the settlements into the Spanish Empire. The settlers were twice offered official and legal residence on the

[84] It is mentioned in several reports, as well having its own report, Expediente sobre hostilidades y exterminio de los Indios Zambos, Mosquitos e ingleses en Roatán, AGI, Guatemala, 303, 1755.

[85] Medidas para expulsar a los ingleses establecidos en Rio Tinto, 1752, AGS SGU, LEG, 6799, 41.

[86] Caroline Williams,'Living Between Empires: Diplomacy and Politics in the Late Eighteenth-Century Mosquitia', *The Americas,* 70:2 (2013), pp.243-245. Weber, *Bárbaros,* p.230.

coast, on the condition that they swore allegiance to Spain. This shift, from destruction to assimilation, represents an acknowledgement of the people's right to live there if they were on the correct side, or at least the value of retaining the population. These offers were met with angry reactions from the British and the Miskito. Speer describes one such reaction: 'By demanding ownership of Black River allowing the inhabitants to stay under the authority of the king of Spain … Indians almost killed the messengers. Very angry that anyone should demand their country.'[87] Developments on the coast had created an image of legitimacy that convinced the Spanish to seek their acquisition as opposed to their destruction.

To achieve any kind of success, the Spanish assumed they would need military superiority. A general shift to a military solution happened around 1730, but detailed planning for a large-scale military expedition did not start until 1752. The expedition launched in 1782 managed to capture Black River temporarily. Reasons for the delay include mishaps in the planning stages, the difficulty in coordinating such widespread resources in an area with poor or non-existent transport links and sometimes pre-emptive attacks by the British and their Miskito allies.[88]

Therefore, from 1732 to 1782, Spanish attention in the region was devoted to establishing the means required to eject the British as well as curtailing their influence. This required a large investment not only militarily, but also in infrastructure. These reforms prompted a variety of measures designed to limit British and Miskito influence through non-military means. In the Kingdom of Guatemala, many of the Bourbon

[87] Description of the Bay of Honduras and the Mosquito Shore, 1765, TNA, ADM 7/837.

[88] For detail on these incidents see Floyd, *The Anglo Spanish Struggle for Mosquitia* and Sorsby, 'The British Superintendence'.

reforms, aimed at strengthening the empire, focused on the threat from the coast. The strategy employed was to reinforce the defences that ran along the centre of the isthmus, while passing military and some fiscal reform.[89] The reorganisation of administrative boundaries and implementation of urban-style government in rural areas focused on improving tax receipts as well as providing more recruits for the militia.[90] It was also hoped that, through the extension of royal power, officials would have fewer ties to local interests, which included contraband. These efforts served to solidify the boundary between Spanish- and British-held territory, with the aim of limiting British penetration. More obvious defences were also reinforced, as the new works created at Fort Inmaculada show.[91] Similarly, attempts were made by missionaries to convert the indigenous groups that lived in the borderland. The aim was to deprive the British, and the Miskito, of allies and a link in the contraband network. This proved to be impossible; the funds for such missions were limited. The Miskito raided and destroyed the missions that did emerge, driving the missionaries back to safe lands and the indigenous groups to sanctuaries in the mountains and deep jungles.[92] These varied Spanish responses demonstrate initiatives taken in the Kingdom of Guatemala and the Mosquito Coast in response to the British presence. Although they were not wholly successful in their aims, they prompted developments in the region and laid the groundwork for the final Spanish success in the region.

[89] The reforms are well documented in Mahoney, *Colonialism and Postcolonial Development*, pp.111-195; and Wortman, *Government and Society in Central America*, pp.120-183.

[90] Dym, *From Sovereign Villages to National States*, p.40.

[91] See Appendix 30.

[92] Floyd, *The Anglo Spanish Struggle for Mosquitia*, pp.100-101.

Ultimately, Spanish success was delivered by the long-planned military expedition launched in 1782. Much of this was based on a report that Luis Diez Navarro, a military engineer, made regarding the defence of the Kingdom of Guatemala. He agreed that the British were a threat and advocated for the construction of a fort. He recommended the bay at Omoa as a site and construction began in 1748, as did planning for the expedition. Fort San Fernando de Omoa was finished in 1775 and firmly established the Spanish on the coast. The construction was meticulously planned, not only was the fort the largest in Central America but a smaller temporary fort was constructed for a garrison to protect the labourers. Extensive maps were also made of the area surrounding the fort and a smaller battery was built nearby.[93] Speer commented during construction that the fort at Omoa could destroy the logwood trade in Belize, threaten the bay islands and put Black River within striking distance, while also providing security for Spanish forces.[94] The construction of such a large fort created a town that still exists today. It marks the considerable impact the borderland had on the development of the region as the new settlement of Omoa would prove essential to the Spanish offensive.

However, while the Spanish reorganised, the established networks adapted and expanded. Most importantly, the contraband trade remained intact in some form and was a perennial problem for the Spanish. A prominent example that demonstrates the resilience and adaptability of the trade is Don Pedro Joll the commander of Fort Omoa. In 1776, one year after the fort was completed, he was accused of trading contraband. As the case progressed, the amount of contraband known to be moving through Omoa

[93] Various plans for Omoa can be seen in appendices 17-28.

[94] Description of the Bay of Honduras and the Mosquito Shore, 1765, TNA, ADM 7/837.

proved to be substantial, having expanded to include items such as wine, aguardiente, coffee, biscuits and rose water.[95] It had also retained its robust structures and connections, possibly even expanding them. A system of boats and meeting points had emerged around Omoa in order to facilitate the movement of goods, and establishment of client networks to dodge royal officials.[96] While this does suggest the contraband trade was as profitable as ever, the fact that it was recorded by the Spanish implies it cannot have been completely secret. The Spanish took steps to reduce and curtail it as a part of their efforts to remove the British. Pedro Joll was fined but ultimately kept his command and the knowledge of routes and places used for contraband made it easier to stop.[97] It showed that even newer developments explicitly designed to destroy the entangled connections between empires were quickly drawn into them, proving how enduring and resilient the connections could be.

The expedition to capture Black River was launched in 1782 and, although it did not achieve its principal aim, it ultimately resulted in the end of a formal British presence. The Spanish expedition started successfully with the resettlement of Trujillo and was quickly followed by the capture of Black River. However, the Spanish were not able to retain control of the settlement for long and surrendered to the regrouped British forces led by Captain John Campbell and Colonel Despard. Historians have attributed the rapid Spanish surrender to casualties caused by disease.[98] The British, having reclaimed Black

[95] Carta de inglés a Joseph Orbuna, 1776, AGI Guatemala 855.

[96] Testimonio de las diligencias instruidas por Don Pedro Joll sobre el arribo de una balandra inglesa a puerto caballos, y trato ilícito de los vecinos de San pedro Sula 1776, AGI Guatemala 855.

[97] Como Parece y así lo he mandado excepto la reintegración del empleo por la diversa constitución que hoy tiene la comandante de Omoa, Don Antonio Ventra de Taranco, 1779, AGI Guatemala 855.

[98] Dawson, 'William Pitt's Settlement at Black River', p.701.

River, allowed the Spanish to leave the settlement unhindered, surrendering only their weapons and their two standards.[99]

The rapid Spanish capture of Black River undermined the confidence in the settlement's security. Spanish forces overcame the isolation, difficult terrain and natural defences that had previously kept large forces away from the Honduran coast. The Miskito failed to defend the settlement, either by lack of motivation or simply not having the capacity to organise quickly enough. This failure was more significant due to the fact that the superintendent had been given permission to exceed his regular gift budget for the Miskito to secure the Miskito alliance by any means necessary.[100] Regardless, failure confirmed what the settlers at Black River had asserted: that, as useful as the Miskito friendship was in order for security to be maintained, the settlement needed a constant English military presence backed by Jamaica. The settlers claimed that, when it came to the Spanish driving them from the coast, 'they have the greater prospect of succeeding as our [government] have resolved to give no encouragement towards the settlers of this country'.[101] The confidence in the Mosquito Coast's defences had been shattered.

If this offensive were to be an anomaly, a product of favourable Spanish circumstances that occurred by chance, it could be dismissed, especially as Black River had been retaken. The British, however, had failed to drive the Spanish from Trujillo and with a new forward base closer to Black River, and Fort Omoa still present, the security of the

[99] Defence Report to Governor Campbell, 1782, CO 137/82.

[100] Ibid.

[101] Copy of a letter from the committee of correspondence to Robert White, dated 28 August 1786 Mosquito Coast Papers 1776-1787 BARS.

settlement and its contraband trade seemed compromised.[102] As a result, in the ensuing peace treaty, the British rescinded all their claims to the Mosquito Coast in return for peace and concessions elsewhere; this included a guarantee that the Miskito would not be treated harshly.[103] Thus, although the Spanish were unable to capture the settlement themselves, they had managed to cripple it. Seizing Trujillo had brought one of the main contraband routes under tight Spanish control and ensured Black River would not be safe from land-based assaults. With both Trujillo and Omoa now under Spanish control, they could influence the indigenous groups as never before, shelter from Miskito raids and deploy patrol ships from nearby ports. All these advances were supported by the reforms across the Spanish Empire, which had significantly strengthened colonial government both financially and militarily. It was a cohesive response that had been designed to counter the threats posed by the Miskito and the British.

3.6 The British Defence of the Mosquito Coast

The British inhabitants had not been idle and were aware that the Spanish were planning to force them from the coast. With the possibility of political recognition like the limited form given to Belize in 1763, the residents of the coast sought to strengthen their claim to the region through their connections with other parts of the British Empire. It was hoped that this, on top of increasing development of the coast's industries, would convince the metropolitan government to fully support their presence. These efforts were motivated by the impending Spanish threat and were at times hampered by the

[102] Ibid.

[103] Dawson, 'William Pitt's settlement at Black River', p.706.

Miskito. Who, although keen to fend off the Spanish, continued to pursue their interests regardless of the damage they might cause to the aims of their British allies while still seeking to retain some sort of British presence.

3.6.1 Jamaican Ambivalence

As the seat of its official government, Jamaica remained an important contact for the Mosquito Coast, as the settlers sought to strengthen their connection with the island colony. While the broad aims of Jamaica's government seemed to vary depending on who was Governor, the will of private individuals to maintain connections to the coast are harder to fathom. This lack of will only seemed to be one way. The settlers at Black River were eager to strengthen their relationship with Jamaica. A single ship visited from Jamaica each year, which was claimed to be inadequate by those at Black River.[104] While the residents of the Mosquito Coast had outfitted several ships to trade as far away as North America and even London, they still pushed for this closer relationship. These expanded networks suggest that the coast was not dependent on Jamaica for economic reasons but sought to strengthen the connection to improve its security.

Jamaica had always been reluctant to invest heavily in the Mosquito Coast's defences, or at least not as keen as the settlers would have liked. Responding to concerns from the coast in 1747, aid from Jamaica consisted of a military engineer to construct fortifications, several cannon for the settlers and gifts to secure the loyalty of the Miskito.[105] This small amount of assistance was sent by Trelawney, a Governor who strongly supported the Mosquito Coast as a venture (he later supported the creation of

[104] Letter to the Right Honourable George Germain, 1777, TNA, CO 137/48.

[105] Edward Trelawny to the Board of Trade, 1747 TNA, CO 137/48.

the superintendence). It is indicative of the difficulties of securing resources for the coast that a Governor who supported the settlement sent so little. The security concerns were not limited to wartime, as shown by the regular requests for a regiment of troops.[106] The settlers sent letters saying that the lack of troops kept the colony in an 'infant state' and made the British who settled there completely dependent on the Miskito to maintain order, mainly in regard to the possibility of slave revolts, of which the settlers seemed to live in near-constant fear.[107] They lacked the coercive means of more established colonies such as Jamaica and the settlers also expressed their wish to establish a permanent naval squadron, as well as reporting a shortage of firearms.[108] In response to these fears, the Jamaican government's consistent reply was to restate its intention of sending them more gifts with which to appease the Miskito and convince them to stay on the side of the British. In fact, Governors explicitly maintained that no soldiers were to be sent to the Mosquito Coast. This reluctance to invest contributed to the brief capture of Black River in 1782 as the Miskito did not stop the Spanish. This reluctance to reinforce the coast was surprising given that it was considered 'the principal support' of Jamaica in wartime.[109] This reinforces the view from the regional level that the Mosquito Coast existed as an extension of Jamaica, rather than an independent entity, as a part of the same set of communications the British reiterate that everything should be done for the defence and security of Jamaica; no other place is

[106]Superintendent Lawrie to George Germain, 1777 TNA, CO 137/48; Joseph Speer, 1765, TNA ADM7/837.

[107] Superintendent Lawrie to the Right Honourable George Germain, 1777 TNA, CO 137/48.

[108] Ibid.

[109] Defence report to Governor Campbell, 1782 TNA, CO 137/82.

mentioned.[110] In the second half of the eighteenth century, the relationship became increasingly simple; Jamaica saw the coast solely as a part of its defences and little else. The few attempts by the coast's settlers to expand trade with the island seemed to yield few results. As a result, the local level sought to connect directly to the metropolitan level.

3.6.2 Appealing to the Metropole

The relationship between the Mosquito Coast and Jamaica had been established almost from the outset; however, the direct relationship with London was much newer. The official position of the coast within the Empire meant that London should have only influenced the coast via Jamaica, and the island did remain important. In official documents, the coast was subordinate to Jamaica through the superintendent; this was despite growing developments on the coast. In theory, this made London's connection almost non-existent as all influence was passed through Jamaica. This did not, however, prevent the coast's inhabitants from attempting to create such a connection. Several orders from London directly addressed the coast, despite Jamaica's official role as an intermediary. The Mosquito Coast thus occupied a strange position within the British Empire, one that would change in the later eighteenth century due to developments within the coast stimulating the creation of new connections.

An example of the Mosquito Coast's bizarre position in the Empire was provided by Speer during his time there in the Seven Years War. In 1763, he was ordered by Joseph Ottaway, the superintendent, to travel to the Spanish fort at Omoa in order to 'demand

[110] Ibid.

satisfactions made by the Spanish on his majesties subjects' in a peaceful manner.[111] The boat he was aboard was captured by the Spanish, who arrested him and his crew under the pretence that the ship was carrying an object that belonged to one of the local Spanish elites. He was then forced to spend five months in captivity, where he fell ill. After recovering in North America, Speer returned to Black River to find his regiment had been recalled to Jamaica, and he had been dismissed from his position with no recompense. According to his letters, he could not apply to the Governor of Jamaica for compensation as he had been relieved from his regiment. Thus, he applied directly to the Board of Trade and Plantations. The answer from the board stated that 'the affairs of the settlement in the mosketto shore have not as yet been under the direction or cognizance of this board and we are not officially informed of the nature and extent of the provisions made for the services of that establishment'.[112] This seems contradictory to a letter sent by the board of plantations, twenty years prior, which appointed Robert Hodgson as the first superintendent, and several letters sent by Jamaica also on the subject of the Mosquito Coast.[113] This placed the sole official, albeit indirectly, under the control of the British government via the Jamaican Governor, making their lack of official knowledge rather suspect. The board did recommend paying Speer the amount he requested, but claimed that they were ultimately not responsible and it was a matter solely for the Jamaican Governor.[114] This suggests that the metropolis was either

[111] Joseph Speer to the Board of Trade and Plantations, 6 March 1766, TNA, T1 /455.

[112]Secretary of State Conway transmitting copy of letter to him from Board of Trade, 1 February 1766 TNA T1 /455.

[113] The letter appointing Hodgson and the creation of the superintendence is signed by the Board of Trade and Plantations and has the king's approval. The Duke of Bedford to Robert Hodgson, 5 October 1749 TNA, T1/355.

[114] Secretary of State Conway transmitting copy of letter to him from Board of Trade, 1 February 1766, TNA T1 /455.

genuinely unaware, demonstrating the difficulty of administering such a distant and small region, alternatively it demonstrates a reluctance to administer a region if not completely necessary. These explanations reinforce the one-sided nature of the connection between London and the Mosquito Coast, as London did not intervene even in a small way; it sought to limit its entanglement in such a diplomatically sensitive area.

British residents of the Coast still reached out directly to London despite their position, sometimes with the assistance of the Miskito. One such occurrence was regarding the actions and treatment of the Miskito, who were enslaving other indigenous groups under pressure from British settlers. Jeremiah Terry described it as:

> [A] system that had been pursued of enslaving the Indians by the temptation of goods upon long credit under the prospect of discharging such debts by hunting down or surprising their fellow creatures among the surrounding tribes and delivering over the captives to their creditors as slaves at certain prices, under the risk, in case of failing in the enterprise of becoming slaves themselves or of surrendering their children to be held as slaves until their accumulated debts should be discharged.[115]

Terry then took it upon himself to try to end this practice. He achieved this by bringing representatives of the Miskito to London to appeal directly to Lord Dartmouth, then secretary of state for the colonies. This also illustrates the difficulty the Miskito

[115]Memorials and other papers concerning Jeremiah Terry's bringing over two deputies of the Mosquito Indians, 1776, TNA T1 524.

presented for recognition, as they were technically an independent people so could in theory entreat the British government in London. After some delay, the meeting happened; it led to the recall of the superintendent, although, again, London's will was exercised through Jamaica as it fell to the Governor to enforce the order.[116] The direct appeal to the metropole suggests Terry did not trust either the superintendent, whose job it was to 'cultivate a union and friendship with the Indians', or the Governor of Jamaica, to whom the superintendent was directly subordinate, to rectify this problem. Evidently, the close interests, or lack of political will at the regional level, undermined Terry's confidence in the official power structure, pushing him to bypass it using the legitimacy presented by the existence of the Miskito kingdom. The metropolis's response, however, attempted to reinforce the imperial structure by refusing to directly administer the coast, thus relying on Jamaica. There was a disconnect between the opinions and wishes of the local and metropolitan levels.

One result of Terry's influence was the recall of the superintendent, Robert Hodgson, son of the first superintendent. Not only was Hodgson junior implicated in the aforementioned slave trade, but there were also 'various complaints laid against him, both by the Indians and white people residing on the mosquito shore'.[117] Broadly speaking, the settlers of the Mosquito shore accused him of abusing his office by creating councils and laws while reserving considerable powers for himself.[118] The case

[116] Ibid.

[117] Ibid.

[118] The dispute is well covered in several pamphlets, namely: Robert Hodgson Jr., *The Defence of Robert Hodgson esq. Late Superintendent, Agent and Commander in Chief of the Mosquito Shore. Humbly addressed to the Right Honourable The lords of trade and plantations In answer to the Complaints Against him from Sundry Inhabitants of the British Settlement There* (London, 1779); and White, *To the Right Honourable The Lords of Trade and Plantations*.

was dependent on a clashing view of the role of superintendent and the exact details of his appointment. The settlers generally saw the role of superintendent to administer the Miskito and secure their allegiance. Hodgson had taken one line of his appointment, 'to establish good order amongst the inhabitants, and to promote the prosperity of the settlement', to mean that he should create some form of legislative council and govern the coast formally. Hodgson argued that the only previous establishment of law was 'an old commission for appointing a chief justice and assistant judges, which had been issued while Admiral Knowles was Governor of Jamaica and had never been put in force'.[119] The settlers took issue with this, citing that the office of superintendent was 'ministerial and political, not civil and judicial'.[120] Most importantly for the discussion of the Coast's position within the Empire was the statement from the settlers, who made two key points:

> First whatever claims or rights, relative to the Mosquito Shore, may be latently existing, his Majesty, or the government of Great Britain has at no time antecedent to the controversy, exerted any sovereign dominion or territorial jurisdiction over the Mosquito Shore.
>
> Second His majesty's subjects settled on the Mosquito Shore, have been always under the protection control and direction of his Majesty's governor of Jamaica; who established a magistracy there, consisting of

[119] Hodgson, *The Defence of Robert Hodgson*, p.22.

[120] White, *The Reply of His Majesty's Subjects*, p.16.

> justices of the peace, antecedent to the appointment or existence of any superintendent of the shore.[121]

Through this, they made a strong point in asserting the primacy of Jamaica over their affairs, as opposed to direct governance from the metropolis, which Hodgson had claimed due to his commission. This asserted the Mosquito Coast's position as an extension of Jamaica as the position of superintendent was reaffirmed as being under the Governor of Jamaica, a stance now supported by residents of the coast. Despite this, numerous letters and pamphlets demonstrated a growing regular correspondence between the coast and the metropolis.

This line of communication was maintained by representatives of the settlers who were based in London. While not an official position, such individuals did their best to exert influence and pressure the government. The most well-known was Robert White, who published several pamphlets on behalf of the settlers in the 1770s and 1780s as well as representing them in their case against Hodgson.[122] Other petitions White championed included seeking omission from a sugar tariff, preventing the settlement of convicts on the Mosquito Coast and making an appeal to prevent the removal of the British from the coast.[123] In many ways, he acted in a similar way to the infamous planter lobby of Jamaica, albeit far less powerful, showing the need for colonies to have a presence in

[121] White, *The Reply of His Majesty's Subjects*, p.15.

[122] He was involved in the publication of T1/549 as well as several other documents such as *The case of his Majesty's subjects having property in and lately established upon the mosquito shore in America* (1789).

[123] Robert White to the Board of Trade and Plantations, 1777 TNA, T1/549. Letter from the Board to Francis Hickey Esquire and others the inhabitants at Cape Gracias a Dios and Along the Southern Coast, 14 February 1786 Mosquito Coast papers 1776-1787, BARS.

the metropole.[124] He became increasingly important due to developments in the Mosquito Coast, and represented a small shift as the settlement increasingly resembled a colony.

The development of the Mosquito Coast became increasingly complex towards the end of the eighteenth century. Hodgson's dismissal affirmed the settlers' view that they were politically subjects of Jamaica, but they attached themselves to Jamaica in other ways. The tariff dispute was the result of the Mosquito Coast being classified as North American, and as a result the colonists had to pay the same duties as French sugars. The settlers and Robert White, however, claimed that, as a part of Jamaica, they should be exempt and pay the same lower duties as Jamaican sugar.[125] This subordination was technically correct, providing that the superintendent, the council and justices all acquiesced to demands made by the Jamaican Governor. It is unclear how the Governor could have enforced their will on the coast in a case of disobedience; the only example was the removal of the settlers in 1787, which was directly backed by London. The settlers' claim that the Miskito were an independent nation in which they happened to settle was harder to ignore. This technically would have made the settlers British colonial subjects who inhabited a foreign, but friendly, nation.[126] They went further and claimed that they existed in neither North nor South America. Such a state was evidently complex and demonstrates the increasing difficulty the settlers faced when

[124] Trevor Burnard, 'Powerless Masters: The Curious Decline of Jamaican Sugar Planters in the Foundational Period of British Abolitionism', *Slavery and Abolition*, 32 (2011), pp.186-188.

[125]Robert White to the Board of Trade, 1777, TNA, T1 /549.

[126]Richard Cumberland: Commissioners of Trade and Plantations believe sugar from Mosquito Coast should be exempt from extra duty and treated on par with that from Jamaica. Memorials of subjects of Mosquito Coast, independent status of Indians there, and depredations of loggers, 1779, TNA, T1 /549.

trying to maintain the benefits of their marginal position, while trying to integrate with the Empire.

The Mosquito Coast had a complex and strange position within the British Empire. It was technically subservient to the Jamaican government through the superintendent, but developed its own council and justices, which was complicated by the tacit recognition of the independent Miskito. Such institutions would suggest an independent settlement with the superintendent acting as a Governor of sorts. This was not the case, as the coast was effectively a colony of Jamaica. This system was not recognised by the inhabitants of the coast. The inhabitants voiced their grievances directly to London rather than Jamaica, making it again appear like a colony, only for London to administer the coast through Jamaica, trying to reaffirm the established structure. This was further complicated by London's lack of knowledge about the coast. The settlers also seemed unsure of their position; they claimed that London had never exerted dominion over the coast, while they appealed for the recall of the superintendent whom London had appointed. The coast was entangled between multiple levels of imperial administration, which made attempts to create formal links while preserving the advantages of the borderland exceptionally difficult. Attempts to solve these issues were hampered by the lack of clarity as to the purpose of the coast in the wider empire, but solutions were needed as the settlement could not survive under the pressure from the Miskito and the Spanish.

3.6.3: The Problems of an Unclear Imperial Role

The Mosquito Coast had other aspects that complicated its attempts to create stronger links with the British Empire; one aspect was the reputation of the region's settlers. Opinions on the Miskito seemed to play a significant role, especially as they were essential for security. They had been described as barbarous, wretched and wild, and their actions were occasionally embarrassing, although they were still considered useful for harassing the Spanish.[127] The necessity of recognising them as a nation also played a role in dissuading a large-scale commitment to the settlement by the British, given the coast's long-standing legal ambiguity. The white settlers themselves were also a factor. Although some were described as living in a wholly European fashion, others were almost entirely derided by observers from Jamaica and the navy; Speer claims they had 'many pernicious customs' that were not proper to mention in a naval report. The coast's reputation as a pirate hideout had also persisted, with Speer also claiming that many of the inhabitants had 'sufficient reasons not to expose themselves in other British dominions' and that they lived lawless and abandoned lives with impunity.[128] This kind of reputation could have profound effects on inter-imperial relations and such lawless settlements had played a significant role in the British Empire in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, and so still existed within living or popular memory.[129] The controversy with the superintendent and trading in indigenous slaves also cemented the coast's reputation as a chaotic and somewhat lawless settlement.

---

[127] Trelawny to His Majesty's Secretary of State on Robert Hodgson's expedition, 16 March 1740, TNA CO137/48.

[128] Description of the Bay of Honduras and the Mosquito Shore, 1765, TNA, ADM 7/837.

[129] For more detail see: Mark G. Hanna, *Pirate Nests and the rise of the British Empire 1570-1740* (Williamsburg, 2015).

The benefits of supporting the Mosquito Coast were also unclear. The economic or strategic value of the contraband trade was difficult to calculate, and despite the efforts of Trelawney and the Miskito, the Kingdom of Guatemala only seemed to strengthen. As early as 1753, Governor Knowles recommended returning the coast to Spain based on Britain's lack of legal claim. He also claimed that the settlement cost more than it produced, lending further credence to the notion that its economic benefit was difficult to discern.[130] It was also undoubtedly much less profitable than the sugar islands. The coast was only strategically valuable in relation to Spain. While Britain was militarily superior to Spain it was valuable; the Mosquito Coast was seen as a benefit, as a buffer for Jamaica and potentially a staging point for counter-attacks thanks to the strength of the Miskito, the British settlers were in many ways less important beyond maintaining the Miskito alliance. It was a problem when the balance was less favourable due to the provocation the inhabitants caused. The creation of the superintendence was especially problematic as it was a post empowered by the crown to administer land claimed by Spain, not just actions of a few individuals.[131]

The coast's potential as a launch point for attack, and the long-held plan of bisecting the Spanish Empire, was tested once; in 1780, the British attempted to invade Nicaragua and seize the San Juan River. Although the offensive was chiefly funded and manned by regular British troops from Jamaica, including a young Horatio Nelson, it relied on the Mosquito Coast to both provide extra men, mostly Miskito but some European, and

[130] Metcalf, *Royal Government and Political Conflict*, pp.115-116.

[131] Most evidently in Hodgson's appointment letter, where he is ordered to 'cultivate such a union and friendship with the Indians in those parts as may induce them to prefer his majesty's alliance and protection to that of any power whatever, which must be to the advantage of this nation but especially in the case of any future rupture with Spain', the Duke of Bedford to Robert Hodgson, 5 October 1749, TNA T 1/335.

keep the rear secure. The expedition was expected to be a simple affair based on the belief, supported by earlier writers, that the 'Indian' populace was ready to revolt against their Spanish rulers and that Spain was a declining power, as seen by its performance in earlier wars.[132] Despite initial successes, Fort Inmaculada stalled their progress and drained resources. More importantly, it gave the Spanish time to fortify Lake Nicaragua with 500 soldiers, a stockade, cannon and armed schooners. The British then managed to upset their Miskito allies by refusing the rights to plunder and captives, which resulted in the Miskito abandoning the expedition and stranding the British. Eventually disease, and the incoming hurricane season, forced the British expedition to retreat despite some reinforcements.[133] The Spanish quickly recaptured and rebuilt their defences, undoing all progress. This defeat, coupled with a failed attempt to capture Omoa the previous year, shattered the illusion of Spanish weakness in Central America, which was driven home by the Spanish reoccupation of Trujillo and temporary capture of Black River two years later. These events critically undermined the geopolitical value of the Mosquito Coast, as it no longer afforded an easy inexpensive way to harass the Spanish Empire. While it could still be used as a base for a larger regular force, such a role did not require a permanent British presence so long as the Miskito remained friendly.

This lack of obvious value is why the British government readily surrendered the coast. The Spanish saw it as a major threat to their empire, but its value to the British was always unclear. The Mosquito Coast was a useful territory as it could be sacrificed in

[132] Description of the Bay of Honduras and the Mosquito Shore, 1765, TNA, ADM 7/837.

[133] For a full analysis of the expedition see Matthew P. Dziennik, 'The Miskitu, Military Labour and the San Juan Expedition of 1780', *The Historical Journal,* 61:1 (2018).

diplomacy to preserve possessions of economic or strategic value. The surrendering of the coast surprised the inhabitants, who had defeated the Spanish twice during the war, but they were ultimately part of a much larger entity that saw little value in their settlements.

In the second half of the eighteenth century, the British settlements on the Mosquito Coast underwent significant developments. As its population grew and its systems of governance became more complex, it started to engage directly with London, trying to justify its existence in the face of Spanish pressure. While it became more assertive in its rights and form of organisation, it paradoxically tried to distance itself from these developments. Many of its advantages derived from its position on the borderland, and the establishment of formal structures that could represent permanent settlement, potentially eliminating many of those advantages. What they needed was greater security. The Miskito remained the main source of security and strategic benefits, while the Spanish had strengthened their military and pursued significant reform across the empire. The British Mosquito Coast had stayed largely the same. The population had expanded, and the economy had started to diversify, but in the wider context it remained a problematic semi-legal appendage of Jamaica with benefits that were difficult to measure. The costs of maintaining it had been tolerated earlier because they were low, but with Spain resurgent the costs grew to a point where the British government decided resources would be better spent elsewhere. The efforts of the settlers to advance their position did not integrate into the Empire and had inadvertently made them vulnerable to the vagaries of international diplomacy.

3.7 Conclusions: Caught between Two Empires and a Kingdom

The Mosquito Coast was of central importance to the development of Central America, as well as events and occurrences in other borderlands. The level of development and organisation of the British settlements and their relationship with the Miskito is what ultimately gave the Mosquito Coast its importance. It functioned without major support from either London or Jamaica, depending chiefly on the Miskito and the geography of the terrain to keep them safe while trading with the Spanish. Such small ventures were not a major threat to the Empire. A small contraband trade and indigenous raids on poor colonial towns were unfortunate, but other concerns in Spain's global empire were far more pressing.

In the eighteenth-century, issues emerged for Spain when these small settlements underwent major developments. These led to significant constructions of non-contraband industries and a significant rise in population; the settlements came to resemble a functioning colony alongside the development of the Miskito Kingdom, they both became very threatening. This dramatic expansion was due to the interactions between the Spanish, British and Miskito, foremost of which was the contraband trade. With the arrival of William Pitt and the founding of Black River, the contraband trade expanded dramatically. This was reinforced by the appointment of a superintendent and a degree of formal backing for the settlements from London and Jamaica. Despite this, the settlements were still largely independent and outside most formal structures of imperial governance. This suited the settlements, which were able to exploit their position to accrue wealth. This wealth was then invested into non-contraband industries, such as sugar production and refining. These industries were more reliable than

contraband trading and raised the possibility of the Mosquito coast becoming a sugar colony like Jamaica if left unchecked.

With the increase in trade, the settlers exerted increasing influence over the economy of Central America, causing the Spanish government to respond directly. The effort of the Spanish and British traders to keep contraband away from Spanish government officials was unsuccessful. After efforts to stop the trade at the local and regional levels failed, the Spanish metropolitan government decided that the removal of British settlers would be the most effective, and only, option. This placed the Mosquito Coast at the centre of a wider Anglo-Spanish struggle for dominance and prestige in America, which helped thrust the Miskito into a position of increasing importance. Lack of support from Jamaica forced the settlers to depend on the Miskito for protection. This was while they attempted to limit Miskito raids; ultimately, they could not achieve both. Although it took a long time for the inefficient colonial administration of Guatemala to gather the resources to expel the British, they did eventually achieve it. For the British, during this preparatory time, the growing settlements were becoming more difficult to fit into established imperial structures. The emergent Mosquito Coast was split between the new administrative structures they established themselves, British imperial government and their dependence on the Miskito. They ultimately failed to resolve the split, leaving them unsupported either by Britain or Jamaica and dependent on a degree of Spanish weakness, which was no longer the case. As global politics shifted, the British settlers were unable to maintain their presence just as much as the Spanish were unable to establish one. This left the Mosquito Coast under the control of those who had dominated it for the duration of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Miskito.

Thus, the Mosquito Coast's eighteenth-century history was deeply entangled between the Spanish Empire, the British Empire and the Miskito. The Spanish Empire was the greatest threat and the greatest source of wealth, acting as the strongest influence on the region. The British settlers depended on the Miskito, and partially on Jamaica, to keep Spain at bay while they profited from contraband, ultimately acting almost entirely in response to Spanish pressure. Other economic ventures were too risky and expensive to invest in without firmer backing. The key issue for the Mosquito Coast was that it was not equally important to the British and Spanish. For the British, its existence was tolerated as a geopolitical asset, but never a necessity in the way Jamaica was. For Spain, it was a grave threat to its empire and a symbol of its decline at the expense of Britain. This disparity is why Madrid and Guatemala laboured harder to remove the British settlements than London and Jamaica did to save them.

Eventually the coast found its purpose in geopolitics as a bargaining chip, exchanged for Gibraltar. This was galling for the settlers who had defeated the Spanish, but it represented its position in the British Empire. Never fully integrated, it was a buffer to preserve more valuable assets. Despite the heavy British presence, it had existed almost entirely due to the Spanish, whose influence and threat had shaped life there, providing both opportunity and boundaries for its settlers. Their constant threat helped the Miskito maintain their position as an essential military force. Their capability to protect the British meant that their allegiance was essential to physically controlling the Coast, which is why the Spanish succeeded in ultimately removing the British through diplomacy. The Miskito’s position as the main military power was left intact and the Coast remained a threat to Spain. As the greatest threat, the Mosquito Coast had also

inadvertently maintained two other borderlands within Central America: Costa Rica and Belize

Chapter 4. Belize: Economic Opportunities and Spanish Pressure

4.1 Belize: Explaining a Central American Anomaly

The area now known as Belize was the only Central American borderland in British hands at the end of the eighteenth century.[1] This was despite Spanish pressure and several military incursions, ending with their defeat at Saint George's Cay in 1798. The regular violence and military action in Belize made the Miskito an essential part of its history, despite not settling there or raiding there with regularity. Much like the Mosquito Coast, Belize was dependent on the Miskito for protection during the first two periods of the eighteenth century. This connection with the Mosquito Coast drew Belize into the wider geo-political struggles that pushed for a permanent settlement after the Treaty of Paris. The key difference between Belize and the other two areas in question was that it had tangible economic value. Like a lot of Central America, it had a contraband trade, but its key export was in logwood and, later, mahogany. The value of these woods was a constant concern for the metropolitan and regional levels of the empires and was a key aspect of the region's development.

