

REPORT OF THE ETHNOGRAPHIC FIELD SCHOOL IN BELIZE (JUNE 2013 SEASON)



CENTER FOR APPLIED ANTHROPOLOGY, NORTHERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY

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Introduction

This report documents the findings of the ethnographic field school organized by the Center for Applied Anthropology (CfAA) at Northern Kentucky University (NKU) in Orange Walk District, Belize, during June 2013. The Sugar Industry Research and Development Institute (SIRDI) facilitated ethnographic research in the communities of San Antonio, San Lazaro, and Yo Creek. The aim of the ethnographic field school was to train students in basic ethnographic methods as well as collect data for SIRDI to use in their agricultural and economic development programs. This field season's research focused on the following broad topics: history and cultural relations; economy; kinship, marriage, and family; sociopolitical organization; and religion and expressive culture.

Background

While the educational aim of the ethnographic field school is to train students in basic ethnographic methods, the applied purpose of the field school is to collect and analyze data that can then be used by SIRDI and other agencies in the development of programs for betterment of the sugar cane farming communities in northern Belize. As posted on the field school's web site:

Students will learn about the local culture by doing participant-observation and conducting ethnographic interviews in a community-based research project. Students will learn research ethics, unobtrusive observation, participant observation, field note writing and coding, ethnographic and life history interviewing, ethnolinguistic data collection, community mapping, rapid assessment procedures, qualitative data analysis, and other ethnographic methods in addition to basic ethnographic writing. After successful completion of this course, students will have:

- developed a basic understanding of Belizean culture,
- formulated an understanding of ethical and validity issues in ethnographic research,
- practiced skills in research design and ethnographic methods of data collection,
- applied basic ethnographic research methods in a non-western culture,
- engaged in a community-based research project, and
- analyzed ethnographic data resulting in an ethnographic monograph. (Center for Applied Anthropology at Northern Kentucky University 2014)

In addition, as posted on the field school's web site:

The ethnographic field school, as part of the CfAA, is collaborating with the Sugar Industry Research and Development Institute (SIRDI) in Orange Walk Town, Belize. Among other things, our partner is interested in our contribution in understanding the household economy and agricultural knowledge of sugar cane farmers in the Orange Walk District village communities. SIRDI will use our results and recommendations to develop and conduct workshops for farmers on agricultural techniques, economics, health, and other community development topics. (Center for Applied Anthropology at Northern Kentucky University 2014)

In Belize, agriculture is both a revenue-producing industry and a means of subsistence, which influences lifestyles and livelihoods. Hence, much anthropological interest has been devoted to agriculture (Atran et al. 2002; Beach et al. 2002; Amiguet et al. 2005; Bourbonnais-Spear et al. 2005; Bourbonnais-Spear et al. 2006). Recently, there has been an increase in the research on tourism, and the effects of tourism, immigration, and international influences on Belizean culture (Moberg 1996; Key 2002; Sutherland 1996). Further expansion of study has been devoted to traditional culture, such as those of the Maya and the Garifuna. This research is based mostly in southern Belize since the northern region is comprised of mostly individuals who are of mestizo heritage (Steinberg and Espejo-Saavedra 1996; Garber 1999; Bonner 1999; Bourbonnais-Spear et al. 2005). Studies of the Maya focus predominantly on ethnobotany, with the Q'eqchi' and Mopan Maya in the south (Bruck 2002; Ross-Ibarra and Molina-Cruz 2002; Emch 2003). In the case of the Garifuna, research is focused around the Garifuna's rituals and cultural identity (Jenkins 1983; Greene 1998; Bonner 1999; Bonner 2001; Greene 2002). Studies on religion are usually directed toward traditional Maya beliefs, or international and linguistic influences on the Garifuna (Stone 1994; Steinberg and Espejo-Saavedra 1996; Bonner 2001).

In contrast, most information regarding the northern region is either general in scope or focused on an ecological aspect of the region (Stone 1994; Moberg 1996). There are few studies of traditional culture in the north, which mostly consider the Maya and the Creole populations (DeChicchis 1989). Other research has been done on the acquisition of semantic knowledge (Rubinstein 1977), tourism development (Pearce 1984), and women and development (Lundgren 1993; Brockmann 1985).

There is only a handful of published research on development and farming in northern Belize: "The Political Ecology of Peasant Sugarcane Farming in Northern Belize" (Higgins 1998); "Los Cañeros: Sociopolitical Aspects of the History of Agriculture in the Corozal Region of British Honduras" (Jones 1969); "Ancient Maya Agricultural Installations and the Development of Intensive Agriculture in NW Belize" (Kunen 2001); and "Indigenous Attitudes, Ecotourism, and Mennonites: Recent Examples in Rainforest Destruction/Preservation" (Trapasso 1994).

Methods

Upon arrival in the villages of San Antonio, San Lazaro, and Yo Creek, Marcos Osorio (SIRDI Director) introduced the field school members to village council representatives and explained our collaborative research project to gain local approval for our presence in the community. Each village council gave their permission and was supportive of our efforts to learn about their communities. They hoped that what we learned would assist SIRDI in developing community-based development programs that would positively affect their communities.

Interviews were conducted house-to-house in a convenience sampling methodology, wherein we approached every house. The Cooperative Center for Study Abroad hired Antonio Novelo (Jungle River Tours) as the field school's land agent. He served as both as cultural liaison and research assistant during research in the communities. Mr. Novelo would explain

our general purpose and introduce students to community members. Two of the field school students were fluent Spanish speakers and would be assigned to interview informants who voiced a desire to be interviewed in Spanish. Students would then present the informed consent statement (Appendix A) and upon agreement, have the informant sign a copy (on file) and were offered an unsigned copy for their records.

