The Origins of the Belize Settlement: A Reconsideration

David M. Gomez[1]

Abstract

The historiography of Belize holds, rather uncritically, that the settlement of Belize (formerly British Honduras) was founded in 1638 by a shipwrecked Scottish buccaneer named Peter Wallace and his crew when they shifted to logwood cutting. If true, this would mean that the Belize settlement pre-empted Jamaica as an English territorial holding in the West Indies and occurred only eight years after the English established a colony in Providence Island off the coast of Nicaragua in Central America. This article argues that this date is unsupported by historical evidence and that the conditions for the establishment of the settlement of British Honduras were not fully in place until or after the mid-1660s. This article builds on the revisionist arguments of Barbara Bulmer-Thomas and Victor Bulmer-Thomas in their 2012 book on the economic history of Belize that the "necessary conditions for the permanent occupation [of Belize were only] in place by the end of 1642" (Bulmer-Thomas & Bulmer Thomas, 2017. p. 35).

Keywords: British Honduras, buccaneers, logwood, contraband trade, colonial settlement.

[1] David Gomez, Ph.D., University College London, is an economic historian whose work focuses on British informal empire in the Atlantic world with emphasis on Central America. His research explores the intersection of history, public policy, and political economy, especially in the 19th century and he has an active research interest in the economic dimensions of emancipation and black colonization projects on state formation in Belize and the broader Central American region. David's other research and teaching interests lie in Belizean history and he recently collaborated with the University of Belize, the Institute for Cultural and Social Research, and the Belize National Historical Society on a lecture series titled "Revisioning Belize History." This article is based on the first lecture in the series delivered in May 2024. Email: blzgomez@gmail.com

Introduction

The historiography of Belize holds, somewhat uncritically, and repeats without hesitation, that the Belize settlement was founded in 1638 by a shipwrecked 'Scottish' buccaneer named Peter Wallace and his crew when they shifted from privateering to logwood cutting. That same historiography also holds that the name Belize is derived from a "corruption" of the name Wallace. Such explanations however have never been supported by historical evidence, and today the question of when the British first settled in the settlement of British Honduras remains inconclusive. As Mavis Campbell (2011) points out, this question is stubborn and will be difficult to answer precisely.

The lack of historical evidence regarding the origins of the Belize settlement notwithstanding, historians and scholars have recently started to give this matter more attention. For instance, in their book *The Economic History of Belize*: *From the 17th Century to Post-Independence*, Barbara Bulmer-Thomas and Victor Bulmer-Thomas (2017) discredited the national myth about Peter Wallace and argue that Wallace "never existed" and therefore "never founded the settlement," and as such "the word Belize cannot be derived from [the name Wallace]" (p. 26). Notably, the authors dispute the 1638 date as the time when the Belize settlement was founded and contend that the conditions for this to happen were not in place until 1642. They reason that before being sacked by Diego "el Mulato", a 'friend' of the British, the Spanish naval fortress at Salamanca de Bacalar would have prevented the English buccaneers from establishing any permanent foothold in the Belize territory (Bulmer-Thomas & Bulmer-Thomas, 2017, p. 26). Assad Shoman, Belize's foremost historian of the territorial dispute with Guatemala, seems to agree with this revisionist account. In the book *Guatemala's claim to Belize: The Definitive History*, Shoman (2018) stated that "exactly when the British began to settle in Belize, first known as the Settlement in the Bay of Honduras, is uncertain" (p. 2). Nevertheless, Shoman places the date of English settlement in Belize in or around 1652 and further contends, rightly so, that the "British did not settle in significant numbers until the 1670s" (p. 2).

Other historians have intimated further possible dates for the founding of the Belize settlement, most of these, later than 1638. For instance, Alan Craig (1969) places this at 1640; Robert Naylor (1989) at 1662; and Gilbert Joseph (1976) in or around 1660 (p. 47). A.P. Thornton (1953) seems to agree with Naylor and in the article titled The English at Campeachy, 1670-82 stated that "Englishmen from Jamaica had been cutting logwood since 1662" (p. 27). Jesse Cromwell (2009) on the other hand, places the activity of British logwood cutters in the area at a much later date – the 1670s, which is consistent with Shoman's contention that "the British did not settle Belize in significant numbers until [this time]" (Shoman, 2018, p. 2). Michael Camille (1996) goes further, and in the paper "Historical geography of the Belizean Logwood Trade" states that "1680 was the approximate date of the first settlement of Englishmen in Belize" (p. 77).

