

## 53 Congreso Internacional de Americanistas

México, 19 – 24 de julio de 2009

### Simposio

#### Etnicidad y nación: debate alrededor de Belice

##### Coordinadoras:

Elisabeth CUNIN, IRD, CIESAS, France-Mexico, [elisabeth.cunin@ird.fr](mailto:elisabeth.cunin@ird.fr)

Odile HOFFMANN, CEMCA, Mexico, [cemca.hoffmann@francia.org.mx](mailto:cemca.hoffmann@francia.org.mx)

Nos proponemos organizar un simposio dedicado a Belice, primero para contribuir en un mejor conocimiento de este país en el campo científico latinoamericano; luego y sobre todo porque Belice, con su historia particular (colonia inglesa, independencia reciente), permite acercarnos a la realidad latinoamericana con una mirada novedosa y original. No se tratará entonces de enfatizar la excepcionalidad del caso beliceño, como si fuera una isla aislada en el continente, sino de analizar las luces que nos da sobre procesos sociales comunes a toda la región. En particular, pensamos que los trabajos sobre la sociedad beliceña nos invitan a cuestionar las categorías científicas y los paradigmas de análisis generalmente utilizados en América latina.

El simposio se centrará en el tema de la relación entre etnicidad y nación, en un país que tuvo que definirse a si mismo muy recientemente y en una sociedad caracterizada por su diversidad étnica.

Proponemos, entre otros, debatir alrededor de las preguntas siguientes:

- ¿ En qué medida la presencia de múltiples grupos étnicos obliga a una reflexión sobre el reconocimiento de la diferencia, en sus vertientes tanto constitucionales y legislativas, como vivenciales en el campo social, cultural, político y económico?
- ¿ Cómo se asocia la identidad nacional con los descendientes de africanos cuando, en el resto de América latina, éstos son tradicionalmente excluidos y aislados?
- ¿ Cómo se vive y se negocia la coexistencia de dos grupos afrodescendientes distintos (*creoles* y *garifunas*)? misma que recuerda hasta qué punto la categoría “afrodescendiente” debe comprenderse en toda su heterogeneidad e invita a analizar las interacciones entre estos dos grupos y su papel en la construcción nacional.
- La importancia de los procesos migratorios ¿ desdibuja las fronteras y propicia nuevas formas de producción y de gestión de la alteridad?

El simposio, en español e inglés, reunirá a investigadores de Belice, Francia, México, Estados Unidos y Gran-Bretaña.

##### **Belize: ethnicity and nation**

The study of Belize social reality, with its particular history (British colony, recent independence), allows us to approach the Latin American reality with a new and original look. Thus, we propose to organize a symposium dedicated to Belize, in order to contribute for a better understanding of this country in the Latin American scientific field. The issue of this symposium will not be the emphasis of the exceptionality of the Belizean case, as if it was an isolated island in the continent, but rather, the analysis of the clues this case brings to the social processes that are common to the whole region.

In particular, we believe that the research on the Belizean society lead us to call into question the scientific categories and paradigm of analysis generally used in Latin America regarding issues such as ethnicity, nation building, and multiculturalism.

Thus, the symposium will focus on the relation between ethnicity and nation in a country that has had to define itself very recently and in a society characterized by its ethnic diversity.

We propose, among others, the following themes of study:

- The presence of a variety of ethnic groups which calls to consider the acknowledgment of the difference, in its constitutional and legislative aspects as well as in daily life aspects in the social, cultural, political and economical fields.
- The association of national identity with the Africans descendants when, in the rest of Latin American, those people are traditionally excluded and secluded.
- The coexistence of two distinct African-American groups (*creoles* and *garifunas*) which reminds us up to which extent the category African-American has to be understood in all its heterogeneity and leads to analyze the interactions between those two groups and their roles in the national construction.
- The significance of the migratory processes, which modify the frontiers and facilitate new forms of production and new forms of management of the otherness.