Interviews were generally conducted on the informant's property (e.g., porch, house, etc.) with a pair of students, one serving as the primary interviewer and the other as observer. The standard method used for this research was the ethnographic interview (Spradley 1979), which is people centered (Levy and Hollan 1998) rather than interviewer centered. Interviews were from five minutes to an hour, depending upon the informant's time constraints and willingness to be interviewed by the students. Ideally the interview would flow naturally from topic to topic and would end when the interviewer or the informant perceived a natural stopping point or when the informant no longer seemed comfortable or interested (Levy and Hollan 1998).

During the first week of interviews while at Yo Creek, the students asked open-ended questions to elicit information about the following topics and subtopics (see Appendix B: Interview Schedule [Procedure]):

- orientation (identification and location, demography, settlements, and linguistic affiliation),
- history and cultural relations,
- economy (subsistence and commercial activities, industrial arts, trade, division of labor, and land tenure),
- kinship, marriage, and family (kin groups, kin terms, marriage, domestic unit, inheritance, and socialization),
- sociopolitical organization (social organization, political organization, social control, and conflict), and
- religion and expressive culture (beliefs, religious practitioners, ceremonies, arts, medicine, death, and afterlife).

After the first week of research, in San Antonio and San Lazaro, each student focused on two to three subtopics, listed above, during their interviews and as the focus of their final paper. Students took field notes both during and directly after each interview. The interviews were digitally recorded and later transcribed (still in progress).

Findings

The aim of this field season was to present a general cultural description of the farming communities in San Antonio, San Lazaro, and Yo Creek. These findings are not intended to be an extensive and in-depth cultural analysis, nor were they intended to focus on a specific theme. They are intended to serve as the basis for further field study and provide relevant cultural information from this and future studies to SIRD I and other agencies for their development of programs affecting sugar cane farming communities in northern Belize.

Orientation (Identification and Location, Demography, Linguistic Affiliation, History and Cultural Relations, and Settlements)

Research was conducted in Orange Walk District within the communities of San Antonio, San Lazaro, and Yo Creek. The predominant ethnicity of the village inhabitants is mestizo, which refers to a hereditary mix between colonial Spanish and the indigenous Maya. Many of the shop owners in Orange Walk were part of a small immigrant population from China and Thailand. Though Mennonites did not live in the village, they did come into town to sell their wares. None of the informants identified themselves as *Kriol* (creole) in the villages in which we conducted interviews.

Most informants lived in cement homes, which were built to withstand tropical storms and hurricanes, many of which were painted in bright colors. In the villages, it is common to see Maya style huts, with hardwood posts that support a thatched roof, which usually serve as a patio for guests. It is also common to see a secondary kitchen outdoors, often used to provide shelter from the heat. Many residences double as storefronts and sell dry goods and sundries.

Informants, with few exceptions, spoke Spanish as their primary language. The younger the informants were, the more proficient their spoken English. If they were in school (secondary or university), they were fluent in English. Some elderly people spoke a little Mayan.

The amount of time the informants lived in the villages varied; the older portion of the population had a larger percentage of people that had lived in the village their entire life. If they were middle-aged or younger, they had generally lived in several other villages.

Higgins (1998) provides an in-depth historical (political ecological) review of sugar cane farming in northern Belize.

Economy (Subsistence, Commercial Activities, Industrial Arts, Trade, Division of Labor, and Land Tenure)

Most subsistence practices in Yo Creek, San Antonio, and San Lazaro are a combination of growing vegetables, gathering fruit, raising livestock, and purchasing foodstuffs. Generally, people grew the majority of their food (vegetables, fruits, and livestock) or purchased produce and animal products from the markets in Orange Walk Town. Typically, some of a family's vegetables and/or fruit were grown on their property and supplies, while the rest of their food came from trading or purchasing from stores. Mennonites regularly rode in the back of pick up trucks through the villages selling produce. A few informants indicated they bought food from the Mennonites when they came around. In all three villages, chickens were running freely; they are used for their eggs and meat. Lime, avocado, mango, almond, sour sop, and banana trees were the most utilized and abundant fruit bearing

trees from which informants gathered food. Informants indicated that during different fruit seasons, neighbors give excess fruit to one another, and as the researchers experienced during mango season, to village visitors and strangers as well. Informants in San Antonio and San Lazaro frequently go to Mexico to buy food. Buying from Mexico is both closer in distance than Orange Walk Town and less expensive than Belizean produce.

Generally, people in the villages generated income from some aspect of sugar cane farming. In addition, some people, usually women, generated extra income by selling homemade items to neighbors or shops. Income generating activities include, but are not limited to, embroidering linens; making food items such as, bread, tortillas and tamales; and sewing school uniforms for locals. Importing, butchering, and cleaning chickens that are sold to vendors in Orange Walk Town generated more substantial and consistent income. Another primary source of income was the manual production of annatto—a chicken spice that is regularly sold to restaurants in Orange Walk Town.