The importance and value placed on Belize's lumber trade differentiates it from the Mosquito Coast, Costa Rica and their relation to existing borderlands literature. In Costa Rica and the Mosquito Coast, the economic value and opportunities at the local level were based on opportunities presented by trade and relations between the Miskito, British and Spanish; requiring some cooperation between the three powers. When regional and metropolitan levels threatened these relations, factions on the local level

[1] Known to eighteenth-century contemporaries as the Bay of Honduras and later as British Honduras, the area will be referred to as Belize within this chapter.

would cooperate to protect them. In contrast, the existence of the local level in Belize was largely based on the extractive industry of woodcutting. This required a degree of interaction to maintain the relatively peaceful conditions that facilitated it but was far less dependent on such interaction than trading relationships. This gave the regional and metropolitan levels a greater range of options when intervening, as well as making them more effective.

Actions taken by the three powers were characterised by attempts by the metropolitan levels trying to control Belize, while the local level focused on turning a profit. Miskito and British relations to Belize changed the most. Before 1763, Belize maintained a close relationship with the Mosquito Coast, which led to a dependence on the Miskito. This reliance on solutions provided by the local level clashed with metropolitan aims after 1763, as the organisation of the settlement became an issue. This change was a response to the constant Spanish goal of expelling the British from Belize. As the Baymen were more isolated, the Spanish had more options. This resulted in them using a variety of methods, responding to British and Miskito actions, but generally relying on the regional and metropolitan levels to expel the British. Belize was a borderland as it was contested by multiple powers, with members of each empire refusing to acknowledge the pre-eminence of the other in certain respects, but, unlike the other examples in this thesis, it was most affected by its relations with the metropolitan level.

The historiography of Belize has been dominated by British-centric narratives. It was persistently assumed its eventual incorporation into the British Empire was a forgone

conclusion, resulting from imperial conflict and its connection to the Mosquito Coast.[2] Studies only moved on from imperial conflict to social and economic histories relatively recently, bringing much needed attention to the role of slavery in Belize's history.[3] These studies began to focus on Belize's differences to other parts of the British Empire and small-scale events that could characterise it as a borderland. These studies eventually culminated in Mavis Campbell's *Becoming Belize,* focusing on attempts to ascertain not only a distinct Belizean cultural identity, but also its origin and development through colonial events.[4] These works have done a lot to discredit some early conceptions about Belize's history, but have left the core British viewpoint largely intact. By analysing Belize as if it were a British colony almost from its inception, this approach treats the actions of the Spanish and the Miskito as just influences on British-led development, rather than the existential threat they were. If the role of these two powers are considered as such, Belize easily fits into a borderlands structure as a territory being fought over with no clear victory until 1798.

Treating Belize as its own borderland, with its own features, adds further nuance to its history. It can show the actions the Baymen took to secure their interests and how they reacted to imperial pressures. It can also illustrate the mutual fear and suspicion between the Baymen and the Spanish. This, in turn, further reinforces the importance of the Miskito as a provider of security and an essential element for military considerations. Examination shows how small-scale events at the local level were received at the

[2] Caiger, *British Honduras: Past and Present*. Grant, *The Making of Modern Belize*. Naylor, *Penny Ante Imperialism*.

[3] Bolland, *Colonialism and Resistance in Belize*. Bulmer-Thomas, *The Economic History of Belize from the 17th Century to Post Independence*.

[4] Campbell, *Becoming Belize*.

metropolitan and regional levels alongside how geographic challenges and institutional limitations prevented the direct imposition of policy at the local level shows how Belize created problems and opportunities for nearby inhabitants, as well as regional and metropolitan actors.

4.2 Belize: Unknown Origins and Problems of Recognition

As with the Mosquito Coast, the British settlements in Belize developed from small outposts that formed in the seventeenth century. Unlike the Mosquito Coast, the origin of the settlements is obscure and difficult to pinpoint. The original formation of the settlements explains why the British presence was legally ambiguous. They lacked a formal settling date but had set a precedent of inhabiting the region. The Spanish, and later the Guatemalan, governments always maintained that the territory was not British and that its inhabitants were some form of squatter.[5] The date and process of the original founding shaped the development of the region, and perceptions of it initiated the pursuit of an accepted legal basis for Belize's existence.

The question of when exactly the British first settled the region is unanswered and Campbell argues that 'we will probably never be able to answer it precisely'.[6] Unfortunately this appears to be the case, with many historians suggesting that the settlements formed in the first half of the seventeenth century, with some settling for the precise date of 1638 based on the reputation of the semi-mythical Captain Wallace, who allegedly founded the settlement that became Belize City.[7] Campbell, however, pushes

[5] Mendoza, *Britain and her Treaties on Belize*, pp. v-vi.

[6] Campbell, *Becoming Belize*, p.95.

[7] See Naylor, *Penny Ante Imperialism*; Caiger, *British Honduras*; and Grant, *The Making of Modern Belize*.

for an earlier, albeit less precise date, placing it sometime in the late sixteenth century based on increased Spanish complaints of corsairs and pirates plying the waters.[8] The implication is that the early corsairs created settlements from which to launch raids, which eventually became the better-known logwood settlements. It is likely that, if they were purely pirate bases, they were not permanently inhabited settlements. The lack of a firm settlement date significantly damaged their legality as, unlike every other colony in the Caribbean, its inhabitants could not refer to a specific document that denoted the start of their community. This served to portray Belize as an unofficial pirate settlement.

While it is possible that Campbell's thesis is true, and the first settlements were pirate bases, it is unlikely that these settlements would develop their own identity and serve as trading bases with other British settlements. The economics of piracy tended to be ship-based, and depended on the will of harbourmasters, customs officers, ship captains and other such persons due to limited state control on the oceans. This suggested that trading connections that formed in Belize were not tied to the borderland but rather to the individual person.[9] Furthermore, other places that harboured pirates did not develop similar European-dominated communities. The solid links that defined Belize only emerged with the formation of the logwood settlements and the growth of the lumber trade, suggesting a clear distinction between piracy and woodcutting. These early years of British settlement remain largely unknown, most of the early accounts ascribing it to a vague swashbuckling piratical origin, with John L. Stephens speaking of a 'romance around its early history'.[10] The shift in industry from piracy to lumber led to a change in

[8] Campbell, *Becoming Belize*, pp.97-98.

[9] Chet, *The Ocean is a Wilderness*, pp.33-35.

[10] John Stephens, *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas and Yucatan* (New York, 1841), p.14.

culture, as pirates and woodcutters seemed distinct. This piratical heritage, however, shaped perceptions of Belize and played a role in shaping its initial forms of organisation and the mentality of its settlers.

The settlements emerged out of changes in the international balance of power; a combination of increased British naval power, declining Spanish security in the Caribbean and the presence of the Miskito. Spain was successful in removing British woodcutters from elsewhere in Yucatan, such as Campeche and Cabo Catoche, and forced many of the loggers to congregate in Belize. This last settlement was close enough to the British naval presence centred on Jamaica to deny the Spanish consistent control of the sea, and close enough to the Mosquito Coast for the settlers to flee from assaults. Belize was also distant enough from British imperial presence to retain the advantages of being a borderland near Spanish territory. The most important of these advantages was the absence of an official government, which allowed the settlers to trade with whom they liked and avoid prosecution from previous deeds. The concentration of the settlers in Belize was, therefore, from the outset, dependent on the entangled relations between the three major regional powers.

The initial settlement is important as they were unrecognised for so long. The settlements never received royal assent, a formal government or even recognition until 1763. The settlements had shed most of the vestiges of their piratical past by the early eighteenth century, and the area no longer served as a staging point for raids against the Spanish. The inhabitants had attained a unique identity of their own with the residents becoming known as ‘Baymen’, showing evidence of an emerging society in the

region.[11] It had started to form trading relationships by the start of the eighteenth century, but it still resembled a pirate settlement due to its temporary nature, lack of organisation and the tendency of its inhabitants to raid Spanish settlements, though this seemed to decrease.[12]

Belize's unknown origin affected how the European powers interacted with the structures that emerged in Belize; the settlers were able to achieve more as they became more organised, but the unknown origins undermined their legitimacy and stymied official recognition of the settlements. The absence of a legal basis for initial settlement was a continuous justification for Spanish attempts to remove the Baymen and made the settlements a permanent insult. This relative independence of the settlements removed any potential need for the British to assist them, as they had coped alone for years, and raised difficult legal questions should they try and claim it as a formal territory. This unrecognised state also made the Baymen appear like the residents of the Mosquito Coast, making it easier for the Baymen to create alliances with the Miskito. This state at the start of the eighteenth century would change as the three major powers interacted and shaped the Belize settlements after their formation throughout the eighteenth century.

[11] The word 'Baymen' was used in British reports from at least as early as 1755 and was also applied retroactively. Martin Murphy Merekh, A description of the Logwood trade in The Bay of Honduras as carried on by British subjects hitherto and how it can be carried on for the future to greater advantage to the nation, 25 September 1717 TNA, PRO 30/47/17.

[12] Ibid.

4.3 The Economic Opportunities of a Borderland: Belize's Wooden Foundations

While Belize was affected by various exterior powers, its inhabitants were motivated by economic gains from the lumber trade. The appeal of Belize was the presence of valuable dyewoods, known collectively as logwood, and, later, also mahogany. It was this wood, and the trade that resulted from it, that motivated the Baymen to return to their settlements after being driven from them. It was also the lumber trade that motivated Britain, and to a lesser extent Spain, to interact with Belize. The economy drove both the inhabitants of Belize to act and for exterior powers to interact with it.

4.3.1 The Lumber Trade as a Force for Development

The lumber trade shaped Belize's position on the borderland was the only aspect fully under the control of the local level. Without political representation or strategic value, the economics of the settlement dominated the lives of the settlers and formed the basis of its connections with other places. The settlements were organised around the trade, ensuring they would be fundamentally affected by any changes in the price of lumber or other disruptions.

The lumber trade had a notable impact on slavery, both on creating it and shaping it in Belize. Like many other extractive industries in the Caribbean, the Baymen made extensive use of slave labour to gather wood. The organisation of slavery, however, was vastly different to other slave societies in the Caribbean and Latin America. In traditional histories of Belize, the slaves were treated with relative kindness as their

owners laboured alongside them and earnt their respect.[13] This camaraderie was to the extent that they willingly fought alongside their masters against the Spanish at the Battle of Saint George's Cay.[14] While this view is now contested, it is reasonable that the realities of working in Belize did afford the slaves some benefits that they did not enjoy in other places. Few of these benefits were enshrined in law but were instead based on customs; such benefits included private property, the right to recover it in cases of theft and not breaking up slave families when sold.[15]

The process of cutting and shipping logwood and mahogany fundamentally determined the organisation of slavery in Belize. To cut wood, long periods of time needed to be spent in the jungle, not only to cut and store the wood but also to locate it. Logwood was relatively easy to cut as it is a relatively small plant; cutting mahogany required a skilled axeman to erect a springy platform so they could cut above the roots, they would then use the momentum gained from swaying on this platform to cut through the dense wood. Both types of lumber were stored near where they were cut and were frequently floated via rivers or on canoes in the wet season back to the coast, where they were cut into more manageable planks or logs for sale.[16] This time in the jungle provided ample opportunity for the slaves to escape or murder their owners. Additionally, the Baymen lacked any kind of permanent armed force or strong fortification as they had always depended on their ability to retreat to the Miskito to keep them safe. The potential difficulty in suppressing a slave revolt meant that masters could not afford to treat their

[13] Caiger, *British Honduras,* pp.41-44.

[14] Ibid., p.26.

[15] Bolland, *Colonialism and Resistance in Belize,* pp.56-57, 66-67.

[16] Bulmer-Thomas, *Economic History of Belize,* pp.57-59.

slaves with exceptional harshness, and slaves did enjoy a standard of living not seen elsewhere. The seasonal nature of logwood cutting gave them more time off than other places, and the plots that they worked for their (and their masters') subsistence became quite extensive.[17] Their assistance in defending the settlements was also considerable. The presence of slaves was regularly counted in Spanish scouting reports as a potential threat to any expeditions they might launch.[18] These benefits were a result of Belize's conditions; the nature of the work required to cut wood and the threat posed by the Spanish made the Baymen much more dependent on their slaves for their security and livelihoods.

These slight improvements in conditions did not prevent the slaves from resisting their masters and seeking their freedom, suggesting that conditions were still harsh. The most common method by far was escape, often due to the opportunities afforded by the jungle and Spanish encouragement. As was Spanish policy elsewhere, slaves who made the journey to a Spanish settlement were granted their freedom. Spain adopted this method as it was seen as an effective way to damage British economic operations.[19] This was to such an extent that, even when they were obliged to cease this practice after 1763, the Spanish officials stationed at the edge of British territory persisted in continuing the practice, much to the frustration of the Baymen.[20] These conditions were largely dictated by an entanglement of outside pressures and internal responses. The

[17] Bolland, *Colonialism and Resistance in Belize*, p.69.

[18] Acompaña testimonio de las dos citadas declaraciones para que V.M. se halle enterado del estado actual del Rio Valis y los designios de ingleses intrusos pobladores, 15 octubre 1755, AGI Mexico 3099.

[19] Sorsby, 'The British Superintendency of the Mosquito Shore 1749-1787', pp.91-92.

[20] Copia de carta escrita por el gobernador de Yucatan al Almirante de la escuadra inglesa que se hallaba en la vaya de Walis en respuesta de una que escribió, 10 June 1764 AGI Mexico 3099.

expanded freedoms had to be offered to offset the lack of coercive methods and security available to the Baymen due to unofficial and underdeveloped infrastructure. This low level of security presented the Spanish with an opportunity to pursue their objective through damaging their economy. The Baymen's dependence on the Miskito determined how they organised themselves, which in turn created opportunities for the Spanish to the limit the settlement's development. The systems the Baymen created benefitted the slaves in some ways.

The value of the logwood trade, both in terms of monetary value and how much it was considered by the British at the time, seems to change across the century. In terms of logwood's monetary value, it peaked in the seventeenth century, with records placing it at around £100 a ton in 1650.[21] Its value, however, decreased sharply so that, by 1716, it was £16 a ton. The price stayed low for the rest of the eighteenth century, hitting a peak of £25 a ton, then eventually settling at around £10 a ton for the second half of the century. [22] While the value per ton did not change much over the eighteenth century, the changes do reflect the impact of global events and the shifting status of the European empires in the Caribbean and Central America. The main reason for the decline in price was the proliferation of logwood across other parts of the Caribbean; the tree was introduced to other islands, most notably Jamaica and Martinique, by the British and French. The price fell further when Spain started cutting logwood elsewhere in Yucatan.[23] The high point of logwood was caused by the removal of another group of British logwood cutters from Campeche near the lagoon de terminos, which temporarily

[21] Bulmer-Thomas, *The Economic History of Belize*, p.56.

[22] Ibid., p.56.

[23] Ibid., p.61.

dropped the supply as main production shifted to Belize. The price was also affected by the rate at which the Baymen were able to cut and ship the wood. This last factor was the only one the Baymen controlled. The price of logwood was therefore heavily dependent on exterior factors, notably the continued influence of Spain and Britain as economic competitors. This placed the main source of income for Belize under the influence of other powers; this was a problem as Belize's small size and basic organisation limited its ability to diversify its economy. Belize's inability to develop industries other than woodcutting during the eighteenth century ensured that its development was shaped by exterior forces and trends.

The other aspect of the trade that was essential, and that the Baymen could control, was the amount of wood that was cut. While, again, the exact amount of wood cut and exported cannot be ascertained due to the scarcity of records kept by the Baymen, certain accounts do provide some evidence. One of the most notable accounts of the logwood trade in general was written by Martin Murphy during the middle of the eighteenth century. He claims that 'for many years during my residence in the bay of Honduras I kept an account of the yearly export of logwood from thence, the amount of which one year with another no less than 20,000 tons'.[24] The amount of wood shipped from Belize seemed to remain very high. Robert Slowley commented about Belize in 1768 that 'about 300 vessels load here yearly'.[25] The Spanish had similar accounts suggesting that as many as 250 ships landed annually at least during the 1750s. Spanish

[24] A description of the logwood trade in the Bay of Honduras as carried on by British subjects hitherto and how it can be carried on for the future to greater advantage to the nation, TNA PRO 30/47/17.

[25] Diligence comments on Stake Bank and the Mouth of the River Belize, 30 March 1768, TNA ADM 346/6.

reports also state that these ships were between 100 and 200 tons in capacity. [26] In the same report, they refer to an additional site, unmentioned in British sources, further north, which was a considerably smaller operation. It was still visited by thirty ships of between 80 and 100 tons a year.[27] Given the oft-described low population of the region and the regular disruption from the Spanish, the Baymen were able to cut a considerable amount of wood. This also helps explain how they were able to stay profitable, even potentially increasing their profits, despite the consistently low value of logwood; they simply started cutting more. This also explains sustained Spanish interest in harassing the Baymen as they ventured deeper into Spanish territory seeking more wood stands.

Belize's position on the borderland also reduced economic assistance from the British Empire, creating opportunities for alternative trading partners. These partners represent a difference between Belize and the other borderlands as strong and important relations formed beyond the major three regional powers. The three powers were unable to provide markets large enough to purchase the amount of wood being cut, though it is important to note that British individuals did trade in Belizean lumber. Uring mentions Jamaican merchants (as well as himself) investing in lumber shipments, and residents on the Mosquito Coast were trading in it at least late in the century.[28]

One of the trade networks from which Belize benefitted was a direct connection to North America. The prominence of North American colonists in the bay trade was well known, with one British observer commenting that 'the North Americans [were] the

[26] Noticias que se han recibiese seré la ocupan de la costa de Mosquitos…, 1756, AGI México 3099.

[27] Noticias que se han recibiese señor la ocupan de la costa de 1756, AGI México 3099.

[28] Nathaniel Uring, *A History of the Voyages and the Travels of Captain Nathaniel Uring with a new Draught of the Bay of Honduras* (London, 1745), p.358; Various Other Duties, Export Duties, 1776-1787, pp. 135-198, BARS Mosquito Shore Records 1776-1787.

chief traders to the bay of Honduras' in the 1750s.[29] Their prominence is such that, in his account, Speer frequently refers to the presence of American traders acting in various capacities; he also notes that many of them are connected with trading wood rather than the contraband trade on the Mosquito Coast.[30] This North American involvement can be traced further back to at least as early as 1727 with the help of Spanish records, which noted a direct trade with New York.[31]

The connections between the Baymen and communities in North America were often quite complex, pointing to Belize's entanglement with the wider world. In 1727, a group of Baymen were named church benefactors of Boston's Christ Church after gifting them logwood. Such a statement served to integrate the Baymen into the local community of Boston and establish them as local patrons. These gifts continued until 1759, when the international situation conspired against the Bostonians, who cut direct links with the Baymen.[32] It also brought them commercial and religious respectability in the English-speaking Atlantic world.[33] Many ships also traded with New York; this was not incredibly unusual, but the risks the merchants faced were incredibly high. This was partially due to the commissioning of trading voyages during wartime, and consistent Spanish targeting of New York ships.[34] This focus is noted in both the *Pennsylvania Gazette* and in Spanish *guardacosta* reports, which specifically note the presence of

[29] A description of the logwood trade, TNA PRO 30/47/17.

[30] Description of the Bay of Honduras and the Mosquito Shore, 1765, TNA ADM 7/837.

[31] De cetaria, del citado, modo, y disposición don que se halaban el mes de agosto de ano pasado los ingleses establecido en la barra de Mosquitos alias rio tinto, folio 653, AGI Mexico 3099.

[32] Ross A. Newton, 'Good Kind Benefactors: British Logwood Merchants and Boston's Christ Church', *Early American Studies*, 11:1 (Winter 2013), p.34.

[33] Ibid., p.34.

[34] Geoffrey L. Rossano, 'Down to the Bay: New York Shippers and the Central American Logwood Trade, 1748-1761', *New York History*, 70:3 (July 1989), pp. 230-233.

people from New York on ships they captured or sunk.[35] These connections to North America provided additional durability to the Baymen's commercial networks and were another strategy in ensuring that the trade could stay intact in spite of Spanish aggression. These links also helped legitimise Belize in the wider Atlantic community and proved it could sell its lumber to places other than Jamaica and the Mosquito Coast.

The Baymen also had a strong commercial connection with the Dutch, who interacted with Belize both directly and indirectly. This connection with the Dutch demonstrated that Belize was not solely an open border to the Spanish, but to the wider world. The Dutch links to Belize were not new to the eighteenth century; their presence and participation in the logwood trade had been noted as early as 1671 by Governor Lynch of Jamaica.[36]

The Dutch traded directly with Belize and purchased Belizean logwood from North American cities, as well as providing the manufactured goods to trade for logwood. These networks became an issue during the eighteenth century as the Dutch took an increasing share of the logwood trade. This was a central theme in Martin Murphy's report on the logwood trade; he claimed that, after North American traders purchased the wood, it was:

> shipped to Holland with other goods of the produce of North America, when disposed of the produce is vested in Dutch manufacture and East India goods brought in the same bottoms on their return home to North

[35] Rossano, 'Down to the Bay', pp. 230-233. Razón de los prisioneros aprehendidos en la boca de rio Walis, 26 noviembre 1753, AGI México 1017.

[36] State of the logwood trade, 25 September 1717, TNA PRO 30/47/17.

> America proceeding north about Scotland and Ireland to avoid the danger of being examined in the English Channel hence it is clear the Dutch have reaped the whole advantage of the logwood trade not only from that mere article but from the vending of their own goods in payment for it. … In short, the British export of logwood is frivolous of course, all the pains sufferings and losses sustained by its subjects have been borne to serve foreigners.[37]

The Dutch were so common that they were mentioned in Spanish reports, often included alongside the British when gauging the strength of the settlement, and they were afforded the same priority when being targeted.[38] The Dutch were additionally disliked by the Spanish as it was thought that they also traded logwood from Campeche.[39] This was insulting to the Spanish authorities as they were still losing revenue despite removing the British in 1717. The Dutch were despised by both the British and the Spanish due to their apparent dominance over the logwood trade. This additional foreign presence motivated both empires to gain control over Belize.

The Dutch connection was different as it was one of pure economic convenience. The Baymen did not attempt to forge any deeper connections with them and the Dutch left little lasting impact on the Baymen. The only noticeable impact was the gradual building of reputation as the Baymen came to recognise the Dutch ships. They frequently offered them the highest-quality wood as the Dutch gave the best prices,

[37] Ibid.

[38] Don Manuel Salcedo to the Viceroy of New Spain, 16 September 1737, AGI Mexico 3099.

[39] Don Manuel Salcedo a Madrid, 3 June 1738, AGI México 3099.

much to the frustration of British traders.[40] Thus the main impact of the Dutch connection was in altering British and Spanish perceptions and approaches to Belize. It strengthened and further convinced Spanish officials that Belize was a problem. It also motivated the British perception of Belize and played a role in convincing colonial officials to strengthen official presence there. Lastly, the notion that the Dutch were one of the largest purchasers of logwood meant they provided a sizeable proportion of the Baymen's wealth. The Dutch were a significant factor in causing the infamous gluts in the logwood market that had such an impact on Belize's fortunes.[41] The Dutch were a major customer in the logwood trade, and therefore a significant factor for Belize's development.

Lumber was a crucial aspect of Belize's development, not only because it was the motivation for settling the region, but also for how it shaped and created Belize's connections with the wider world. It influenced both British and Spanish policy towards the region, motivating the British to reform the settlement and encouraging the Spanish to remove the Baymen. It also created connections from Belize to other countries, most notably North America and the Netherlands, linking it to world markets and, in the case of North America, giving them the opportunity to build a more respectable image. These wider economic links were another source of pressure from other metropolitan and regional levels. They placed Belize at the mercy of global market forces via the price of wood. This forced the Baymen to cut greater quantities of wood, which stimulated greater diplomatic issues as their operations expanded.

---

[40] Long, *The History of Jamaica, new edition vol.1,* p.329.

[41] Bulmer-Thomas, *The Economic History of Belize,* pp.55-56.

4.3.2 Supporting the Borderland Economy: Spanish Connivance and Contraband

While Belize was best known for its woodcutting trade, it did not preclude its inhabitants from engaging in other industries or economic activities. These were usually to support the main lumber trade and consisted of small-scale farming and fishing for subsistence. The other notable practice was a small contraband trade like that of other borderlands, but it differed in that its primary focus was again to support woodcutting.

As elsewhere, there was an illegal trade between the British settlers and Spanish settlements. British observations and reports on Belize rarely mentioned this trade. The only mentions are small comments in documents that are typically focused on another subject. This trade was mentioned in Slowley's report, where he remarks that the settlers at Saint George's Cay had 'a small trade with the Spaniards'.[42] The trade was also mentioned in published literature; Lieutenant Cook wrote that he 'must not here omit observing how much it is in the interest of the Baymen to be on good terms with the guards of these outposts'.[43] He then goes on to explain the gifts given and other methods of convincing the Spanish guards to assist them. Cook was also travelling with a British merchant who was familiar with the route and who had connections with the numerous towns and villages.[44] This trade with the Spaniards was evidently of limited interest to British observers and from the British perspective was only important to the local level.

[42] Diligence comments about the Bay of Honduras, 1768, TNA ADM 346/6.

[43] Lieutenant Cook, *Remarks on a Passage from the River Bellise, in the Bay of Honduras, to Merida; the Capital of the Province of Yucatan in the Spanish West Indies* (London, 1769), pp.4-5.

[44] Ibid.

In contrast, the Spanish were very concerned about the contraband trade with the British settlers at multiple levels. This is partly due to the perceived connection to the contraband trade at Campeche or Laguna de Terminos.[45] Although the British settlements had been removed from this area, the entry of foreign goods and the illegal extraction of their own logwood supplies was a constant concern. The Governor of Yucatan often appeared to see both illegal markets as a part of the same problem.[46] It served to motivate the Spanish and was one of the principal reasons for removing them in 1748; the expedition was a significant undertaking and cost the lives of several officers.[47] The existence of the contraband trade never seemed to be consistently proven by the Spanish, but remained at the forefront of their suspicions.

In correspondence between Don Julian Arriaga and Admiral Burnaby, Arriaga remained convinced that the British settled closest to Bacalar at the Hondo River were trading contraband.[48] Through what means is not clear, but another incident in 1768 suggests that logwood cutters would trade goods with Spanish soldiers – ironically those meant to stop them – in return for information on where logwood stands could be found.[49] Overall, the non-wood contraband trade in Belize was very small in volume and its contents likely rarely left the Yucatan peninsula. What was important about it was that it demonstrated a local link between Belize and the Spanish colonies. While it was not as developed as other regions in Central America, it still linked the British settlers to their

[45] Ramos, *El Contrabando Ingles en el Caribe y el Golfo de México*, pp.69-70.

[46] AGI Mexico 3099; both places are often referred to in the same letters and treated as a part of the same problem.

[47] Don Alonso de Heredia to Marques de Ensenada, 10 March 1748, AGI Mexico 3099.

[48] Don Julián de Arriaga ti the governor of Yucatan, Mexico 3099, 12 June 1764, AGI Mexico 3099.

[49] Report to Governor Cristóbal de Zayas, 19 febrero 1768, AGI Mexico 3099.

neighbours and fostered a degree of cooperation between the British and Spanish inhabitants of Yucatan. It added another motivation for the Spanish to try and remove the settlers, especially due to their perceived link with Campeche and these concerns grew significantly after 1763.

These two industries, contraband and woodcutting, were the only notable non-subsistence economic practices in Belize, of which the woodcutting industry was the most important and the most valued. These industries were essential in helping the settlers develop and provoking action from the upper levels of the British and Spanish empires. The economy of Belize did not develop technologically or diversify much over the eighteenth century, but the economy did expand. The area cut by the Baymen expanded as wood stands were exhausted and the price of wood declined, but the methods of cutting wood and trading contraband stayed the same. It was ultimately an economic activity enabled by the careful balance of powers in the borderlands and the Caribbean.

4.4 Pre-1763 Belize: Spanish Hostility and Dependence on the Mosquito Coast

Belize's eighteenth-century history can be broadly divided into two periods, consisting of the periods before and after the 1763 Treaty of Paris. Prior to the treaty, Belize's development was like the other borderlands as it resisted Spanish pressure by relying on Miskito protection. Unlike the other borderlands, however, Belize did not need to balance relations with the Spanish, but instead organised itself and used its connections to survive. The Spanish threat remained important as it was one of the only factors driving development of the region.

4.4.1 Limited Government at the Limits of Empire: The Early Organisation of Belize

The form of government adopted by the Baymen was also different to other colonies in the British Empire. As the settlement was unrecognised by Spain until 1763, the Baymen did not have an official British administration and so organised themselves. During his stay among the Baymen in 1711, Nathaniel Uring made no mention of any system or laws that governed them. In 1734, John Atkins described their system as follows: 'They have a king, chosen from among their body, and his consort is styled Queen, agreeing to some laws by common consent, as a guide to them.'[50] Later accounts of the Belizean settlements do not mention any system of organisation, choosing instead to focus on economic matters. Despite this, the Baymen did press for a formal government, requesting a Governor or some form of civil government to be assigned to them from Britain.[51] When this did not occur, they continued ruling themselves with what Campbell calls 'the public meetings', whereby the Baymen collectively agreed to follow a set of simple articles to govern themselves. Campbell's argument is that the Baymen were adopting established piratical governing practices to their settlements.[52] This link to a buccaneering past is not necessarily due to a lack of imagination from the Baymen, but rather from the realities of their situation. The migratory and dangerous nature of their existence, due to the threat from Spain and Miskito shelter, meant that they only gathered in one spot to sell their wares, and even these spaces showed little signs of permanent settlement. Therefore, loose agreements

[50] John Atkins, *A voyage to Guinea, Brazil and the West Indies; In his Majesty's Ships the Swallow and Weymouth* (London, 1735), p.228.

[51] Campbell, *Becoming Belize*, p.118.

[52] Campbell, *Becoming Belize*, p.118-119.

that could be easily changed were necessary, especially as they were caught between two competing imperial powers; one that usually ignored them, and another determined to remove them. This lack of cohesion made defending themselves difficult, but they could always shelter on the coast under the protection of the Miskito.

4.4.2 Dependence on the Miskito: The Role of the Mosquito Coast

While Belize had a tenuous relationship with Jamaica, it was deeply connected to the Mosquito Coast in terms of politics and defence. This connection was more consistent over the eighteenth century. The Mosquito Coast had no legal or official requirement to assist the inhabitants of Belize, but it seemed that the British residents of the two areas assisted and cooperated with each other on an individual basis and both depended on the Miskito. The people cooperated to the extent that the development of the two regions was inextricably intertwined. The Miskito were also essential in providing security for the Baymen, albeit in a less direct manner than on the Mosquito coast.

The most essential link between these two areas was in terms of defence, chiefly by mitigating the effect of Spanish attacks by providing a safe location. The Baymen also played a role in the development of the Mosquito Coast development. The coast, and especially Black River, owed a great deal to individuals who had originally settled in Belize. William Pitt, the founder of Black River and *de facto* leader of the coast until the appointment of Hodgson, was originally from Belize; it was no coincidence that Black River was founded in 1731, one year after the Spanish attack on Belize in 1730.[53] Joseph Patiño commented on Pitt in a later report that he had escaped 'with his wife, daughter and slaves to the Mosquito' and that it would be 'very important to take the

[53] Dawson, 'William Pitt's Settlement at Black River on the Mosquito Shore', p.682.

measures and precautions that they did not return to the Belize river'.[54] These measures and precautions consisted mostly of the construction of Fort San Felipe de Bacalar. The practice of retreating continued throughout the eighteenth century, with Speer commenting in 1765 that the Spanish 'drove the English from thence [Belize], the last time was in November 1759, since which none are returned there, but most of them settled on the Mosquito shore where they cut mahogany and gather Sarsaparilla'.[55] This provision of shelter proved essential to ensuring the survival of the Baymen, especially in the face of Jamaican laxity.

This system of retreating and returning, so essential to the British survival in Belize, was only possible due to the Miskito. The Miskito's military strength made the Mosquito Coast an effective refuge and they were known to assist the Baymen in other, more direct, ways. One such incident of such assistance was a Miskito raid on the settlement at Bacalar.[56] This raid was unusual for the Miskito as it was far from their normal raiding routes, which usually took them to Costa Rica or to inland Honduras and Nicaragua. It is possible that it was motivated by their British allies, as Bacalar was known to be the closest Spanish settlement and became a predominantly military outpost to observe the Baymen.[57] The Miskito were also considered essential in resettling the Baymen in 1755, as they were the only force in the area capable of defending the Baymen from the Spanish while they built defences; the regular British

[54] Joseph Patiño to the Viceroy of New Spain, 27 January 1733, AGI Mexico 3099.

[55] Description of the Bay of Honduras and the Mosquito Shore, 1765, TNA ADM 7/837.

[56] An account of the Mosquito shore, 1757, MS ADD191.

[57] Cook, *Remarks on a Passage from the River Bellise to Merida*.

forces either being unavailable or unwilling to help.[58] Some Spanish officials were aware of this important role As Don Manuel Salcedo complained in a letter:

> En las instrucciones, y ultimas órdenes dadas a Vázquez, ni a otros respectivos gobernadores (por estas muy anticipadamente expedidas) para la extirpación de los ingleses que allí se hallaban, y van, y vuelven a cortar y conducir el palo de tinte, sino que toda la mira, y empeño fue sé a desarraigarlos de rio tinto, laguna azul, y otros pequeñas plantaciones que tienen en la costa de Honduras, donde atraen, abrigan, y fomentar a los indios mosquitos, se viese como pospuesto este primario y urgente intento de la presente constitución, y que obligando a no dejarlo de la mano hasta conseguirlo
>
> eran dictamen que del citado oficial general Vázquez se desea probase en respuesta de sus cartas la expedición que determino contra los ingleses del rio walis por intempestiva, no habérsele mandado, ni ser aquel terreno se su jurisdicción
>
> que debió como se le ordeno haber puesto toda se mira en la expulsión de los de Rio Tinto y parajes de Honduras dependientes de aquella provincia[.][59]

It was accepted by many that Black River was the more important target and that the Baymen could not be easily removed until the British presence in Honduras had been removed. Hodgson largely agreed with this view, saying that 'the logwood cutters of the Bay of Honduras regarding it [Black River] as the nearest retreat of security for

[58] Governor Knowles to the Lords of Trade and Plantations, 29 March 1755, TNA, T1/361.

