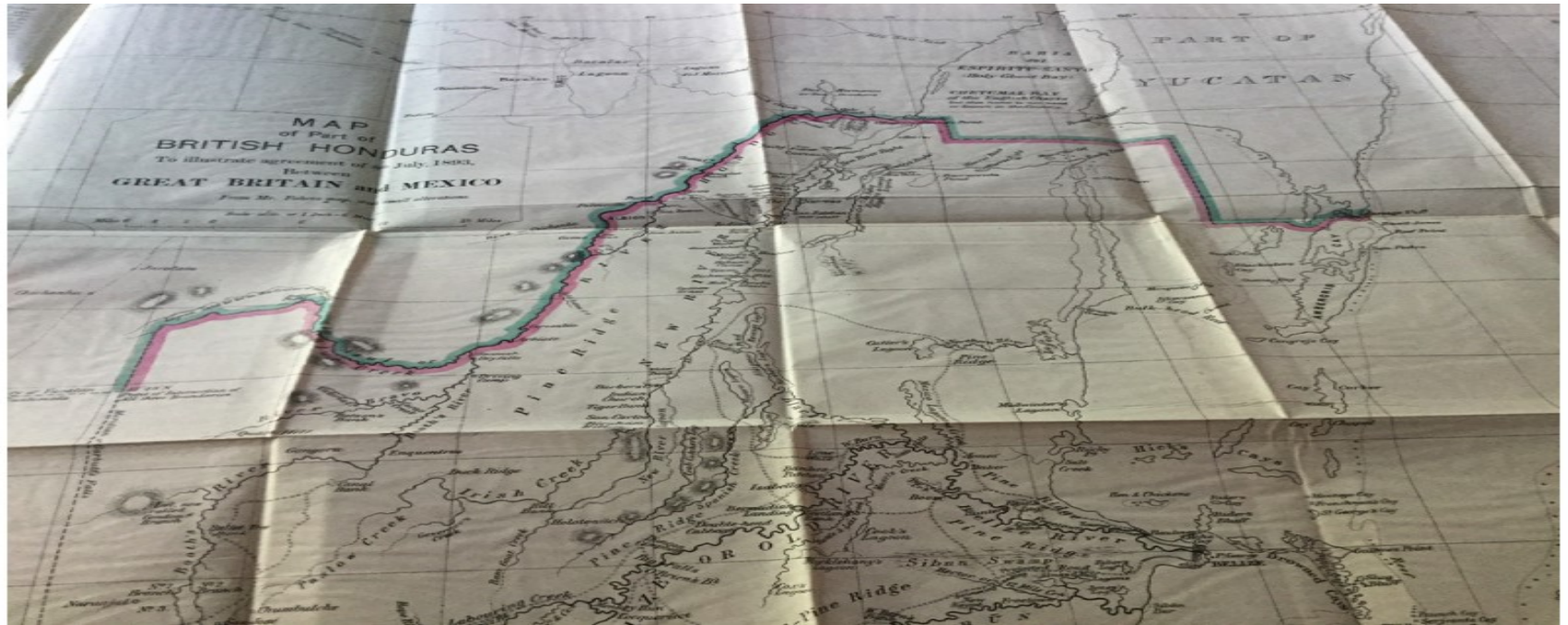


The Mexican Caste War 1847- 1902

Its impact on Belize



Belize on the eve of outbreak of conflict

- 1786 Convention of London permitted both logwood and mahogany cutting.
- Boundary set between the Hondo and Sibun.
- Resident British Superintendent to oversee terms of treaty strictly kept.
- Bi-annual inspection by Spanish official
- Affairs of the colony settled by Public meeting.
- No legal status.

Mexico – causes of conflict

- Civil War – unfinished business from the Mexican War of Independence 1810
- What political system to have: Federalism or Centralized Government.
- Centred on Merida and Campeche.
- Maya at first co-opted by both sides; later rebellion against both and even each other.

The Belize Perspective

- Belize a settlement with no legal status; without a border Belize faces potential existential threat.
- Uncertainty about taking sides
- Economic interests at stake – incl. sale of arms.

The Belize Position

- Cautious neutrality to promote friendly relations.
- E.g. Peace broker between Maya and the Yucatan state.
- Both the Yucatecos and the Maya at different times begged to be taken under British protection.

The Maya Threat

- 1864-1867 Maximilian Emperor of Mexico.
- Declared all of Mexico, incl. the unstable Yucatan and Belize part of his Empire.
- Essentially three distinct Maya groupings:
 1. Santa Cruz Maya (Cruzob after 1861)
militarily the strongest and greatest threat to the Settlement – armed by Belize.
 2. Icaiche – claimed portions of Belize N.W. – armed by the Yucatan authorities and most anglophobic.
 3. San Pedro Maya – a breakaway faction of the Icaiche: refugees in Belize at first, but later threatened the settlement.

Progress of the War

- 1847 Hostilities in Mexico spill over into Belize – Mestizo and Criollo refugees from Bacalar flee to N. Belize and beg for protection
- Bacalar garrison supplied with arms by Belize and 30 men sent to Haylock Bank to help protect Mahogany works.
- Belize mobilize troops (West Indian Regiment) preparing for hostile invasion.
- Breakaway San Pedro Maya ask to be taken under British protection – settled in Yalbec, San Antonio and San Pedro.
- Refugees keep moving into Belize.
- Mexico National Government protests to Belize about the sale of arms to the Maya now at Bacalar.
- Yucatan Government asks Britain, Spain and US for help promising sovereignty
- Belize sends 3 men to negotiate a ceasefire with the Maya Chief of Army in Yucatan. Offer accepted.
- Negotiated peace breaks down.
- Maya demand independence from the Mexican Government

The Battle of Orange Walk

Marcos Canul of the Icaiche

- 1868-1872 lead up to battle: Increasing threats on the Belize side: demands for rents, burning of villages, hostages taken etc. executions.
- Aug. 1872 Canul and 150 men crossed the Hondo and March into Orange Walk town taking prisoners burning and looting.
- W.I. Regiment dug in at Cairns hill but Canul heads to the plaza.
- Shot by a Mestizo refugee, Francisco Escalante, and fatally wounded.

Aftermath

- Spencer-Mariscal border treaty with Mexico signed in 1893 and ratified in 1897.
- Belize a full colony since 1862 in exchange for British defense protection in times of conflict.
- Legislative Assembly replaces Public meeting.
- Overseen by British Governor.
- Population doubles result of influx of refugees both Yucatecos (Corozal, Orange Walk) and Maya. (15 Maya Villages).
- Refugees start the Sugar Industry.