Most of the informants and their kin were involved with sugar cane farming; their occupations included laborers in the cane fields and truck drivers. Few informants owned sugar cane fields or farms, but instead rented farmland. When it is economically viable, farmers hire cane laborers from their local village. Otherwise, family members help in the fields. Yo-Creek has a farmer-laborer cooperative of 10-12 farmer members and 25-30 laborer members. Cane laborers work in the fields during planting and harvesting seasons. Planting cane, if done completely by hand, requires the laborers to first clean the fields of the last harvest's leftover cane trash (i.e. leaves, stalks left in the ground), make rows about four feet apart in the soil, put holes in the rows with a cane digging stick, and plant a three foot piece of cane stalk that has buds growing out of it. After cane is planted, there is one application of fertilizer, which is manually sprayed on the fields. When the ground is hard enough, rented or owned tractors are used for everything except cutting and shucking the cane. If the fields are too wet to support the tractor, then fields are planted manually. Harvesting is done by hand, the cane is cut and shucked (removing the outside leaves) with machetes. The shucked cane is lined up along the edge of the fields in bundles for the grabber or claw tractor to pick up and load the bundled cane onto a truck. Cane truck drivers are contracted by farmers to drive the sugar cane from the fields to the factory where the cane is then processed. Laborers are paid either by the hour or by the ton of cane harvested. Informants reported a pay per tonnage of approximately \$7 BZD. The harvesting season can be hazardous for laborers and cane farmers, primarily due to wounds inflicted by machetes, poisonous snakebites, and killer bee stings.

Trade was common among the three villages. The villagers traded produce grown in their yards, such as bananas and mangos, animals, and clothing from local businesses. In San Lazaro, one woman mentioned that her family traded adult cows for calves with the Mennonites. Another informant grew pineapples, tomatoes, avocados, and bananas at her home and traded them with a neighbor for other food and clothing.

For the most part, the majority of the informants traded within the community. Those who claimed to not be involved with trade stated that it was primarily due to lack of opportunity or product. However, some informants who had both opportunity and product elected to give away things to their friends, neighbors, and families, engaging in long-term reciprocity over short-term trade.

Informants reported sons who had contributed the most to the farm preferentially inherited that farmland. Land can also be divided equally amongst heirs. Birth order does not determine inheritance. Although the majority of informants reported that sons receive inheritance, some said that women, either a wife or daughter, would inherit the land. Though there were no strict rules about who is able to inherit, informants indicated it would be almost exclusively either spouse or children.

Land may be exchanged between family members. The most common example of this is owner giving a portion of their farmland to another family, most often to their direct offspring, nieces, and nephews. It is also common for siblings to give each other land. The person that is given the land is then the owner; they have to pay the yearly property tax unless they obtain the title to the land.

New farmland can be acquired through the village council (reportedly determined by the length of time one has lived in the community), by lease from the Lands Department, and by outright purchase of the property's title. If a person leases the land, then they must pay a property tax every year to the Lands Department. Acreage did not seem to affect the price of the property tax, as many interviewees claimed they paid about \$40 BZD every year. If a person owns the title of the land, then they do not have to pay the annual property tax. Some said that the title could be purchased outright, but other informants said that a person must wait 7 to 10 years before being able to purchase the title of the land.

Men, women, children, and the elderly perform different roles in the communities. Typically, men have the full time jobs, usually either in the sugar cane industry or construction. Sugar cane farming was the predominant source of employment through landowners producing and selling their crops to the nearby processing factory or as laborers helping farmers during the planting and harvesting season. The farming of sugar cane was an almost exclusively male job; very few informants mentioned women farming or the planting sugar cane.

Women are responsible for maintaining the domestic unit. The majority of informants responded that women do not usually have employment out of the home; they are responsible of taking care of the home and children. Some women made products to sell in their communities, such as baked goods as well as types of arts and crafts. Some women did have jobs in town, most commonly teachers, and various positions at Orange Walk Hospital. As mentioned above, few informants mentioned that women were involved in the process of sugar cane farming.

Children and adolescents usually spend their days at school. After school, they return home to help around the house. Children who were under 5 years of age normally did not have any chores in the home. Boys and girls helped with maintaining the household when they reached a certain age. Typical chores included maintaining the yard, cleaning up rooms in the house, cleaning dishes, and taking care of their younger siblings. It was more common for boys to help their families during sugar cane season. Boys had to be at least 10 to 12 years of age to help in the fields. As the boys got older, they were allowed to be more involved in the process of farming sugar cane.

The last main group of individuals in the community was the elderly. Informants stated that the retirement age was around 60 years of age. A common exception to this rule was farmers, who would usually continue working until they were not physically able to do the labor, which may be before 60 years of age. Upon retirement, these individuals were given social security payments by the state. The elderly in the community commonly stayed at home, in which they would use their free time to do activities and hobbies, such as gardening.

Kinship (Kin Groups, Descent, and Kinship Terminology)

Families in the villages reported that they had strong bonds with one another and that they preferred having the whole family live together, as they prioritize spending time together collectively. The husband/father typically earned the family's income and made many of the household decisions. Children inherited their father's last name. Adoption was also common among the informants we interviewed.

The households that were completely Spanish speaking utilized only Spanish terms when speaking to one another; for example, when parents would speak to their children, they would say, *hijos* (children), *cariños* (affectionate term), *negrito* (a child of a darker skin tone), *gordita* (a child who is chubby or overweight), and *bebitas* (babies). More commonly, however, they would call them by their names or nicknames. For example, a fragment of a family member's name, or calling one's mother "old lady" in Spanish or English. If the inhabitants of the household regularly spoke English, they would also use English terms when conversing with one another, such as "baby" or "love". These terms would also apply for Spanish-speaking couples; should they only speak Spanish, the most common term used for a spouse, girlfriend or boyfriend was *amor* (love). *Cariño*, the affectionate term commonly used for children, was also used between lovers. In addition, regardless of the most commonly spoken language of the household, the use of "babe" or "baby" was extremely common between lovers. Some parents called their children by their names only when they are upset with them, otherwise using affectionate Spanish terms. What was much less common among informants was that they would refer to everyone in their families solely by their names, even their wives.