## PROGRAMA

### 1-

#### **Entre los vecinos y los imperios: el papel de Belice en la geopolítica regional**

MÓNICA TOUSSAINT

Instituto Mora

[mtoussaint@mora.edu.mx](mailto:mtoussaint@mora.edu.mx) y [moniesca@gmail.com](mailto:moniesca@gmail.com)

México

¿Cuál es el papel de Belice en la geopolítica regional? Esa es la pregunta que se quiere contestar en esta ponencia a partir de tres grandes etapas de la historia de Belice a lo largo del siglo XX: la primera, que abarca las décadas que van de principios del siglo a 1963, cuando Belice alcanza el autogobierno; la segunda, de 1963 a 1981, que incluye el periodo de la lucha por la independencia y que coincide con la crisis centroamericana; y, la tercera, que va de la independencia a nuestros días. En cada una de ellas se tratarán de analizar problemas tales como el papel de Belice en el contexto regional, la relación entre la política interna y sus vínculos con los países del área, la política de los principales actores externos (México, Gran Bretaña y Estados Unidos) hacia Belice, y los conflictos del gobierno beliceño con los países vecinos, particularmente con Guatemala, entre otros. Asimismo, se buscará dar cuenta de las discusiones sobre la independencia de Belice en los foros internacionales, el papel de México en la defensa de la autodeterminación del pueblo beliceño, así como las posturas de algunos de los gobiernos centroamericanos, más afines a las directrices de Washington.

Palabras clave: Geopolítica, independencia, política exterior, historia, Centroamérica

### 2.

#### **The African Diaspora Experience in Belize (1718-1922): between theory, rhetoric and practice**

AONDOFE JOSEPH-ERNEST IYO

University of Belize  
[aondofe@yahoo.com](mailto:aondofe@yahoo.com)  
Belize

Is the Creole culture in Belize national or diasporic? The “theory and practice of the African diaspora” is reemerging as a major field of inquiry that is questioning “Creolization Discourses in Caribbean Culture” (cf. Verene Shepard & Glen Richards 2002). There is indeed a need to go beyond the “fact finding” stage in the study of the African diaspora. Explored in this essay is how far it is true to conclude, as many have (cf. Orlando Patterson 1982), that the “African” was dead on arrival; and that only a visual marker remained? Also explored in this essay is how far it is true to say, as many have alleged, that, “had it not been for physical appearance, the Creole would have vanished without a trace into the crucible of the Belizean melting pot?” This essay seeks to interrogate the view expressed by many early twentieth century anthropologists, that, “any amount of African tradition which the ‘Negro’ brought to Belize was very small; and that when the ‘Negro’ landed in Belize, she left behind almost everything but her dark complexion and her tropical temperament?” The objective of this essay is to deconstruct the way the African diaspora is currently been studied and analyzed. The purpose of this essay is to demonstrate how the study of the African diaspora can become practical and relevant. The aim of this essay is to propose a methodology of studying and analyzing the survival and persistency of Africans in the diaspora over time, cross-culturally and multi-culturally. The author is of the view that the problems and challenges encountered by students of the African diaspora have been complicated by the lack of an in-depth comparative-historical analysis that goes beyond the observation that there is an African diaspora. Perhaps the most critical challenge or problem in the study of the African diaspora in general, is the failure to sustain, within an interdisciplinary context, a level of theoretical and practical innovation on a par with that of established academic disciplines. The approach suggested here, conceptually and methodologically, is a departure from the dominant discourse on the African diaspora, which simply reiterates the fact that there is an African diaspora. The methodology proposed for this essay draws from archival and other documentary evidence found in Belize as well as from the experience of the author and his involvement in a project aimed at introducing the teaching and learning of African and Maya civilizations and history in Belize on one hand, and his cumulative research in the study of the African diaspora in Belize over a period of twelve years, on the other.

Key Words: diaspora, African, Creole, Maya, education

### 3.

#### **Race, Nation and Belonging in Belize’s Garveyism**

GIULIA BONACCI

Institut de Recherche pour le Développement (IRD)

[giuliabonacci@hotmail.com](mailto:giuliabonacci@hotmail.com)

Francia

Despite visits made to Belize then British Honduras - by the Jamaican black nationalist Marcus Garvey (1887-1940), and the role played by the Belizean Samuel Haynes (1898-1971) in Garvey’s organization, the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), Belize’s Garveyism is characterized by a peculiar contradiction. It is best expressed in its double loyalty to britishness and, second only, to blackness.