[59] Don Manuel de Salcedo a Juan Antonio de Bizarrin, 23 April 1737, AGI 3099.

themselves and their effects; both because of the friendship of Indians and of the bars of the rivers, which are hazardous to pass without being acquainted with them'.[60]

Miskito protection extended to those who traded with Belize. Observers commented, often derisorily, that those going to trade with Belize would often stop at the Mosquito Coast to obtain information about the current state of the bay.[61] The Mosquito Coast played a pivotal role in maintaining the British settlements in Belize, but even so they did not commit many resources, especially when considering the forces they could muster to defend their own holdings. Money was granted for the re-establishment by Jamaica, but none (if any) detail any formal material aid given by the residents of the Mosquito Coast.[62] Such provision would not be unheard of, Hodgson had been known to request funds for building projects on the Mosquito Coast around the same time.[63] The defensive assistance seemed to focus on protecting the people rather than the territory itself, providing a safe retreat for the inhabitants and information to those who traded there. This displays the Mosquito Coast's own limited resources, or selfishness, that they were willing to defend Belize insofar as its defence contributed to their own security. Alternatively, it shows the Baymen had a limited attachment to Belize, that the loss of property or home was not as catastrophic as it was elsewhere in the British Empire. It is likely the British settlements in Belize may not have survived without the security provided by the Miskito.

[60] An account comprising the Mosquito Shore, 1757, MS ADD191.

[61] Description of the Bay of Honduras and the Mosquito Shore, 1765, TNA ADM 7/837.

[62] Charles Knowles transmitting an account for the expense incurred in re-establishing the British colony on the Bay of Honduras, 27 April 1755, TNA T1/361 35.

[63] H. Moose to the Lords Treasury, 24 January 1757, TNA T1/376.

This defensive provision created the stronger link between the two places through their shared population. The regular retreat of Belize's inhabitants brought them into frequent contact with the Mosquito Coast, to the extent that many of the coast's inhabitants were originally settled in Belize. This contact helped foster trade and agreements to a much greater extent than other places within the British Caribbean, such that the residents of the two areas came under the jurisdiction of the same governing bodies. This amicability is noticeable by the way in which the inhabitants of the Mosquito Coast allowed the Baymen to take up residence, temporarily or permanently. Hodgson noted that 'This place they retired when they were routed by the Spaniards in 1730; and several of them who were dissatisfied with their former turbulent life settled here. They did the same in 1754'.[64] This acceptance was not offered to anyone. The Baymen were thought to live irregularly and were considered 'very different' to the Mosquito Coast inhabitants, but could settle; later in the century, when someone attempted to 'settle' convicts on the Mosquito Coast, they were strenuously prevented.[65] The close alliance and similarity between these regions is most evident at the end of the eighteenth century. When forced to evacuate the Mosquito Coast, most of the coast's inhabitants chose to resettle in Belize. The settlements were deeply entangled through the personal connections and by Belize's dependence on the coast as a haven. Belize's geographical location and connections to such contentious territories drew it into the wider struggles between Britain and Spain.

[64] An account comprising the Mosquito Shore, 1757, MS ADD191.

[65] An account comprising the Mosquito Shore, 1757, MS ADD191. Letter from the board to Francis Hickey Esquire and others the inhabitants at Cape gracias Dios and along the Southern Coast, 14 February 1786, BARS Mosquito Shore Papers 1776-1787.

The Mosquito Coast and Belize were connected due to their inhabitants and their shared dependence on the Miskito. The vulnerable position of the British settlements in Belize made the inhabitants dependent on an exterior force for protection, and with Jamaica's recalcitrance to defend the settlement the Baymen came to rely on the Mosquito Coast. Although not necessarily proactive in the defence of the Baymen, the Mosquito Coast provided an essential sanctuary. Its proximity and security allowed them to retreat there quickly and easily and remain safe from Spanish reprisal. The ease with which the Baymen could move encouraged their return to Belize, despite repeated Spanish raids, and made settling there viable. The Mosquito Coast also served Belize's defensive purposes in the wider Caribbean. It provided information to those who traded with Belize, as well as providing a haven to shelter from Spanish *guardacostas*; through these actions, the Mosquito Coast monitored and safeguarded Belize's trade routes, making the influence of the British – and, more importantly, the Miskito – essential to Belize's development.

4.4.3 Jamaican Indifference: Governmental Neglect

As the centre of British influence in the Caribbean, Jamaica and its government had links to Belize that were crucial. It was through Jamaica that the government in London could shape the development of Belize. The most important connection between the two regions was political. Until 1862, Belize had no official existence as an independent political entity. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, it was loosely organised by its inhabitants, who would meet only a few times a year. Over the course of the eighteenth century, it received official government positions but remained under the control of Jamaica. The extent to which Jamaica was able, or wished, to control Belize was the basis of the connection between the two areas.

Belize came under the direct jurisdiction of the Jamaican Governor, with the assembly having no official power over the region. The Governor had military jurisdiction over Belize from at least as early as 1743, when Trelawney is styled as 'commander in chief of Jamaica and other territories depending on them in the Americas'.[66] The tasks of military and civilian governance in Belize rarely seemed fulfilled. The Jamaican Governor theoretically governed Belize, but the direct influence in the early eighteenth century was negligible.

The task of governing Belize was made more difficult by the temperament of the settlers and their lack of organisation. Nathaniel Uring commented on their character, describing them as a 'crew of ungovernable wretches', citing their tendency for drunkenness and swearing as the main reason.[67] The large distances between settlements and lack of infrastructure also made potential governance difficult. Uring mentions their scattered settlements and their tendency to move around, stating that:

> In the dry time of the year the logwood cutters search for work; that is, where there are a good number of logwood trees; and then build a hut near 'em where they live during the time they are cutting ... during the floods [the logwood cutters] dwell at the barcadares, which is forty-two miles up the river.[68]

This made establishing a central point to administer the region difficult, although this problem was eventually solved by the end of the century as the settlers began to

[66] Edward Trelawny to Phillip Baker Esquire, 1739 National Archive, CO 137/48.

[67] Uring, *A History of the voyages and the travels of Captain Nathaniel Uring*, p. 358.

[68] Ibid., pp. 354, 357.

congregate at two main points, the mouth of the Belize River and Saint George's Cay. As late as 1754, Mark Heweth commented on efforts to set up trading regulations, saying that 'the nature of the country can not admit of regular officers nor can few perform that task, because of the variety of shipping places on that coast'.[69] It is worth noting that Heweth does not suggest it is impossible. This is a development from the 'ungovernable' nature Uring described, however hyperbolic the description may have been.

The weak link to Jamaica was also evident in the lack of defensive measures. Jamaica could provide some defensive assistance, as it did for the Mosquito Coast, providing funds, weapons and even soldiers on occasion. No such provisions were made for Belize during the eighteenth century. Instead, Belize was seen as another borderland that could be defended by the established practice of relying on the Miskito, though this had arguably limited success. The fact that the Baymen were driven from Belize four times during the eighteenth century, in 1717, 1730, 1754 and 1779, suggests provisions for defence were rather limited if they existed at all beyond the shelter offered on the Mosquito Coast by the Miskito. Despite this ambivalence, the defence of Belize was considered by several contemporaries. Robert Hodgson, during his initial appointment as superintendent, toured the coast of Belize and made his assessment about its defensibility:

> I know of no other place where the Spaniards can come immediately on the back of the logwood cutters except down the river Belize, and

[69] Mark Heweth, A description of the logwood trade in the Bay of Honduras as carried on by British subjects hitherto and how it can be carried on for the future to greater advantage to the nation, 1754, TNA PRO 30/47/17.

> that might be prevented by a proper fort, neither can they get up to them but by the river's mouth, which likewise may be prevented by small forts or rather block houses. One about the mouth of the new river and another at the haulover at Bellise both which should be provided with armed crafts … and I believe either near the bar or about the mouth of the river Bellise a fortification might be made to defend the shipping from privateers at least.[70]

The supposed quality of the available wood in Belize would certainly allow for the creation of such defences, but Hodgson made no attempts to reinforce Belize. The Baymen, however, did take some steps to defend themselves by constructing a fort at the mouth of the Belize River.[71] This appears to be a largely independent action taken by the Baymen due to the report needing to inform the Governor of Jamaica, showing how the Baymen took responsibility for their own defence.

This show of independence can be misleading as Jamaica remained in charge of Belize's defence, largely due to obligations given by London. Following the retreat from the Spanish in 1754, Jamaica helped the Baymen resettle and requested additional funding from London to cover costs. The king acquiesced, but also told them to supply 'a schooner with guns and other warlike stores … and hope in a short time they will be

[70] Description of the Bay of Honduras and the Mosquito Shore, 1765, TNA ADM 7/837. The reference to 'privateers' likely alludes to the Spanish *Guardacostas* who were known to attack ships thought to be carrying logwood or contraband.

[71] Governor Knowles, Map of part of the Belize River in the Bay of Honduras showing the adjacent keys and the fort in progress, 1755, TNA MPI 1/387.

sufficiently fortified to prevent being surprised for the future'.[72] Jamaica was forced to intervene again after the Treaty of Paris in 1763, in accordance with the nineteenth article that 'his Britannic majesty shall cause to be demolished the fortifications which his subjects shall have erected in the bay of Honduras'; this particular clause was notorious for its vague phrasing, but it was clear enough that the fort in Belize would have to be torn down.[73] As the focal point of British power, it fell to the Jamaican government to ensure such fortifications were removed. The fortifications in the Mosquito Coast were left intact by this part of the treaty as the settlers there resisted the ship sent by Jamaica to dismantle their defences. Nothing of the sort appears to have happened in Belize, as two naval reports commented on the lack of fortifications in the Bay of Honduras 'due to a treaty of peace with the Spaniards'.[74] The Baymen, despite their alleged ungovernable nature, seemed to readily acquiesce to the authority of Jamaica when it came to defence, even when it was detrimental. They also did not seem to press Jamaica or Britain for any form of defence from the Spanish during the first seventy years of the eighteenth century, instead relying on shelter provided by the Miskito. The level of obedience shown by the Baymen towards Jamaica would suggest a regular or well-developed connection, when in fact the Jamaican government rarely officially communicated with the Baymen. The main factor inhibiting them was the lack of sustained effort.

[72] Transmitting an account for the expense incurred in re-establishing the British colony in the Bay of Honduras, 27 April 1755, TNA, T1/361.

[73] Mendoza, *Britain and her Treaties on Belize*, pp.30-31

[74] Reports on the Bay of Honduras, 30 March 1767, TNA, ADM 346/6.

4.4.4 Spanish Suspicion and British Ignorance: Belize in the Eyes of the Metropoles

Prior to the Treaty of Paris, Belize was not frequently acknowledged by London; it was, however, well known in Madrid. This was indicative of the difference in how the region was valued by the imperial capitals and was the start of growing metropolitan influence. The actions taken by Madrid against Belize shaped Belize's development as the inhabitants had to resist Spanish pressure. It motivated the Spanish offensives against the region and made Belize a part of Spanish imperial designs, which had a profound effect before the Treaty of Paris.

A significant reason for these various levels of value placed on Belize was the lack of knowledge at the metropolitan level. This was especially true for Spain, which considered it a major security threat. A general report in 1756 collected from various colonial officials voiced suspicions about the British presence in Belize. They remarked on the logwood that was collected in Belize, arguing that it was of such low quality when compared to what was collected in Campeche that the British must be there for a separate reason. Ideas included a base from which to launch a land-based invasion of New Spain or Guatemala, a base from which to launch piracy raids on Spanish shipping or simply maintaining a presence to insult the Spanish crown.[75] This concern about Belize's proximity to Mexico was exploited, with the Duke of Bedford commenting in 1762 that the Spanish ambassador 'dreaded to see the English in the Gulf of Mexico'.[76] The Spanish view of Belize's connections to other borderlands, and its own colonies,

[75] Noticias que se han recibiese senoré la ocupan de la costa de Mosquitos por varias partes…, 1756, AGI Mexico 3099.

[76] The Duke of Bedford to the Earl of Egremont, Paris, 19 September, TNA SP 78/253.

gave it an influence on Spanish actions that was disproportionate to its presence, demonstrating how perceptions were shaped by entanglements and that Spanish action towards Belize was shaped by British action not only in Belize, but also at the metropolitan level.

The lack of knowledge exacerbated Spanish fears of contraband and hampered British policy towards Belize. If the British created a contraband network in Yucatan, the financial losses could have been severe. The reality was that Belize remained largely a logging camp with little aspiration beyond that, and there were no developments that matched the largest Spanish fears. The British, however, were similarly ill informed regarding the limited economic activity that took place, most noticeably in their ignorance of the shift towards cutting mahogany in the latter half of the eighteenth century, in addition to their ignorance of the location of the settlements and the population.[77] This lack of knowledge complicated British efforts to settle disputes around the region and assuage Spanish fears. In response, Spain saw the vagueness as potential cover to ulterior motives and the potential actions of the Miskito, which led to them over-valuing the region. The British were only too happy to exploit this, exaggerating Spanish fears over the region; continually high tensions and a lack of assistance from London kept Belize dependent on the Mosquito Coast and limited the development of other industries.

Prior to 1763, any British presence on the mainland was illegal according to Spain, leading to Spain attempting to police the area. This included direct reprisals and the seizure of logwood. Spanish officials, usually at the behest of the viceroy of New Spain

[77] Naylor, *Penny Ante Imperialism*, p.56.

or the Governor of Yucatan, outfitted ships to target vessels carrying logwood. In one such case in 1724, the Spanish attacked settlements in Belize and nearby ships with the express aim of capturing logwood, which was considered Spanish property.[78] The incident is notable as it fell in a period when Britain and Spain were officially at peace, further cementing the Spanish view that the Baymen were criminals and they had the right to carry out these actions. Other measures included requesting a sloop specifically for policing the waters around Belize. This would allow legal merchants to take logwood from Belize to Campeche and a regular Spanish naval presence would dissuade any attempts at piracy.[79] The raids against logwood ships from Belize continued throughout the next three decades, although it became apparent that, without removing the Baymen's refuges and settlements, the traffic was unlikely to stop.[80] These sustained efforts necessitated durable and easily repairable trade links, deterring more significant investment.

The connection between Belize and the metropoles was maintained by nearby colonies. London received scant information of any sort about Belize, and what little information London did receive likely came through Jamaica or reports from individuals in the navy. Madrid, by comparison, received a great deal of information about Belize. The Governors of Yucatan and the commanders of Fort Bacalar regularly reported what information they could gather to the viceroy of New Spain and Madrid. While the accuracy of this information varied, Madrid still acted and made decisions about Belize

[78] Minutas del año de 1724 sobre las presas de los navíos y un bergantín en el rio de Balis, 11 diciembre 1724, AGI Mexico 1017.

[79] The viceroy of New Spain to the Governor of Yucatan, 14 May 1725, AGI Mexico 1017.

[80] Governor and Capitan General of Yucatan informing your majesty on the arrival of an English Brigantine at the mouth of the Walix River, 26 January 1750, AGI Mexico1017.

based on a steady stream of information. The Baymen therefore had an indirect way of influencing Spanish policy regarding Belize; it was rarely to their advantage, but the connection went both ways. In comparison, London acted largely in response to Spanish concerns to secure more valuable interests. Although Belize was connected to both metropoles and subject to their decisions, it was only able to influence policy in Madrid.

Overall, it can be seen that Belize had connections with numerous levels of British and Spanish government. These political and social connections played a pivotal role in shaping Belize's development. They also demonstrate that Belize was entangled as differing groups' influence would come into conflict. This was most obvious in the ongoing competition between the Spanish and the British metropolitan governments but was also evident in the differing actions of British administration. The Mosquito Coast and Jamaica both influenced Belize through their connections with the region. Jamaica was its official government, a role with which the island's government seemed reluctant to engage until after 1763, thus ensuring that, until the Treaty of Paris, the Mosquito Coast was Belize's main social, political and military ally: a role facilitated by the military dominance of the Miskito. The result of this close connection was many similarities in social and cultural practice between the two regions' European populations. The Baymen also came under the essential protection of the Miskito, most importantly by the provision of a refuge in case of Spanish aggression. These retreats also served to strengthen connections between the two places as some inhabitants stayed, such as William Pitt, and many set up temporary businesses. Spanish pressure was an essential factor for the creation of these connections, as it was in response to the threat of conflict that the Baymen reached out to the Mosquito Coast and built defences that forced Jamaica to intervene. The Baymen's presence spurred the Spanish into

action, ensuring the development of pre-1763 Belize was shaped by the Baymen finding ways to resist Spanish pressure.

4.5 Post-1763 Belize: Diplomatic Recognition, Spanish Sabotage and Jamaican Expansion

The Treaty of Paris gave the Belize settlements limited recognition and, for the first time, obliged the British and Spanish empires to act in accordance to a legal agreement when interacting with Belize. This recognition changed the way Belize developed; it could now appeal to official bodies who were obligated to assist. The legal framework made Jamaica play a role and it eventually imposed a government on the region. The treaty also changed the Spanish impact; they continued to interfere with the economy but were less threatening to the existence of the settlements. This change reduced the role of the Miskito as defensive assistance gradually became less essential given that it could now shield itself behind diplomatic agreements. The recognition given to Belize by both empires allowed it to eventually disentangle itself from informal borderland relations and be officially incorporated into the British Empire.

4.5.1 Tenuous Legal Existence: Article 17 of the Treaty of Paris

The Treaty of Paris drew Belize directly into the diplomatic struggles between Britain and Spain. In his book *Britain and her Treaties on Belize*, Mendoza argues that no 'pact which was agreed to until 1750 has the slightest reference to British claims in the Bay of Honduras'.[81] While the settlers did not have any direct contact with the metropolitan governments, the decisions made in the European capitals had a major effect on Belize. However, Belize was not completely dominated by the machinations of the metropoles.

[81] Mendoza, *Britain and her Treaties on Belize*, p.28.

The distance and tenuous nature of the connections meant that the Baymen had considerable agency in choosing whether to implement policies dictated to them. The decisions made by the metropoles did, however, have a strong impact on other levels of regional government, and the agents of these levels were able to enforce changes at the behest of the metropoles.

The Treaty of Paris at the end of the Seven Years War had severe ramifications for the Baymen. Throughout negotiations, the inhabitants of Belize remained largely passive actors, relying on British diplomats to look after their interests, which focused on little more than economics. The most important part of the treaty for Belize was Article 17, which stated:

> His Britannick Majesty shall cause to be demolished all the fortifications which his subjects shall have erected in the bay of Honduras, and other places of the territory of Spain in that part of the world, four months after the ratification of the present treaty; and his Catholick Majesty shall not permit his Britannick Majesty's subjects, or their workmen, to be disturbed or molested under any pretence whatsoever in the said places, in their occupation of cutting, loading, and carrying away logwood; and for this purpose, they may build, without hindrance, and occupy, without interruption, the houses and magazines necessary for them, for their families, and for their effects; and his Catholick Majesty assures to them, by this article, the full enjoyment of those advantages and powers on the Spanish coasts and

territories, as above stipulated, immediately after the ratification of the present treaty.[82]

For the first time, the Baymen had a legal right to live in Belize and cut logwood, but only on the condition they removed their defences. The few established defences in Belize were duly dismantled, on the assurances that the Baymen would no longer be harassed by the Spanish.

This had profound effects on the settlements as they suddenly found themselves more vulnerable to Spanish incursions. The Spanish were aware, and it was likely a long-term target for the negotiations, as their weak position at the end of the Seven Years War discouraged them asking for outright evacuation. Spanish reports before the Treaty of Paris often had meticulous information on the exact layout of the Belizean defences, suggesting plans for an offensive.[83] Given the Baymen's concerns about their safety and the protections suggested by various observers (even the Spanish planned potential defences that could be built to secure the region cheaply), it seemed that Belize was largely considered a bargaining chip and a way to influence Spain. The British were able to assuage Spanish fears of British dominance in an area they did not value, but one that Spain saw as critical to the wider defence of Central America. This allowed Britain to appear magnanimous with low risk. Furthermore, due to the small population and trading value of the area, it was unlikely to have a major political or economic impact. Belize was therefore used as a diplomatic asset by Britain in settling the Seven Years War, as the value placed on it by Spain allowed the British to safeguard assets Britain

[82] The Treaty of Paris 1763. See Appendix 7 for a contemporary map of the region.

[83] Numerous records see folios: 13, 68, 654, AGI Mexico 3099.

deemed more valuable. This demonstrated how perceptions of Belize and its development were entangled with actions at the highest level of imperial government.

The need to regulate the terms of the treaty necessitated closer monitoring of the settlement, and this responsibility fell to Jamaica. This led to a transitional period that lasted for the rest of the eighteenth century as Belize aligned with Jamaica instead of the Mosquito Coast, shifting from a dependence on the Miskito to the British Empire. Continuing Spanish pressure over the British presence in Central America necessitated a firmer political structure for Belize to ensure the terms of the treaty were enforced. This growing influence did not necessarily alter the internal structures of Belize, but it did make it more subject to the two empires.

4.5.2 Slow Development: The Continued Miskito Connection and Jamaican Failures

Initially, the Treaty of Paris seemed to have a limited effect on the Belize settlements. They remained scattered and temporary, as can be seen in a 1769 report to the Admiralty by Jonathon Jackson, who was aboard the *Dolphin*. His report outlined many areas along the Central American coast, detailing places where ships could resupply for food, water and wood, including Spanish settlements that were receptive to trade. He made no mention of any British settlement near the Belize River. This can suggest several things: that there were no noticeable settlements when Jackson was there, that there were simply not any settlements there at all or that there were settlements, but Jackson and his crew were unable to acquire supplies from them. The last is unlikely as Jackson mentions that even the Spanish commander at Fort Omoa (a fort built explicitly to deter the British) provided them with at least ‘water and all other necessities’ as well

as allowing them to purchase fish, fruit and beef, and the Baymen are never described as having a shortage of food or water.[84] This suggests that legal recognition had not removed the need for settlements to be temporary.

An earlier report reinforces the scattered nature of the settlements, but implies a small degree of political development. Robert Slowley's report does mention the two main settlements and the presence of British settlers. In his description of the settlers, he supports Uring's assessment from forty-five years earlier. He says that 'little law and justice are on shore for they are all marooners', reinforcing the commonly held view of Belize as a relatively lawless place with little government.[85] Slowley does mention the presence of a level of formal government among the settlers that was enforced by Jamaica, suggesting some development. Slowley says that the colonial government 'are obliged to send ships of war from Jamaica every year among those logwood cutters to make peace among them … admittedly they has [sic] made 30 justices there but they are little regarded'.[86] Evidently, the attempts to enforce a degree of order in Belize were a result of Jamaican imposition; however, it seems that these initial attempts were largely unsuccessful. This suggests that, for most of the eighteenth-century, Belize had few political links with Jamaica, largely due to the ambivalence both regions showed to each other. It was evident, however, that Jamaica started to exert influence on Belize.

The Mosquito Coast and Belize continued to share social and, to a lesser extent, political connections. In these respects, the direct role of the Miskito was small due to the Baymen not living chiefly on the coast, and the Miskito tendency to see the English

[84] Report on Port Omoa, 1769 TNA ADM 346/6.

[85] Diligence comments about the Bay of Honduras, 1768, TNA ADM 346/6.

[86] Ibid.

as a homogenous group, always referring to them as 'our friends the English' when referring to the inhabitants of the three Caribbean areas with which they had regular contact.[87] The Miskito's importance also diminished slightly due to a reduction in direct Spanish attacks. The European inhabitants of Belize and the Mosquito Coast remained economic partners and social equals despite their treatment as separate political entities by Jamaica. The regular presence of the Baymen on the coast had a considerable impact on their livelihoods and perceptions of themselves. In official council minutes and trading accounts from the Mosquito Coast, the Baymen were treated as residents of the Mosquito Coast. When declaring where a resident was from, the Bay of Honduras or Saint George's Cay were treated as equivalent to locations on the Mosquito Coast such as Pearl Key lagoon, Black River or Cape Gracias a Dios. As a result, there are examples of individuals in these areas splitting assets between themselves, appointing attorneys to recover debts and witnessing official functions.[88] This was not the case for traders from Jamaica, who were always defined as such and occurrences appear much rarer, suggesting a level of familiarity between the Baymen and the residents of the Mosquito Coast.[89] One example is an account of Captain Joseph Rose detailing his ownership of a brigantine and the associated transport business. Rose and his family can be seen to move between the Bay of Honduras and the Mosquito Coast regularly over the course of two years, before finally settling in the Mosquito Coast. Despite initially settling in Belize, he was able to establish a presence as a businessman and, it seems,

[87] Governor Dalling to W.R., 1780, TNA, CO 137/77.

[88] Mosquito Shore Records, Recorded by the Desire of John Potts, BARS Mosquito Shore Papers 1773-1780 4 April 1779. Christopher Simnoll of the Bay of Honduras appoints Robert Kaye of Black River to be his attorney to recover sums of money debts and demands owed, 5 April 1777 BARS Mosquito Shore Records. Inventory and appraisement of the negroes and other effects the property of the estate of Geoffrey Walker deceased, Mosquito Shore Papers, 1 October 1776, BARS.

[89] BARS Mosquito Shore Records, 1770-1783, 1773-1780, 1776-1787.

socially, in both places, while living periodically in each one for about a year.[90] Another resident called Thomas Scully was listed as a resident of both Black River and the Bay of Honduras in local records.[91] This suggested regular transport and communication between the two areas. This degree of social similarity is further evidenced by the similar descriptions given to the two areas by British observers, characterising the settlement's social lives as generally unpleasant. Speer said that:

> the Baymen have been so long left to themselves that nothing but anarchy and confusion can be expected from them. Indeed, the strange character that has been often given of them does them but little injustice, but tho' I intended to mention nothing of what I might think conducive to make this a regular colony I must observe that the present inhabitants only will never do. [92]

While Speer had little to say about the residents of the Mosquito Coast (beyond mentioning their pernicious customs), Hodgson had said earlier that they both 'lived without laws" and Uring had referred to the Baymen as "generally a rude and drunken crew'.[93] The speed and ease with which people could, and did, move between the two areas meant that their community extended across the Caribbean between the two areas. This developed towards the end of the century as the populations increased.

This shared population also brought about some political unity, as people who moved between the two areas technically came under the jurisdiction of the superintendent and,

[90] By order of the Superintendent and Council, October 1776, BARS Mosquito Shore records, 1776-1778.

[91] Recorded by desire of Lucy Partridge, 29 January 1779, BARS Mosquito Coast Papers 1773-1780.

[92] Remarks on that part of the bay where the English cut logwood, 1765, TNA, ADM 7/837.

[93] Remarks on that part of the bay where the English cut logwood, 1765, TNA, ADM 7/837. An account comprising the Mosquito Shore, 1757 MS ADD 191. Uring, *A History of the voyages and the travels of Captain Nathaniel Uring*, p. 355.

later, the various justices of the peace who were assigned to Belize and the Coast. Belize was monitored by Jamaica but, as commerce grew, increasing amounts of cases required powers of attorney and the function of actual courts. In this respect, many inhabitants of the bay vested associates with the power of attorney, typically for the recovery of various debts, such as recovering loaned slaves, goods lost in transit or profits owed because of owning part of a ship.[94] These powers of attorney were assigned to these people by the newly established council of the Mosquito Coast. This suggested a degree of political proximity or at least willingness on the part of the Baymen to recognise and make use of the government on the Mosquito Coast instead of their own.

The Belize settlements developed after the Treaty of Paris, but in many ways continued to rely on their connection with the Mosquito Coast, even retreating there again in 1779. As both settlements increased in population, they started to organise themselves and established more complex connections. The distrust of the Spanish ensured that the Baymen felt the need to maintain established relationships.

4.5.3: Imperial Reactions: Sabotage and Planning for the Economy

The treaty did not solve many issues, but it did force those involved to adopt new strategies. For Spain, Belize remained a weak point in its empire both economically, as they lost potential revenue from lumber and contraband remained a concern, and strategically, due to the presence of the nearby Miskito and the need to remove the British from all the borderlands to hopefully curtail the Miskito threat. The British

[94] Recorded by the desire of Joseph Claypool, BARS Mosquito Shore Records 1770-83, 29 September 1774.

became inclined to try to defend their rights now they were assured in the treaty. In many ways it was perceived to be like the Mosquito Coast and frequently part of the same problem or opportunity.

The potential value of the lumber trade was not lost on British observers, who recommended plans for controlling and expanding it. The most detailed plans for expanding Britain's operations at Belize were put forward by Speer and Murphy, who both suggested establishing a formal company to regulate the logwood settlements. Writing during the Seven Years War, Murphy's main argument for setting up a company was that it would be the best way to prevent the Baymen from trading with foreign powers. He argued that a company would prevent the Baymen from 'disturbing the Spaniards' and restrain them from trading with the Dutch.[95] Such measures would also help the settlements appear more legitimate. He stated that a company would ensure that wages would stay stable and that employment would be less erratic.[96] Speer's account, written after 1763, called for 'a small company of merchants to contract for the logwood', which would extend to its cutting, price and regulating which goods would be traded for it.[97] Each of them claimed that the creation of such a company would bring in large profits to Great Britain. It is also notable that the reasoning for creating a company changed; Speer had no concerns about upsetting the nearby Spanish, whereas such concerns were a major consideration for Murphy. These plans demonstrate a degree of support for the Baymen, or at least the woodcutting trade, and were indicative of a gradual shift in recognising the value of Belize, now that the

[95] Description of the Bay of Honduras and the Mosquito Shore, 1765 TNA, ADM 7/837. A description of the logwood trade, 25 September 1717, TNA, PRO 30/47/17.

[96] A description of the logwood trade, 25 September 1717, TNA, PRO 30/47/17.

[97] Description of the Bay of Honduras and the Mosquito Shore, 1765, TNA, ADM 7/837.

legal question was partially solved. Ultimately, neither of these plans were adopted; instead, the British government began the process of gradually implementing government in Belize.

The Treaty of Paris forced the Spanish to change their methods when attempting to remove the British. No longer legally permitted to attack the settlements, they turned to harassing the economy. The Baymen were limited in where they could cut logwood; lacking formal or clearly mapped borders, the agreement limited the Baymen to the space between the Belize and Hondo rivers.[98] This proved to be vague and, following the implementation of the treaty, the Spanish would apprehend Baymen or confiscate their property, accusing them of routinely crossing boundaries, which was likely an intentional practice by the Baymen.[99] The Spanish sought to use international agreements to legitimise their actions around borders that were increasingly hard to distinguish, yet became subject to strict agreements.

The other main way of damaging the Baymen's economic interests was to encourage their slaves to flee. In 1771, the Governor of Yucatan responded to British complaints about the practice and claimed that:

> El Rey no puede negar la hospitalidad, y protección del extranjero de cualquiera condición, que, profesando distinta religión, buscas el asilo de sus dominios con deseo de abrazar la católica: las leyes fundamentales del estado hacen libre al esclavo prófugo, mientras no es pleno de crimen de les majestad, y otro exceptuado, de los que por

[98] See Appendix 7

[99] Report to the king of Spain, 1765, AGI 3099.

> mutua seguridad de los sagrados personas de los príncipes tienen acordado restituirlos.[100]

The continued use of these methods demonstrates several aspects of Spain's relationship with Belize. First, that it was always hostile and that the goal of damaging or removing the settlement remained a persistent aim, as seen by the reinforcement of fort San Felipe de Bacalar in 1772.[101] Second, that the Spanish recognised the settlements' overwhelming economic nature and so constantly targeted the sources of the Baymen's wealth, either directly seizing their goods or limiting their extraction. Third, that they still felt the need to adhere to international agreements and that pressure from London or Jamaica was a concern; the shift to less direct methods suggests that the constraints of the Treaty of Paris had some effect even if it was not the only reason. Belize was still dominated by the regional powers, but how they exerted influence over Belize was changed by the Treaty of Paris. The Spanish now pressured Belize indirectly, and the Baymen remained dependent on the Miskito and Jamaica for support, the latter of which started to take a direct role in administering the settlements.

4.5.4 The End of a Borderland: Forming a Government and the Battle of Saint George's Cay

Despite some continuity in the internal structures of Belize, the pressures from the empires and the legal status given to them by the Treaty of Paris caused profound changes. The most important was a concerted effort to create a functioning government.

[100] Copia de la carta de Gobernador de Yucatan, 5 January 1772, AGI, Mexico 3099.

[101] Plano y elevación del actual estado en que se halla el Fuerte de S[a]n Phelipe de Bacalar… la nueva obra o refuerzo que le hizo el actual comandante D[o]n Joseph Rosado el año pasado de 1771, en las caras y flancos, por los motivos que se hacen presentes, AGI, MP Mexico 272, 30 Janaury 1772.

This was assisted by the arrival of the Mosquito Coast settlers in 1787, which increased Belize's population and brought the governing systems that had been established on the coast. The stability these developments brought ultimately solidified the British settlements and their systems of governance and disentangled it from its connections across the borderlands.

A major step to the formation of a government was the writing of *For the Better Government of His Majesty's Subjects in the Bay of Honduras Presented to them by the Honourable Sir William Burnaby, Knight, Rear-Admiral of the Red and Commander in Chief of his Majesty's Squadron in Jamaica*, also known as Burnaby's code.[102] Although many of the rules in this document are claimed to be repetitions of rules already established in the earlier public meetings, it represented a shift into a formal colonial government. The initial articles became the basis of Belize's government and went through several iterations over the next fifty years.[103] This shift was supported by Jamaica, which started sending regular naval ships to Belize to resolve disputes and enforce a degree of order. Initially they were relatively unsuccessful; based on admiralty reports, Belize remained relatively lawless. A slow shift is evident as the Baymen began to assert specific rights and individuals began to request that the officials sent to govern them be given a way to enforce the regulations.[104] They also began petitioning the British government for compensation for damage caused by the Spanish and other

[102] William Burnaby, *For the Better Government of His Majesty's Subjects in the Bay of Honduras Presented to them by the Honourable Sir William Burnaby, Knight, Rear-Admiral of the Red, and Commander in Chief of His Majesty's Squadron in Jamaica* (London, 1809).

[103] Ibid.

[104] Campbell, *Becoming Belize*, p.188.

grievances.[105] These developments, while slow, demonstrate Jamaica's growing influence over Belize as it was increasingly pressured to administer the settlements due to obligations from international treaties. Increasing recognition made a formal organisation useful for the Baymen so they could be more integrated with the British Empire.