Marriage and Family (Domestic Unit, Inheritance, and Socialization)

According to informants, weddings are become less popular. Informants of the villages, in which interviews were conducted, reported that people are choosing to live together in a common law marriage as opposed to formalized marriage. People defined common law marriage as the couple moving in together and signing legal papers with no ceremony. The reason given for having a common law marriage rather than a formalized marriage was that the formalized marriage conferred no benefits over common law marriage, and it was expensive.

It seemed rare for informants to have had large weddings. When one does occur, it is similar to the following example. The informant described a traditional Catholic wedding in Orange Walk, which had both friends, and family in attendance. A reception followed the wedding at the bride's mother's house who served *Reno*, a traditional chicken stuffed with mashed boiled eggs and pork and beans and rice, coleslaw, and bean dip for the chicken. The bride's family and her husband's family paid for the wedding, this aspect of the wedding was uncommon because it is usually the groom's family responsibility to bear the expense. Honeymoons are uncommon, because they are too expensive. According to informants, people married in the Catholic Church are not allowed to get divorced; however, they are allowed to re-marry if their spouse dies.

The more common type of wedding is the small wedding. One example of a small wedding occurred at a Catholic church in the San Antonio. The bride met her future spouse in school and had been dating a few years before getting married. They made the decision to get married because they had small children. The groom was a Seventh Day Adventist and his bride was Catholic, but they did not see this as a conflict and they agreed to be married in the Catholic Church. Villagers and family came to the wedding and there was not a party afterwards. They had "Black Dinner" which included chicken, beans, and rice. Both families contributed to the cost of the wedding.

Common law marriage was also a frequent occurrence. An example of common law marriage requires a common law certificate that can be obtained for a very small cost. This is option is chosen if one or both of the participants do not want or cannot afford a formal wedding. The small expense of the certificate is especially important to informants that could not afford a traditional marriage due to expenses of already having a small family.

Reasons for divorce include the general feeling that marriage is a partnership where spouses work together and when one does not contribute, they may divorce. Another reason given for divorce was if a spouse is rarely at home. Women may file for divorce in Orange Walk Town.

There were a few instances where informants reported that they did not want to get married at all. Generally, the reasons not to be married include costs and lack of benefits in being married. One informant stated that the only benefit of getting married is to collect a check if your spouse dies.

The most common domestic unit consisted of parents and children; occasionally a grandparent would be also living in the household. In most circumstances, the village would be the home village of the husband. Informants reported that due to financial reasons, grandparents may come and stay regularly and adult siblings may permanently join the household. There are also community members that live alone.

Informants reported that they felt that the entire neighborhood consisted of their family. For example, one informant said that they consider everyone in Yo Creek family because they are related to almost half of Yo Creek's inhabitants. Aunts, uncles, and cousins are considered close family.

In addition to the socialization of children in their family, the children are also socialized through the formal education system. The educational system is divided into three main groups. This division is by chronological age. Each division is then further subdivided by groupings that contain individuals that are born approximately within a year of each other. The major groupings are infant, standard, farm. Each subdivision is named after the major grouping followed by a number. The numbers increase consecutively through the divisions (i.e. infant one, infant two). The child progresses sequential through these divisions as s/he ages and masters the requirements. The infant grouping consists of two subgroups. The standard is subdivided into six groups. The farm grouping is also divided into six groups. In Yo Creek, the average grade achieved by the informants was farm 3.5. There was a generational difference that is not reflected in the average educational achievement of farm 3.5. Many of the informants under 30 years old went to school until farm four or six, while those older than 30 completed, on average, standard six. In San Lazero, the average education was grade farm 1.72. In addition, in San Lazero, there was a generational difference in the length of education. The older informants did not go to school as long as the younger informants did.

Sociopolitical Organization (Social Organization, Political Organization, and Conflict)

Many people in sugar cane farming communities reported that politics were very important, and debates frequently happened. At the local level of government in Belize, there was the village council, or town council that consists of elected officials. Village council elections are held every 3 years. The council meets once a week, and consists of six members and one chairperson. Their duties include but are not limited to distributing disaster relief money, mediating minor disputes, collecting tax money, and cleaning the streets. The city council does not have legal authority and must rely on charismatic authority. Land disputes, which cannot be resolved locally and are referred to the regional government in Orange Walk.

Members of the village/town council come from a variety of backgrounds including but not limited to teachers, homemakers, and those that have contributed notably to the community in some fashion. For example, a young man, who was a community organizer, was recently voted onto the village council. He organized a local soccer

league, and was successful in finding funding for trophies for the winners of the tournament. Both men and women can be elected to the council. In San Lazaro, there are currently two women on the council. They earned the title of “Machistas”. Many of the governmental employees are perceived to be wealthy. However, this wealth and political power does not confer social status. One informant reported, “For us, everyone is the same.”