The aim of this paper is to discuss the entangled representations of race, nation and belonging in Belize’s Garveyism. Tensions contained therein, expressed in discourses and social practices, will be contextualized and compared with Jamaica’s Garveyism. Archival evidence, local and

international newspapers, and oral history will contribute to the analysis of yet another history of nation-(un)building in the Americas.

Key words: History / Garveyism / blackness / britishness / nation-building

#### 4.

##### **Transmission of Rights to House Lots in Barranco, a Garifuna village in Southern Belize 1895 to 2000. – lessons in Caribbean Ethnohistory**

JOSEPH O. PALACIO, Judy LUMB, Carlson TUTTLE

University of the West Indies School

[glessima@btI.net](mailto:glessima@btI.net)

Belize

Studies have shown that as in other British colonies in the Caribbean, monopoly control over land and labour persisted throughout the post-emancipation era in Belize continuing throughout most of the nineteenth century. Studies on the landless non-British minorities, however, have been limited almost exclusively to the Maya fleeing either from Mexico as Caste War refugees or forced labour from Guatemala. These studies have overlooked the Garifuna, who were also looking for their own refuge and in doing so established footholds for communities mainly in Southern Belize. While being black like the larger population of African ex-slaves in Belize, the Garifuna maintained strong ties to extended kinship as well as to the land and sea as intrinsic components of their nationhood, which had congealed in South America and the Eastern Caribbean over centuries. Initial interactions of the Garifuna with British authorities on rights to house lots within villages, which they had established on land even before the British had assumed full territorial rights from Spain, makes for a backdrop of topics that I cover in this paper under the heading of legalizing lot tenure. They include carrying out a cadastral survey, re-distributing surveyed lots which had already been occupied, and initiating a formalized structure for ownership and its transfer, among others. The study provides detail description and analysis of circumstances being repeated in other communities that were simultaneously undergoing lot ownership 'regularization' in southern Belize.

Palabras clave: tenure, Garifunas, territorial rights

#### 5.

##### **Retorno a norte de Belice: Migración transfronteriza entre México y Belice a principios del siglo XX**

ALLAN ORTEGA MUÑOZ

INAH

[allanortega@yahoo.com](mailto:allanortega@yahoo.com)

México

La población beliceña que habitó el sur de Quintana Roo a principios de siglo XX experimentó el proceso de una migración transfronteriza a ambos lados de la frontera sur mexicana, dentro de un marco de cultura regional transterritorial que le permitió compartir una serie de bienes de consumo, así como costumbres, que los unificaba. Este proceso transfronterizo posibilitó el establecimiento, sostenimiento, adaptación y sobrevivencia de la población en México. Sin embargo, hubo un grupo de beliceños que manifestaron un mayor movimiento a través de la frontera ¿Por qué? La ponencia establece una serie de elementos que permite discernir qué grupos de la población beliceña retorna a Belice (Honduras Británica) y las causas de esta decisión. Estos elementos se circunscriben dentro de factores demográficos, así como sociológicos.

## 6

### **The Role of Ethnicity in the Internationalization of Belize's Independence Struggle**

ASSAD SHOMAN

Investigador independiente

[assads13@yahoo.com](mailto:assads13@yahoo.com)

Belize

The independence of Belize was delayed for almost two decades because of a military threat from a neighbouring country (Guatemala) that claimed its territory. This paper explains how and why it was possible, in the context of the Cold War, for Belize to resist the pressures of the colonial power (the UK) and the US to compromise sovereignty and cede land in return for security.

Belize's efforts to achieve early and secure independence involved two related processes: negotiation and internationalisation. Belize was able to overcome disadvantages of size and power by taking advantage of the particular nature of the international context. The importance of the shifting conjuncture is evaluated, including the fact that the "Third World" and the United Nations were at the apex of their influence in the 1970s. The paper explores how the ethnic composition of Belize's population impacted on the political significance of the Guatemalan claim in Belize and in Guatemala, and examines its importance for the strategy of internationalisation which succeeded in achieving the goals set by Belize.