A scan of the literature suggests that there are at least fifteen suggested dates for the origins of the settlement at Belize, ranging from as early as 1603 (Asturias & Calderon Quijano, 1925), to as late as 1717 (Carillo y Ancona, 1871; Nunez Ortega, 1877). The discrepancy in dates spans over 100 years, 114 to be exact, with dates suggested in no less than eight different decades and two different centuries (i.e., 1600s and 1700s). The sheer number of dates are as confounding as the literature justifying these is unconvincing. The problem with many of the existing accounts about the origins of the Belize settlement is that they are they not adequately supported by historical evidence and do not provide feasible explanations for this occurrence. Shoman and the Bulmer-Thomases have changed this propensity and offer plausible explanations for their suggested dates – that is, that the conditions were in place for the settlement to have been founded. For Shoman, this involved final abandonment of the Spanish Fort at Bacalar on Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula which continued to operate at a degraded capacity after it was sacked by "el Mulato" a decade earlier. However, as Mavis C. Campbell (2003) reasons, it was only "when Britain's attitude to the buccaneers changed [...] and their plundering eventually ceased: [that ...] some remained and became logwood cutters" (p. 172).

This article reconsiders the origins of the Belize settlement and uses an economic history frame of analysis to do so. This had the benefit of shifting attention away from legal arguments over claims to the territory and removed the bias for political arguments supporting English territorial claims to Belize in 1638 (Britain did exist until 1707 when England and Scotland formed a union thereafter becoming Great Britain). This new analytical frame also helped to get around the challenge posed by the lack of historical documentation and allowed for relevant historical events to be interpreted more directly in relation to the settlement's origins. Thus, this article takes a fresh look at the role of the logwood trade

and reassesses the buccaneering/privateering factor in relation to the settlement's origins. It also briefly examines the role played by the contraband trade from Jamaica through Belize.

Logwood

Logwood, *Haematoxylon campechianum L.*, was only one of several types of dyewoods found in the Americas. Logwood was important for over a century following Christopher Columbus' visits to the New World, both as an export from the colonies, and to the textiles industries in England and other parts of Europe including France, the Netherlands, Italy, and Spain. Notably, the discovery of logwood in the Americas coincided with early growth and development of the textile industry in England (Breuer, 1993, p. 2), and therefore was important to the early economy of the colonies (Craig, 1969). Some scholars have gone as far as claiming that, after sugar, logwood was the second most important export from the West Indian colonies. In the case of Belize, logwood was the raison d'etre for the settlement's founding and was significantly more important economically and socially before sugar became an important export commodity for the country (Bolland, 1988).

Logwood and other dyewoods grew abundantly in the West Indies and on the Spanish Main and was found mainly in coastal areas in the Antilles, Jamaica, Brazil, Nicaragua, the Bay of Honduras, and the Yucatan Peninsula, especially in the Bay of Campeche. The latter, especially the Laguna de Términos, was the most important centre of logwood extraction from the second half of the 1600s but in the first quarter of the 1700s this shifted to the Bay of Honduras, particularly the Belize settlement. Shortly after Columbus' expeditions to the New World, the availability of logwood and its widespread use by the indigenous populations there led to recognition of the commodity's value as a dye for textiles, leather, and other materials (McJunkin, 1991). Thus, Columbus and his crew likely took back samples of logwood and other dyewoods to Spain on their return (Offen, 2009), and other early explorers likely also took back samples as well. However, dyewoods of other species and types were already known to Europeans, especially dyers and merchants, and there are records showing that cities in northern France as well as Italy and the Low Countries (i.e., Belgium and the Netherlands) had been importing dyewoods from as early as the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, some two hundred years before Columbus first sailed to the New World (Joseph, 1974). Hence, other dyewoods including brazilwood, palo de Campeche, palo de tinto, and Nicaragua wood were also exported from other Spanish colonies in the Americas.

