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Peripheral Areas and Illegal Settlements:
Everyday Life in the Early Colonial Period of Belize

Although an official part of the Spanish empire by 1544, Belize, then part of the Bay of Honduras, never came under its full control. With the suppression of piracy in the 18th century, British buccaneers began settling the interior establishing an economy based on slavery and forestry exports. Although the British Empire did not openly acknowledge these logging camps, they supported them behind closed doors. Attacks by Spain increased substantially in the 1700’s, culminating in treaties that officially recognized British settlements while also restricting expansion into Southern Belize. Regardless of these strictures, these areas became a refuge for a wide array of Spanish and British colonists, runaway slaves, and indigenous Maya. Although archaeologists have long dealt with evidence of piracy and other illegal activities, peripheral areas are often treated as unimportant or subordinate to the processes of colonization. This talk examines research conducted during the 2017 summer field season, focused on the identification and recovery of archaeological sites associated with the early Colonial period (AD 1544-1840).