Keywords: Belize, Independence, Territorial Claim, Cold War, Ethnicity

## 7.

### **Nación y diferencia: el caso de Belmopán**

ELISABETH CUNIN

Institut de Recherche pour le Développement (IRD), Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social (CIESAS)

[elisabeth.cunin@ird.fr](mailto:elisabeth.cunin@ird.fr)

Francia y México

Los primeros debates para la construcción de una nueva capital, emergen a principio de los años 1960, justo después de la tragedia del huracán Hattie (marzo de 1961) que arrasó gran parte de la ciudad de Belize. Belmopán iba a ser la nueva cara moderna del país, el símbolo de una nación joven. Sin embargo, desde su nacimiento, la ciudad tiene problemas para desarrollarse y para poblarse, y Belize City sigue siendo la capital no oficial del país. La historia de Belmopán, de su planificación inicial a sus dificultades actuales, me permitirá analizar, como un reflejo simbólico, la nación en construcción. En particular, es interesante observar cierta resistencia de parte de los "Creoles", supuestamente los primeros candidatos a la migración hacia Belmopán ya que ocupan gran parte de los cargos administrativos (Civil servants). El huracán Hattie inicia los primeros flujos importantes de migración hacia los Estados Unidos y gran parte de la población "creole" prefiere irse a Nueva York o Miami en vez de Belmopán. Al mismo tiempo, los años 1980 se caracterizan por una importante ola de migraciones de refugiados centroamericanos que huyen de las guerras civiles (Salvador, Guatemala), seguidos pronto por migrantes económicos (Salvador, Guatemala y Honduras). El nacimiento de barrios identificados como centroamericanos (Salvapán, Las Flores) en Belmopán acentúa un sentimiento de "invasión" que se traduce por la referencia a una "guerra étnica" o a una inversión del "equilibrio étnico" de país.

## 8.

## **Are Belizean Creoles an Ethnic Group?**

RICHARD WILK

Indiana University

[wilkr@indiana.edu](mailto:wilkr@indiana.edu)

USA

The dominant culture is rarely defined as an ethnic group – a term which is usually used for minorities, especially indigenous people and recent immigrants. The issue becomes more complex in countries like Guyana, Mauritius, Trinidad and Fiji, where there are two major groups contending for majority and national political hegemony. The term ‘Creole’ has had many meanings in Belizean history, but in the 1990s with the establishment of the National Creole Council and other organizations, some people began to use Creole as an ethnic identifier, a form of structural equivalence with the many other groups in Belize which have sought recognition as ethnic minorities. They sought to bolster the ethnic claims of Creoles by emphasizing the now-traditional ethnic markers of music, language, dress, food and dance. Others, particularly those associated with the earlier Pan-Africanist oriented UBAD movement, argued that Creole people should identify themselves primarily and globally as racial members of the African Diaspora, to identify as Black rather than as an ethnic group. Finally, a significant number of Creole people stood on the sidelines, and continued to see themselves primarily as true Belizeans, the inheritors of a national, rather than ethnic or racial identity. This complex contest of identity politics exposes some of the limitations, as well as the advantages of ethnic politics in small diverse countries. It also exposes some of the problems and fractures which hide behind the official discourse of a peaceful and welcoming multiethnic country which values diversity.