The last major phase of Belize's internal developments was largely due to the Mosquito Coast. Following the Convention of London in 1787, many of the Mosquito Coast's British residents moved to Belize, significantly increasing Belize's population. This brought closer scrutiny from Jamaica, which exerted greater effort to control the settlements by appointing a superintendent. Annoyed at this perceived infringement on their traditional rights, the Baymen organised a 'committee of thirteen' to govern the settlement and assert themselves over the superintendent. This committee incorporated many of the governing structures and some of the individuals who had come from the Mosquito Coast; this explains why many council records from the coast are in the Belize archives.[106] This new form, far from being the loose arrangements held by the Baymen in the first half of the eighteenth century, increasingly resembled Jamaica, as a few rich elites came to dominate political life, to the extent that they successfully pushed for the dismissal of royal superintendents.[107] Many of the problems they faced remained the same, but now that they were integrated into the British Empire they could request assistance from the imperial government. No longer troubled by Belize's

[105] Campbell, *Becoming Belize*, p.199. Robert White, *The Case of the Agent to the Settlers on the Coast of Yucatan; and The Late Settlers on the Mosquito Shore Stating the Whole of his Conduct In soliciting Compensation for the Losses, Sustained by Each of those Classes of His Majesty's Injured and Distressed Subjects* (London, 1793).

[106] Campbell, B*ecoming Belize*, p. 119-220.

[107] Ibid., pp.243-244.

unrecognised status, the imperial government was more inclined to assist them, signifying the disentangling of the region as it no longer depended on the Miskito.

The creation of a formal government alongside limited rights granted in international treaties served to disentangle Belize from the borderlands.[108] The form of government in the early eighteenth century had been formed in response to the perennial Spanish threat and the temporary nature of the settlements. The formation of a structured government under the Jamaican Governor and regular British naval presence signified the abatement of this threat. This ended the Baymen's dependence on the Miskito and an overall switch from improvised local methods of survival to empire-wide efforts for recognition and restitution due to legal transgressions. This new colonial order was threatened by one final Spanish attack in 1798. The Baymen were able to organise and defeat the Spanish at Saint George's Cay. After narrowly agreeing by vote to stay and fight, the Baymen, their slaves and a small contingent of regular British troops, along with the three royal navy ships *Tickler, Teazer and Merlin,* repelled a larger Spanish force; the small British schooners and canoes proving far more appropriate to the shoals and reefs around Saint George's Cay.[109] The Baymen now had a government, legal recognition, a clear position in the British Empire and had successfully repelled an attack that challenged their rights. In many ways, Belize no longer resembled a borderland.

4.6 Conclusion: Disentanglement and Formal Incorporation into the Empire

Belize's development was dramatically shaped during the eighteenth century because of external forces exerting influence over the region. This is not necessarily unique to

[108] See Appendices 8 and 9 for maps detailing Belize's clearer borders.

[109] Caiger, *British Honduras,* pp.96-98. Campbell, *Becoming Belize,* pp.268-269.

Belize and is similar to the experience of the Mosquito Coast, but what was unusual about Belize's case was the extent to which Belize was subject to outside pressures. Belize's existence in the eighteenth century, as a loose set of British settlements in the Bay of Honduras, was only feasible due to the precise balance of power between Britain and Spain. It was overwhelmingly shaped by a hostile power. First and foremost, the motivation for living in Belize – the logwood trade – was highly unusual when compared to other extractive industries in the Caribbean. It was cheap to extract and required little extra labour to be profitable, unlike sugar, and it was comparatively rare as it could not be farmed easily. Despite the price of logwood crashing in the eighteenth century, its steady price per ton ensured that expansion could occur if new sources could be found and was assisted by the inclusion of mahogany. This presence of a low-risk exportable commodity was enough to attract settlers and was dependable enough to encourage their return. The product was not valuable enough to precipitate large-scale military action to secure it. Instead, the Baymen were able to depend on the Mosquito Coast and the Miskito to keep them safe.

The role of other nations was also essential to explaining Belize's development. Despite its relative lack of value, the Spanish spent a lot of time, effort and money in trying to expel the British. This threat and the actual expeditions had a dramatic impact on Belize as the Baymen remained aware that they could be forced to flee, preventing long-term planning for settlement and their industries. This was not a purely hostile relationship as it is evident some small degree of amicable commerce did take place between the Spanish and the Baymen. This Spanish hostility made Belize more valuable to Britain as diplomats used Belize's location and the potential threat it posed as a bargaining tool in negotiations with Spain, resulting in the critical Treaty of Paris. This was the first

time the British government felt the need to administer the settlements in any capacity and they did so through their representative, the Governor of Jamaica. Until this point, Jamaica had largely ignored the Baymen's settlements, seeing no need to interact with them in any meaningful way. Now that the British were obliged to enforce the terms of the Treaty of Paris, Belize was linked with Jamaica and the British Empire. It grew to depend on official means of protecting itself.

Until the Treaty of Paris, and to a lesser extent afterwards, Belize had been dependent on smaller regional allies and interests. Its economy weathered sustained Spanish interference largely thanks to the efforts of Dutch and North American traders. They were able to take advantage of Belize's lack of trading laws and trade in logwood, enriching both the settlements and themselves. More importantly, Belize had shared a close relationship with the Mosquito Coast, which had provided essential defensive assistance until 1763 and continued to do so afterwards, though it became less essential, until the battle of Saint George's Cay, when the Baymen alone defeated the Spanish.

In many ways, Belize's development from a trading post to a colony is most evident from its changing relationships. As fewer influences acted on it, the more it resembled Jamaica. With the evacuation of the Mosquito Coast, it became less like a borderland and its government became more formalised. When the Spanish became distracted with events in Europe and the growing independence movements in their American empire, the priorities of the Baymen shifted purely to trade and commerce. This retreat of Spanish interests also signalled the decline of attention from London as, without Spanish complaints about the region, it lost importance until later struggles in the nineteenth century. This left Jamaica as the sole influencing power of any note, and so

Belize began to gradually transition into an oligarchic system where a few individuals held most, if not all, economic and political power. Belize was a region thoroughly entangled with the Central American borderlands. Its development was driven by the reactions of its settlers to external pressures. Very little development happened because of internal occurrences as the Baymen sought to navigate their international position while turning a profit. It is likely due to this reason that it was the only mainland settlement Great Britain retained, as, outside of imperial struggle, it simply did not have much value to either of the major imperial powers vying for it. This would change in the mid-nineteenth century, but at the end of the eighteenth and at the start of the nineteenth century its role in wider affairs was almost nil.

Chapter 5. Costa Rica: Opportunity, Violence and Fear on the Borderland

5.1 Introduction: A Localised Borderland?

Costa Rica was another similar point of interaction for the three major powers but had some key differences. Most notable of these was, the ephemeral British and Miskito presence, which, although consistent, was not permanent as they never sought to settle in the region. This theoretically left the Spanish in control of the region, but the resistance of Costa Rica's own indigenous population, coupled with a weak Spanish administration, meant Costa Rica never seemed stable and limited the influence of the metropolitan and regional levels. Spanish attempts to control the contraband trade and indigenous groups only achieved mixed successes while frequently instigating retaliatory violence. For these reasons, Costa Rica is an entangled territory, but was missing many features that would make it a borderland. Costa Rica was affected by many of the same factors driving development in other borderlands but was only involved at the regional and metropolitan levels of the Spanish Empire.

The inclusion of foreign influence is relatively new to the historiography of eighteenth-century Costa Rica. Older histories of Costa Rica focus on the concept of 'Costa Rican exceptionalism'. This argued that its isolation and poor economic performance in the colonial period had long-term benefits that manifested in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[1] This idea of colonial society forming a 'rural democracy' came under

[1] Palmer, *The Costa Rica Reader, History, Culture and Politics*, p.1. John Bell, *Crisis in Costa Rica in the 1948 Revolution* (Austin, 1971), p.5. Augelli, 'Costa Rica's Frontier Legacy', pp.4-5. Seligson, *Peasants of Costa Rica and the Development of Agrarian Capitalism*, pp.5-9. Rankin, *The History of Costa Rica*, p.32. Leonard Bird, *Costa Rica the Unarmed Democracy* (London, 1984), pp.24-25.

criticism, but some core ideas persisted and remain important parts of Costa Rican historiography, such as its small-scale economy and relative lack of direct imperial oversight. From the 1990s onwards, more studies emerged focusing on the role of imported goods and slavery, demonstrating that Costa Rica was not as isolated as previously thought.[2] Considering these new assessments illustrating Costa Rica's connections to exterior powers, it seems relevant to analyse how these powers reacted to actions taken by actors in Costa Rica and the relationships that were formed as a result.

The limited British and Miskito presence, alongside the lack of major clashes over territory or control, mean that Costa Rica's importance to wider Anglo-Spanish Miskito relations differs considerably. As international agreements began to play more of a role, Costa Rica's importance faded. The Miskito's role in Costa Rica was like the Mosquito Coast, taking full advantage of their military superiority to pursue their own aims. The Spanish goals in Costa Rica remained consistent as they sought to secure territory by subjugating indigenous groups and expelling other Europeans. The British presence was notably different as there were no permanent British settlements, only temporary camps for visits from contraband traders. The omission of two imperial powers competing over a territory eliminated a common factor for defining a borderland. Interactions between the three major powers had the most impact during the first two periods of the eighteenth century, when it was a vital source of contraband and wealth for the Miskito and British, stimulating increased activity. After 1763, Costa Rica's importance waned as British and Miskito concerns about security and long-term survival in the Mosquito

[2] Fonseca, 'El Comercio de Costa Rica Durante el Declive del comercio Español y el desarrollo del contrabando inglés', *Anuario de Estudios Centroamericanos*, 20:2 (1994), p.27. Philip Macleod, 'Auge Estancamiento de la Producción de Cacao en Costa Rica 1660-95', *Anuario de Estudios Centroamericanos* 22:1 (1996), pp. 95-97. Potthast-Jutkeit, 'Centroamérica y el Contrabando por la Costa de Mosquitos', p.499.

Coast took precedence. This was demonstrated in its complete omission from both the 1763 Treaty of Paris and the settlements in 1782 and 1787 that led to the evacuation of the Mosquito Coast and settlement in Belize. Costa Rica's eighteenth-century history is mostly concerned with its own local level but remained connected to events elsewhere.

With this viewpoint in mind, Costa Rica serves as a point of comparison to the other two borderlands included in this thesis. Although entangled between the three major powers, it is distinct enough to demonstrate two key differences between the Coast and Belize. First, it demonstrates the impact Europeans at the local level had without assistance from either the regional or metropolitan levels. Second, its inclusion shows how the metropolitan and local levels react to threats when they do not have a direct counterpart. When trying to achieve goals in Costa Rica, the Kingdom of Guatemala and Madrid could not further their goals by interacting with Jamaica or London. Instead, they had to seek internal solutions to external problems and focused more on non-European threats at the local level. From a theoretical standpoint, Costa Rica's inclusion demonstrates the different applications of the entangled approach and levels of interaction to an area that is not a conventional borderland, but is still heavily affected by them. Whereas many borderland and frontier histories are concerned with which state a territory eventually becomes part of, Costa Rica's eighteenth-century history is an opportunity to apply borderland and entangled approaches to a territory where the eventual territorial 'victor' is not really challenged.

5.2 Imperial Isolation: The Limits of Guatemala and Madrid

Costa Rica was the Kingdom of Guatemala's southernmost region and the limited role of the Spanish regional and metropolitan levels plays a pivotal role to the area's history.

The economic influence of British traders, the threat posed by the Miskito and other indigenous groups, and the autonomy of the local Spanish government made Costa Rica seem like a frontier or an unstable province. The lack of will or ability of the regional or metropolitan levels to affect Costa Rica made it heavily subject to actors at the local level. Slow-acting and distant institutions common at the regional and metropolitan levels had limited influence in Costa Rica, giving way to the personal immediate power of local leaders, meaning allegiances and plans could change rapidly. This position and the lack of support from Guatemala or Madrid made it susceptible to entanglements and the impacts from the Miskito and British, despite their limited presence.

Costa Rica's small population had a profound impact on its economy and helped isolate it from the rest of the Spanish Empire. At the start of the eighteenth century, its population was still fewer than 20,000 people, of whom the government only considered slightly more than 2,000 to be 'Spanish', reducing the need for regular communication with the province.[3] Under Spanish control, Costa Rica's total population was always small. The demographic collapse of indigenous groups, either being particularly devastating or simply due to the small original indigenous population, meant that the labour force for *encomienda* was limited. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, *encomiendas* and land gained through the mercedes were small when compared to other similar grants elsewhere in the Spanish Empire; one such grant had only ten tributaries by 1619.[4] This deterred many Spanish settlers from the area and stymied the creation of large estates that characterised other richer colonies. While historians have argued for longer-term benefits of these limitations, in the colonial

[3] Augelli, 'Costa Rica's Frontier Legacy', p.3.

[4] Lohse, *Africans into Creoles,* p.111.

period it meant that the area was under-resourced, as the imperial government had little incentive to invest in the region's economy or defence.[5] The former reason was exacerbated by the absence of precious metals (despite the optimistic naming of the region), which was the overriding focus of Hapsburg economic policy. Events under Hapsburg administration had made the colony exceptionally poor, as traditional methods of economic organisation proved ineffective in Costa Rica. This led settlers to shun the area in favour of other regions, leaving Costa Rica with few Spanish settlers.

The population that remained found abundant land, which affected settlement patterns and economic practices. Most legal agricultural activity was at subsistence level, with excess sold to local markets and a limited mule trade to neighbouring Nicaragua and Panama, though this had been declining since the seventeenth century. Products included wheat, maize, beans, potatoes, other vegetables, sugar cane, fruits and livestock. Haciendas did not develop in the same way that they did in other colonies, as there was little benefit in large estates.[6] Labour was hard to import for these purposes as the lack of infrastructure and limited market deterred many slave traders, and the lack of commercial crops or other exports reduced the motivation to do so. As a result, small family units ran farms known as *chacras*, which occupied as much land as they could feasibly work predominated.[7] Such claims were not contested as land was plentiful. Any potential legal issues were circumvented by the provision for recognition of land ownership simply by the merit of occupying it for a set amount of time.[8] The focus on

[5] Bird, *Costa Rica the Unarmed Democracy*, p.25.

[6] Seligson, *Peasants of Costa Rica*, pp.7-8.

[7] Augelli, 'Costa Rica's Frontier Legacy', p.4.

[8] Ibid.

family-run farms and subsistence farming dispersed the population as the main function of most large settlements was as seasonal market towns. This system ensured that potential tension between elites and small-scale landholders was minimised in Costa Rica, allowing them to focus on other potential threats. It also emphasised the limited application of Spanish administrative methods used elsewhere in the Empire.

Costa Rica's principal city is a prime example of the region's small population. Despite Cartago being the largest population centre in the province, it still paled in size and wealth to other major settlements in the Kingdom of Guatemala such as Comayagua, León, Tegucigalpa and Granada; at the start of the eighteenth century, Cartago allegedly had 2,353 inhabitants.[9] As for what was in the city itself, Don Diego de la Haya stated that the capital comprised of 'una iglesia una ayuda de parroquia un convento de san franco dos ermitas y setenta casas fabricas hechas de adobes de tierra y cubiertas de teja', suggesting its small size.[10] Eighty years later, around 1800, Cartago's population had experienced significant growth, reaching 8,337.[11] This disparity was also noticeable in the general populations of the regions. In 1778, Costa Rica's population was 24,536, while those of Nicaragua and Honduras were 69,399 and 56,677 respectively.[12] This small population and small-scale economy made the limited opportunities provided by foreign contact appear more lucrative and the danger posed by hostile indigenous groups more threatening. This was a common feature across Central America, but the

[9] Seligson, *Peasants of Costa Rica*, p.7

[10] Don Diego de la Haya, 15 March 1719, AGI, Guatemala 240.

[11] Dym, *From Sovereign Villages to National States*, p.271.

[12] Dym, *From Sovereign Villages to National States*, p.270.

difficulties in communicating with the rest of the Spanish Empire limited the support they could receive from the regional and metropolitan levels.

One way in which these communication difficulties were apparent was the amount spent by Cartago on communication and how they persisted to the end of the century. Accounts for official correspondence in the Kingdom of Guatemala encompassing the 1770s present a breakdown of the expenses incurred, and Cartago is consistently shown as not only having significantly less money to spend on communication, but also being very sparing with it. For example, in 1772, Cartago imported 762 silver reales and spent only 421 on communication. For comparison, in the same year, the closest major settlement, Granada in neighbouring Nicaragua, spent 5,359 silver reales on communication, importing 5,405 reales to pay for it.[13] This sharp difference appears to persist throughout the remainder of the eighteenth century. One way in which the trend shifted was in the amount: while the costs of the other cities routinely reached at least four digits, even five in some cases, Cartago's rarely raised higher then around 700 reales and seemed to decrease as the century progressed. This indicated that the city communicated less, arguably making it more isolated despite the growing prosperity of the province. These statistics are not to say that Cartago was completely isolated from the rest of the Spanish Empire. The costs involved only account for mail sent from the city, as payment seems to have been given at the issuing of a message rather than at its reception. This explains why Cartago's communications appear so limited, that as the administrative centre of a poor province it had little to report on. In contrast, Guatemala, as the capital of the kingdom, spent just over 107,000 reales on correspondence in 1773,

[13] Cuentas de la Administración de Guatemala, Cuenta para los Correos de 1772, AGI Correos 96A.

the same year it was almost destroyed by the Santa Marta earthquakes.[14] It is reasonable for the administrative centre to spend so heavily on communicating orders and other messages across Central America. Therefore, it seems that Cartago may have received just as much attention from higher levels of government, but responded infrequently, giving it an image of isolation. This lack of communication can suggest a provincial government that acted independently of the wider Empire as the central point of imperial authority seemed unable or unwilling to correspond when compared to its neighbours.

This isolation and the expectation that local problems would be handled independently was reflected in the organisation of Costa Rica's colonial government. The problems in communicating with Costa Rica were recognised and warranted an expansion in the Governor's powers. Due to the distance between Cartago and Guatemala, the Governor of Costa Rica frequently wielded all the powers of Cartago's cabildo in addition to his own and a higher salary of 2,000 pesos a year, and it was also recommended that the Governor of Costa Rica always be a professional soldier.[15] The cabildo was frequently lacking members and few wanted to pay for a position in such a remote area.[16] Costa Rica's unique position was reflected during the later Bourbon reforms; when the other provinces were reorganised with intendencies, Costa Rica remained the only governorate in the Kingdom of Guatemala.[17] The Governor also remained the only major government official in the province for most of the eighteenth century; even local

[14] Cuentas de la Administración de Guatemala, Cuenta para los Correos de 1773, AGI Correos 96A.

[15] Patch, 'Imperial Politics and Local Economy in Colonial Central America 1670–1770', p.24.

[16] Carlos Melendez, *Historia de Costa Rica* (San José 1979), pp.64-65.

[17] Dym, *From Sovereign Villages to National States*, p.52.

administration was limited as Cartago only formed a municipal council in 1778.[18] Theoretically, this made the Governor of Costa Rica very powerful in an area dominated by local interests. This was accentuated by distance between Cartago and any other major urban centre, which meant the Governor and other Spanish settlers lacked the oversight of any high-ranking colonial officials, unintentionally giving them a large degree of provincial autonomy.

Despite a higher salary and the higher degree of autonomy, Costa Rica seemed to attract governors of poor quality, most of them being mid-level captains from the army with limited (if any) political experience.[19] One incident does reveal a particularly ineffective Governor as well as Costa Rica's position within the Kingdom of Guatemala and the alternative methods of governance available to it. In 1760, the Governor, Don Manuel Soler, was deemed incapable of ruling the province after an incident in León in Nicaragua. He allegedly declared that he wished to 'kill the neighbours of Costa Rica', which resulted in him being declared mad and consigned to San Juan hospital.[20] Afterwards, persons apparently representing the office of the Governor asked for the officials of León to remove Soler from office and to assist them in the running of the province until a new Governor could be appointed.[21] Considering the costs and time involved, this could be a long process; it could be several years before the new Governor could take up residence and govern. All these measures allowed Costa Rica to maintain a functional government and theoretically even a strong one. The reality,

[18] Ibid., p.38.

[19] Bird, *Costa Rica the Unarmed Democracy*, p.24

[20] Correspondencia con Gobernadores Comandantes, Carta de la Audiencia de Guatemala fecha de 6 de diciembre de 1760, 6 December 1760, AGI Guatemala 456.

[21] Ibid.

however, seemed to be an official government that was suited to defence and little else. In other respects, the metropolitan influence on local government appears to have been weak.

One of the local government's principal goals for improving the defence of the province was settling the territory claimed as Costa Rica by the Spanish Empire. The only area fully under Spanish control was the plateau known as the 'central valley', home to most Spanish settlements, including Cartago. The indigenous groups that lived in the territory proved resistant to Spanish attempts to incorporate them into the colonial system and were perceived by contemporaries as a perennial threat. Agricultural practices and lack of investment reduced the economic reasons for settlers to risk acquiring land in these areas. Therefore, any push to reduce the indigenous populations had to come from the local government, which, due to a lack of local resources, would require assistance from elsewhere in the Empire. Efforts to secure this aid were difficult as Costa Rica lacked strategic importance when compared to the areas immediately surrounding it. The route from the Caribbean to the Pacific across Panama was to the east, and the British were acutely aware of the strategic value of the San Juan River and the opportunity it presented for a similar cross-isthmus route to the west. When compared to these assets, Costa Rica offered little to the geopolitical ambitions of the European empires. Despite this, it was still a part of the conflict being fought between the other powers on the Mosquito Coast and throughout the Caribbean. All these factors discouraged involvement in the region by higher levels of Spanish government, which often left the provincial governments of Costa Rica to act largely independently in its own interest.

It is important to note that, when it came to internal matters, Costa Rica was not completely isolated from the metropolitan regional levels. When the Bourbon reforms reached the isthmus, Costa Rica benefited. Most prominent was a tobacco factory and attached monopoly in San José. It has been argued that the introduction of this factory, which had severe ramifications after the eighteenth century, was an attempt to extend the influence of the Guatemalan merchant class and royal authority rather than support for the colony's weak economy.[22] The factory was ultimately unsuccessful in promoting market growth, as it could only supply the nearby domestic markets of Nicaragua and Panama, which lacked a large demand for imports.[23] Politically, Costa Rica was unique in the Kingdom of Guatemala as its governing structures remained largely unchanged during the intendancy reforms. Costa Rica was largely unaffected by many of the broader changes imposed on the Spanish Empire,

It is in this context of small-scale economics and lacking imperial influence that the limited presence of the Miskito and British can assume such importance. While they stopped short of setting up permanent settlements as they had done elsewhere, they brought a new trading route where others were stifled.[24] They also formed a tangible threat that played upon existing fears at the local, regional and metropolitan levels, which led to efforts to secure the province in various ways. These efforts can make Costa Rica's eighteenth-century history seem very frontier-like, with a single European power seeking to expand and secure its borders. It is, however, complicated as two of the main obstacles to this expansion were another European empire and an indigenous

[22] Ortega, 'Historia Económica Del Tabaco En Costa Rica: Época Colonial', pp.349-350.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Wortman, *Government and Society in Central America 1680-1840*, p.146.

group that were based elsewhere, yet these groups did not seek to settle and never truly contested the Spanish claim to the territory. The borderlands were, therefore, important as they led to interactions at the local level in Costa Rica, but, uniquely in Central America, the regional and metropolitan levels of the British Empire were not directly involved to any significant degree. This meant that only the local levels interacted, accentuating the influence of the three powers' local actors. These influences also provided impetus for the Spanish government to try extending its influence into the region, which it had shown little interest in doing prior to the eighteenth century.

Despite its long history of Hispanic settlement, the local level of the Spanish Empire in Costa Rica still resembled a borderland in the eighteenth century. This was due to the small population, localised economy and the limited distinction between social classes. Its forms of organisation throughout the eighteenth century also marked it as different from other colonies; the failure of the *encomienda* to take root and the continuation of the governorate instead of becoming an intendancy were the most prominent examples. The limited efforts of the metropolitan level to resolve these issues encouraged the Costa Rican population to seek opportunities and solutions to problems at the local level. Both problems and opportunities were linked to the presence of the Miskito and the British. Costa Rica was thus a borderland as the eventual dominance of the Spanish-speaking government from the central valley was never really contested but its development was strongly affected by the British and Miskito presence. All three powers played key roles at the local level, the Spanish regional and metropolitan levels affected it occasionally and the upper British levels had minimal (if any) impact at all.

Costa Rica was unique among the Central American borderlands as it was not a direct part of the wider struggle between the British and the Spanish. It was not addressed in the various treaties that were signed in association with the Mosquito Coast and Belize. In this respect, it was never considered officially involved in this struggle by either imperial power. Even Spain saw that the few issues caused by the British in Costa Rica could be stopped by removing them from the Mosquito Coast. The two borderlands were closely connected, and actions taken in one would have ramifications in the other. This lack of wider impact is a result of Madrid's limited involvement, which meant it was not a major point of contention between London and Madrid.

5.3 Borderland Opportunities: The Matina Valley, Slavery and Contraband

The Matina valley was crucial for the development of Costa Rica and a key point for the three major powers to interact. It was Costa Rica's biggest Caribbean-facing trading point, both in terms of size and in value of exports. In the eighteenth century, it was a location for many of Costa Rica's cacao plantations and a site for exporting it; these actions were dependent on slavery. This, along with its geographical position, helped explain why it became the principal target for Miskito raids and their British contraband trading. The British settlers and the Miskito both travelled to Costa Rica for economic reasons, to trade contraband for cacao and to acquire slaves. These had important ramifications both in Costa Rica and further afield, and fed into the contraband networks and trading routes between the Mosquito Coast and Jamaica. Matina presented the biggest opportunity for economic enrichment for Costa Rica.

Cacao was a key source of wealth for all three powers, and its development as an important crop was linked to Costa Rica's position as a borderland. The appeal of cacao

to the richer Spanish inhabitants of Costa Rica is quite evident; it had a good export value at the start of the eighteenth century, it was relatively cheap to set up and maintain, but, most importantly for Costa Rica, it required few labourers, allowing the industry in Matina to be operated almost entirely by the region's small slave population. This enabled the settlement of lands previously considered uninhabitable by the non-slave population of Costa Rica. Like much of Central America, the Caribbean coast of Costa Rica was low lying, wet and known for its unhealthy climate, with life expectancy considerably lower than highland regions due to disease.[25] This had prevented any long-term settlement by the Spanish, but these factors made it excellent for growing cacao. Contemporary wisdom held that slaves of African descent were better suited to such climates and so, with the acquisition of slaves, the land became viable for commercial uses.[26] Cacao was a valuable commodity in many places, but Costa Rica's unique features meant that its growth as an industry had a major impact, notably the growth of slavery in the province.

Slavery in Costa Rica had exceptional features, largely because of its marginal position within the Spanish Empire. The slaves in Matina were often under lax supervision. Due to the inhospitality of the region, the landowners would rarely visit, the only time typically being during the harvest, when they would bring additional manpower. Otherwise, for much of the year, the valley was inhabited by slaves and some overseers in what could be a case of absenteeism. Unlike other absentee systems, it did not create exceptional cruelty and harsh conditions; this is chiefly due to the small size of the

[25] Russel Lohse, 'Cacao and Slavery in Matina, Costa Rica, 1650-1750', in Lowell Gudmundson, Justin Wolfe (eds), *Blacks and Blackness in Central America Between Race and Place* (London, 2010), pp.66-67.

[26] Lohse, *Africans into Creoles*, p.119.

cacao estates and the comparatively mild nature of the labour involved in maintaining cacao trees.[27] This left many of the slaves in Matina time to farm their own private land that they held near their lodgings in Matina; many of these plots could be quite extensive due to the abundance of land in Costa Rica. Many slaves also maintained their own cacao trees, which allowed them to enter the contraband trade. As a result, some slaves were able to live relatively well, especially when compared to other parts of the Spanish Empire; some of them were even able to gather enough funds to purchase their own manumission. These opportunities came as a result of Costa Rica's borderland position. The lack of a powerful commercial class, royal monopolies or stringent oversight made space for slaves to exercise a limited sense of economic freedom and earn a significant profit.

This rosy picture did not result in a comfortable lifestyle. Many slaves had lives dominated by work. Labour in Matina not only included harvesting and selling cacao, but also fending off wild animals and Miskito raids, both of which were a perennial threat.[28] Furthermore, not all slaves enjoyed the benefits of Matina's opportunities. Many were employed in Cartago as domestic servants or artisans, and slaves were often moved between these urban roles and working in Matina. The enhanced economic opportunity did not always result in freedom; there are several accounts of slaves who paid for their freedom only for their master to not free them and keep the money. This could have been due to the whim of their master, or if their previous master had died and their new master simply refused to free them on account of the agreement being

[27] Lohse, 'Cacao and Slavery in Matina', p.71.

[28] AGI, Expediente sobre hostilidades y exterminio de los indios zambos y mosquitos, así como de los ingleses, Guatemala 302, Carta del presidente de la audiencia de Guatemala sobre hostilidades y robos de indios zambos en costa rica Ano 1724 junio, 9, 9 June 1724; Lohse, 'Cacao and Slavery in Matina', p.67.

with the previous owner.[29] It was also likely that the low slave population made them more valuable, contributing to the reluctance of their masters to free them.[30] Costa Rica had a slave society that was small but complex due to the conflict between the remarkable opportunities offered to them in Spanish laws, and the masters' ability to override it in certain cases.[31]

Costa Rica's slave population had considerable freedoms when compared to other slave societies. The power of slaveholders, however, made the freedoms quite arbitrary. The fact that the slaves were able to negotiate and occasionally assert these rights suggests they could be incorporated into ideas of passive slave resistance, by asserting a degree of independence in the face of efforts to control them. While actions such as these happened in other slaveholding societies, they were pronounced in Costa Rica because of the small economy, government and free population of the region.

This resistance to the Spanish imperial system was not limited to the slaves; other inhabitants of the colony, especially the wealthy, also resisted often indirectly. As Costa Rica was so far from the major power centres and direct supervision for much of the eighteenth century, many rules of the strict mercantilist economic system could be bent through the contraband trade. The contraband trade was endemic across the Kingdom of Guatemala and formed in Costa Rica due to limited opportunities for trade. The expansion of cacao growth had been made with the intention to sell it through the trade

[29] Lohse, *Africans into Creoles,* p.131.

[30] Michael D. Olien, 'Black and Part-Black Populations in Colonial Costa Rica: Ethnohistorical Resources and Problems', *Ethnohistory*, 27 (1980), pp.18-20.

[31] Lohse, *Africans into Creoles,* p.175.

fairs at Portobello in Panama, one of Costa Rica's traditional avenues for trade.[32] Costa Rica also initially exported cacao to Nicaragua to be sold throughout the Spanish Empire, but as one Governor complained early in the century:

> Los tratos y comercios de esta provincia son muy cortos y de poca substancia para sus vecinos la razón es porque el zurrón de cacao que vale en toda ella veinte y cinco pesos, para sacar lo del valle de Matina a la ciudad de Cartago tiene de costo seis pesos y para dársele alguna salida es necesario traficar lo a la provincia de Nicaragua y para esto se paga un peso de derechos y otros cinco de conducirlo y las más veces los venden por veinte pesos con que en lugar de tener algún adelantando se abasan perdiendo más de la mitad de su valor.[33]

Difficulties such as these forced many traders to find alternate routes to carry out trade. These systems displayed Costa Rica's marginalisation by imperial Spanish law regarding licensed ports and trade monopolies. Most of its trade was made up of contraband, according to official terminology, and, as a result, a large proportion of Costa Rica's wealthiest inhabitants were involved in it.[34] For many, it was one of the most accessible methods of enriching themselves in a province with a small indigenous population and limited legal trade. The most important source of contraband goods were the British merchants trading at Matina. This is not necessarily because of the value of

[32] Fonseca, 'El Comercio de Costa Rica durante el declive del comercio Espanol y el desarrollo del contrabando inglés', p.4. Macleod, 'Auge y Estancamiento de la Producción de Cacao', p.100.

[33] Cartas de los Gobernadores de Costa Rica, 1719, AGI, Guatemala 240.

[34] Fonseca, 'El Comercio de Costa Rica', pp.55-57.

the merchandise or because it was the only route; due to imperial definitions, a lot of trading between Spanish subjects was technically contraband.

The balance of power between Spain and Britain allowed the settlers from the Mosquito Coast to expand their contraband network to Costa Rica, where it was readily accepted. Once in place, it quickly became an integral part of the Costa Rican economy, accommodating cacao that had previously been traded legally.[35] Determining the value and extent of the contraband trade is difficult due to the paucity of records, but there are several factors that can be examined to see the extent of involvement. One way is by examining what objects were sold; the nature of them would help determine where demand was coming from. In this respect, many of the wares smuggled into Costa Rica were basic objects such as clothes, fabrics, tableware and work materials required by most people for a decent standard of living or for their profession.[36] This suggests a broad involvement in the trade, or at least that those involved sold goods on to most people. The amount of luxury goods that contrabandists sold was small, but their constant presence, and sale, throughout the eighteenth century suggests that the richest residents in Costa Rica also used contraband. It was so accepted that contraband was traded very openly; Spanish reports complained about the presence of a trade fair. According to reports, the British set it up at the mouth of the river Matina to buy and sell wares.[37] Hodgson and Speer both commented of the value to the British of trading cacao, with Speer specifically mentioning in 1765 that Costa Rica 'produces large

[35] Macleod, 'Auge y Estancamiento de la Producción de Cacao', p.100.

[36] Castillo, 'Matina Bastion del contrabando en Costa Rica', p.439.

[37] Fonseca, 'El Comercio de Costa Rica', p.56.

quantities of the best cocoa… at the river mouth [Matina] English vessels reason and trade with the Spanish for that commodity for considerable sums of money'.[38]

The contraband trade served to stimulate the Costa Rican economy. Matina's cacao production expanded throughout the eighteenth century because of wealth generated by the contraband trade.[39] This also brought about an increase in the slave population as the owners of cacao plantations sought to expand their workforce. This had a significant impact on the province, and racial boundaries became increasingly complex as the number of people with African heritage started to increase.[40] While such changes were not uncommon in other American or Caribbean colonies, one stranger change brought about by the dominance of cacao was unique to Costa Rica. Due to the combination of cacao's value and the lack of coins in the province, the inhabitants of Costa Rica used the cacao bean as the main form of currency.[41] For how long this continued is unclear, though it could have been several decades, given that Governor Diego de la Haya reported this occurrence in 1721 and accounts from Cartago in the early 1770s still show very small amounts of coinage being brought into the province from Guatemala.[42] This use of cacao was not limited to personal interactions between individuals for economic transactions, but was also used by colonial officials. When the Governor sought to outfit an expedition to retaliate against the Miskito in 1753, they still paid

[38] An account of the Mosquito shore, 1757 MS ADD191; Description of the Bay of Honduras and the Mosquito Shore, 1765 TNA, ADM 7/837.

[39] Potthast-Jutkeit, 'Centroamérica y el Contraband por la Costa de Mosquitos', pp.514-515.