Beyond the local government, the next level of government that the informants were interested in discussing was the national government. They reported that the national government consists of a prime minister, and a deputy prime minister, who is second in command. A house of representatives are elected area representatives. In total, 27 area representatives represent the people and vote for the prime minister. National elections are held every 5 years. Two political parties have power in Belizean politics. Although there are more parties, it is nearly impossible for a third party to achieve national power because voters are so deeply rooted within the political party they already support. The two major parties are the United Democratic Party (UDP), which is symbolized by the color red, and the People's United Party (PUP), which is symbolized by the color blue.

It is not uncommon for a town to be overwhelmingly supportive of one party. In Yo Creek, the strongest and more popular party was the PUP. While the other two villages, San Lazaro and San Antonio seemed to be more divided politically. Many people were very comfortable talking about politics; however, some people became very hesitant when asked about the village council or national government. The party in power of the national government while conducting interviews was the UDP. It was often reported that villages that had a “red” council would get more funding because of the political alignment with the party in power. Consequently, “blue” villages did not receive as much money. Some villagers compared the problem of political favoritism to racism. They also reported that it divides people, even children, and is the most common conflict within the community.

Typically people support the same political party as their family, although, there are instances of households being divided by politics. Often the political views of the husband determined the views of the household. Since it is believed by the informants that political alignment can assist or hinder individual dealings with local government, the informants believe that a person’s perceived political affiliation can be more influential than their actual one. For example, in a village with a red council, an informant's house flooded. Her common-law husband was blue, however, she was red. She reported that the village council assumed she was blue and therefore, her family did not receive any aid. The perception of political favoritism is dividing the sugar cane farming communities.

Many people publicly show their support for their favored party. During election times, some people will wear red or blue clothes to match the party they favor. Religion rarely played a role in politics. Many villagers believed that elected party members would remember individuals showing support for the party and would

reward those individuals in the future. In Belizean politics there are many ways for an individual's political affiliation to be known. Some people go to extreme lengths to create their political display. Many households display the political party's flag they support. Supporters of PUP have been known to spray paint PUP in blue on their property. The informants did not define the political differences between the PUP and the UDP. It was reported that little has changed since Belize was given its independence and that the political difficulties the nation faces is due to Belize being a nascent country.

The most widely reported problems in the local communities were truancy, assaults, theft, domestic violence, drugs, and alcohol. The police are based in Pine Ridge and Orange Walk. There were variable reports of the time it took for the police response to arrive upon the scene. This response rate was influenced by the nature and danger of the situations. Many of the problems such as assault and theft were attributed to be ancillary issues of the use of drugs and alcohol. The community takes truancy very seriously.

Religion and Expressive Culture (Medicine, Religious Beliefs, Religious Practitioners, Ceremonies, Arts, Death, and Afterlife)

In the villages, health care providers were not usually present. If someone needed medical attention, the closest healthcare providers would be found in Orange Walk. There were both private and public physicians present in Orange Walk Town. Medical treatment at the hospital is inexpensive; however waiting time even for serious conditions can be extensive. Private doctors are also available but they are more expensive. Several informants indicated that the private doctors were worth the increase in price because the quality of care was better and timelier, especially for children. Informants reported that hospitals are staffed by Cuban interns and that people often feel like they are not getting appropriate medical attention. The high birth mortality rate at the public hospital in Orange Walk Town was also a concern. Multiple informants recounted a story of a mother who delivered twins but was only given one baby at the hospital and was told that she had only ever had one.

Health problems that people frequently faced in the villages were diabetes, anemia, and various forms of cancer, including breast cancer and leukemia. In cases of serious illnesses such as cancer, the financial hardships of paying for medical care were reported. One informant specifically mentioned having to take out loans to pay for cancer treatments. In cases of cancer, it is sometimes necessary to travel to Merida in Mexico for the best treatment. It was reported that some people chose to go to Guatemala for more affordable healthcare.

Some people in the villages relied on traditional ecological knowledge to take care of minor ailments. Of the three villages, there were no examples of full time traditional healers but they were present historically and were referred to as users of bush medicine. In San Antonio, there was a bush doctor in recent decades that had the ability to cure snakebites. In Yo Creek, one informant reported that there were bush

doctors who were able to cure sick, crying babies by holding them. Hammocks are used for physical therapy to help back injuries. Lime was used to help coughs and ginger for stomach aches. There was a vine with narrow leaves that could be boiled and used to cure fungal infections. Sour orange leaves, lime, cinnamon, and garlic can be boiled to treat diarrhea. Lemongrass can be boiled to cure fever and infection and can cure a cough when paired with honey.

An additional way that people take care of themselves is by going to pharmacies to buy over the counter medications. Medications for colds, fevers, or minor pain could be obtained at a pharmacy or other shop in Orange Walk Town or the villages. Some older informants mentioned that while older generations would have made home remedies to treat these problems, younger people prefer to get pills. Parents who use traditional remedies for minor illnesses may not teach their children how to prepare and use these remedies due to a lack of interest in transferring the knowledge and the easy accessibility of pharmaceuticals. Some medications that are widely available in the United States are difficult to obtain in Belize so friends or relatives living in the United States would mail back medication.

There were private and public dentist offices in Orange Walk. The public dentist was associated with the public hospital. In San Antonio, it was reported that children's dental exams happen at the school when a dentist visits the village. From observations of the villages, there were no places offering dental care but dental hygiene products were available at the shops.

The major churches in the area were Catholic, Methodist, Seventh Day Adventist, Evangelical, and Pentecostal. Informants displayed various levels of devotion to their religious organizations and some went to meetings several times a week while others only went on special occasions. Members of the same family were often affiliated with the same church and tensions could arise from marrying outside of the church. When two people from different religious backgrounds were married, one would usually convert to their spouse's belief system or they would both stop attending church.