Key words: ethnicity, Belize, Creole, history, nationalism

## **9.**

### **Racial Inclusivity and Exclusivity in Belizean Women's Politics, 1920s-50s**

ANNE S. MACPHERSON

History Department, SUNY College at Brockport

[amacpher@brockport.edu](mailto:amacpher@brockport.edu)

USA

Women of the middle and popular classes in British Honduras/Belize played critical roles in processes of colonial reform, labor agitation, and nationalist struggle in the twentieth century. How did these women deal with ethnic/racial/cultural differences, how have their practices shaped nation-building in Belize, and how might restoring their visions and practices to historical memory shape future nation-building? This paper will examine the strong Creole character of middle-class women’s reform practice in the 1920s-50s period, focusing on the Black Cross Nurses. These women embraced the “anti-Latin” tradition of the Battle of St. George’s Caye, treated poor Creole women as disordered clients—fostering no cross-class black sisterhood—and at best helped forge a link between middle class Creole manhood and restored legislative authority. The paper will then contrast that tradition with the more multi-ethnic politics of working-class women in the labor-nationalist camp, in the 1930s and 1950s. While labor-nationalist agitation began among Afro-Belizean women—both Creole and Garifuna—such women articulated in the mid-1930s a vision of womanhood suffrage that explicitly embraced mestizas and Mayan women, while seeming to exclude white women from the imagined national body politic. Nor did the PUP’s United Women’s Groups, founded in the late 1950s, articulate an exclusive link between blackness and the nation, drawing their huge membership from women of all ethnic groups. The paper will conclude by arguing that the latter tradition offers important lessons at a time when immigration to Belize by

Spanish-speaking Central Americans has sparked chauvinistic ethnic definitions of Belizean identity.

Keywords: women, ethnicity, politics, twentieth century

## 10.

### **Reconsidering the politics of race, migration and participation in Belize**

DAVID HOWARD

Institute of Geography, University of Edinburgh

[david.howard@ed.ac.uk](mailto:david.howard@ed.ac.uk)

GB

With a current population of 290,000, Belize has undergone a rapid demographic increase during the last three decades, primarily as a result of immigration from neighbouring states. The paper analyses the impact of contemporary demographic mobility and concomitant political and nationalist tensions in Belize. The study is based on interviews undertaken in two communities along the Mexican and Guatemalan borders, and considers racial discrimination and prejudice in Belizean society at large.

The current influx of predominantly Spanish-speaking migrants has significantly altered the historically sensitive balance between mestizo, creole, Garifuna and indigenous groups. Longstanding unease between mestizo and creole political parties and nationalist factions has been exacerbated by tensions over access to environmental and social resources and the challenge of a rapidly increasing population, fuelled by the recent immigration from the nearby countries of Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua. A fifth ethnic group, the Mennonites, descendants of a German-speaking religious sect from Mexico and Canada, is numerically small, but makes a significant contribution to agricultural production and marketing systems in Belize. The political and economic interplay of these ethnicities in the context of resource development, a reconceptualisation of racialised categories and political participation form key aspects of this study.

Key words: nationalism, race, politics, immigration, territory

## 11.

### **Elecciones y política en Belice, una exploración cartográfica**

ODILE HOFFMANN

Centro de Estudios Mexicanos y Centroamericanos (CEMCA),

[odilehoffmann@prodigy.net.mx](mailto:odilehoffmann@prodigy.net.mx)

Francia-México

Este trabajo parte de una doble inquietud: la de reunir datos e informaciones acerca de un país y un sistema político bastante desconocidos en México ; la de explicitar y documentar una serie de paradojas y contradicciones cuyo análisis constituye un reto teórico apasionante por su originalidad. En efecto, el espacio electoral reúne una serie de rasgos que llaman la atención. Por un lado ostenta toda la formalidad democrática que muchos países latinoamericanos podrían envidiar: alternancia, alta participación, “popularity” razonable, es decir márgenes de victoria “normales” y creíbles, aparente aceptación social de los resultados, instrumentos y organización de votación acorde a pautas internacionales. Y sin embargo, a la vez, se evidencia una altísima desconfianza de los políticos, poca legitimidad, acusaciones de fraudes y corrupciones múltiples y muy elevadas, denuncias de represión política y restricción de libertad de expresión hasta en los años 1980

(Shoman 1990), etc. La perspectiva “geográfica” asumida consiste en analizar la dinámica electoral en términos de construcción de los espacios electorales, construcción tanto políticos y sociales como materiales, es decir considerando también su proyección espacial en jurisdicciones, entidades administrativo-políticas y unidades censales, etc.