In the sixteenth century, the importance of logwood to the Spanish Crown had become such that it declared a monopoly on the logwood trade (Joseph, 1974). Additionally, to control prices of the commodity, King Ferdinand of Spain "limited the royal monopoly to exports of 50 tons per year" (McJunkin, 1991, p. 56), and, to further protect the expected profits from this, the Spanish Crown established the *Casa de la Contratación*, a merchant house which managed Spain's colonial trade for nearly three centuries. The *Casa de la Contratación* was responsible for encouraging the import of dyewoods from Spanish America and forbid its importation from elsewhere. These combined arrangements suppressed logwood trade from the Indies not exported by duly authorised merchants from New Spain, especially logwood cut by English, and later British, woodcutters in the Bay of Honduras, or seized by English and Dutch privateers. Still, given the importance of wood dyes to European textiles industries, the Spanish Crown encouraged the trade in logwood but for several decades only 500 tons of the commodity, on average, was exported annually from the Indies and Spanish America, and between 1503 and 1522, only 30 tons on average were exported annually to Spain. Consequently, the promised riches for the Spanish crown from logwood never materialised and by the time the market for this opened fully in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the British and Dutch controlled large shares of the trade (McJunkin, 1991, p. 20). The Dutch developed a vigorous contraband trade in dyewoods along the Caribbean coastline of South America from the 1590s, but did not engage in logwood cutting themselves. And they later set up and used the West India Company to help prise open Spain's monopoly of trade with the New World (Fisher, 1997, p. 78).

The production of indigo, native to Guatemala, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries may have also affected the Spanish trade in logwood. As McJunkin argues, by 1570 Indigo production in the new world had surpassed or supplanted all dyewood trade from Spanish America though the indigo trade did not reach its golden period until around 1760, about when the logwood trade started to decline. Still, indigo, alongside silver and cattle, was especially important to the merchants from the Kingdom of Guatemala and demand for indigo in Europe grew exponentially during the period of the *Consulado de Comercio* of Guatemala. This is because the *Consulado* (i.e., merchant guild) focused primarily on

developing the indigo trade so that between 1791 and 1800 the average annual exports of indigo was 875,256 pounds and reached a high of 1,149,800 pounds in 1793 (Woodward, 1966, p. 39).

English prohibitions against logwood

During the 16th century and in the first half of the 17th century, the involvement of English woodcutters in the logwood industry in Yucatan was relatively non-existent, though a few may have been involved in the cutting and trading of brazilwood from other parts of the Indies. One reason for this had to do with prohibitions in England against logwood. In 1581, the English crown banned the importation and use of logwood due to the dye "colours being false and deceitful to the queen's subjects … and discreditable beyond the sea to [English] merchants and dryers…" (Parliamentary Act, 1581). This placed the English textiles sector at a significant disadvantage vis-à-vis textiles sectors in other European countries that were already more advanced (McJunkin, 1991, pp. 92-97). Hence, in the late 16th century and well into the first half of the 17th century, English cloth were shipped mostly uncoloured and unfinished. The English crown made additional proclamations against logwood in 1583, 1597, 1607, 1630, and again in 1636 – the latter notably only a couple years before the Belize settlement was purportedly established.

The problem in England was that it was widely believed that the dye from logwood could not be made steadfast. Thus, logwood imports remained banned in Britain until 1662, seven years after England captured Jamaica from Spain, around when the outlook of the English crown towards privateering in the Caribbean was beginning to shift. Indeed, there was a powerful and effective lobby against logwood and this is illustrated in a case where, following a letter from the Lord Mayor of London to the Earl of Worcester concerning a complaint about "the fraudulent way in which black silk had been lately dyed in the City" (Overall, 1878), an inquiry was instituted and all persons that were not registered dyers were ordered to cease such occupation. A "Recommitment of the Bill Against Logwood from 1607" in the House of Commons Journal also provides useful insights into the attitudes in England about the trade in logwood and logwood dyes in the early part of the seventeenth century. That year, there was a Petition against logwood to the House of Commons on the grounds that "[logwood was] continually brought in, kept, prepared, and […] used within the Realm of England, to the Hindrance of the King and his Custom [… and] to the wrong of his Subjects, who buy deceitful Dyes for sure colours [… hinders] merchandize and shipping and Employment of the Poor, and [thus] should me made a felony" (British History Online, 1802). Three decades later, logwood remained a problem in England, and in 1630, Charles I, issued a proclamation that "… no silk shall be dyed of any other black but Spanish black…" (Overall, 1878). As McJunkin (1991) contends, the purpose of this was "possibly to [continue to] outlaw the use of logwood in England and require the English to purchase their blacks from Spain dyed with logwood" (p. 98).