In every village visited, there was at least one Catholic Church and a Catholic school. Informants claimed that only Catholic schools received government funding. In many of the homes of the informants who identified as Catholic, there were crucifixes and images of Jesus hanging on the walls. While some homes would contain only one or two images or crucifixes, others would have several. Catholics seemed to make up the majority of informants from all three villages. Catholics in San Lázaro typically met every Sunday but meetings were not set in stone because the Priest traveled and was responsible for leading churches in other communities as well. Catholics in Yo Creek typically mentioned attending a weekly mass that occurred on Saturday or Sunday. According to some informants, Yo Creek's Catholic Church also had additional meetings throughout the week.

In Yo Creek the majority of informants who did not identify as Catholic identified as Evangelical. There was an Evangelical school in the village affiliated with the church. The Evangelical church in Yo Creek was partnered with missionaries who had recently built a basketball court. Yo Creek's Evangelical church held meetings throughout the week but most people mentioned attending one on Mondays. The church had separate meetings for men, women, and youth to attend that sometimes occurred on different days. According to our informants, the church was involved in some community service projects in the community that involved working with youth.

In San Lazaro, along with the Catholic Church there were also Methodist, Pentecostal, and Adventist churches. Many informants identified as Methodist, Pentecostal, or Seventh Day Adventists. According to one informant the Seventh Day Adventist Church in San Lazaro had about 50 members. Methodist missionaries were present in the village. San Lazaro had two Pentecostal churches. One church was affiliated with other Pentecostal churches throughout Belize. The other Pentecostal church had been built by and was partnered with an American church in Arkansas. The Pentecostal church affiliated with American missionaries was larger than the one that was strictly Belizean.

Evangelical and Mennonite faith was practiced in San Antonio. The Evangelical church was active in the community. Evangelical missionaries would come from America once or twice a year and would get the youth of the village involved in activities. The Mennonite church in San Antonio was called a Mennonite Witness church. The people that attended it were Belizean, mostly Mestizo, who attempted to follow the same beliefs, rules and guidelines of the German Mennonites that lived in nearby communities. Despite the differences in the belief systems of the churches that we encountered in the villages, everyone got along surprisingly well.

Celebrations and ceremonies vary depending on the village, religion, and personal beliefs. Mother's Day and Father's Day are celebrated in the three villages. One informant in San Lazaro reported that Mother's Day is more festively celebrated than Father's Day. The informant joked, "Father's Day doesn't make the list." Mother's day in San Lazaro is celebrated with balloons and games, including a game that is similar to Musical Chairs. Mass is held at village churches on Mother's and Father's Day.

Belize's Independence Day is celebrated on September 21, and festivities take place in both the individual villages and in Orange Walk Town. Most people go to Orange Walk Town to see the commemorative parade and participate in music and dancing, fireworks, and feasts, which include traditional Belizean fare—rice and beans, chicken, tamales, and hot dogs. Schools from Orange Walk Town and the surrounding villages perform presentations such as dances and plays. Individual villages also commemorate Belize's Independence Day by having small parades through the streets. The school children usually dress up in costumes of traditional Maya garb and march through the village.

The villages named after saints, San Antonio and San Lazaro, celebrate their patron saint once a year, sometimes called Day of the Village. In San Antonio, an informant described the day as a track-and-field types, with relay races, swimming, and other outdoor activities. San Antonio Day is on June 13. The Catholics in San Antonio call the Day of the Village the *Feast of the Patron*, and includes a metaphorical walk with the Patron where villagers walk through the village streets, followed by a feast consisting of rice, beans, chicken, and tamales. San Lazaro Day, or the San Lazaro Feast, is celebrated on December 17. Another day in San Lazaro—Culture Day—is observed in the schools and gives students the opportunity to explore other cultures of the world through food, costume, stories, and presentations. An informant described a Hindu costume and dance that her daughter was practicing, and lamented that she did not know what to make for her dish. No one in Yo Creek mentioned a village day.

Different religions practice different ceremonies in the villages. Baptisms are performed at different stages of life according to the religious faith of the individual. Babies born into a Catholic family are baptized when they are infants, but those of non-Catholic faiths, such as Pentecostal, are baptized as an adolescent or adult whenever they see fit. A Pentecostal baptism is done in a natural body of water and up to ten individuals are baptized in one trip. Family and friends bring food and drinks and spend the day at the water with the baptized. The individual that is being baptized makes a testimony about why they want to be baptized, and after the complete submersion in the water, they talk about how they feel. Parents of non-Catholic faiths may devote their child to Christ when the child is an infant. Evangelical faithful have a Holy Communion ceremony. A Pentecostal informant spoke of Bible Day, observed on October 31, and is celebrated with a parade of a truck and trailer decorated as a giant bible with bible verses written on it. The informant was adamant about all inhabitants of the village being welcome to the parade, especially all Christian faiths present in the village.

Christmas is celebrated differently by different Christian faiths. In the Evangelical church, members gather at the church for Mass and Christmas-themed presentations. One Pentecostal informant from San Lazaro described a Pentecostal Christmas celebration as a type of lock-in, where church members stay the night in the church, make tamales, pray, and learn about the bible. Some informants explained that they raise chickens and turkeys to slaughter and eat on special occasions, such as Christmas.