[40] Lohse, *Africans into Creoles*, p.203.

[41] Cartas de los Gobernadores de Costa Rica, Don Diego de la Haya, 1719; AGI, Guatemala 240.

[42] Cuentas de los Correos, 1772-1774, AGI, Correos 96A.

them in cacao equivalent to seven pesos a month.[43] If the contraband trade (and, by extension, cacao planting) expanded and cacao maintained its value as an export crop then its value should not have declined sharply. In addition to the economic benefits of the contraband trade, its adoption and growth had ramifications across the province.

When compared to other borderlands across Central America, the contraband trade had one of the largest economic impacts on Costa Rica. At the local level, it was essential to supporting the growth of Costa Rica's cocoa industry due to the lack of easy access to other markets and providing manufactured goods that could not be easily produced in Costa Rica. This influx of clandestine wealth had severe ramifications beyond economics as it stimulated the growth of slavery, which led to new social developments and structures as social classes became more distinct. The Spanish also failed to curb contraband in any meaningful way; the Miskito still maintained it as late as 1787.[44] As a result, the contraband trade shaped the development of Costa Rica for most of the eighteenth century. It is difficult to ascertain how much the contraband trade harmed the Spanish economy at the metropolitan or regional levels since Costa Rica was so marginal. However this was not a deep concern for many inhabitants of Costa Rica. Lacking support from the metropolitan and regional levels, the inhabitants of the local level acted largely independently to solve their own problems. The solution in this case was provided by an external source based in the nearby Mosquito Coast. While this solution did at least partially remedy the province's economic problems, it drew Costa

[43] Correspondencia con los Gobernadores Presidentes Carta al Gobernador Don Alonso de Arcos Moreno, 16 Julio 1753, AGI Guatemala 448.

[44] Michael D. Olien, 'After the Indian Slave Trade: Cross-Cultural Trade in the Western Caribbean Rimland, 1816-1820', *Journal of Anthropological Research*, 44 (1988), p. 52.

Rica into the wider imperial struggle and the entanglements linked to the other borderlands, which brought risks that many seemed willing to take.

5.4: Borderland Violence: Entangled Relations and Clashes with the Miskito and British

The increased economic opportunities at Matina attracted the attention of other Europeans and the Miskito. The British presence had some beneficial effects and they were essential to the contraband trade. The higher economic output drew the increased attention of the Miskito who regularly raided the region, taking cacao, people and other valuables. The British and Miskito methods to gain wealth from Costa Rica were detrimental to each other and complicated the Spanish relationships with both groups. This was not helped by the British dependence on the Miskito for security and the attempts of Costa Rican Governors to entreat the Miskito. The escalation of violence was an extension of the Anglo-Hispanic imperial rivalry reaching the previously isolated Costa Rica. The province, through taking advantage of localised and illegal trade networks, gained the tense and complex relations with a potentially hostile power in the form of the British and a power that was mostly hostile in the form of the Miskito.

Miskito raids along Costa Rica's coast were not new for the eighteenth century, but their intensity did increase. Throughout the seventeenth century, and perhaps earlier, the Miskito had travelled the length of the coast in order to hunt turtles and manatee and to raid Spanish settlements for trade goods and slaves.[45] What is important to note about these voyages is that they did not suggest a permanent presence, as they only occurred

[45] Helms, 'Miskito Slaving and Culture Contact: Ethnicity and Opportunity in an Expanding Population', pp.183-84. M.W., *The Mosqueto Indian and his Golden River*, p.288.

at specific times to coincide with turtle migrations or the cacao harvest.[46] Prior to the eighteenth century, these incursions were expeditions to gather resources, which were important for the Miskito, but would gain further importance as they began to trade more with other Europeans. This accrued wealth played a prominent role in forming the Miskito Kingdom, as raid leaders were able to amass and distribute resources to reinforce their position. The loot was either kept or sold to their British allies, the Jamaican demand for slaves being a strong motivating factor.[47] To take fuller advantage of the British trade, the Miskito increased their raiding in Costa Rica for economic enrichment.

The relationship between the British and the Miskito regarding Costa Rica, and Matina specifically, appeared to be quite opaque. The lack of clarity is largely due to the lack of sources written on the topic by contemporary British or Miskito commentators. Such records regarding Costa Rica are rare. The Spanish accounts seem to detail a very conflicting set of aims between the British and the Miskito. The principal aim of the Miskito, as in other parts of Central America, was to acquire captives and goods for personal prestige and to trade. In this it seems they were generally very successful with their own raids. In one such example in 1724, they took over 1,000 zurrones of cacao and eighteen slaves.[48] It is also evident that they were aware of the value of cacao as the plantations were frequently the sole target of Miskito raids. The British were rarely involved in these raids, suggesting that they were undertaken without direct provocation

[46] Lohse, *Africans into Creoles*, pp.39, 120.

[47] Helms, 'Miskito Slaving and Culture Contact', pp.183-84; Seville, Archivo General de Indias, Expediente sobre hostilidades y exterminio de los indios zambos y mosquitos, así como de los ingleses en Roatán, Guatemala 301, Carta del presidente de la Audiencia de Guatemala sobre situación del territorio tras el terremoto, 5 June 1718.

[48] Carta del presidente de la audiencia de Guatemala, 9 June 1724, AGI, Guatemala 302.

and for the Miskito's own benefit. The Miskito's view of Matina thus seems to be largely identical to any other Spanish region within their reach; it was principally a source of resources, mainly cacao, and slaves to trade with their British allies.

In comparison, the British voyages to Matina seem to have been carried out exclusively for peaceful, if tense, contraband trading. These were complicated by the frequent presence of the Miskito, which the British brought as navigators and armed security. British concerns for their safety were evident by the number of armed individuals they brought with them, but the Miskito were not always present. A potential explanation for the variance in British trading expeditions is that some of the British traders came directly from Jamaica and instead brought armed individuals from the island for protection.[49] Spanish accounts frequently mention several types of 'ingleses', even at one point referring to them as 'Jamaicanos'.[50] The other point in favour of this view is just how many armed British there were; considering the concern of the Mosquito Coast settlers regarding the lack of British troops there, it seems unlikely they would commit many armed individuals to trading ventures to Matina, especially when they could, and indeed seemed to, travel with the Miskito for protection.[51] The method of contraband trading was therefore different in Costa Rica when compared to the Mosquito Coast. The British were forced to travel in person more often, due to a lack of intermediary indigenous groups, which was a considerable risk.

[49] Naylor, *Penny Ante Imperialism*, p.50.

[50] Carta del Gobernador de Costa Rica sobre procesos contra él, 10 December 1724, AGI Guatemala 302.

[51] Cartas y testimonios del presidente de la audiencia de Guatemala sobre petición para comerciar hecha por un zambo mosquito, 10 May 1737 AGI Guatemala 302.

The methods of the British and Miskito contradicted, as sustained raiding by the Miskito inhibited the growth of the cacao trade by taking slaves and generally disrupting the coast. This was counter to British interests in the region, which, like in other parts of Spanish Central America, were to extract as much wealth as possible at minimal cost. Thus, the resources at Matina were fought over by the three main groups, the British and Spanish, who were mostly content to trade illegally between each other, and the Miskito, who preferred to just take the resources. This complicated the Miskito-British alliance against the Spanish as their goals at the local level clashed. Spanish attempts to control the region exacerbated the problems and, while not completely resolving the clash, did bring a degree of unity to British and Miskito actions when they carried out violent reprisals.

At the local level, the Spanish viewed the Miskito as the principal threat to the region. This led to some efforts to limit the threat they posed while preserving the trade. The most apparent attempts were the efforts to form an agreement between the Spanish and the Miskito. In 1722, Governor Diego de la Haya met with Governor Anibel (Hannibal) of the Miskito to negotiate an alliance or truce.[52] The Spanish aim was for Anibel to swear allegiance to the Spanish crown and to agree to educate his children in Catholicism. They hoped to achieve this by granting him several titles such as 'el gobernador patente de capitán de mar, y Guerra, gobernador, y guardacostas de las del citado valle' and hoped that opening to trade with them would placate them.[53] The alliance was ultimately unsuccessful, but the letter contains numerous assurances to the

[52] Expediente Sobre la Obediencia hecha a su Majestad, por Anibel Mestizo, Gobernador Mosquito, 21 May 1722, AGI, Guatemala 301.

[53] Expediente Sobre la Obediencia hecha a su Majestad, por Anibel Mestizo, Gobernador Mosquito, AGI Guatemala 301, 21 May 1722.

imperial government that the alliance was chiefly for security purposes and not an attempt to subvert the economic system.[54] One of the benefits to a cessation of hostilities would be the preservation of Matina's cacao and the smoother running of the contraband trade. The agreement is also notable as there is no mention of turning the Miskito against the British, which was often a component of such Spanish plans, further suggesting this was a purely defensive agreement for the Spanish.

These efforts seemed to continue throughout the eighteenth century. The British found a similar attempt from the Costa Rican governor to ally with the Miskito Admiral Dilson in 1769, with the Spanish again offering trading privileges in return for the Miskito's allegiance. Dilson was dissuaded from the deal by a combination of British and Miskito pressure.[55] Attempts by the Costa Rican governors were unsuccessful; either the alliances were never agreed on, or the Miskito leaders were pressured into reneging on them upon returning to Miskito territory.[56] The threat of the Miskito remained persistent throughout the eighteenth century and the Governors of Costa Rica evidently attempted to limit their aggression while maintaining the economic opportunity. As they were the most prominent military threat to the region, limiting them would also limit the British, who had begun the eighteenth century as largely peaceful traders but became a military threat.

The desire to stop contraband and prevent or limit Miskito raids led to local Costa Rican aims coinciding with those of the wider empire, specifically the need for greater security. Attempts to achieve this either took the form of building fortifications or

[54] Ibid.

[55] Description of the Bay of Honduras and the Mosquito Shore, 1765, TNA, ADM 7/837.

[56] Olien, 'General, Governor and Admiral', p.306.

military reprisals. Reprisals were often ineffective as they frequently led to counter-reprisals. They also demonstrated a difference between the aims of the Governor and other individuals within the colony, specifically over the acceptance of contraband. The dismissal of Governor Soler on the grounds of madness could have been motivated by his attitude towards the contraband trade. Shortly after Haya's attempts to form an alliance with Anibel, a lieutenant in Matina ambushed and captured British and Miskito traders after they had loaded up their ships with contraband. Later that year, Anibel returned and sacked the Matina valley, taking the entire cacao harvest and twenty-five hostages in what was widely seen as an act of revenge.[57] Such reprisals did not always deter the Spanish, as Speer describes a similar incident:

> The Spanish traders of this place [Costa Rica] having appointed some English vessels to meet them there in 1759, where they promised to be with proper effects to trade, accordingly on the 26 of that month, 3 sloops and 3 perryaguas from curacao, Jamaica and the Mosquito Shore arrived on the 28th dealt with the Spaniards, to the amount of twelve thousand pieces of eight, and had fair promises for a larger sum in a few days, on which assurance, the English and Dutch by persuasion of the Spaniards, left their vessels at anchor without the bar and erected tents on the banks of the river, where the Spanish turned up armed and surprise attacked them and murdered 60 people, only two whites and some mosquito escaping by swimming across the river. The mosquito king swore vengeance and in

[57] Fonseca, 'El Comercio de Costa Rica', pp.52-53.

> 1760 admiral Dilson of the mosquitos led 150 men took an emplacement stealing the guns and boats, killing 30 Spaniards by burning them alive another 30 in cold blood, and taking the rest prisoner.[58]

This perceived betrayal is likely due to the failure to differentiate between Costa Ricans who engaged in the contraband trade and those who were trying to stop it. Attacks such as this were not entirely unprovoked; British settlers had been involved in earlier raids, or at least were thought to have been. They had also made more direct threats pertaining to the contraband trade. In 1747, a British captain sent a letter to the Governor of Costa Rica, saying:

> Nuestro vivo deseo es establecer con vosotros, por quienes sentimos benévola inclinación, relaciones de libre comercio, con el consejo y bajo los auspicios de pudientes y acreditados comerciantes de la ciudad generalmente conocida con el nombre de Kingston, más ... sí rehusareis ... esta proposición de libre comercio igualmente ventajosa para vosotros y para nosotros, y fuere rechazada ... en breve devastaremos a hierro y fuego vuestras casas y plantaciones ... Esperamos con ansia vuestra contestación dentro de una semana ... en el sitio llamado Salt Creek ... Si no os fuera posible hacernos llegar

[58] Description of the Bay of Honduras and the Mosquito Shore, 1765 TNA, ADM 7/837.

> vuestra respuesta en el plazo asignado, podéis dirigirla a los comerciantes Alejandro Campbell, residente en Kingston.[59]

The content of the letter suggests that the British who sent it were likely from Jamaica rather than the Mosquito Coast, further complicating the already tense relationships. Efforts from the Spanish to deter the Miskito by force were ultimately unsuccessful. The failure to limit or prevent their raids meant that any attempts at reprisal would be reciprocated; this drew the British residents of the coast and Jamaica into this fluctuating armed conflict. Contraband in Costa Rica was characterised by a high tension, as violence was always likely.

In addition to military attacks, efforts were made to build defences to limit the damage done by the Miskito and British. Over the eighteenth century, several Costa Rican Governors sent correspondence pertaining to the defence of the province requesting assistance, typically financial, in creating fortifications and establishing a permanent militia. The official aim was to secure the entire coast against foreign interference, ideally stopping the Miskito raids and the contraband trade at the same time. The reality, however, was entirely focused on stopping the Miskito raids while leaving the contraband trade untouched. One such defence plan put forward by Governor Francisco Antonio de Carrandi y Menán in 1737 involved establishing a fort at the mouth of the Matina River and to permanently station a frigate and two galliots to patrol the nearby oceans and rivers.[60] This fort was eventually built in 1742 and named San Fernando de

[59] Ricardo Fernández Guardia, 'El fuerte de San Fernando', *Crónicas Coloniales San José: Editorial Costa Rica*, 19, p.133, in Fonseca, 'El Comercio de Costa Rica'.

[60] Cartas y testimonios del presidente de la audiencia de Guatemala sobre petición para comerciar hecha por un zambo mosquito, 10 May 1737 AGI 302.

Matina, but it was considered to be a relatively poor construction.[61] During his inspection of Central America's defences, Luis Diaz Navarro commented that, due to its position, it could not defend Matina and its garrison did little more than inform the Costa Ricans when contraband traders arrived and did nothing to stop them.[62] This fort was eventually destroyed in a raid after having failed to have any meaningful impact on the security of the region. Efforts to maintain an effective militia for defensive purposes seems to have also had problems. Haya commented in 1721 that the militia were clumsy, barely knew how to fire a gun and that some were only armed with spears.[63] Additionally, they were paid in cacao, which was valuable mainly due to the contraband trade. There was a general reluctance to take any action that might stifle the contraband trade, but there was support for action against the Miskito, who were considered the main threat.

The debacle of San Fernando de Matina was indicative of the problems Costa Rica faced when trying to improve its security and stabilise the interactions on the Atlantic coast. Its marginal position within the Spanish Empire meant that it received little support from the regional or metropolitan levels, forcing it to rely on its own limited resources. Lacking the means to build effective fortifications, the inhabitants of Costa Rica resorted to counter-attacks to try dissuading the Miskito and British. This failed as there was no provision for defence, in either a well-organised militia or fortifications. This demonstrated the power of the Governor who, if he was opposed to contraband, was able to temporarily gather people to try and prevent it. The result was a series of

[61] See Appendix 15 for its planned layout.

[62] Fonseca, 'El Comercio de Costa Rica', pp.55-56.

[63] Al presidente, de Guatemala… copia de una representación del gobernador de costa rica sobre el estado de aquella provincia reducción de los indios Talamancas…, 15 March 1719 AGI Guatemala 240.

bloody reprisals fought between the Miskito, the British and the Costa Ricans as no side had an overwhelming advantage. This also failed to reduce the contraband in any meaningful way and many Costa Ricans carried on trading illegally despite the risks and the damage caused by the violence. Prevention happened in isolated temporary cases but was undermined by the necessity of contraband in the Costa Rican economy. The result was a simultaneous encouragement and deterrent towards contraband during the eighteenth century as Costa Rica lacked the resources or will to decisively choose one course of action. The British and the Miskito, in contrast, never sought to stabilise the local level as their goals never necessitated it, and they had opportunities elsewhere due to their connections with other levels of interaction. This did not mean they were less active, just that they did not pursue long-term goals in the area. The Miskito and British actions never posed a threat to the existence of Costa Rica, but their presence did exacerbate other Spanish fears.

5.5: Borderland Fear: Talamanca and the Fear of Indigenous Power

Like the Mosquito Coast, Costa Rica had a significant population of unsubjugated indigenous groups. Independent of the Miskito, these groups were concentrated in the Talamanca mountain range and were considered a serious threat by Spanish contemporaries. Unlike the Miskito, the groups in Talamanca did not launch the same scale of raids against the Spanish; instead, they seemed to resist Spanish attempts to colonise and subjugate them. The Spanish saw this as a grave threat to their security in Costa Rica. This perception of Talamanca as a threat, and the urgency of Spanish efforts to reduce it, were directly affected by the British and the Miskito and were a key fear at the local level.

The area referred to as 'Talamanca' by Spanish records encompassed a broad area that in the modern day covers both eastern Costa Rica and western Panama; and there is considerable difficulty when comparing the indigenous groups between modern ethnography and historical accounts. It comprised a mountain range and the coastal plains that spanned from the foothills to the coast. The ethnography of the region is also known to be very sparse; as of 2009, the indigenous groups were the least known ethnographically in the western hemisphere.[64] Many of the early accounts regarding the indigenous groups are similarly sparse, focusing mostly on the experience of indigenous groups inside missions, featuring little about their experience in their own societies. Thus, the accounts of the indigenous groups have led to an incomplete record until the nineteenth century, making discerning indigenous groups and their practices very difficult.

Spanish efforts to conquer and evangelise in the region targeted areas rather than the specific groups that inhabited the region, although they often included groups from Panama as being located within Talamanca. In 1754, a letter sent to the Governor General of Costa Rica from an ecclesiastical judge shows the great diversity of indigenous groups in the region. In the letter, reference was made to at least seven different indigenous groups: the Talamancas, Térrabas, Tojares, Changuenes, Dorasques, Yeguas and Guayime.[65] The views of other commentators show that this depiction of the region was not fixed and subject to significant change. For example, in 1787, the Governor of Veragua claimed that there were only three indigenous groups in

[64] *Native Peoples A to Z*, vol 2, p.400.

[65] Expediente Sobre el aumento de sínodos a los misioneros de Salamanca y Tologalpa del Colegio de Crucificado de la Ciudad de Santiago de Guatemala, 1754, AGI 385.

Talamanca: the Cabecaras, Viceytas and North Terrabas.[66] These differences in opinion suggest changing views on where Talamanca was, and which groups lived there. Modern work by the Costa Rican historian Juan Carlos Solórzano Fonseca suggests that, at the start of the eighteenth century, there were three indigenous groups in the Costa Rican area of Talamanca: the Cabécares, Térrabas and Biceítas.[67] The presence of such a broad range of indigenous groups, coupled with the vague Spanish knowledge of them, suggests the limits of Spanish power in the region when compared with other, better-documented, mission frontiers.

The Spanish seemed to know little regarding the societal structures and population of the indigenous groups. The Governor of Veragua described them as:

> Su índole, carácter brutal, y cobardía de ánimo especialmente si oyen tiros de fusil, y la deridia en no aprovecharse del mucho oro de que abunda aquel terreno, contentando se con su cosecha de maíz, plátanos, y algunas frutas silvestres.[68]

The warlike aspects described in the account are supported to a certain extent by ethnographic works. Evidence suggests that groups in Talamanca lived in palisaded villages, and that warfare was an important part of social life.[69] This is not uncommon in Central American indigenous groups, but the elevation of warriors in certain tribes to

[66] …los resuelto acerca de la conquista proyectada por los misioneros del colegio de cristo crucificado de los indios infieles de la provincia de Talamanca…, 19 de noviembre de 1787 AGI, Guatemala 962.

[67] Juan Carlos Solórzano Fonseca, 'La rebelión de los indígenas bajo la Dirección de Pablo Presbere (Talamanca 1709-1710)', *Cuadernos de Antropología*, 21 (2011), p.7.

[68] …los resuelto acerca de la conquista proyectada por los misioneros del colegio de cristo crucificado de los indios infieles de la provincia de Talamanca… 19 de noviembre de 1787 AGI Guatemala 962.

[69] Rojas, 'Exploring Warfare and Prisoner Capture in Indigenous Southern Central America', pp.110-111.

a special class denotes a degree of importance. It is not clear what this status granted other than a special burial, but the Guaymi did appear to have a feudal structure, based on inheritable positions, a hierarchy and military or economic service, suggesting a significant degree of organisation. The account implies that they planted and harvested corn, suggesting a significant level of sedentary agriculture supplemented with foraged fruits. This degree of organisation does not seem to have spread much beyond agriculture. The Spanish were surprised that they did not mine the gold that was apparently abundant in the mountains; this is despite several observers and excavations finding indigenous peoples with golden ornamentations. Their weapons and other material culture were like that of their neighbours, consisting mostly of bows, spears, baskets, pots and simple clothes.[70]

Determining the population of these groups also seemed to be very difficult, and there was open disagreement on the subject in official correspondence. In the early eighteenth century, when efforts were first being made to evangelise in the region, two friars reported that:

> Talamanca No tiene mil indios en su provincia jugamos sin juicio encontré que el que esta dice o no sabe lo que se habla, anunciad en citado a esta provincia que cuando no miráramos al pecado de una mentira grave informando a VM que son cinco mil indios lo, que están dentro parte no siéndolo.[71]

[70] *Native Peoples A to Z*, vol. 4.

[71] Testimonio de autos hechos debido a una petición de fray Antonio de Andrade y fray Pablo Rebullido, sobre la reducción de indios en las misiones de Talamanca, 16 February 1709, AGI Guatemala 297.

Despite this disagreement and the gravity with which it was viewed, recording the number of residents appeared to remain difficult. A later piece of correspondence claimed that there were 10,000 'indians' in Talamanca, a dramatic increase to double a population in twenty-seven years.[72] This lack of knowledge of the numbers of the indigenous groups likely stymied missionary efforts as it hampered planning, but more importantly it stimulated Spanish fears of large-scale resistance.

The most significant incident of indigenous resistance was the Presbere uprising of 1709. Although it was crushed the following year, it marked a significant setback for Spanish missionary efforts. Presbere gathered over 1,000 indigenous people and fought against the Spanish. The rebels burnt more than a dozen chapels and killed several missionaries and Spanish soldiers, forcing those who survived to retreat from the mountains.[73] The response from the Costa Rican government was impressively swift as it gathered a military force of around 200 Spanish troops, captured Presbere and crushed the revolt. Presbere and 700 indigenous people were marched to Cartago for punishment, with 200 perishing or escaping during the journey. His execution was supposed to serve as a warning to any who might resist Spanish authority, but indigenous groups continued to resist. The rebellion remained a part of Costa Rican collective memory for a long time, as late as the mid-nineteenth century an image was

[72] De los autos dichos sobre las providencias que se majestad manda se den para la reducción y pimento de los indios de la Talamanca…, 10 septiembre 1736, AGI Guatemala 379.

[73] Expediente sobre la escolta de los misioneros del cristo crucificado para la reducción de los indios Talamanca y conservación de una misión de 24 religiosos. Anos 1737-1741, AGI Guatemala 379.

made by José María Figueora commemorating the execution, suggesting the memory was still present.[74]

The rebellion unsettled the Spanish, making Talamanca a fixation of the Costa Rican government, and reinforced the need to maintain relations with the regional and metropolitan levels. Costa Rica was dependent on Guatemala and Madrid for the resources necessary to reduce Talamanca. The rebellion had been crushed thanks to a rapid shipment of 175 firearms from Guatemala.[75] The personnel required to run the missions also had to come from outside the colony; most missionaries sent to Talamanca came from the Franciscan college based in Guatemala, and coinage to pay soldiers also had to be imported. References to the revolt and other clashes in the early years of the eighteenth century were in many letters as warnings to what might happen if Talamanca was left unsubjugated.[76] It was likely there was a fear that the indigenous groups might be influenced by other Europeans, as the Miskito had been, or that the Miskito could strengthen themselves by raiding Talamanca. The Talamanca mountain range therefore became the principal point of Spanish expansion in Costa Rica.

The importance placed on the reduction of Talamanca is evident in letters sent from the Governors of Costa Rica. Shortly after assuming the position of Governor, Diego de la Haya sent a message to the king urging him to give him the resources needed to reduce them, going so far as to say that he was willing to sacrifice himself in pursuit of the

[74] Palmer, *The Costa Rica Reader*, p.22.

[75] Floyd, *Anglo-Spanish Struggle*, p.52.

[76] Expediente sobre la escolta de los misioneros del cristo crucificado para la reducción de los indios Talamanca y conservación de una misión de 24 religiosos, 10 septiembre 1736, AGI Guatemala 379.

goal.[77] The importance placed on Talamanca influenced other efforts to fortify Costa Rica. In a letter sent three years later, de la Haya was reporting on efforts to reinforce defences at Caldera only to insist on the crucial importance of conquering Talamanca.[78] The importance of this goal continued to grow as the century progressed, driven by the growing Anglo-Miskito threat as the government sought to shore up any potential weak points. In 1739, Governor Pedro Rivera was urged to split the resources allocated for defence between holding back the Miskito and on reducing Talamanca.[79] The presence of unsubjugated indigenous groups in Talamanca was perceived as a serious threat by the Spanish government, and remained one throughout the eighteenth century, as a map from 1780 demonstrates.[80] Regardless as to whether this level of concern was justified or not, it drew significant attention and resources from other matters in Costa Rica, affecting its development as the indigenous groups continued to resist, drawing resources and focus away from other concerns.

There were several reasons motivating the Spanish to conquer Talamanca. Common motivations that applied elsewhere in the Spanish Empire were present, such as the drive to evangelise, seeking resources or indigenous labour. Some, however, were unique to Talamanca and reflected wider geopolitical goals. One such motivation was wider strategic defence. The Spanish were eager to tighten their control over the region

[77], El Gobernó de la provincial de Costa Rica… de cuenta a V.M. lo que necesita provincial para su defensa y para la conquista de los Talamanca, 15 March 1719, AGI Guatemala 240.

[78] Cartas de los Gobernadores de Costa Rica Años 1719-1759, 24 March 1721, AGI Guatemala 240.

[79] Cartas y Testimonios de autos del presidente de la Audiencia de Guatemala Sobre Hostilidades de Mosquitos en Comayagua y Costa Rica, 15 December 1739, AGI Guatemala 302.

[80] See Appendix 16; numerous unsubjugated groups of indigenous people can be seen towards the top of the map.

not only to consolidate their control over the isthmus, but also defend against Miskito raids further afield. It was hoped that the:

> reducción de ellos los vencidos indios respecto de ser paraje… a los negros zambos de isla de mosquitos llevando para su mejor contribuyeron a la provincia de Boruca.[81]

This suggests that it was local pressures from other borderlands that led the Costa Rican government to push for the reduction of Talamanca. The direct Miskito threat to Talamanca also motivated Spanish efforts to conquer the region. There was a fear that the Miskito would raid the Talamancans, as they had done in the case of other indigenous groups. The results of these raids could have been varied and all bad for the Spanish. One of their principal fears was that the Miskito would increase their slave population, thus bolstering their numbers and economic productivity.[82] The other ramification would be unimpeded Miskito access to Costa Rica's southern regions. Thus, occurrences involving the Miskito, because of pressures from elsewhere, were able to spur Spanish expansion in Costa Rica. This brought the Talamancan missions into the wider anti-Miskito strategy across the Kingdom of Guatemala. The Costa Rican government may not have seen themselves as a part of this much wider struggle, but they seemed to think that, by using the Miskito threat, they may receive more assistance from the imperial government. Such a suggestion was not unreasonable considering the

[81] Expediente sobre la escolta de los misioneros… para la reducción de los indios Talamanca y conservación de una misión de 24 religiosos. Ano 1737-1741, 10 September 1736, AGI Guatemala 379.

[82] Ibid.

influence the Miskito had on the economy of the region via their interference with the contraband trade.

The missions in Talamanca were motivated by numerous factors, some of which were unique to the province of Costa Rica. This was in the face of serious logistical challenges Costa Rica faced such as chronic underfunding and lack of armed escorts. Missionary efforts in Talamanca were important to the Spanish due to occurrences in other borderlands, the Miskito stimulated Spanish fears of unsubjugated indigenous groups and uncontrolled territory. There was a fear that Talamanca could become a region like the Mosquito Coast. This fear was exacerbated by the Presbere rebellion in 1709, which served to illustrate the danger of Talamanca's inhabitants. The significance of Talamanca was that it appeared far more threatening to the Spanish because of the interactions with the Miskito and British

5.6 Conclusions: Development from the Pressures of Entanglement

Unlike the other Central American borderlands, Costa Rica was dominated by the Spanish who lived there, who were never in any real danger of being forced out, but foreign influence and the threat of indigenous groups had a profound effect on the region. It serves as an excellent example of how borderland approaches can be applied to an area without concerning itself with a narrative tied to state formation. From the start of the eighteenth-century, Costa Rica resembled a borderland society with its small population, local economy, limited metropolitan control and the presence of other powers, which affected all aspects of the region's development. Many of the major developments that occurred within Costa Rica were caused by interactions with the Miskito or British. Despite this, Costa Rica remained outside the scope of most

discussions of the borderlands. Belize and the Mosquito Coast were thought to be a part of the same problem, but Costa Rica experienced similar developments but was not drawn into a wider international struggle. Its development was driven by nearby local actors.

The lack of trading routes and links to other Spanish colonies accentuated the impact of non-Spanish actors. To address economic issues, the Costa Ricans turned to farming cacao and trading it illegally with nearby British traders. This spurred the growth of slavery and contraband in Costa Rica, which brought in major economic and demographic changes. This trade also brought increased violence as Miskito raids intensified and clashes broke out between British traders and Spanish officials. This brought the conflict that was occurring on the Mosquito Coast to Costa Rica, which fed long-standing fears of the indigenous groups of Talamanca. These combined fears pushed the local Spanish government in Cartago to secure itself from threats while preserving the new sources of revenue that had emerged. In contrast, the Miskito and British saw little need to expand their already limited presence. This made the Spanish at the local level the only consistently pro-active power in Costa Rica out of the main three. The Miskito and British would protect their interests, but would not seek to dramatically alter the status quo, whereas the Spanish sought greater stability and an end to Miskito raiding.

This was what made Costa Rica so different from the Mosquito Coast and Belize: although it was a territory entangled between three powers, only one of them was actively trying to take control and assert dominance. The reason why only one power was trying was due to contemporary perceptions, as Spanish fears over indigenous

activity and the conflicting roles of the Miskito and British pushed them to act despite the actual threat being very limited. This was compounded by the limited connections the local Spanish government had with the regional and metropolitan levels of the Spanish Empire, which helped prevent any overwhelming force being sent to Costa Rica. Costa Rica was also a smaller concern compared to Belize and the Mosquito Coast.

Costa Rica was dramatically affected by factors that were similar, if not more pronounced, than in the other Central American borderlands, but had a very different result, due to a lack of engagement from two of the three major powers. The result was a relatively united society throughout the rest of its history, at least when compared to Belize's ongoing border disputes and the sharp divides between the Atlantic and Pacific sides of Honduras and Nicaragua. These issues cannot be neatly explained solely by the events of the colonial period, but a clear developmental path can be seen, and it is inextricably entwined with being a borderland, which is in turn entwined with other areas within Central America and further afield.

Conclusions

The eighteenth century was a pivotal time for the economic, social and political development of Central America. This development was influenced by the borderland areas along its Atlantic coast, which blurred the lines between the Miskito alongside the British and Spanish empires, drawing the region into multiple historical narratives. The borderlands have been treated by historians as either a failed British front in their imperial struggle with Spain, or a small group of petty traders carving out a paltry existence on the edge of empire. To the Spanish Empire, the borderlands brought European intruders to the Kingdom of Guatemala, who posed a threat due to their alliance with indigenous groups; they hampered economic development and brought the wars of the eighteenth century to a region that otherwise might have escaped them. To the Miskito, it was a pivotal time for societal development, accelerated by their interaction with warring empires. Either way, they were studied within the constraints of modern borders, limiting the extent to which their influence on development could be analysed. This research was carried out to challenge these views as they did not seem to match the complexity of the societies that emerged in the borderlands and seemed to marginalise the influence of small societies in the context of empires.

The entangled approach, and new ideas regarding borderlands, started to consider the merits of considering contemporary views of borders and states. The result was that borderlands became seen as spaces that were shaped by clashes and interactions between all neighbouring states. To contemporaries living in them, concepts such as borders and states were ideas that were constantly in flux and difficult to define. While this could apply to a person's sense of self-identification, such as being a subject of the

British or Spanish empires, it also applied in a more tangible, physical way. Imperial boundaries were vague and rarely adequately monitored and were subject to regular changes due to the results of imperial wars or shifting indigenous boundaries. This lack of clarity also applied to the rules by which imperial subjects were supposed to lead their lives. Many laws did not apply in these fringe areas and, even when they did, the lack of state oversight meant they could be easily bent, broken or ignored. In such spaces, national and imperial narratives were inadequate as the inhabitants did not fully engage with imperial identity or aims. The proximity of these areas opened them up to the influence of other competing states, further complicating any chance of a straightforward narrative. Therefore, levels of interaction were used to differentiate different sets of actors while retaining the focus on how they were interconnected and how they shaped the local level in the borderlands. The focus was on how they communicated and influenced each other and how the distances and actions of other levels affected the borderland experience.

These levels corresponded to a broad range of actors across both the British and Spanish empires as well as the Miskito. Although the focus of this thesis was on the borderlands and the local level, the role of these three key powers were an essential piece of context that had both profound effects on the borderlands and were profoundly affected by them. The Spanish Empire sought to secure the region in order to preserve other more valuable imperial possessions and preserve their economic monopoly, which was being undermined by contraband. This goal remained constant over the eighteenth century but was pursued in a variety of ways as the Spanish were forced to adapt to the changing conditions in the borderlands. Efforts directed by the regional level to defeat the Miskito and crackdown on contraband gradually changed as it became increasingly unfeasible.