These prohibitions, coupled with the trade limitations by the Spanish crown, likely would have served as a strong disincentive to English buccaneers to engage in logwood cutting in Belize, indeed anywhere in the Bay of Honduras for that matter. Moreover, before the late 1660s to early 1670s, the markets for logwood in Boston and New York had not yet developed so this was not an option for any buccaneers and privateers cum logwood cutters. Indeed, the logwood trade between the Belize settlement and these places did not develop until the first quarter of the 18th century (Newton, 2013; Pitt, 2024). However, some logwood cutting and trade was already occurring in the 1670s, around when this trade started to take off from Campeachy. For instance, in 1670 Governor Lynch of Jamaica reported that around 600 tons of logwood had been shipped to Boston (Calendar of State Paper (CSP), Colonies, 1669-1674). And in 1675, one Edward Cranfield of Port Royal, Jamaica reported that in the space of two and a half months, seventeen New England vessels had touched at that port bound to Campeachy for logwood (CSP, Colonies, 1675-1676, p. 314). Notably, these shipments did not involve Belize.

The impact of the prohibitions against the import of logwood in England extended beyond placing the English textiles sector at a significant disadvantage vis-à-vis textiles sectors in European countries. Significantly, it also discouraged English buccaneers and privateers from turning to logwood cutting, at least in any permanent way – there just wasn't enough money in the logwood trade at the time to warrant such a change or shift, and after 1650, the price of logwood started to decline precipitously from its high of £100 per ton. Given this reality, it is unlikely that English buccaneers established permanent settlements in Belize in or around 1638 to cut logwood. In fact, only a few years earlier (i.e., in 1630) the Providence Island Company abandoned its plans for exporting logwood from Tortuga for which it had a Patent (Bulmer-Thomas & Bulmer-Thomas, 2017, p. 42). When privateers did turn to logwood cutting, this happened only after conditions had changed (Campbell, 2003, 172) and the logwood trade had

started on an upturn – i.e., in the late 1660s and into the last quarter of the 1600s (Dawson, 1983). However, buccaneers and privateers being what they were, it is likely they would have attempted to offload any logwood and other valuables they captured for a ransom.

Developments relative to logwood, c. 1655 – 1670s

After the logwood trade started to flourish, but before English buccaneers started shifting from marauding to woodcutting, there were important changes and developments in the political and security contexts. Firstly, the Spanish naval fort at Salamanca de Bacalar was finally abandoned after 1652. This meant that English buccaneers operating in Campeachy and the Bay of Honduras were no longer checked by the Spanish *guarda costas* and therefore were free to establish permanent settlements in the Bay. However, the likelihood of this happening in Belize immediately after 1652 is low because, as already pointed out, logwood still faced several prohibitions in England, and the English had not yet captured Jamaica. The latter event is significant because, as Carla Gardina Pestana contends, England's capture of Jamaica from the Spanish in 1655 reshaped its Atlantic endeavours and England now had opportunities to extract resources from the Indies, including logwood and mahogany (Pestana, 2017). Prior to this, English settlements in the region had been limited to just a few settlements, including Providence Island (this was short-lived) and the Bay Islands (Bulmer-Thomas & Bulmer-Thomas, 2017, p. 35).

Secondly, in the late 1660s English colonial officials in Jamaica became openly reluctant to enforce the English Crown's prohibitions against logwood trading. For instance, Sir Thomas Modyford, Governor of Jamaica from 1664 to 1671, collaborated with several privateers and even held shares in some of their business ventures, and following the outbreak of war Modyford used the occasion to issue several letters of marque that the English privateers used to attack Spanish settlements and ships. Notably, Modyford was the governor that issued the English crown's proclamation against privateering in 1664, but attitudes had changed among key officials in England and several high-ranking officials, including the Dukes of both Albemarle and York, tacitly supported the continued plunder (British Empire Online, n.d.). Armed with this background, Modyford deviously argued that "the logwood trade was the only diversion for privateers that would keep them from raiding Spanish ports and preying on other shipping" (Cromwell, 2009, pp. 47-48). Modyford even went as far as writing to the Council of Foreign Plantations to make the point that "if the logwood cutting was encouraged the whole logwood trade will be English" (Botella-Ordinas, 2010, p. 144). Modyford's actions had immediate effect, as several English privateers turned to the logwood trade, and in 1670 Modyford estimated that there were around twelve vessels in the harbour in Jamaica that engaged in logwood cutting. Not unsurprisingly, the Governor of Campeche complained to Jamaica that English ships were carrying off logwood from the Spanish Main, but these complaints referred to logwood cutting and shipping in the Bay of Campeachy and not to any settlement in Belize.