Birthdays are celebrated with a family get-together at a family member's house. The traditional birthday consists of a dinner of Belizean food, a piñata, and a flan cake. Presents such as clothes, shoes, and money are given to the individual celebrating the birthday. An informant told us that some people celebrate birthdays and anniversaries with a power point presentation of pictures of the celebrated individuals through the years. Graduations from high school and college are celebrated in a similar way as birthdays, with a barbecue of traditional Belizean food and a gathering

of family and friends. The graduation ceremony proper involves graduates donning caps and gowns of the school's colors and walking up to receive a diploma. An informant from Yo Creek poured a concrete dance floor in the middle of his yard for his son's graduation celebration, which included music and of course dancing and traditional Belizean fare.

In addition to modern ceremonies such as birthdays and religious holidays, a traditional Maya ceremony has survived. An informant described a Maya rain ceremony, which is still used today by some farmers during times of drought. The informant explained that his father was a farmer, and the first thing he did when he planted corn was to ask the gods for help in his harvest. He then explained that the Maya god of rain was named *Chaac*, and he was called upon to bring rain to farmer's *milpas* (crop fields). The ritual includes a *Meen* (Priest) to sprinkle a bucket of water around the altar as a symbol of rain. The informant was adamant about the *Meen* being a man, not a woman. The informant assured us that this was not just a myth, but was effective, as he personally saw storm clouds form after the performance of the Maya rain ritual.

Artwork in the villages was limited. There were a number of female informants that embroidered for enjoyment. Informants that embroidered created things like pillowcases, table runners, and dresses. An informant in San Antonio spoke of learning how to embroider through a class held in another village and that her mother also embroidered as a hobby. This informant created embroidery patterns on white cloth in the shape of flowers, butterflies, geometric designs, and Disney princesses including Belle, Cinderella, and Aurora. She purchased her materials from Orange Walk Town, or other nearby towns. It was reported that a man from the Peace Corps was living in San Antonio, and formed a "ladies' group" where women of the village would gather and learn how to embroider, decorate cakes, and cook different things, most notably soy sauce. The Women's' Group, we were told, met once a week.

Another form of expressive art found in the villages was music. A young man in San Lazaro expressed his passion for singing, especially worship songs, as he was an active member in the Pentecostal church. Other informants described using musical talents as a form of religious worship, including a pastor for the Seventh Day Adventist church's children that formed a band compete with a lead singer, a drummer, and a guitarist. The informant reported that he had taught his children the basics of what he knew musically, and then they furthered their instrumental education through Internet sources such as YouTube. In San Antonio, music could be heard playing from houses—drums, guitars, and vocals. Most of the music was covering contemporary American bands such as Green Day.

Folklore as a form of spoken art was prevalent in the villages. The majority of the informants described the same characters, including figures, such as *Xtabai*, *La Llorona*, *El Sisimite*, and *Aloox*, although stories often overlap. Most of these stories contained some kind of moral lesson, as one informant in Yo Creek explained that everyone in the village knows the same kind of stories. He told us that *El Sisimite*

walks backwards in order to trick unsuspecting victims into thinking he's walking away from them, when really, he's getting closer. He assured us that *El Sisimite* lives mostly in the southern part of Belize. Another informant described *El Sisimite* as an ape-man who frightens his prey to death. The same informant told us that the *Aloox*, or a small man sporting a large hat, was otherwise known as an elf in English. The story of *Aloox* tells of two creatures; one good *Aloox*, and one bad *Aloox*. The bad *Aloox* is suspected of running away with women and destroying them in the forest. Another informant claimed that if the bad *Aloox* asks to see one's hand, one must always hide one's thumb, lest the *Aloox* cut it off. The good *Aloox* protects the forest, milpas, and Mayan sites. The *Aloox* wears a very big hat, and some informants described his feet as being backwards like those of *El Sisimite*, so one could not tell if he is walking towards or away.

La Llorona is a female character that is known as the "crying lady" and, in some places, a woman in white. Legend has it that she drowned her two children in the river, and now mourns them and steals other mischievous children. The *Xtabai* is said to be a beautiful woman with long black hair who, like *La Llorona*, wears a long flowing white gown, and floats slightly above the ground. *Xtabai* is identified by her feet—one foot is that of a bird, and the other is a hoof. The *Xtabai* appears mostly to men, and usually drunk men walking alone at night. If an individual sees *Xtabai*, he or she must never speak of it, or else contract typhoid and probably die. To many villagers, these stories are not just legend, but are claimed to have been experienced by a close family member. One informant said that her sister-in-law saw one, and screamed "*Xtabai*". She became very sick for three days. In San Antonio, an informant claimed that *Xtabai* appeared at a natural spring in the village. Certain trees are mysterious to the villagers, as the stories claim both *Xtabai* and *La Llorona* live inside of them. Some informants became uneasy when asked about the *Xtabai* or the *La Llorona*, and in one instance, an informant looked away and refused to speak on the subject at all.

Another oral tradition told of a green lizard that lives in the forest and "loses people". An informant described the legend as a first-hand experience, and said that if the green lizard runs around a tree twelve times and one does not see him, they will become lost in the forest. If one spots the lizard before he completes his twelve circles, they will find their way out. Each village has its own distinct culture, but there are parallels through all three of them that proved constant.

There is a marked effort towards Maya cultural revival, and it is said, at least in Yo Creek, that there are about 25 people who practice some form of Maya tradition. While no one practiced pre-contact Maya religion, there were people who knew stories from Maya lore. The most popular accounts were of *Xtabai* (as described above). One informant reported that their brother had been preyed upon by an *Aloox*. Intriguingly, *La Llorona* was also mentioned, as a character of local mythos.