A new focus on reaching an agreement with the Miskito and removing the British via diplomacy at the metropolitan level demonstrated Spanish flexibility in pursing their goals in an increasingly entangled region. The pairing of this approach with continued internal reforms also showed a degree of uniformity across the Empire in pursuing a specific goal led by the regional level and then taken up by the metropole. In contrast, the British regional and metropolitan levels were led by actions at the local level, which contributed their erratic, sometimes chaotic, actions. For Jamaica and London, much of the eighteenth century was spent trying to utilise the borderland communities for wider strategic advantages at minimal cost. In pursuing this course of action, they made some official appointments, most notably the superintendent, but otherwise had little official interaction outside of wartime. As a result, they relied on personal connections between individuals, and when efforts were made to formalise connections to make the settlement fit more securely in official international structures and agreements, they were met with hostility and suspicion. In the face of these internal problems and the limited benefits, it was easier for Britain to remove most of the territories. Unlike Spain, Britain had no consistent long-term goal for the area across the Empire. Officials in London and Jamaica seized opportunities when they arose, but only a select few individuals had long-term plans and, by the late eighteenth century, there was little enthusiasm to implement them; much to the displeasure of the local level, which had created concrete long-term plans and structures.

The Spanish and British empires had very different long-term goals and intentions for the Central American borderlands but were still both ultimately dependent on the Miskito. This centrality of the indigenous group to European aims in the borderlands, regardless of what they were, underlines their importance and their ability to manipulate

European aspirations for their own benefit. These interactions also had deep impacts on the Miskito themselves as they experienced rapid political and social development in order to better pursue their own goals. The Miskito Kingdom, while being a far looser political entity than either of the European powers, became far more organised and improved their military capability. With this essential leverage, they pursued focused local goals despite being divided between four main leaders. These developments and coherent action ensured that they retained the ascendant military position they had enjoyed in the seventeenth century in the face of European, especially Spanish, developments. The Miskito were able to influence the regional and metropolitan levels through their contacts at the local level. These arrangements took place in the context of the tacit recognition of the Miskito Kingdom existing in some form. Thus, distant European policy regarding the borderlands had to accommodate the Miskito, essentially meaning that internal Miskito social, cultural and political developments were connected to actions taken at the regional and metropolitan levels. The three powers were all linked through the local level at the borderlands, and the actions they took were dependent on the actions of the others at multiple levels.

The Mosquito Coast occupies a place of major importance and is a prominent example of the entanglement between various groups in the region. Unlike borderlands in other parts of the Spanish Empire, the encroaching British settlements started developing governmental structures and industries reminiscent of a fully-fledged colony. These developments occurred due to unique opportunities and were dependent on connections the settlers formed with the Spanish Empire and the Miskito. The contraband trade and a degree of shared uncertainty over the indigenous groups drew British and Spanish subjects together and allowed the region to prosper. This close contact, however, drew

the attention of Madrid, London, Jamaica and the Kingdom of Guatemala, showing an entanglement of multiple levels of imperial government. This deep entanglement at multiple levels made it prominent in imperial relations and was a reason why it was the focus of diplomatic efforts and military action in the 1780s. Its presence and the actions of its inhabitants allowed the formation and development of the two neighbouring borderlands of Belize and Costa Rica.

British settlements in Belize pre-dated those on the Mosquito Coast, but the region experienced rapid change due to events occurring elsewhere during the eighteenth century. Increased activity in Central America brought imperial attention to Belize, as the Spanish viewed it as a part of the wider British threat and, in response, the Baymen sought security with their allies on the coast. Wider global developments in textiles also brought the potential of wealth as logwood began to be harvested for American and European markets. Belize's extractive industry-based economy survived falling logwood prices by expanding into cutting mahogany. This tangible economic benefit brought Belize to the attention of the metropolitan level and observers who saw potential despite the small population and lack of any formal institutions in the region, unlike in the Mosquito Coast. Thus, a competition started between Spain and Britain, with Spain aiming for the eventual removal of British settlers for imperial security and Britain trying to secure the economic benefits of the region. The interwoven networks of diplomacy, complicated by events on the ground, created a bizarre situation of simultaneous British presence with recognised Spanish sovereignty. Belize found itself at the centre of external forces that shaped its development through the manipulation of its connections to other areas. Its internal developments were driven by the immediate needs of its inhabitants to survive rather than any planned route to colonial

development. Belize became a prize to be won by the machinations of imperial powers in the borderlands, much of its development being driven by local reactions to decisions at the metropolitan level.

In comparison, the development of Costa Rica as an entangled territory was very different. The small scale of events and limited British presence prevents it from being classified as a true borderland, but it was still heavily connected to the Mosquito Coast. This ensured that the Miskito and British played a very similar role in Costa Rica's development as they did elsewhere. These roles were exacerbated by Costa Rica's limited connections with the other parts of the Spanish Empire. Its lack of resources had deterred major Spanish efforts to improve the colony. Its development during the eighteenth century would be dictated almost solely by the local level. The development of Costa Rica's contraband cacao trade was the most important economic connection the colony formed. It brought manufactured goods and British influence to the region, but it also brought the attention of the Miskito. Where the aim of many British merchants was to engage in (usually) peaceful trade, the Miskito frequently raided the coast for cacao and slaves to sell to the British. This outside influence also stoked Spanish fears of the indigenous groups residing in Talamanca. Spanish efforts to subjugate the region were stepped up in response to the fear of creeping Miskito and British influence. Between these pressures, the local government of Costa Rica found itself attempting to enforce stability on two powers without metropolitan support in what became a series of very small localised conflicts that seemed far more dangerous to contemporaries then perhaps they were. Costa Rica was indicative of what an entangled territory looked like when there was a large disparity in commitment between the principal powers interacting in the area.

This ascendancy of the Miskito, in terms of power and influence, was in turn dependent on the ongoing imperial struggle. The opportunities that were open to the Miskito and their value to the British and Spanish were a result of European aspirations for the region. They were the only force capable of securing the borderlands and maintaining the lucrative borderland trade. This was a result of Spanish and British reluctance to invest heavily in the region. The large armies and resources committed to other theatres of inter-imperial wars during the eighteenth century did not manifest in Central America. Smaller regional and local forces were left to carry out the global imperial contest. While the local inhabitants of the borderlands opted for cooperation, exploiting the porous borders for their own gain, colonial officials in Jamaica, Mexico and Guatemala sought to expand the influence of their respective empires and colonies.

Lacking the resources of the metropole, these regional governments had to look to other methods to influence the borderlands, of which the most prominent were the Miskito. While these ventures did eventually receive metropolitan backing, it ultimately fell to the colonial centres to implement the actions. This small scale of conflict allowed the Miskito to dominate, as they could easily surpass regular troops, both in numbers and effectiveness, and their control and access to trade networks ensured they were always well supplied and equipped. This dominance was tenuous, however, and depended on a very specific balance of power in the region. This balance temporarily collapsed between 1780 and 1782, undermining the esteemed position the Miskito had held. Despite initial Miskito support, the British San Juan raid achieved nothing, Trujillo was resettled by the Spanish and Black River was temporarily occupied; the significance of its recapture undermined due to the fact the British faced only a fraction of the Spanish force that had taken it.

While the borderlands remained intact after 1782, its role within both empires and its entanglements had fundamentally changed. The loss of the thirteen colonies and changing markets drew Britain's attention to Asia and India. With this pivot, Spain became less of a colonial rival, so permanent peace grew more appealing, and the borderlands could not be tolerated as constant sticking points between the empires. The metropolitan level exerted its will on the coast and, in contrast to earlier efforts, when it had been rebuffed by the settlers, no such leniency was granted. Protests from both the settlers and the Miskito were ignored and, in 1787, the settlers left, with most travelling to Belize; the only concession was a clause ensuring that the Miskito would be treated fairly by the new Spanish residents, an interesting clause considering the Miskito were still the main military power in the region. The removal of the British would also reduce the number of traders travelling to Costa Rica, reducing the value of its cacao trade.

This was an impressive development for Spain, which had sought to reclaim the coast and assumed it would have to be done piecemeal. The response also demonstrated how the borderlands had been viewed by the metropolitan governments. The Mosquito Coast was considered the centre of the British presence in Central America. Efforts to remove them had focused on slowly and methodically stripping away its outer layers – hence the strikes at Belize, efforts to recruit indigenous groups (including the Miskito) and efforts to limit the contraband network across Costa Rica, Honduras and Nicaragua. The aim had been to gradually encircle and crush the main British presence; this also explains why, during their successful assault in 1782, the force left to hold Black River was so small. The main force was to secure Trujillo; a base for future assaults on both British settlements and the contraband trade. The willingness of the British to cede the coast in return for continued logging rights in Belize (not even full possession, as

Spanish sovereignty would still be recognised) must have seemed somewhat perplexing. Without the Mosquito Coast, the Baymen would have nowhere easy to flee, making them incredibly vulnerable, and the contraband trade in Costa Rica would shrink as the small-scale traders stopped trading due to the increased distances involved. These last two borderlands would be much easier to remove with the central region under Spanish control. The British, however, were willing to cede it in return for keeping Gibraltar, which they saw as far more valuable. This was emblematic of two things: the borderlands had always been 'territories of convenience' for the British, tools of diplomacy through which rights could be ceded for diplomatic gain and minimal economic loss; and, despite both the borderlands and Gibraltar being flashpoints for Spain and Britain, the fact that the powers valued them so differently demonstrated where these empires thought their futures lay.

With the British loss of the Mosquito Coast, the borderlands ceased to be a major influence on the development of Central America for the rest of the colonial period. The failed Spanish effort to settle the Mosquito Coast was mostly an internal matter, and the eventual loss of control in 1798 was overshadowed by events in Europe. Furthermore, without a strong British presence in the Mosquito Coast, the potential danger posed by the British in Belize and Costa Rica shrank considerably. With the military threat curtailed, the menace of contraband also became a smaller concern. Britain draining resources from the Kingdom of Guatemala became a small problem when compared to naval defeats at Cape Saint Vincent, Trinidad and eventually Trafalgar, which effectively cut off the empire from Spanish rule. This loss of control and the need for resources to fight revolutionary France, then Britain and finally Napoleon's invasion, swiftly consumed all Spanish attention. Although the British would eventually return to

the coast, its role would be fundamentally different from that of the eighteenth century and the borderlands would lose a great deal of prominence.

This change of role after a brief Spanish interlude can be largely explained by the 'rise' (a generous use of the term) of Belize. The battle of Saint George's Cay in 1798 can be seen in many ways to signify the end of the borderland-dominated phase of development in much of Central America. When, for the first time, the Baymen fought and defeated an invading Spanish force, it secured Belize against its Spanish-speaking neighbours and ended their dependence on the Miskito for protection. Whether this confidence was warranted or not, what was important was that the Baymen now felt safer and confident they could defend themselves. The loss of the constant fear of a hostile force removed the need for many of the connections that had characterised much of the eighteenth century. Knowing they could repel assaults, settlements would not need to be temporary and they would not need to constantly beseech either Jamaica, or the Miskito, for protection. The creation of permanent settlements also helped produce more traditional slave-based extractive economies and reduced the role of contraband, further reducing the power of the Miskito and indigenous groups who were essential to its operation and reducing the need to form relationships with their Spanish-speaking neighbours. Belize, alone of the three areas, had become a viable British colony and would officially become one in 1854.

While the roles of borderlands and entangled international connections remained prominent in the nineteenth century, they were very different in nature. They were driven primarily by economics and were not the result of clandestine opportunists settling on a largely unknown coastline, but international companies backed by

governments seeking, among other things, bananas and canals. This was enterprise and government working in direct partnership for mutual benefit and, in such an environment, the indigenous groups could not play the same role they had in the eighteenth century.

By comparison, the borderlands of the eighteenth century had exerted considerable influence on their attached governments. The British settlers had taken a chance for personal enrichment, and the potential they offered to assist imperial objectives endeared them to the London and Jamaican governments. Their advantages of geographical location, the contraband trade and growing rapport with indigenous groups could all benefit the British Empire. Jamaican governors and London officials thus included the settlements in their plans, granting some assistance in return for their participation in imperial affairs. The Miskito also benefitted, exploiting their position to extract concessions and resources from two empires. The British settlers and the Miskito, however, needed the Spanish Empire to support their societies; not just as contraband trading partners, and an omnipresent common threat, but as an institutional construction that ultimately connected what were small-scale economies and events to a wider massive global whole. It was a small territory in which the governments of two of the world's major powers were deeply entangled.

The borderlands of eighteenth-century Central America were a conduit through which people who made the region their home reached out to global and imperial connections to improve and develop their societies. Through this effort, the borderlands' inhabitants had a deep effect on the isthmus. They brought attention, wealth and influence to the region that would likely have been spent elsewhere where Spain and Britain clashed.

This degree of exterior influence set a precedent for intervention through the Atlantic coast as the borderlands remained largely free of central control. The difference with the eighteenth century was that the empires involved were so large and inefficient that they could not muster enough force to bring the area under complete control. This allowed those who lived there to negotiate, carve out a space and play the empires against each other for their benefit; they created societies largely dependent on a larger world system. They were borderlands because they were dependent on the empires which they bordered, but they were distinct societies shaped by their position both geographically and within imperial structures. That position was deeply entangled with both empires and other bodies further afield.

This thesis has demonstrated that the borderlands were important to the development of Central America. The societies of the eighteenth century were central to making the borderlands important to the British and Spanish empires, as the territories in question had little strategic or economic value. Previous works have detailed the area's role in imperial competition and the development of the region, but the two views have not been reconciled and nor have their interconnections been demonstrated. This challenges existing frameworks for studying British and Spanish colonies by emphasising the role of actors outside of the empire, rather than focusing on clashes solely between metropolitan and regional governments. The escalation of British and Spanish action in the region was a result of developments in the borderland societies. These developments were, in turn, a result of imperial actions, thus creating a cyclical impetus for development. The focus of borderland societies being the central cause is new as it creates an indirect form of interaction between the European empires and the indigenous societies. The isolated trading post's slow development over the sixteenth and

seventeenth centuries accelerated in the eighteenth century due to interference from the regional and metropolitan levels. This was a result of myriad entangled connections between individuals, commercial interests and multiple empires.

The archival record supports this view. As the settlement developed, a greater quantity of detailed sources was produced by the borderland societies; mirroring this development, official correspondence increasingly mentioned the borderlands as they became a more significant issue. This is exemplified by the Mosquito Coast, which – as the Belize archives show – developed an incredibly functional government towards the end of the eighteenth century. It was this development across the eighteenth century that supports the argument that the Mosquito Coast was a borderland that sustained the British presence in Belize and Costa Rica, entangling those areas across multiple imperial and indigenous levels. They supported a closely interconnected set of territories inextricably linked to imperial structures that prompted their development due to the shifting course of Anglo-Spanish rivalry during the eighteenth century.

It is through this structure of entangled borderland societies that the Miskito can claim to have played such a prominent role. Their exceptional role in the eighteenth century has been commented on by extensive works, both modern and contemporary, and arguments over fine details of their internal politics may have obscured the broad academic consensus on their prominent role in wider ranging imperial histories. They played a crucial role in all three areas (with some regional variance) to the extent that European plans and actions made regarding Central America had to accommodate them in some form. Their assistance was often considered crucial or they were a principal subject for efforts to control the region. They also experienced the most relatively

significant developments of any group based in the region. It is difficult to call any one group or settlement the ‘core’ of the complex entanglements that characterised the region, but of all the actors involved the Miskito have the strongest claim to be the principal actor.

This research was carried out to prove that Central America was shaped heavily by interactions between three major regional powers, the British and Spanish Empires and the Miskito. These interactions created unique societies and networks that had a significant impact on the surrounding areas. Using the idea of levels of interaction has allowed for the classification of different points of interaction between different structures. This loose definition has helped demonstrate the entangled nature of the region while also allowing for enough separation to distinguish the different localised effects of the interactions between the three major powers in the three main borderlands. The focus of this thesis has overwhelmingly been on the effects at the local level; a more extensive analysis of how the borderlands affected decisions made in Madrid, London, Guatemala and Jamaica would doubtless improve the study. Although they are mentioned in this thesis, they are only referenced lightly, mainly to provide context and a few analytical points.

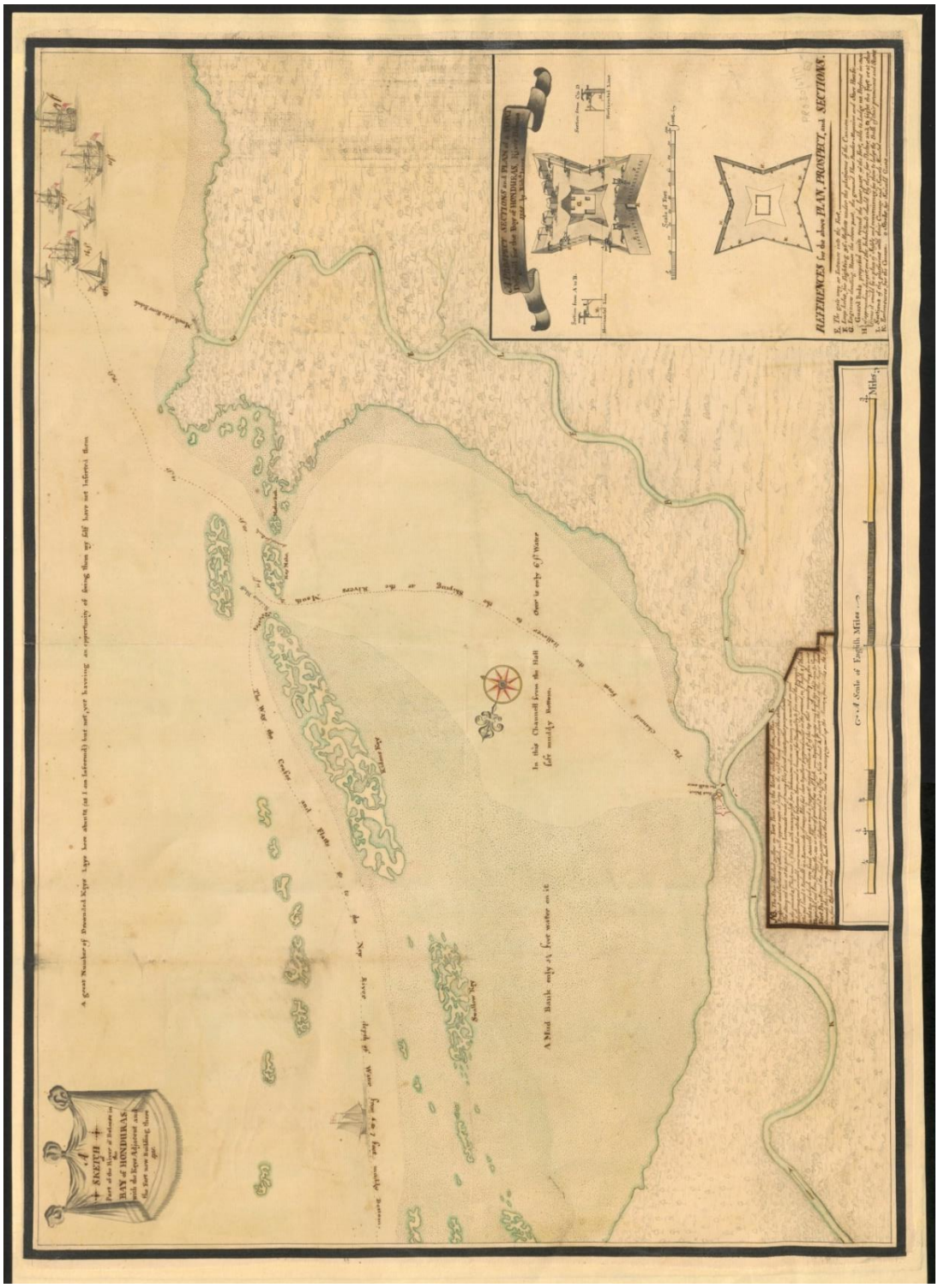
This study would also benefit from using a much broader scope of sources, as time, funding and linguistic limitations have proven to be large, if not insurmountable, issues. The most glaring omission is the lack of any records from the Archivo General de Centroamérica, which the author was not able to make use of but has no doubt would be of great benefit. Alongside this, there are undoubtedly insightful records in the national archives of Honduras, Nicaragua and Costa Rica. Other archives and collections in the

UK and Spain also have relevant material untapped by this thesis, such as the Archivo Histórico Nacional in Madrid, records of the United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in the Bodleian Library and the Kemble papers in Michigan University, to name but a few. All these could expand numerous issues only touched on in this thesis. The Bourbon reforms, the importance of missionaries, the intricacies of contraband and the impact on Jamaican slavery all deserve a closer re-examination in the context of the borderlands. Many aspects of colonial societies had links with these borderland societies and the impact of these interactions should be considered.

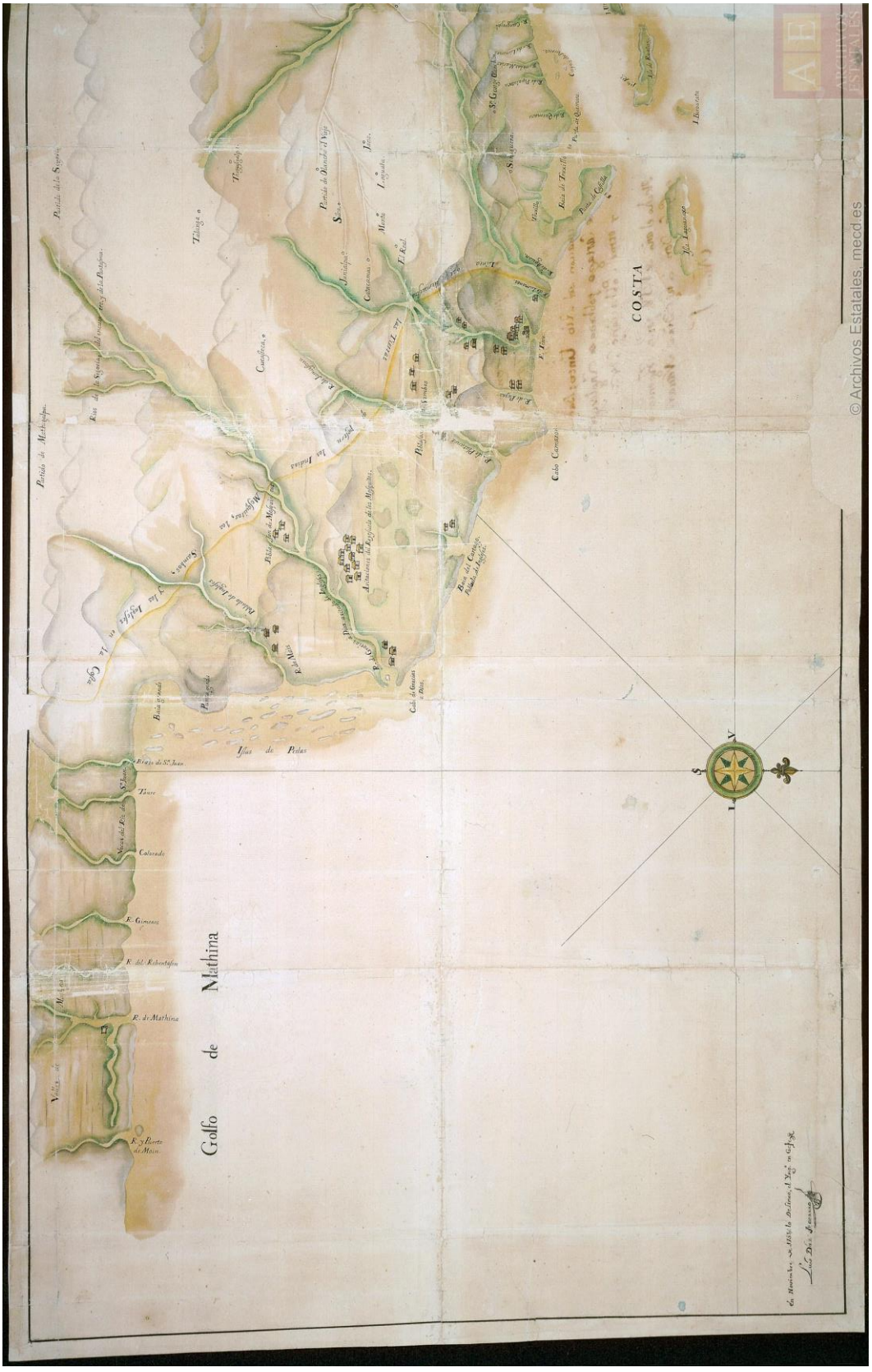
With the nineteenth century came independence, and the powers that the borderlands' residents had to play against each other shrank unevenly; new technologies reduced the protection afforded by the environment and imperial ambitions shifted globally. As the world changed, the space between great powers shrank and the borderlands' inhabitants could no longer act as intermediaries or offer special access to any strategic advantage. In such a place, what had been the borderlands became areas of loose control where foreign powers could extract economic benefits. The residents had little power beyond what was granted to them. The entanglements that had created such unique opportunities had changed and were no longer as exploitable for those who lived there.

Appendix A: Historical Maps

1: AGI, Mapa de lo Principal de la Provincia de Nicaragua, Su Laguna, y Desagüe de ella, por el Río de San Juan, Poblasones de los enemigos Zambos e ingleses en Punta Gorda y Mosquitos y las costas y Parajes adonde Hazen daños y prezas, 1716. MP Guatemala 17.



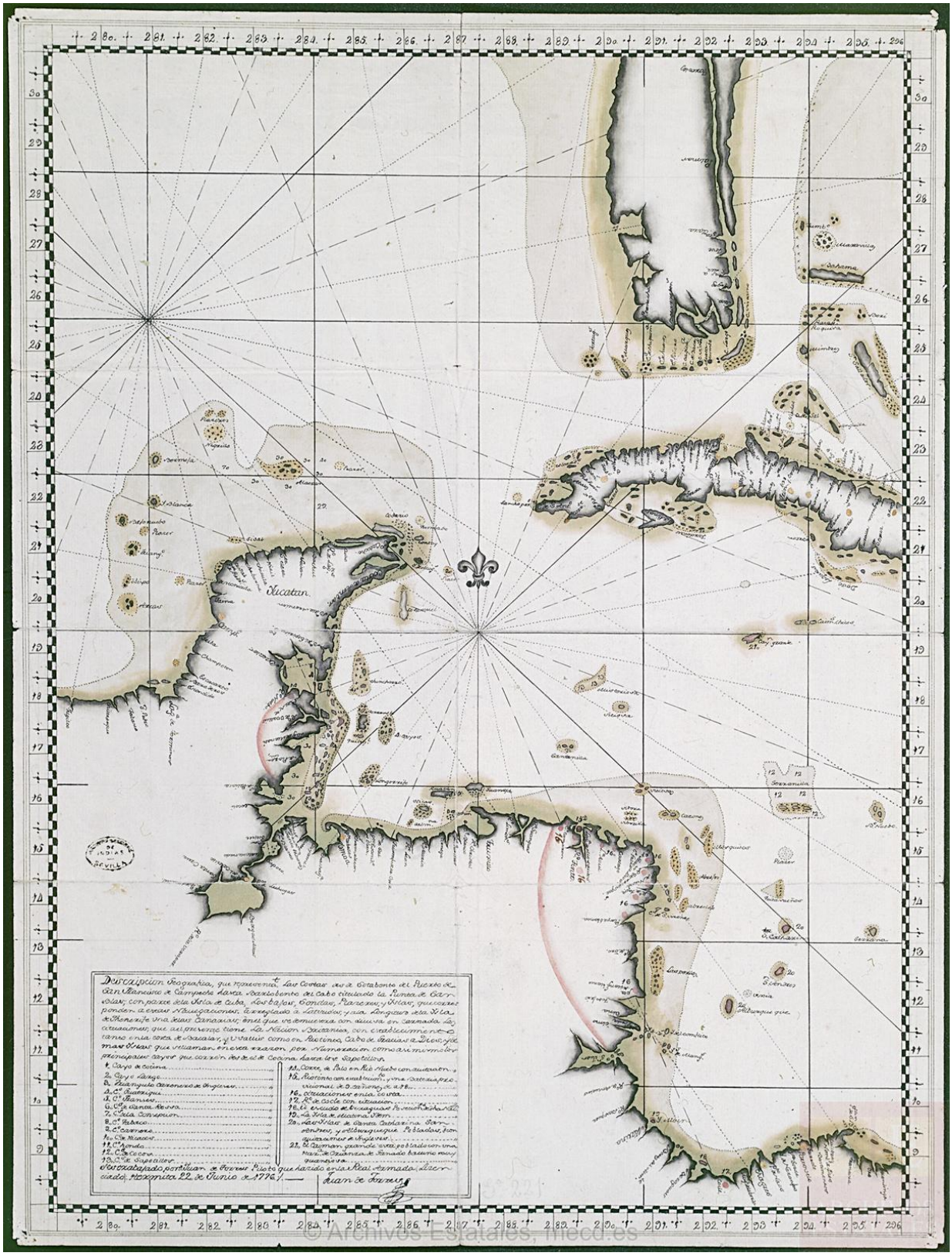
2: TNA, Central America. Map of part of the Belize River (now in Belize) in the Bay of Honduras showing the adjacent keys and the fort in progress. Soundings, navigable channels, mud banks and ships at sea are also shown. An inset shows a plan and sections of a fort designed for the Bay of Honduras. Reference tables. Scales: map 1 inch to 586.6 yards; inset 1 inch to 30 feet. Compass rose. Originally enclosed in a letter dated 12 July 1755 from Governor Knowles. MPI 1 387.



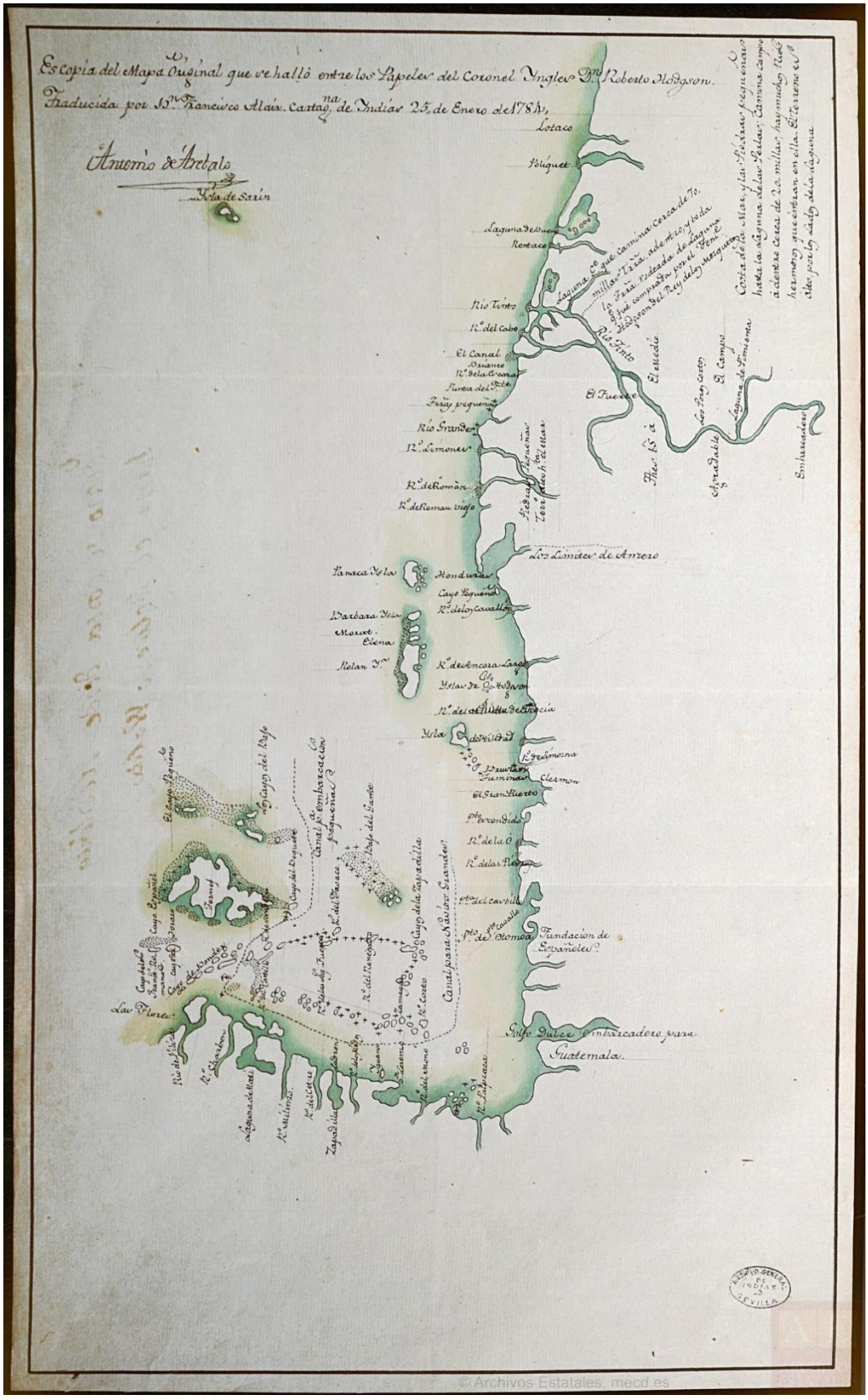
3: AGI, Mapa que comprende desde el Golfo de Matina hasta el de Santo Thomás, 1758. MP-Guatemala 49.

AGI, Mapa que comprende desde el Golfo de Matina hasta el de Santo Thomás, 1758.MP Guatemala 49.

4: AGI, Plano Geográfico de la mayor parte del Reino de Guatemala que empieza desde la misma Ciudad mirando hacia el Oriente y comprende por la parte del Mar del Sur las Provincias de Guazacapan, la de San Salvador, y parte de la de Nicaragua y toda la de Costa Rica hasta el Rio de Voruca, que es donde empieza el Reino de Tierra firme: Por la parte del Norte se vé la Provincia de Vera Paz, la de Honduras, la de Segovia y Tologalpa (que poseen los Ingleses, Zambos e Indios Mosquitos) y remata por esta parte en la costa de la Provincia de Cartago , etc., 1776. MP Guatemala 225.