By the early 1670s the presence of British logwood cutters in the Yucatan had become a problem for Spain, and in 1674 the Queen Regent of Spain issued a royal cedula calling for logwood cutters and pirates in Honduras and Yucatan to be punished. Following this, Spanish *guarda costas* that had started patrolling again in the Indies, seized several ships from Jamaica operating near Yucatan and the Bay of Honduras and accused them of carrying on illicit trade, which essentially meant the logwood trade. Nevertheless, the illicit trade with Jamaica continued, and in 1671, Thomas Lynch who replaced Modyford as Governor of Jamaica estimated that English logwood cutters had processed "forty thousand English pounds [worth of] logwood" through Port Royal (Cromwell, 2009, p. 47). By 1674, Charles II of England, "facing the threat of war with Spain, tasked his Council for Foreign Plantations [… with] solving the problems posed by […] logwood" (Botella-Ordinas, 2010, pp. 143). English philosopher John Locke, a member of the Council and someone who had personal interests in the logwood trade, helped "the English crown deploy an imperial argument of *res nullius*" (Botella-Ordinas, 2010, p. 144) which the English used to make claims to Spanish territory where logwood being was cut by English woodcutters (Pagden, 1998). This development helped reshape the outlook of English privateers towards logwood cutting in the Bay of Honduras and the Yucatan.

Thirdly, in the late 1650s and early 1660s mordants for natural dyes were introduced into the market and new stabilizing techniques were developed and applied which made the dye from logwood more stable, but not before 1664. This spurred renewed English interest in the logwood trade, and several leading merchants followed up on an Order of Parliament in June 1649 that requested the Committee of the Navy to take Consideration of the Business of Logwood and to report their Opinions to the House. The order had come about because members of Parliament in England were facing growing pressures

from the Companies of Merchant Adventurers, Drapers, Dyers, Felt Makers and Salters to 'remove the prohibitions on logwood as this was necessary for dying woollen cloths, cotton and line, and all threads as well as leather and hats' (House of Commons Journal, 1650). Finally, in 1662, Charles II removed the penalties against the use of logwood (McJunkin, 1991, pp. 99-100), declaring that "the ingenious industry of modern times hath taught the dyers of England the art of fixing colours made of logwood … [and thus it was now permitted] to import and use it for dyeing" (UWIMONA, n.d.). Thereafter, the import of logwood into England increased substantially. To be sure, from 1662 to 1774, the value of logwood imports into England from the Indies and Spanish Main rose from around £3000 to £167,000. This upturn of logwood activity was a period ripe for the establishment of a settlement in British Honduras, especially considering that the territory had some of the best stands of logwood and its 'remoteness' generally obscured it from view. Naylor (1989) seems to agree and contends that this was around when the settlement at British Honduras in the Bay of Honduras was established. By 1715, Great Britain imported some 5,863 tons of logwood (Wilson, 1936, p. 5).

Fourthly, alongside sugar, tobacco, indigo and other commodities, logwood was declared an enumerated product under the Navigation Act of 1660. This meant that any logwood destined for the English market could only be shipped to English ports in English bottoms (CSP, Col., 1699, pp. 419, 438). This placed logwood on a precarious footing, but Barbara and Victor Bulmer-Thomas (2017) argue that this did not have any effect on the logwood trade from Belize which continued apace as the settlement was not covered by the Act. Nevertheless, as an enumerated product it would have been challenging for buccaneers and privateers to sell logwood unto the market in England. Logwood seized by English and Dutch privateers already fetched lower prices in Europe (around £9/ton), and even lower prices than Nicaragua wood which sold at around £30/ton. However, the constraints were short-lived and just two years later (i.e., in 1662) logwood imports into England was legalised, and "the British judiciary agreed that logwood from Belize did not fall within the Navigation Acts and could therefore be sold anywhere" (Bulmer-Thomas and Bulmer-Thomas, 2017, p. 41). After this development, Belize became very attractive for settlement given its valuable stands of logwood.