There was only one interview in which there was utterance of Witchcraft. It should be noted that the interview was given by an Evangelical minister and his wife, and

that they often related the practices to Satanism. The rituals in question involve potions, for love or revenge, and dolls that they stick pins in, which resemble Voodoo dolls.

While people still have Maya myths, their death rituals are mainly Christian. When a death occurs, people have a wake, and then they take the body to Church for a service, and then to the grave. In the Catholic funerals, the occasion is known to the community and everyone in town comes together to help the bereaved, bringing medicine, money, food (sandwiches were extremely popular) to help them pass the night when they would sit with the dead. There are, however, some subtle variations. While most funerals are held in the village, some are planned and done in Orange Walk Town. Funeral guests are typically those people who knew the deceased in life, from family and friends to acquaintances. The funeral of one informant's sister was very large, and the informant said that there were people from the entire district there, as she exerted great influence in the community.

Regardless of religious affiliation, all people are buried in the same burial ground, which in all three cases was located at the edge of the village. Where one is buried seems to be a matter of choice. People have mentioned being buried at home or close to family as important and most often choose to be buried in those places. Sometimes remains are transported great distances for interment. There were a few graves around the Church in San Antonio that belonged to the original owners of the land. Churches have the holiest ground, but this is no longer allowed due to lack of space.

In the last 50-60 years, the aboveground burial style, in which the coffin is encased in a block of cement above the ground has become the norm. There are also burials underground, which used to be more popular, but are now considered poor burials. One informant reported that people used to be buried in the yards of their homes, which is a distinctly Maya tradition. He went on to mention that the Church had legally put a stop to that, but that it had been practiced within the last two decades.

The majority of informants identified themselves as Christian and believed that the afterlife consisted of spending eternity in either heaven or hell. One informant described an out-of-body near-death experience, which solidified his belief in the Afterlife, as he said he felt his soul leaving his body, and that he was falling, he believed to Hell. Only two informants mentioned reincarnation. One informant said that "sometimes God is not finished with us here" and will offer another chance for people in another life. A few informants said that there is nothing after death and claimed to not know about the soul.

Conclusion and Future Research

The report documented the findings of the ethnographic field school organized by the CfAA at NKU in Orange Walk District, Belize during June 2013. This field season successfully met its goal, to focus on broad topics (history and cultural relations; economy; kinship, marriage, and family; sociopolitical organization; and religion and expressive culture)

forming a basis for further study of sugar cane farmers in Northern Belize. In future field seasons, the focus of research will be on topics more directly assisting SIRDI in constructing development programs among farmers in Northern Belize, beginning with sugar cane farming as indigenous knowledge (as Sillitoe and Dixon 2005) and documenting household economic behavior (as Wilk 1991).

Appendix A: Informed Consent Statement



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INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPANT IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

TITLE OF PROJECT: Ethnographic Field School

NAME OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Dr. Douglas Hume, Northern Kentucky University

CONTACT NAME AND PHONE NUMBER FOR QUESTIONS/PROBLEMS: Douglas Hume, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Anthropology, Northern Kentucky University, humed1@nku.edu or 859-572-5702.

PURPOSE OF RESEARCH: This research project records the way of life of sugar cane farmers in Northern Belize with the intent to share the results on the Internet, journals and conference proceedings as well as in a report to the Belize Sugar Cane Farmer’s Association, Institute of Social and Cultural Research, and the Sugar Industry Research and Development Institute.

PROCEDURES/METHODS TO BE USED: The interview includes questions about your household economic behavior and sugar cane farming methods. The interview is estimated to last between five minutes to one-half hour. The audio recording of the interview will be securely stored and destroyed after it is transcribed. Data collected in this study will then be anonymous, as we are not collecting names or other identifying information. You will not be paid for being in this study.

RISKS INHERENT IN THE PROCEDURES: There are no known risks.

BENEFITS: It is hoped that the results of this research will influence how the Belize Sugar Cane Farmer’s Association and the Sugar Industry Research and Development Institute develop educational programs about farming, health, and economics for sugar cane farming families in Northern Belize.

CONFIDENTIALITY: The only identifying information that we will keep on record is this signed document, which may be inspected by the Institute of Social and Cultural Research and other human protection bodies. This document will not be connected with you interview data.

LIABILITY: Neither the researchers, their agents, or you (the participant) are liable for any damages or penalties from participating in this research.

PARTICIPATION: Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you decide to participate in the study, you may withdraw your consent and stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Your signature acknowledges that you have read the information stated and willingly sign this consent form. Your signature also acknowledges that you have received, on the date signed, a copy of this document.

Participant name (printed)

Participant signature

Date

Witness to signature (project staff)

Date

Appendix B: Interview Schedule (Procedure)

Two students

1. Primary Interviewer (Informed Consent/Recorder/Questions)
2. Secondary Interviewer/Observer (Back-up Questions/Observational Data)

Informed Consent Statement

Interview and Observation Questions

1. Orientation (identification and location, demography, settlements, linguistic affiliation)
2. History and Cultural Relations, Economy (subsistence and commercial activities, industrial arts, trade, division of labor, and land tenure)
3. Kinship, Marriage, and Family (kin groups, kin terms, marriage, domestic unit, inheritance, and socialization)
4. Sociopolitical Organization (social organization, political organization, social control, and conflict)
5. Religion and Expressive Culture (beliefs, religious practitioners, ceremonies, arts, medicine and death and afterlife)

After Interview Notes

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