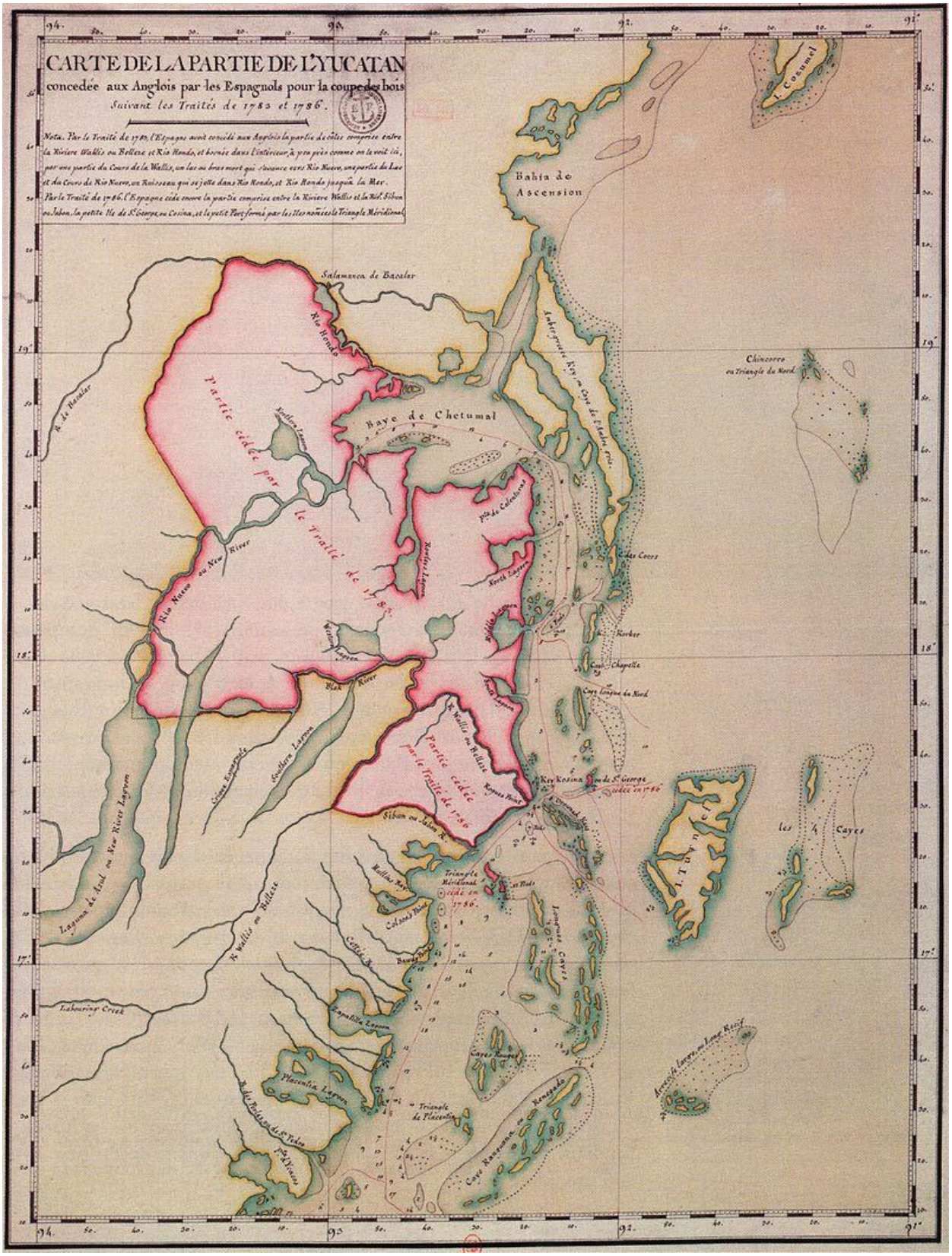
5: AGI, Descripción Geográfica (mapa) que representa las costas desde Sotavento del Puerto de San Francisco de Campeche hasta Barlovento del Cabo titulado la Punta de San Blas, 1776. MP Guatemala 221.



6: AGI, Pedazo de costa desde Río Tinto hasta el Belice o Walis: Costa desde el Golfo Dulce hasta poco más arriba del Río Tinto, 1784. MP Guatemala 331.

7: AGI, Plano de los tres ríos de Belice, Nuevo y Hondo. Situados entre el Golfo Dulce o provincial de Guatemala y la de Yucatán, 1764. MP México 198.

8: AGI, Mapa de la Península de Yucatán, 1785. MP México 399.



9: Map of the part of the Yucatan conceded to the English by the Spaniards for the cutting of wood, according to the treaties of 1783 and 1786. Bibliothéque Nationale de France.

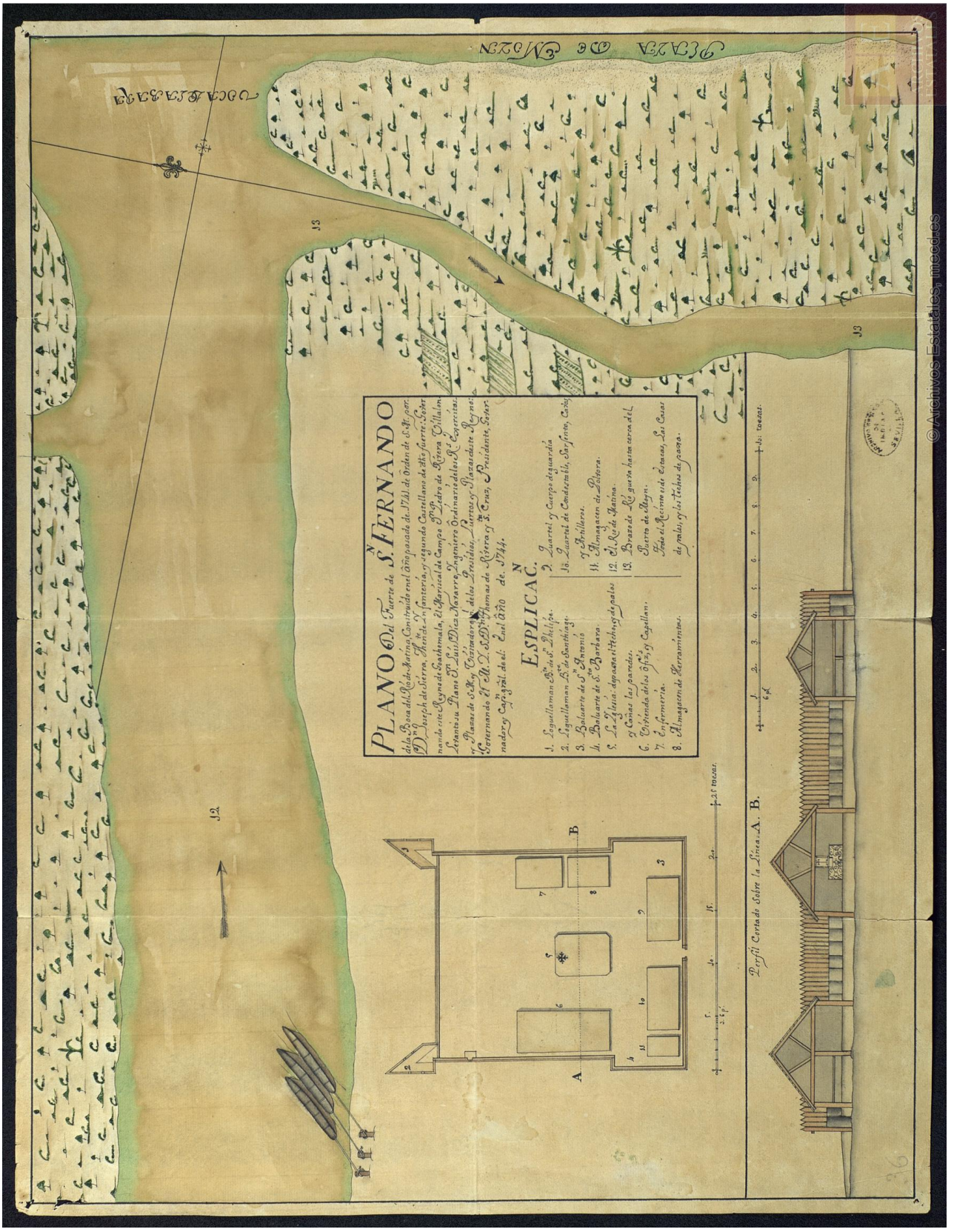
10: AGI, Mapa de una parte de la costa de la provincia de Yucatan desde el presido de Bacalar hacia el golfo de Omoa, 1798. MP Mexico 550.

11: AGI, Descripción [sic] Plan del Río Tinto con su Pueblo, Barra y pies de agua que hay como demuestran los números; fortalezas como marca el Abecedario,1758. MP Guatemala 51.

12: AGI, Figuración, o idea del terreno, y costa, Barra, Río y Población que los ingleses han fundado en Río Tinto jurisdicción de la Provincia de Comayagua en el Golfo de Honduras conocido por territorio de Mosquitos, 1758. MP Guatemala 50.

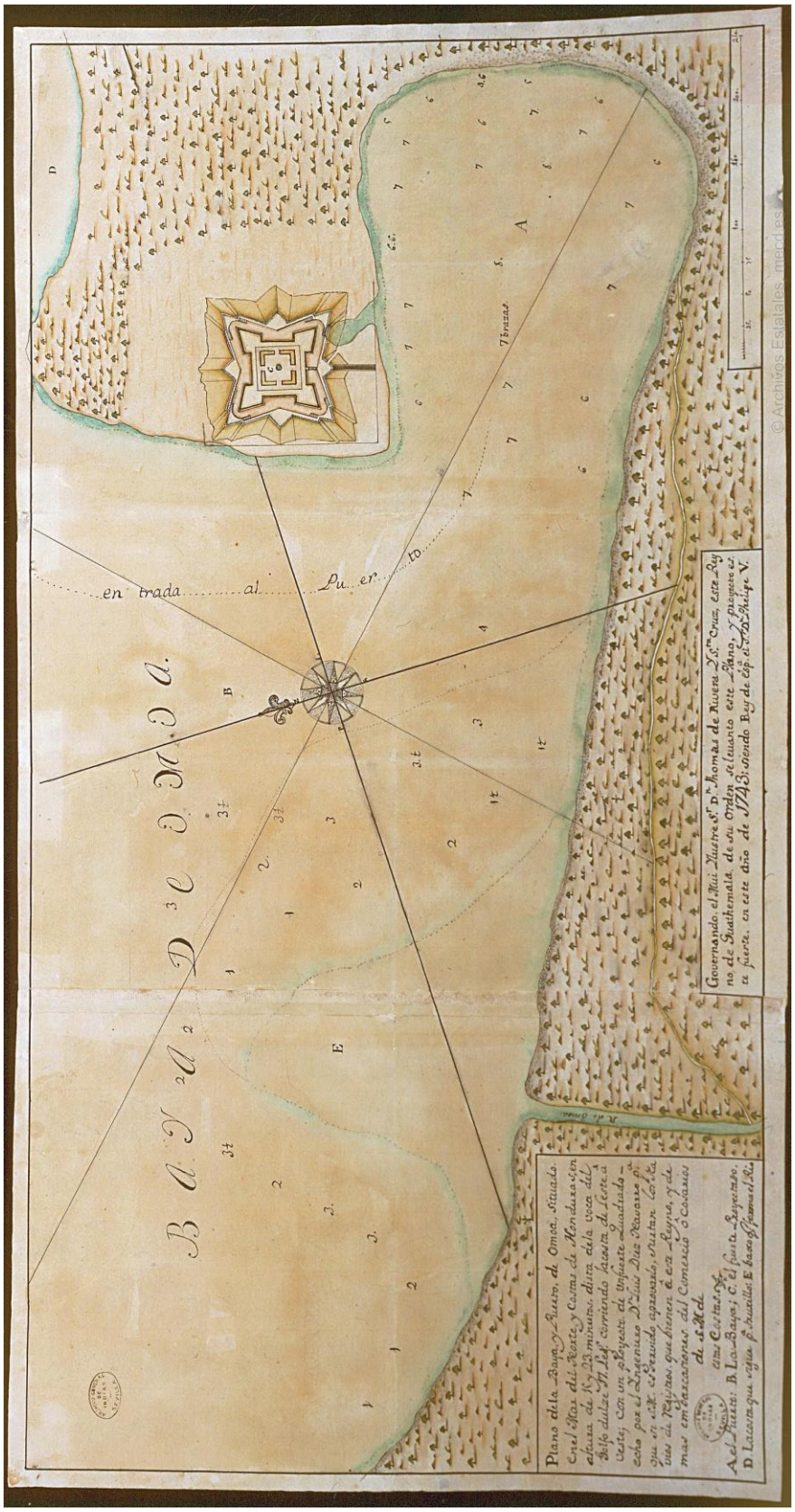
13: AGI, Diseño hecho a pluma de territorio que ocupan los ingleses en la Costa de Mosquitos junto al Río Tinto, 1774. MP Guatemala 213.

14: AGI, Prospecto del camino de Río Negro en la costa de Mosquitos, 1784. MP-Guatemala 336.



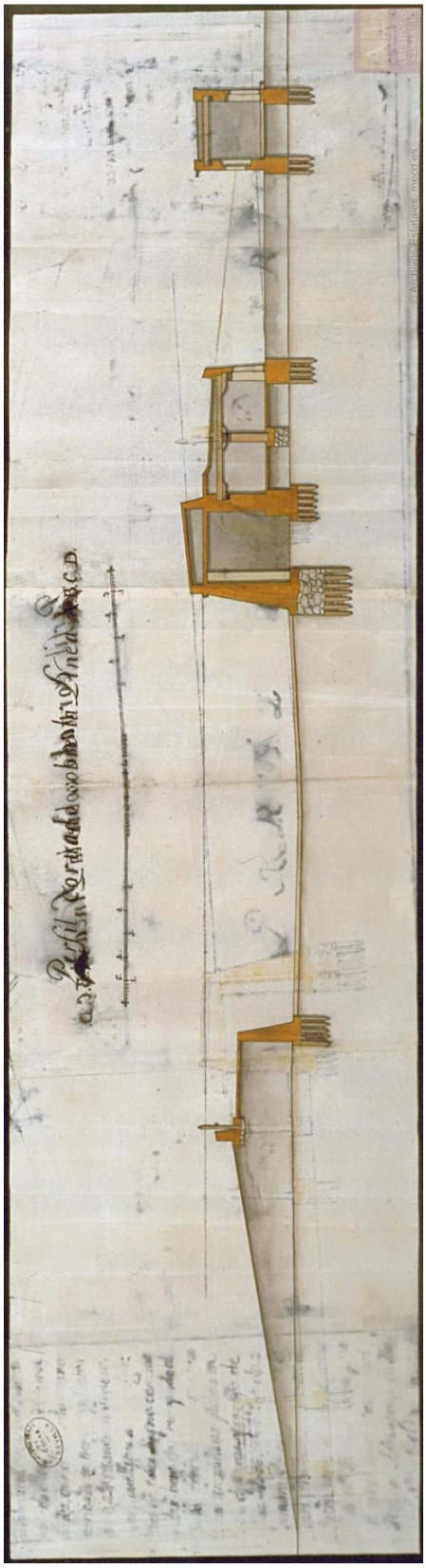
15: AGI, Plano del Fuerte de San Fernando, en la Desembocadura del rio Matina (Costa Rica), 1744. MP Guatemala 36.

16: AGI, Plano geográfico de las provincias y terrenos confinantes a la Talamanca con demostración de sus montañas, situaciones, etc, 1780. MP Guatemala 242.

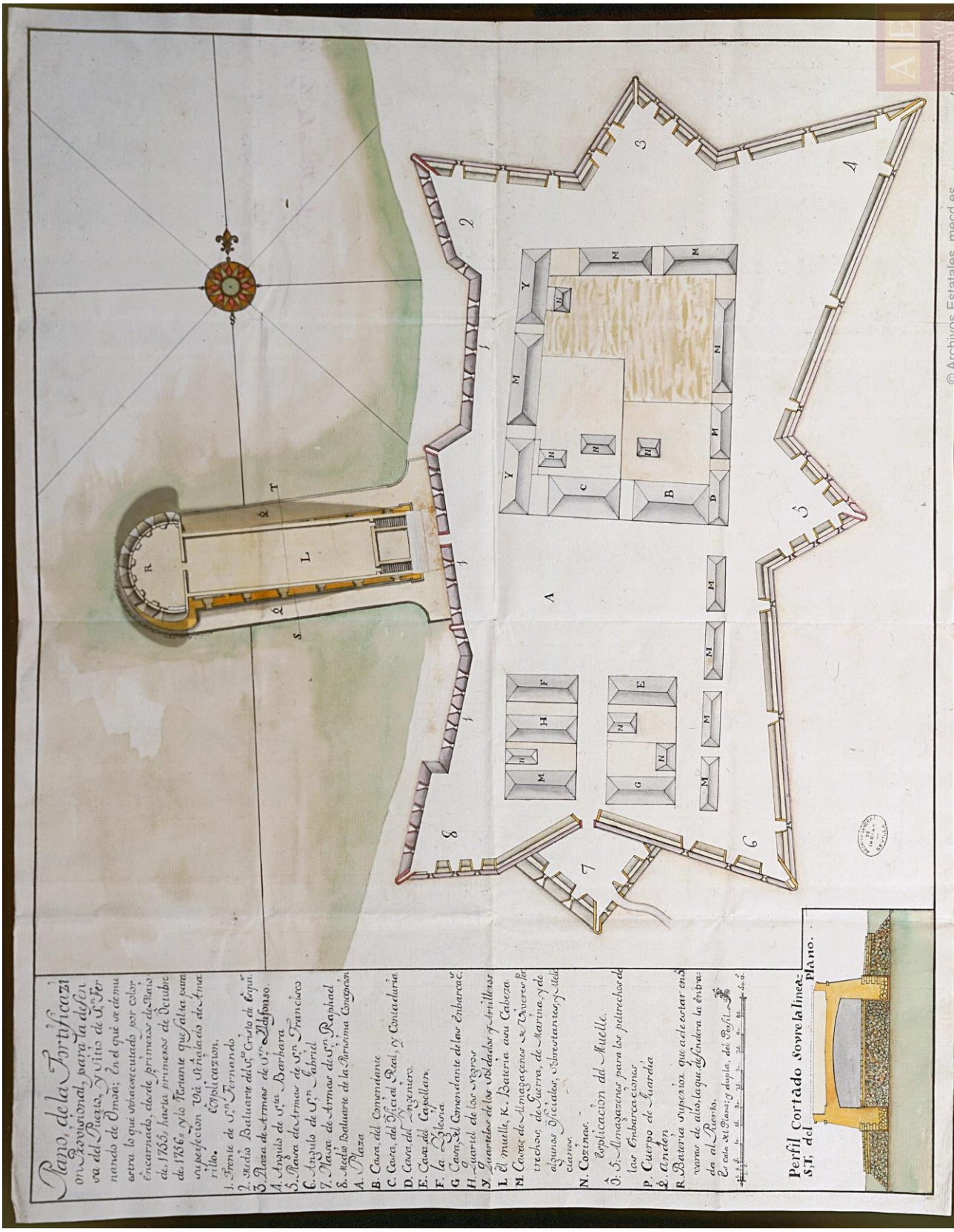


17: AGI, Plano de la Baya, y Puerto, de Omoa, situado en el Mar del Norte, y Costas de Honduras, en altura de 15 y 23 minutos, 1743. MP-Guatemala 29.

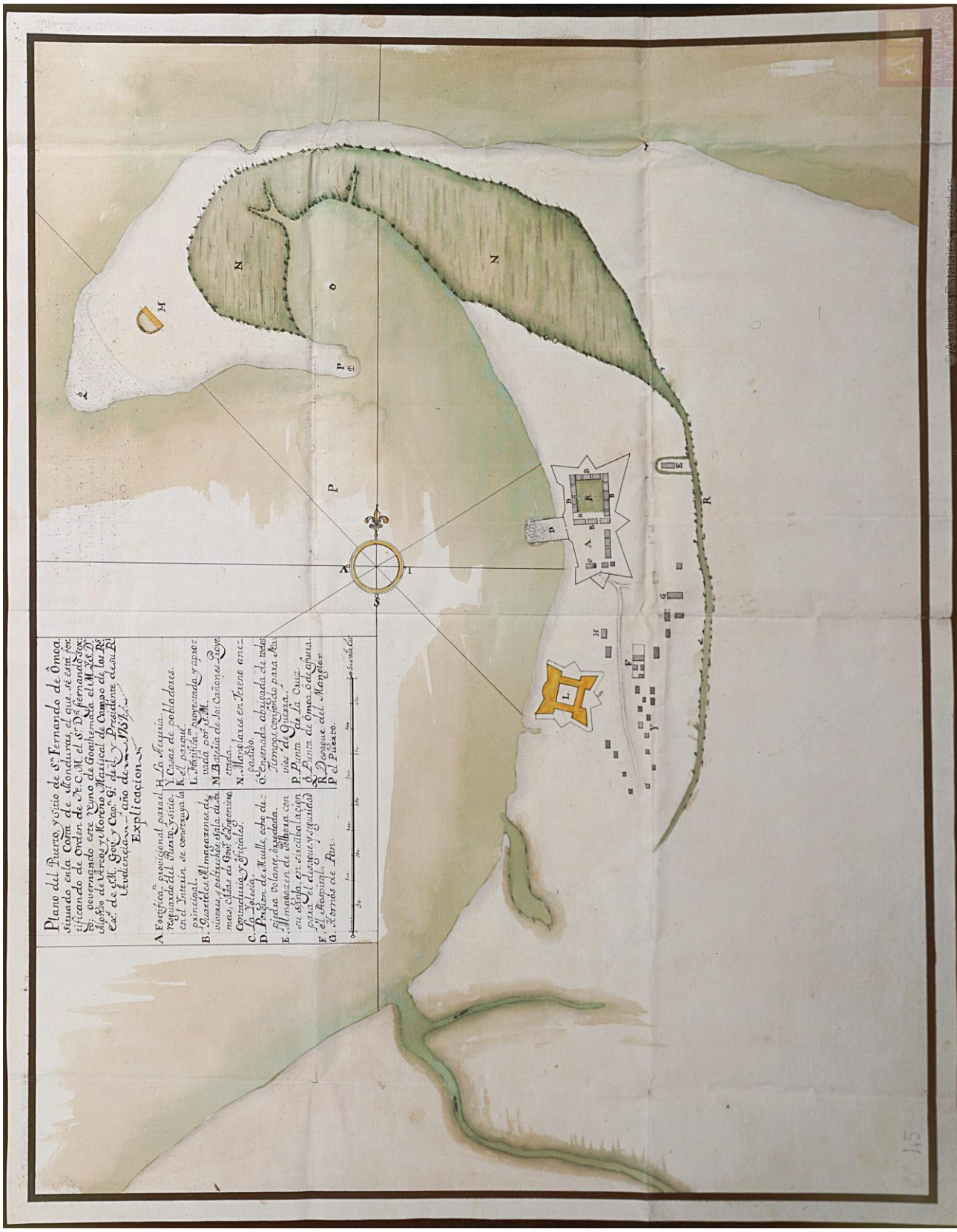
18: AGI, Plano de un fuerte proyectado para fortificar el puerto de Omoa, 1751. MP-Guatemala 40A.



19: AGI, Perfil cortado sobre la línea A B C D del fuerte proyectado para el puerto de Omoa, 1751. MP Guatemala 40B.



20: AGI, Plano de la Fortificación Provisional, para la defensa del Puerto, y Sitio de San Fernando de Omoa, 1756. MP-Guatemala 44.



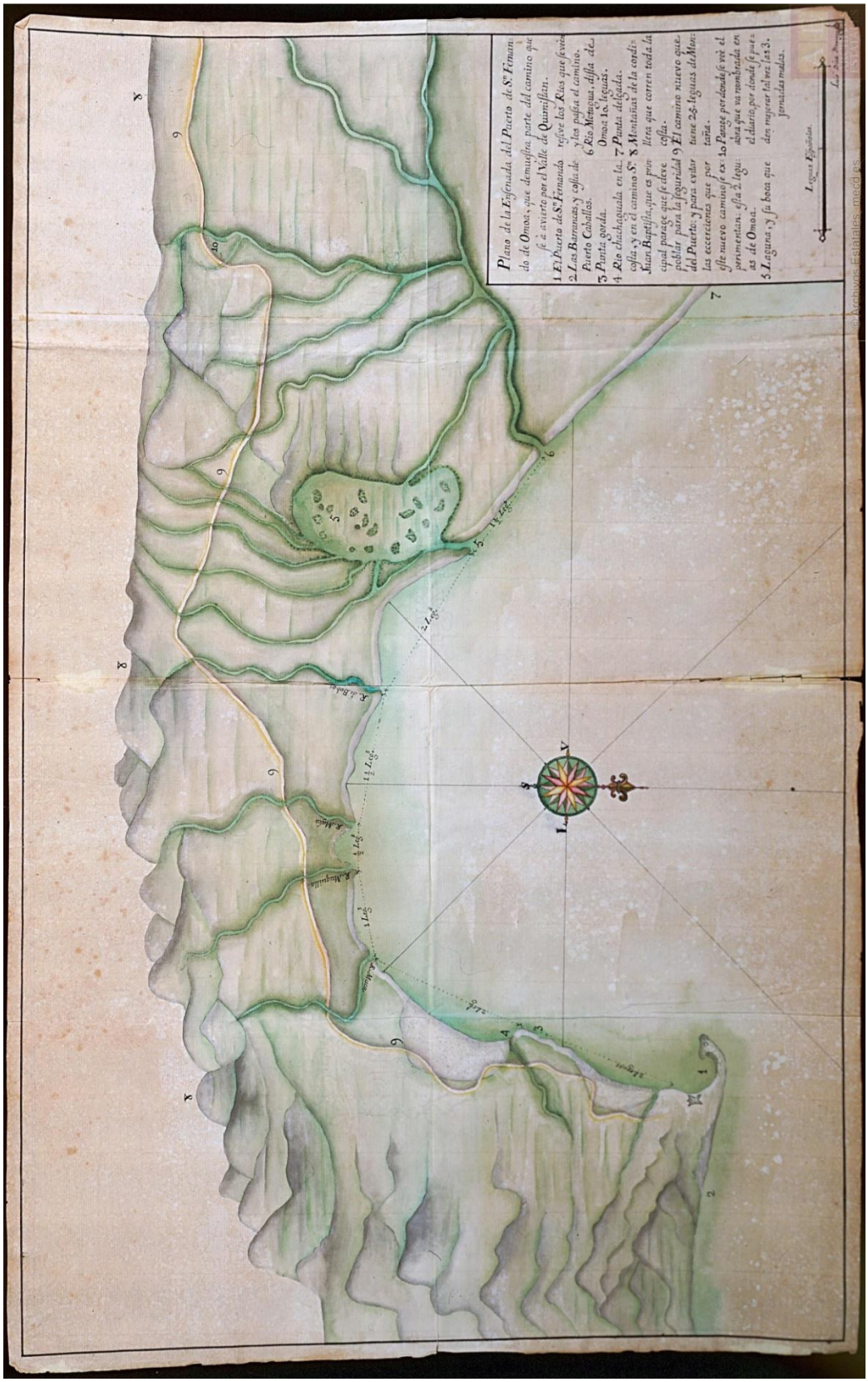
21: AGI, Plano del Puerto y Sitio de San Fernando de Omoa, situado en la Costa de Honduras, 1757. MP-Guatemala 45BIS.

22: AGI, Plano del fuerte que se está construyendo por orden de su majestad para la defensa de este puerto de san Fernando de Omoa, 1760. MP-Guatemala 59.

23: AGI, Plano de la fortificación provisional situada en el puerto de san Fernando de Omoa, 1765. MP-Guatemala 63.

24: AGI, Mapa, o Descripción, Ygnográphica, y Scenográphica del Puerto de San Fernando de Omoa en la Costa de Honduras, 1768. MP Guatemala 71.

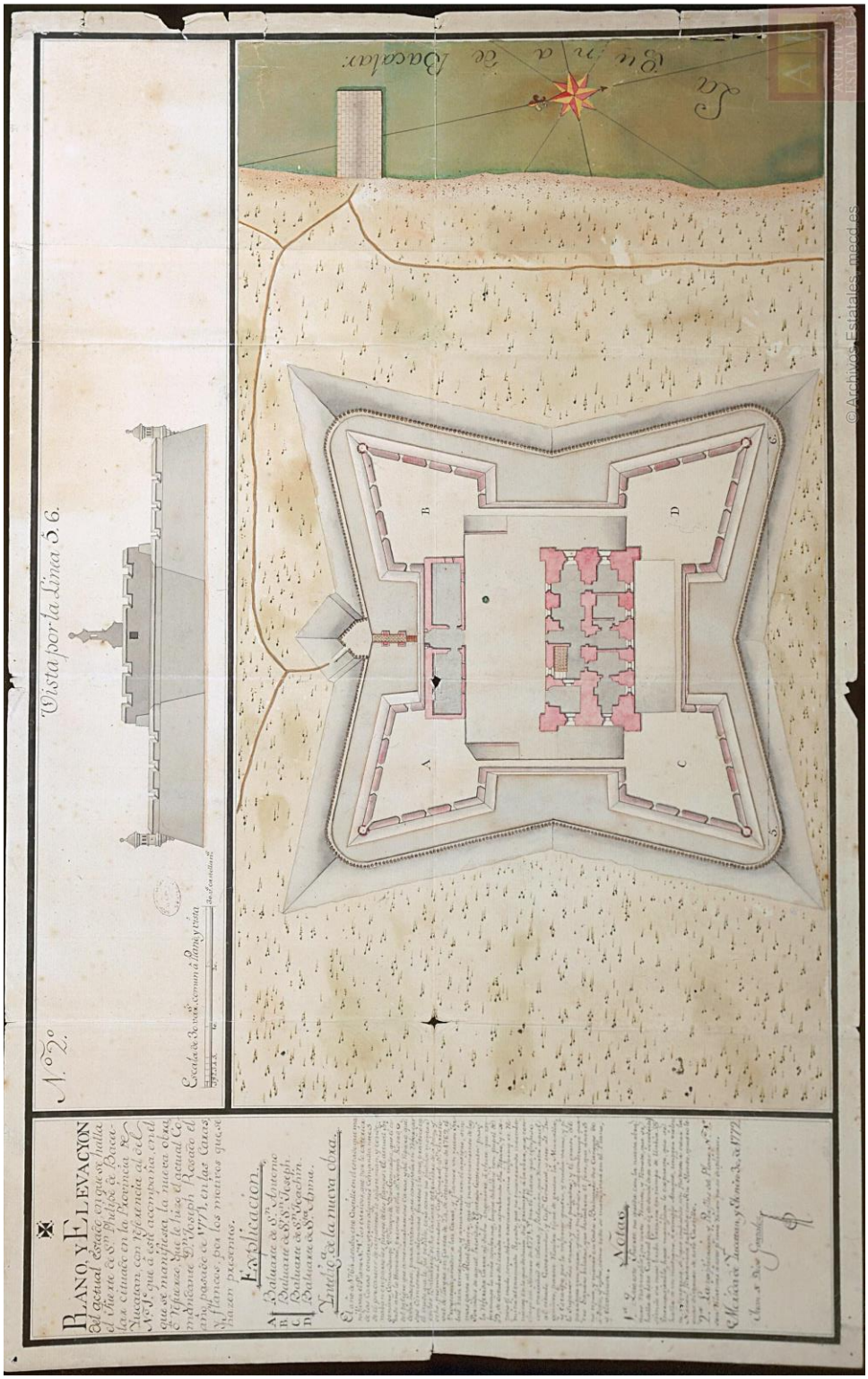
25: AGI, Plano de la batería que se propone para defender la entrada del puerto de san Fernando de Omoa en la costa de Honduras, 1769. MP-Guatemala 189.



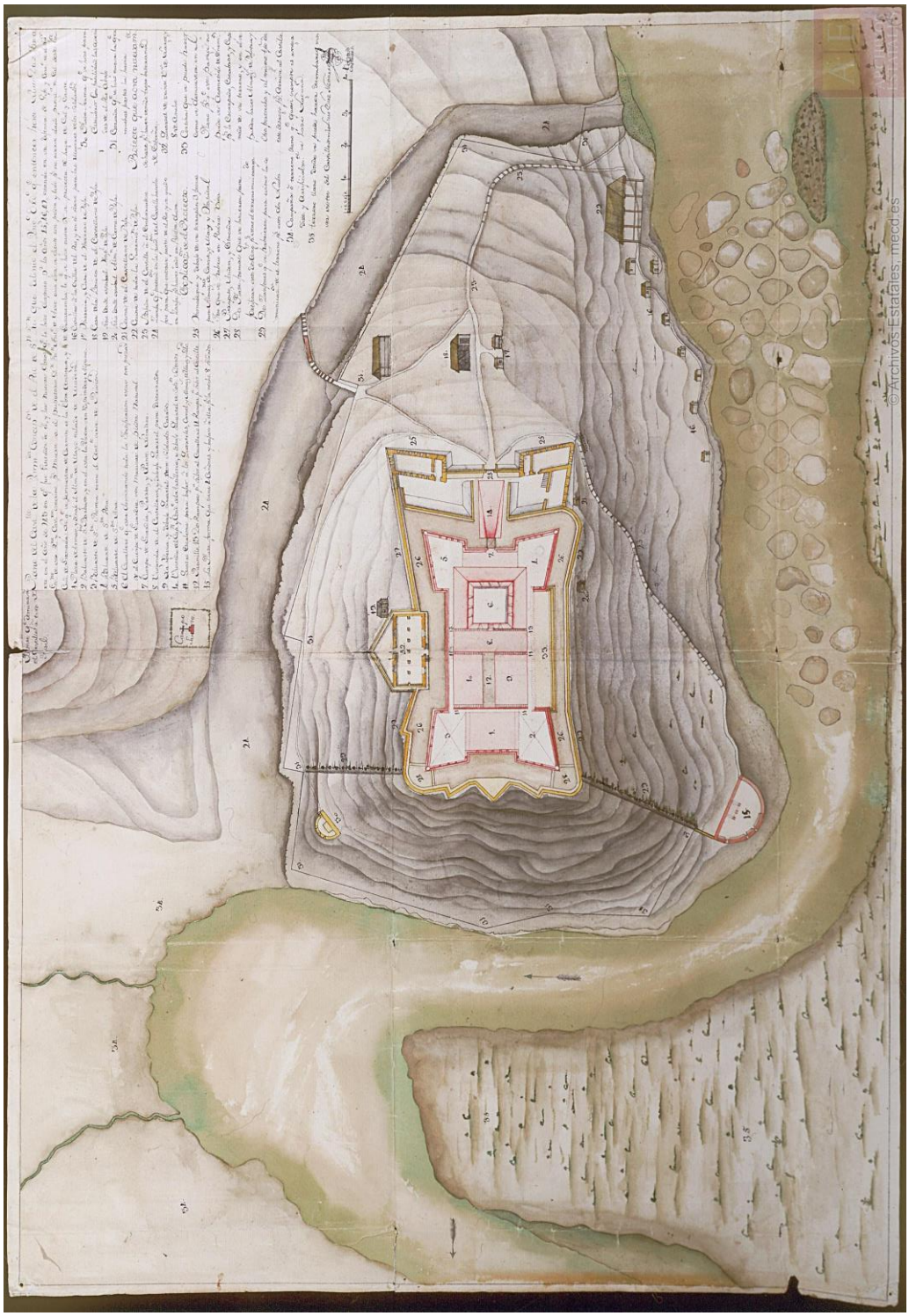
26: AGI, Plano de la ensenada del puerto de San Fernando de Omoa que demuestra parte del camino que se a abierto por el valle de quimista, 1758. MP-Guatemala 48.

27: AGI, Idea de un plano que representa el nuevo camino que se ha formado desde la nueva Guatemala al Fuerte de Omoa para comunicación con lo interior del Reyno, 1779. MP-Guatemala 238.