And finally, the Treaty of Madrid of 1667 and the Treaty of Godolphin of 1670 brought an end to peacetime privateering and when the profitability of privateering dried up, this pushed many former privateers into logwood cutting and harvesting. As Cromwell (2009) surmised, "by this treaty, Spain recognised England's holding in the Caribbean, including Jamaica, and in return the English pledged to cease giving commissions in peacetime to privateers who raided Spanish shipping and ports" (p. 46). Importantly, the Treaty of Godolphin excludes mention of any settlement of British Honduras, suggesting that either Spanish and English officials in Jamaica were unaware of any permanent logwood settlement there; or the English officials, especially those in Jamaica, were aware but kept quiet about this; or no settlements were located there, at least not any significant ones. This last development was key as the buccaneers and privateers now needed to find places where logwood could be cut. Thus, Belize was likely targeted for exploitation and with this permanent settlement followed, but it would take another four or five decades for any settlement in Belize to emerge as the centre of logwood activity in the Bay of Honduras.

Buccaneers, Privateers and Woodcutting

Following the series of related developments above, the swarms of buccaneers and pirates that flooded into Jamaica after the island was captured from Spain, now found shifting to logwood cutting and trading more appealing. Thus, it is unsurprising that it was around this time, that is, between 1662 and 1670, that English presence in the logwood areas of the Yucatan increased significantly and numerous new settlements were established in Campeche and Cape Catoche. The impetus for this increase had two additional sources: a resolution in 1666 by the Council of Jamaica to 'grant letters of marque again the Spaniard which would allow easy access to logwood and other commodities;' and a letter from Governor Modyford in 1670 'encouraging the whole logwood trade, as this could become English, with twenty percent of the profit per ton for the king' (Botella-Ordinas, 2010, p. 144). Consequently, by the first half of the 1670s the trickle of ex-buccaneers and privateers cum logwood cutters that settled in Laguna de Términos in the early 1660s had increased so much so that by 1672 some 900 or more English logwood cutters were living and cutting logwood in Campeche.

Despite the remoteness of the Belize territory and difficulties with navigating its coastline, the area was appealing to English woodcutters as it held some of the best logwood stands in the Yucatan and Bay of

Honduras areas. As Thomas Lynch who succeeded Modyford as governor of Jamaica stated in a letter to the Secretary to the Council for Plantations, "the best logwood in the region grew in thickets on calcerous crops in the "morose and swampish" areas near the coast" (CSP, Col., 1672). Given this knowledge about the availability of the choicest logwood stands being in Belize, even if a permanent settlement had not yet been established, logwood cutting had already started there. This is probably what William Coxon was referring to in 1672 when he informed Lynch that Englishmen had been cutting logwood in the eastern coast of the Yucatan and had been doing so for three years (Board of Trade, 1717). If Coxon was correct, then it suggests that a settlement existed in Belize from around the latter part of the 1660s, or by 1670. Modyford's contention that the cutting in uninhabited places (i.e., Belize) had been happening before the signing of the Madrid Treaty seems to confirm Coxon's report. Still, when Thomas Modyford wrote to Secretary Lord Arlington in 1670 stating that "more than a dozen former privateering vessels were shipping logwood from the Bay of Campeche and Mosquito," there was no mention of any logwood cutting or the existence of a settlement in Belize. However, this does not mean that English wood cutters were not already cutting logwood there.

The nature of buccaneering activities suggest that the individuals involved in this vocation were not the type that possessed any impulses for setting up settlements, save for the temporary bases that facilitated their plundering ways, nor would they have been spontaneously inclined to switch to logwood cutting. Indeed, the "sinew populations" were composed of individuals who were "neither planters nor slaves [but] sailors, soldiers, and smugglers…" (Cromwell, 2014, 771; Rutledge, 2018, p. 11) that refused to give up their buccaneering lifestyles. E.O. Winzerling (1946) pointed out as much when he stated that the likes of earlier privateers Sir Francis Drake and Sir John Hawkins, "were not interested in establishing colonies" (p. 23). Nevertheless, as David Head (2018) posits, "European challenges to Iberian hegemony [in the New World] began with maritime marauding … and their raids eventually led to buccaneer settlements in places … usually along the coast" (pp. 52-53). The Belize territory had enough remote coves and inlets along its coastline to render it attractive to buccaneers operating in the area. However, as already pointed out, English buccaneers would have been largely prevented from 'settling' there while the Spanish naval fort at Salamanca de Bacalar was operating at full capacity and *guarda costas* were actively patrolling the waterways (Bulmer-Thomas & Bulmer-Thomas, 2017, p. 26).
To protect against privateering attacks and plundering, the Spanish colonial authorities in Mexico created a coastal defence system of *vigías,* or nautical warnings, on the northern and eastern coast of the Yucatan Peninsula. After this proved ineffective against several maritime assaults and piracy raids, the Spanish authorities in Yucatan "outsourced some of their *guardacosta* work to Dutch and Irish buccaneers" (Head, p. 59), and between 1671 and 1674 these 'hired guns' seized some seventy-five English vessels operating in the Bay of Honduras. The fact that there are no reports or documentation in the historiography about Spanish naval forces attacking any settlements in Belize prior to 1695 or 1696 seems to support the view that there were no significant, or permanent, logwood settlements in Belize long before this time. Rather, it wasn't until the English logwood cutters started relocating from the Bay of Campeche to the Bay of Honduras in the second decade of the eighteenth century that the Spanish forces launched more serious raids on the settlement at Belize. For instance, in 1718 there was an attack from Peten in the interior that drove the woodcutters to the coast, and again in 1722 and 1726 when many of the logwood cutters in the settlement at British Honduras were expelled.

Spanish attacks on the Belize settlement notwithstanding, the critical development regarding English buccaneering had to do with the Treaty of Godolphin in 1670. Following this, the market in Jamaica for riches from buccaneering closed and former buccaneers and privateers were now forced to consider other options for earning a livelihood. This is crucial, as it shows that the changes that unfolded in the Indies at that time, especially when considered against the backdrop of the other changes already discussed in this article (i.e., the removal in England of the prohibitions against logwood) would have been a strong enticement to English buccaneers to take up logwood cutting. Although logwood now traded at only £15 per ton, the volume of the trade had increased to several 1000 tons annually, compared to the 500 tons annually during the period of the Spanish crown's monopoly of the logwood trade. Thus, in a letter from the Board of Trade to George I, the Board pointed out that the Anglo-Spanish Treaty of 1667 "had led the way to a great increase in the number of logwood cutters" (C.O. 123/3). Indeed, it seems that from this point on, the stream of ex-buccaneers that had been trickling into Laguna de Términos in the Bay of Campeachy to cut logwood snowballed. At the same time, 'encouragements' from English colonial governors in Jamaica likely resulted in some "going to the bays to cut logwood". And, when Thomas Lynch succeeded Modyford as the Governor of Jamaica, he brought with him a vision of "England becoming the storehouse of logwood for all Europe which may be worth £100,000 per annum to the trade and customs" (Burdon, 1931, p. 52). This analysis is consistent with

Mavis Campbell's (2003) contention that it was only when the buccaneers had no other choice than to cut logwood that they settled in Belize (p. 172).

Contraband trade with the Spanish Main

After Jamaica's capture by the English in 1655, a flourishing contraband trade with the Spanish Main developed, and until 1692, this was organised primarily out of Port Royal (Rutledge, 2018, p. 96). As Vera Brown (1927) noted, "Jamaica was the source from which flowed the largest of the streams of illicit commerce that rolled over the shores of Central America, defying Spain's monopoly of commerce with its colonial dominions" (p. 178). Contraband trade routes from Jamaica into the Kingdom of Guatemala were well developed long before the British secured the coveted *asiento* from Spain, and a significant share of this illicit commerce was conducted via the Belize settlement. From there, goods were transshipped through Lake Isabal in the Gulfo Dulce region using smaller vessels, ideally those not exceeding 20 feet in draught, for example piraguas and 'pit-pans' – flat bottomed vessel (Woodward, 1965). This way of shipping commerce was necessary since the approach to the harbour at Belize was tricky because of the reefs and coastline and because it silted up. Still, during the colonial period it was the most satisfactory shipping route into Central America (Naylor, 1989). As Chiero (2016) recently noted, "even after two centuries of Spanish colonial control, there were only two main routes from [the Atlantic coast to the Kingdom of Guatemala] – through Mexico and through British Honduras" (p. 2).

Illicit trade was endemic to British activity in the New World in the 16th and 17th centuries, and it was "the largest and most important of the three branches of Anglo-Spanish commerce that bound Jamaica to Spanish America" (Rutledge, 2018, p. 96). Contraband trade with Spanish America arguably resulted from Spain's closed system of trade with its colonies in the New World and this monopoly included the logwood trade (Schmitt, 2011). Hence, English buccaneers continually harassed and plundered Spanish shipping, and they often captured ships carrying logwood from the logwood settlements in the Yucatan. In such cases, the captured logwood and other booty was sold onto the black market. The Spanish were aware of the illicit trade in logwood by English buccaneers but largely neglected to protect Spanish subjects cutting logwood in Campeche and Laguna de Términos after the maritime station at Salamanca de Bacalar was abandoned in 1652.