28: AGI, Plano ideal del rio motagua costa de Omoa golfo y rio de honduras, 1792. MP-Guatemala 270.

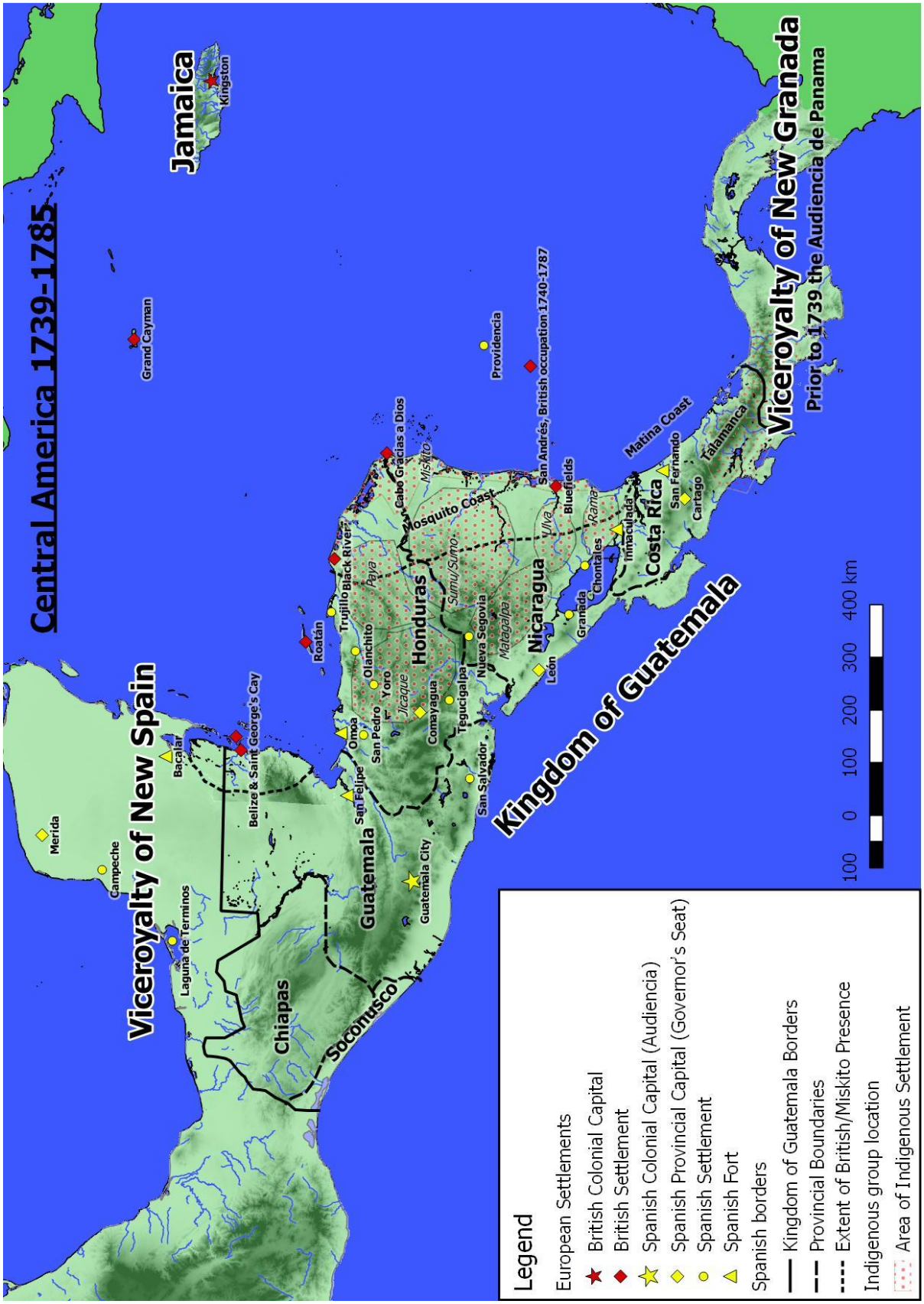


29: AGI, Plano y elevación del actual estado en que se halla el Fuerte de S[a]n Phelipe de Bacalar situado en la Provincia de Yucatán, con referencia al del no 1 que a este acompaña, en el que se manifiesta la nueva obra o refuerzo que le hizo el actual comandante D[o]n Joseph Rosado el año pasado de 1771, en las caras y flancos, por los motivos que se hacen presentes, 1772. MP-Mexico 272.



30: AGI, Plano del Castillo de la Inmaculada Concepción del Rio de San Juan que delineo el Ingeniero ordinario que entonces Hera Luis Diez Navarro en el año de 743 en que fue visitador de él y las nuevas obras que le hizo después por los años de 45, 46 y 47 estando en su defensa de jefe del Superior Gobierno de este Reyno y Castellano interino por muerte de el propietario D. Juan Antonio de Arce, 1772. MP Guatemala 193.

Appendix B: Other Maps



Bibliography

Archival Sources

The National Archives

Admiralty: Hydrographic Department: Ships' remark Books, Miscellaneous papers, ADM, ADM 346/6.

Admiralty Miscellanea, ADM7/837.

Central America. Map of part of the Belize River (now in Belize) in the Bay of Honduras showing the adjacent keys and the fort in progress. Soundings, navigable channels, mud banks and ships at sea are also shown. An inset shows a plan and sections of a fort designed for the Bay of Honduras. Reference tables. Scales: map 1 inch to 586.6 yards; inset 1 inch to 30 feet. Compass rose. Originally enclosed in a letter dated 12 July 1755 from Governor Knowle. MPI 1/387.

Duke of Bedford Papers, SP 78/253.

Original Correspondence, Secretary of State, CO137/48.

Original Correspondence, Secretary of State, CO137/77.

Original Correspondence, Secretary of State, CO137/82.

Ratification by France of the 1763 Treaty of Paris between Great Britain, France and Spain. SP 108/124.

Secretaries of State: State Papers Domestic, George II, SP/48.

Secretaries of State; State Papers Foreign, France, Earl Harcourt and Colonel Blaquiere, SP 78/284.

Treasury Papers, T1/335.

Treasury Papers, T1/361.

Treasury Papers, T1/376

Treasury Papers, T1/390.

Treasury Papers, T1/450.

Treasury Papers, T1/455.

Treasury Papers, T1/467.

Treasury Papers, T1/524.

Treasury Papers, T1/544.

Treasury Papers, T1/549.

Wyndham, Charles, 2nd Earl of Egremont Papers, PRO, 30/47.

Archivo General de Indias

Cartas y Expedientes, Guatemala 559.

Cartas y Expedientes del presidente y Oidores, Guatemala 232.

Cartas y Expedientes del presidente y Oidores, Guatemala 234.

Cartas y Expedientes de Gobernadores y Corregidores, Guatemala, 240.

Cartas y Expedientes de los Oficiales Reales de Guatemala, Guatemala 254.

Colegio Cristo Crucificado de Orden San Francisco de Santiago de Guatemala, Guatemala 385.

Comercio ilícito de Comayagua, Guatemala, 349.

Comercio ilícito de Comayagua, Guatemala, 350.

Comercio ilícito de Comayagua, Guatemala, 351.

Correspondencia con los Gobernadores Presidentes, Guatemala, 448.

Correspondencia con los Gobernadores Presidentes, Guatemala, 451.

Correspondencia con Gobernadores Comandantes, Guatemala, 456.

Cuentas de la Administración de Guatemala, Correos, 96A.

Duplicados de Gobernadores Presidentes, Guatemala, 482.

Expediente Sobre el Permiso del Corte del Palo de Tinte, Mexico 3099.

Expediente Sobre Hostilidades y exterminio de los Indios Zambos y Mosquitos, así como de los ingleses en Roatán, Guatemala, 299.

Expediente Sobre Hostilidades y exterminio de los Indios Zambos y Mosquitos, así como de los ingleses en Roatán, Guatemala,301.

Expediente Sobre Hostilidades y exterminio de los Indios Zambos, así como de los ingleses en Roatán, Guatemala, 302.

Expediente Sobre Hostilidades y exterminio de los Indios Zambos, así como de los ingleses en Roatán, Guatemala, 303.

Expediente Sobre Laguna de Términos y Desalojo de Ingleses, Mexico 1017.

Mapas, Planos, Documentos, iconográficos y documentos especiales MP-Mexico 272.

Misioneros del Colegio de Cristo Crucificado, Guatemala 379.

Puerto de Omoa Ilícito Comercio, Guatemala 855.

Reales Cédulas, Ordenes e Informes sobre misiones, Guatemala, 962.

Reducción de indios de Talamanca, Guatemala, 297.

Archivo General de Simancas

Colonias Inglesas, Honduras, SGU, LEG 6799, 33.

Corso. Colonias Inglesas, SGU, LEG, 6799, 65.

Honduras Británico. Colonias Inglesas, SGU, LEG 6799, 41.

Belize Archives and Record Service

Mosquito Shore Records, 1776 - 1778.

Mosquito Shore Records, 1770 - 1783.

Mosquito Shore Records, 1773 – 1780.

University College London Special Collections

Hodgson, Robert, *Narrative Comprising an Account of the Mosquito Shore,* 1757, MS ADD 191.

Lambeth Palace Library

The Fulham Papers Volume 29, MS FILM 766

The Fulham Papers Volume 35, MS FILM 769

Miscellaneous American Material, MS FILM 776

Books

Published Primary Sources

Atkins, John, *A Voyage to Guinea, Brazil and the West Indies; In His Majesty's Ships, the Swallow and Weymouth* (London, 1735).

Burnaby, William, *For the Better Government of His Majesty's Subjects in the Bay of Honduras Presented to them by the Honourable Sir William Burnaby, Knight, Rear-Admiral of the Red, and Commander in Chief of His Majesty's Squadron in Jamaica* (London, 1809).

Lieutenant Cook, *Remarks on a Passage from the River Balise, in the Bay of Honduras, to Merida; the Capital of the Province of Yucatan in the Spanish West Indies* (London, 1769).

Dallas, R.C., *The History of the Maroons, From their Origin to the Establishment of their chief Tribe at Sierra Leone, Volume 1* (London, 1803),

Dampier, William, *A New Voyage Round the World describing particularly the isthmus of America several coasts and islands in the west indies, the isles of cape Verde the passage by terra del fuego, the south sea coasts of Chile, Peru, and Mexico; the isle of Guam one of the ladrones, Mindanao and other Philippine and east India islands near Cambodia, China, Formosa, Lucania Celebes, &c New Holland Sumatra, Nicobar isles; the cape of good hope and Santa Helena their soil, harbours, plants, fruits, animals, and inhabitants. Their customs, religion, government, trade etc* (London, 1697).

Hodgson, Robert Jr., *The Defence of Robert Hodgson Esq. Late Superintendent, Agent and Commander in Chief of the Mosquito Shore. Humbly addressed to the Right Honourable The Lords of Trade and Plantations In answer to the Complaints Against him from Sundry Inhabitants of the British Settlement There* (London, 1779).

Leyva, Héctor M., *Documentos Coloniales de Honduras* (Tegucigalpa, 1991).

Long, Edward, *The History of Jamaica or General Survey of the Antient and Modern State of that Island with Reflections on its Situations, Settlements Inhabitants, Climate, Products, Commerce, Laws and Government* (London, 1774).

M.W., *The Mosqueto Indian and his Golden River being a familiar description of the Mosqueto Kingdom in America with a true Relation of the Strange Customs, Ways of Living, Divinations, Religion, Drinking Bouts, Wars,*

Marriages, Buryings &c. of those Heathenish People; Together with an Account of the Product of their country (London, 1699).

Uring, Nathaniel, *A History of the Voyages and Travels of Captain Nathaniel Uring with a new Draught of the Bay of Honduras* (London, 1726).

Vassa, Gustavus, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa* (London, 1794).

White, Robert, *To the Right Honourable The Lords of Trade and Plantations The Reply of His Majesty's Subjects, The Principal Inhabitants of the Mosquito-Shore, In America For themselves and on behalf of all other residing there, under the direction control and government of his majesty's subject of Jamaica to the printed pamphlet entitled 'The defence of Robert Hodgson, Esq. Late superintendent agent and commander in chief of the mosquito shore, humbly inscribed to the right honourable the lords of trade and plantations in answer to the complaints against him from sundry inhabitants of the British settlement there'* (London, 1780).

White, Robert, *The Case of the Agent to the Settlers on the Coast of Yucatan; and The Late Settlers on the Mosquito Shore Stating the Whole of his Conduct In Soliciting Compensation for the Losses, Sustained by Each of those Classes of His Majesty's Injured and Distressed Subjects* (London, 1793).

White, Robert, *The Case of His Majesty's Subjects having Property in and Lately on established upon the Mosquito Shore in America most Humbly Submitted to the kings most excellent Majesty in Council the Lords and Common in Parliament and the Nation of Great Britain at Large* (London, 1789).

Published Secondary Sources

Acker, Alison, *Honduras the Making of a Banana Republic* (Toronto, 1988).

Bassi, Ernesto, *An Aqueous Territory Sailor Geographies and New Granada's Transimperial Greater Caribbean World* (London, 2016).

Bauer, Ralph, Norton, Marcy, 'Introduction: Entangled Trajectories: Indigenous and European Histories', *Colonial Latin American Review*, 26:1 (2017).

Bell, John Patrick, *Crisis in Costa Rica the 1948 Revolution* (Austin, 1971).

Bird, Leonard, *Costa Rica the Unarmed Democracy* (London, 1984).

Bolland, Nigel O. *Colonialism and resistance in Belize essays in Historical Sociology* (Benque Viejo del Carmen, 2003).

Brown, Richmond F., *Juan Fermín de Aycinena Central American Colonial Entrepreneur 1729-1796* (Norman, 1997).

Bulmer-Thomas, Barbara, Bulmer-Thomas, Victor, *The Economic History of Belize from the 17th Century to Post Independence* (Benque Viejo del Carmen, 2012).

Byrd, Alexander X., *Captives and Voyagers Black Migrants Across the eighteenth-century British Atlantic World* (Louisiana, 2010).

Caiger, Stephen L., *British Honduras Past and Present* (Edinburgh, 1951).

Campbell, Mavis C., *The Maroons of Jamaica 1655-1796 A History of resistance Collaboration & Betrayal* (Massachusets, 1988).

Campbell, Mavis C., *Becoming Belize a History of an Outpost of Empire Searching for Identity 1528-1823* (Kingston, 2011).

Chet, Guy, *The Ocean is a Wilderness Atlantic Piracy and the Limits of State Authority, 1688-1856* (Amherst, 2014).

Clark, Catherine M., Dawson, Frank G., Drake, Jonathan Drake, *Archaeology on the Mosquito Coast a reconnaissance of the pre-Columbian and historic settlement along the Rio Tinto* (Cambridge, 1982).

Craton, Michael, *Searching for the Invisible Man: Slaves and Plantation Life in Jamaica* (Cambridge, 1978).

Craton, Michael, *Testing the Chains: Resistance to Slavery in the British West Indies* (London, 1982).

Craton, Michael, *Founded Upon the Seas a History of the Cayman Islands and Their People* (Kingston, 2003).

Dozier, Craig, *Nicaragua's Mosquito Shore: The Years of British and American Presence* (Tuscaloosa,1985)

Dunkerly, James, *Power in the Isthmus* (London 1988).

Dym, Jordana, *From Sovereign Villages to National States City, State, and Federation in Central America 1759-1839* (Albuquerque, 2006).

Dym, Jordana, Belaubre, Christophe, *Politics, Economy and Society in Bourbon Central America* (Boulder, 2007).

Elliott, J. H., *Empires of the Atlantic World Britain and Spain in the Americas 1492-1830* (New Haven, 2006).

Eriksen, Thomas Hylland, *Small Places Large Issues* (London, 2010).

Floyd, Troy S., *The Anglo Spanish Struggle for Mosquitia* (Albuquerque, 1967)

Foster, Lynn V., *A Brief History of Central America* (New York, 2007).

Grant, C.H., *The Making of Modern Belize Politics, Society & British Colonialism in Central America* (Bristol, 1976).

Gudmundson, Lowell, Wolfe, Justin, *Blacks and Blackness in Central America Between Race and Place* (London, 2010).

Hale, Charles R., *Resistance and Contradiction: Miskitu Indians and the Nicaraguan State, 1894-1987* (Stanford, 1984).

Hall, Carolyn, Brignoli, Héctor Pérez, Cotter, John V., *Historical Atlas of Central America* (Norman, 2003).

Hanna, Mark G., *Pirate Nests and the Rise of the British Empire 1570-1740* (Williamsburg, 2015).

Helms, Mary W., *Middle America a Culture History of Heartland and Frontiers* (New York, 1982).

Ibarra, Eugenia, *Del arco y la flecha a las armas de fuego. Los Indios Mosquitos hay la historia Centroamericana, 1633 – 1786* (San José, 2011).

Lohse, Russell, *Africans into Creoles: Slavery, Ethnicity and identity in Colonial Costa Rica* (Albuquerque, 2014).

Lynch, John, *Bourbon Spain 1700-1808* (Oxford, 1989).

Mahoney, James, *Colonialism and Postcolonial Development Spanish America in Comparative Perspective* (New York, 2010).

Melendez, Carlos, *Historia de Costa Rica* (San José, 1979).

Mendoza, Jose Luis, *Britain and her Treaties on Belize (British Honduras) Guatemala has the right to reinstate the entire territory of Belize* (Guatemala, 1946).

Merril, Tim L., *Honduras a Country Study* (Washington, 1995).

Metcalf, George, *Royal Government and Political Conflict in Jamaica 1729-1783* (London, 1965).

Monteith Kathleen E.A., & Richards, Glen, *Jamaica in Slavery and Freedom History, Heritage and Culture* (University of West Indies, 2002).

Naylor, Robert A., *Penny Ante Imperialism the Mosquito Shore and the Bay of Honduras A case study in British Informal Empire* (Cranbury, 1989).

Ohland, Klaudine, Schneider, Robin, *National Revolution and Indigenous Identity; The Conflict Between Sandinistas and Miskito Indians on Nicaragua's Atlantic Coast* (Copenhagen, 1983).

Palmer, Steven, Molina, Iván *The Costa Rica Reader History, Culture, Politics* (London, 2004).

Pascoe, C.F., *Two hundred Years of the SPG: An Historical account of the Society for the Propogation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts 1701-1900 (based on a digest of the society's records) by C.F. Pascoe (Keeper of the Society's records)* (London, 1901).

Pearcy, Thomas L., *The History of Central America* (New York, 2006).

Petley, Christer, *Slaveholders in Jamaica* (London, 2009).

Perez-Brignoli, Hector, *A Brief History of Central America* (Oxford, 1989).

Pons, Frank Moya, *History of the Caribbean: Plantations Trade and War in the Atlantic World* (Princeton, 2007).

Preston, Jean, *The Mosquito Indians and Anglo-Spanish Rivalry in Central America, 1630-1821* (Glasgow, 1988).

Ramos, Hector R. Feliciano, *El Contrabando Ingles en el Caribe y el Golfo de Mexico (1748-1778)* (Seville, 1990).

Randeria, Shalini, 'Geteilite Geschichte und Verwobene Moderne', in *Zukunftsentwurfe Ideen fur eine Kultur der Veranderung* eds. Jorn Rusen, Hanna Leitgeb and Norbert Jegelka (Frankfurt 1999).

Rankin, Monica A., *The History of Costa Rica* (Santa Barbara, 2012).

Seligson, Mitchell A., *Peasants of Costa Rica and the Development of Agrarian Capitalism* (Wisconsin, 1980).

Stephens, John, *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas and Yucatan* (New York, 1841).

Steward, Julian H., *Handbook of South American Indians* (New York, 1963).

Tillman, Benjamin F., *Imprints on Native Lands The Miskito-Moravian Settlement Landscape in Honduras* (Tucson, 2011).

Turner, Frederick Jackson, ‘The Significance of the Frontier in American History’, in *The Turner Thesis Concerning the Role of the Frontier in American History: Problems in American Civilisation* ed. by George Rogers Taylor (Lexington, 1972).

Usner, Daniel H. Jr, ‘Borderlands’, in *A Companion to Colonial America* ed. Daniel Vickers, (Oxford, 2003).

Van Oss, Adriann C., *Catholic Colonisation a Parish History of Guatemala* (Cambridge, 1986).

Vargas, Germán Romero, *Las Estructuras Sociales de Nicaragua en el Siglo XVIII* (Managua, 1987).

Wallerstein, Immanuel, *Modern World System IIL Mercantilism and the Consolidation of the European World-Economy, 1600-1750* (Berkeley, 2011).

Weaver, Frederick Stirton, *Inside the Volcano The History and Political Economy of Central America* (Oxford, 1994).

Weber, David J., *Bárbaros Spaniards and Their Savages in the Age of Enlightenment* (New York, 2005).

White, Richard, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge, 1991).

Wolf, Eric R., *Europe and the People Without History* (London, 1982).

Woodward, Ralph Lee Jr., *Central America a Nation Divided* (Oxford, 1976).

Wortman, Miles L., *Government and Society in Central America, 1680-1840* (New York, 1982).

Journal Articles

Adelman, Jeremy, Aron, Stephen, 'From Borderlands to Borders: Nation-States and the People in Between in North American History', *The American Historical Review*, 104 (1999).

Alderson, Robert J Jr., ‘Entangled Borderlands: The 1974 Projected French Invasion of Spanish East Florida and Atlantic History, 88 (2009).

Anderson, Jennifer, ‘Nature’s Currency: The Atlantic Mahogany Trade and the Commodification of Nature in the Eighteenth Century’, *Early American Studies: an Interdisciplinary Journal,* 2 (2004).

Augelli, John P., ‘Costa Rica’s Frontier Legacy’, *Geographical Review,* 77 (1987).

Bader, Thomas M., ‘A “Second Field” for Historians of Latin America; AN Application of the Theories of Bolton, Turner, and Webb’, *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs,* 12 (1970).

Baud, Michiel, and Van Schendel, William, ‘Toward a Comparative History of Borderlands’, *Journal of World History,* 8:2 (1997).

Black, Jeremy, 'Britain's Foreign Alliances in the Eighteenth Century', *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies,* 20 (1988).

Bolton, Herbert E., ‘The Epic of Greater America’, *The American Historical Review,* 38 (1933).

Brooks, Philiph C., Brooks, Philip C., ‘Do the Americas Share a Common History?’, *Revista de Historia de América,* 33 (1952).

Burnard, Trevor, ‘Powerless Masters: The Curious Decline of Jamaican Sugar Planters in the Foundational Period of British Abolitionism’, *Slavery and Abolition,* 32 (2011).

Burnard, Trevor, Morgan, Kenneth, 'The Dynamics of the Slave Market and Slave Purchasing Patterns in Jamaica 1655–1788', *The William and Mary Quarterly,* 58 (2001).

Cañizares-Esguerra, Jorge, ‘Entangled Histories: Borderland Historiographies in New Clothes?’, *The American Historical Review,* 112 (2007).

Castillo, María Eugenia Brenes, ‘Matina Bastion del Contrabando en Costa Rica’, *Anuario de Estudios Centroamericanos,* 4 (1978).

Conzemius, Edward, ‘Ethnographical Survey of the Miskito and Sumu Indians of Honduras and Nicaragua’, *Smithsonian Institution Bureau of American Ethnology,* 106 (1932).

Cusick, James G., ‘Creolization and the Borderlands’, *Historical Archaeology,* 34:3 (2000).

Dawson, Frank Griffith, 'William Pitt's Settlement at Black River on the Mosquito Shore: A Challenge to Spain in Central America. 1732-87', *The Hispanic American Historical Review,* 63 (1983).

Dawson, Frank Griffith ‘The Evacuation of the Mosquito Shore and the English who stayed behind’, *The Americas,* 55:1 (1998).

Dennis, Philip A., Olien Michael D., ‘Kingship among the Miskito’, *American Ethnologist,* 11 (1984).

Donis, Jay. ‘Imagining and Reimagining Kentucky: Turning Frontier and Borderland Concepts into a Frontier-Borderland’, *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society,* 114: 3&4 (2016).

Dziennik, Matthew P., ‘The Miskitu, Military Labour, and the San Juan Expedition of 1780’, *The Historical Journal,* 61:1 (2018).

Erickson, Frederick, ‘What Makes School Ethnography Ethnographic?’, *Anthropology & Education Quarterly,* 15 (1984).

Floyd, Troy S., ‘The Guatemalan Merchants, the Government, and the Provincianos, 1750-1800’, *The Hispanic American Historical Review,* 41:1 (1961).

Floyd, Troy S., ‘The Indigo Merchant: Promoter of Central American Economic Development 1750-1808’, *The Business History Review,* 39 (1965).

Fonseca, Juan Carlos Solórzano, ‘El Comercio de Costa Rica durante el declive del comercio Espanol y el desarollo del contraband inglés: periodo 1690-1750’, *Anuario de Estudios Centroamericanos,* 20 (1994).

Fonseca, Juan Carlos Solórzano, ‘La Rebelión de los indígenas bajo la Dirección de Pablo Presbere (Talamanca 1709 - 1710)’, *Cuadernos de Antropología,* 21 (2011).

Forbes, Jack D., 'Frontiers in American History and the Role of the Frontier Historian', *Ethnohistory,* 15 (1968).

Fowler, William R. Jr, ‘Ethnohistoric Sources on the Pipil-Nicarao of Central America; A Critical analysis’, *Ethnohistory,* 32 (1985).

Fradera, Josep M., Schmidt-Nowara, Christopher, ‘Spanish Colonial Historiography: Everyone in Their Place’, *Social History,* 29 (2004).

Gabbert, Wolfgang, 'In the Shadow of the Empire – The Emergence of Afro-Creole Societies in Belize and Nicaragua', *Indiana,* 24 (2007).

Gabbert, Wolfgang, ‘God Save the King of the Mosquito Nation! Indigenous Leaders on the Fringe of the Spanish Empire’, *Ethnohistory: The Bulletin of the Ohio Valley Historic Indian Conference,* 63:1 (2016).

Gould, Eliga H., ‘Entangled Worlds: The English-Speaking Atlantic as a Spanish Periphery’, *The American Historical Review,* 112 (2007).

Gould, Eliga H., ‘Entangled Atlantic Histories: A response from the Anglo-American Periphery’, *The American Historical Review,* 112 (2007).

Grafe, Regina, Irigoin, Alejandra, 'A Stakeholder Empire: The Political Economy of Spanish Imperial Rule in America', *The Economic History Review,* 65 (2012).

Hämäläinen, Pekka, and Truett, Samuel, ‘On Borderlands’, *The Journal of American History,* 98:2 (2011).

Hammond, John Craig, ‘Slavery, Sovereignty, and Empires North American Borderlands and the American Civil War, 1660-1860’, *Journal of the Civil War Era,* 4 (2014).

Harkin, Michael E., ‘Ethnohistory’s Ethnohistory Creating a Discipline from the Ground Up’, *Social Science History,* 34 (2010).

Hastrup, Kirsten, ‘The Ethnographic Present: A Reinvention’, *Cultural Anthropology,* 5 (1990).

Helms, Mary W., ‘The Cultural Ecology of a Colonial Tribe’, *Ethnology,* 8 (1969).

Helms, Mary W., ‘Miskito Slaving and Culture Contact: Ethnicity and Opportunity in an Expanding Population’, *Journal of Anthropological Research,* 39 (1983).

Helms, Mary W., ‘Of Kings and Contexts: Ethnohistorical Interpretations of Miskito Political Structure and Function’, *American Ethnologist,* 13 (1986).

Hill, Robert M. ‘Social organisation by Decree in Colonial Highland Guatemala’, *Ethnohistory,* 36:2 (1989).

Juricek, John T., ‘American Usage of the Word Frontier from Colonial Times to Frederick Jackson Turner’, *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society,* 110:1 (1966).

Kocka, Jürgen, ‘Comparison and Beyond’, *History and Theory,* 42 (2003).

Mack, Taylor E., 'Contraband Trade through Trujillo, Honduras, 1720's–1782', *Yearbook conference of Latin American Geographers,* 24 (1998).

Macleod, Philip, ‘Auge y Estancamiento de la Producción de Cacao en Costa Rica 1660-95’, *Anuario de Estudios Centroamericanos,* 22 (1996).

Mahoney, James, Vom Hau, Matthias, ‘Colonialism and Development: A Comparative Analysis of Spanish and British Colonies’, *American Journal of Sociology,* 111 (2006).

Mendiola, Daniel, ‘The Rise of the Mosquito Kingdom in Central America’s Caribbean Borderlands: Sources, questions, and Enduring Myths’, *History Compass,* 16 (2018).

Mihok, Lorena D. and Wells, Christian E., ‘Miskitu Labour and English Royalisation at Augusta, Roatan Island, Honduras’, *International Journal of Historical Archaeology,* 18:1 (2014).

Morgan Phillip D., ‘Slaves and Livestock in Eighteenth Century Jamaica: Vineyard Pen 1750-51’, *The William and Mary Quarterly,* 52:1 (1995).

Newson, Linda A., ‘Silver Mining in Honduras’, *Revista de Historia de América,* 97 (1984).

Newton, Ross A., 'Good Kind Benefactors: British Logwood Merchants and Boston's Christchurch', *Early American Studies,* 11 (2013).

Offen, Karl H., ‘British Logwood Extraction from the Mosquitia: The Origin of a Myth’, *Hispanic American Historical Review,* 80:1 (2000).

Offen, Karl H., ‘The Sambo and Tawira Miskitu: The Colonial Origins and Geography of Intra-Miskitu Differentiation in Eastern Nicaragua and Honduras’, *Ethnohistory,* 49:2 (2002).

Offen, Karl H., ´Creating Mosquitia mapping Amerinidan Spatial Practices in eastern Central America, 1629 – 1779´, *Journal of Historical Geography,* 33:2 (2007).

Offen, Karl H., ‘Mapping Amerinidan Captivity in Colonial Mosquitia’, *Journal of Latin American Geography,* 14:3 (2015).

Olien, Michael D., 'Black and Part-Black Populations in Colonial Costa Rica: Ethnohistorical Resources and Problems', *Ethnohistory,* 27 (1980).

Olien, Michael D., ‘The Miskito Kings and the Line of Succession’, *Journal of Anthropological Research,* 39 (1983).

Olien, Michael D., 'After the Indian Slave Trade: Cross-Cultural Trade in the Western Caribbean Rimland, 1816-1820', *Journal of Anthropological Research,* 44 (1988).

Olien, Michael D., ‘General, Governor and Admiral: Three Lines of Miskito Succession’, *Ethnohistory,* 45 (1998).

Olien, Michael D., Squier, E.G., ‘E.G. Squier and the Miskito: Anthropological Scholarship and Political Propaganda’, *Ethnohistory,* 32 (1985).

Ortega, Víctor Hugo, Acuña, V.H.A.O., de Peralta, Manuel María, ‘Historia Económica Del Tabaco En Costa Rica: Época Colonial’, *Anuario de Estudios de Centroamericanos,* 4 (1978).

Palka, Joel W., ‘Archaeology of Indigenous Culture Change in Mesoamerica’, *Journal of Anthropological Research,* 17 (2009).

Patch, Robert, 'Imperial Politics and Local Economy in Colonial Central America 1670–1770', *Past and Present,* 143 (1994).

Potthast-Jutkeit, Barbara, ‘Centroamérica y el Contrabando por la Costa de Mosquitos en el siglo XVIII’, *Mesoamérica,* 36 (1998).

Robertson, James, 'The Best Poor Man's Country? Thomas Thistlewood in Eighteenth Century Jamaica', *Caribbean Quarterly,* 52 (2006).

Robertson, James, ‘A 1748 “Petition of Negro Slaves” and the local Politics of Slavery In Jamaica’, *The William and Mary Quarterly,* 67:2 (2010)

Rogers, Nicholas, ‘Caribbean Borderland: Empire, Ethnicity, and the Exotic on the Mosquito Coast’, *Eighteenth Century Life,* 26 (2002).

Rojas, Ibarra, 'Exploring Warfare and Prisoner Capture in Indigenous Southern Central America', *Revista Arquelogía Americana,* 30 (2012).

Rossano, Geoffrey L., 'Down to the Bay New York Shippers and the Central American Logwood Trade, 1748-1761', *New York History,* 70 (1989).

Sánchez, Luís, 'Splitting the Country: The Case of the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua', *Journal of Latin American Geography,* 6 (2007).

Smail, John, 'Credit, Risk and Honour in Eighteenth Century Commerce', *Journal of British Studies,* 44 (2005).

Squier, E.G., ‘British Encroachments and Aggressions in Central America: The Mosquito Question’, *American Whig Review,* 5 (1850).

Thornton, John K., ‘The Zambos and the Transformation of the Miskitu Kingdom 1636 - 1740’, *Hispanic American Historical Review,* 97:1 (2017).

Tracy, Nicholas, 'The Falklands Island Crisis of 1770; Use of Naval Force', *The English Historical Review,* 354 (1975).

Van Buren, Mary, ‘The Archaeological Study of Spanish Colonisation in the Americas’, *Journal of Anthropological Research,* 18 (2010).

Weber, David J., ‘Turner, The Boltonians, and the Borderlands’, *The American Historical Review,* 91 (1986).

Williams, Caroline, ‘If You Want Slaves Go to Guinea: Civilisation and Savagery in the “Spanish” Mosquitia, 1787-1800’, *Slavery & Abolition,* 35:1 (2014).

Williams, Caroline, ‘Living Between Empires: Diplomacy and Politics in the Late Eighteenth -Century Mosquitia’, *The Americas,* 70:2 (2013)

Wilson, Kathleen, 'The Performance of Freedom: Maroons and the Colonial order in Eighteenth Century Jamaica and the Atlantic Sound', *The William and Mary Quarterly,* 66 (2009).

Wilson, Kathleen, 'Rethinking the Colonial State: Family Gender and Governmentality in Eighteenth Century British Frontiers', *The American Historical Review,* 116 (2011).

Wortman, Miles, 'Bourbon reforms in Central America: 1750-1786', *The Americas,* 32 (1975).

Wortman, Miles, ‘Government revenue and Economic Trends in central America, 1787-1819’, *The Hispanic American Historical Review,* 55:2 (1975).

Zahedieh, Nuala, ‘The Merchants of Port royal Jamaica, and the Spanish Contraband Trade, 1655-1692’, *The William and Mary Quarterly,* 43:4 (1986).

Reference Works

Instituto de estudios políticos para América latina y África, *Los Miskitos, Instituto Catalá antropología* (Madrid, 1986).

Indigenous people resources, *Native peoples A to Z: A reference guide to native Peoples of the Western Hemisphere* (Hamburg, 2009).

Unpublished Works

Sorsby, William Shuman, *The British Superintendency of the Mosquito Shore 1749–1787,* PHD thesis University College London, 1969.

Websites

News.bbc.co.uk