The illicit trade through Belize started off small, involving the use of temporary bases along the coast and the very nature of the trade would have been highly appealing to English buccaneers. However, as noted above, the illicit commerce out Jamaica's only developed after the island's capture by the English in 1655. As such, the Belize territory would only have become important, and necessary, as a transhipment point for contraband trade with the Kingdom of Guatemala after this. That being the case and considering that the logwood trade had also not yet started to enter its golden period, the likelihood that English or Scottish buccaneers established a permanent settlement in Belize prior to this time remains low. Instead, the historical evidence shows that it is only after the Treaty of Godolphin of 1670 outlawed privateering activities that the buccaneers started cutting logwood and did so especially during periods when there were lulls in the contraband trade. The story of John Coxon the buccaneer cum logwood cutter seems to exemplify this pattern as between 1669 and 1689, Coxon, by his own admission, fluctuated between cutting logwood and serving as a commissioned privateer. However, by 1679 Coxon had returned to privateering and plundering (Coxonclub, n.d.).

Conclusions

The historical revisionism around the origins of the Belize settlement initiated by Barbara and Victor Bulmer-Thomas in 2017 discredited the long-standing claim in the historiography of Belize that this occurred 1638 by a Scottish buccaneer named Peter Wallace. The Bulmer-Thomases posited that the conditions for the settlement to be established were right towards the end of 1642 when the Spanish naval fort at Salamanca de Bacalar was sacked by El Mulato. This view seems to be supported by the leading historian on the Belize-Guatemala territorial dispute, Assad Shoman, but he contends that this was more likely from about 1652, after the fort had been permanently abandoned. This article agrees that conditions in the Bay of Honduras, indeed in the wider West Indies, were starting to change during this period but adds that not all the conditions to facilitate a permanent English settlement being established in the Belize territory were in place until after the mid to late 1660s.

To support these historically revisionist claims, this article argues, firstly, that the logwood trade was, for myriad reasons, not economically and financially attractive enough to entice buccaneers and privateers to give up their plundering and marauding ways to cut logwood before the late 1660s. The likelihood therefore that buccaneers and privateers would have established any permanent settlements in British Honduras earlier than this period is not compelling. This article also shows that the circumstances were not fully right until around or after 1670 when the Anglo-Spanish treaty (also known as the Treaty of Godolphin) sought to permanently suppress privateering and forced English buccaneers and privateers to shift to cutting logwood as an alternative form of 'useful engagement.' By this time the price of logwood had fallen to around £50 per ton, but the logwood trade had started on an upturn and a centre of logwood activity emerged in 1662 in the Laguna de Términos area of the Bay of Campeachy. During this period, attention of English buccaneers to logwood were focused on Campeachy. Still, Belize had stands of some of the best logwood in the region and these could be readily exploited so it is possible, but unlikely, that such places were being logged while logwood activity in the Campeachy area was on the upturn or at its peak. Given this reasoning, it is also unlikely the English buccaneers started using any temporary bases in Belize for more sustained periods during the year, and even more doubtful that if such bases existed, they were settlements in the sense of permanent communities. However, by the time Belize emerged as the main centre for logwood activity in the first quarter of the 1700s, there were permanent English settlements in Belize. Finally, this article shows that the contraband trade from Jamaica with the Spanish Main only developed after Jamaica had been captured by Cromwell's forces in 1655, and it was this happening that led to Belize's emergence as the main trans-shipment point for the illicit trade with the Kingdom of Guatemala. Thus, prior to this date, Belize would not have been attractive or practicable as a permanent settlement for the purposes of servicing this trade. Instead, the impetus for the English buccaneers and privateers to establish permanent settlements in Belize was fomented by the combination of Charles II ending the long-standing prohibitions against logwood; the Treaty of Godolphin inciting privateers to shift from plundering to logwood cutting; and the entreaties of different governors of Jamaica with personal and business interests in the logwood trade for the English crown to encourage this trade. All these changes occurred during or after the 1660s and therefore the conditions were only in place at this point or afterwards for buccaneers or privateers to settle in Belize. Thus, logwood was undeniably the raison d'etre for the origins of the Belize settlement.

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