

# ***The Belize Settlement : Colonial Expansion of Territory or a Foothold for Threatening Spain's Colonial Markets in Spanish (Central) America?***

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51 GORDON SQUARE



Britain's policy was “certainly aimed at securing trade, but to achieve this end through colonization of the source of supply.”

*Sir John Burdon – Archives of British Honduras, 6*

“...she understood not why her, or any prince’s subjects should be **debarred from the trade of the Indies**, which she could not persuade herself the Spaniards had any just title to by the donation of the Bishop in Rome...”

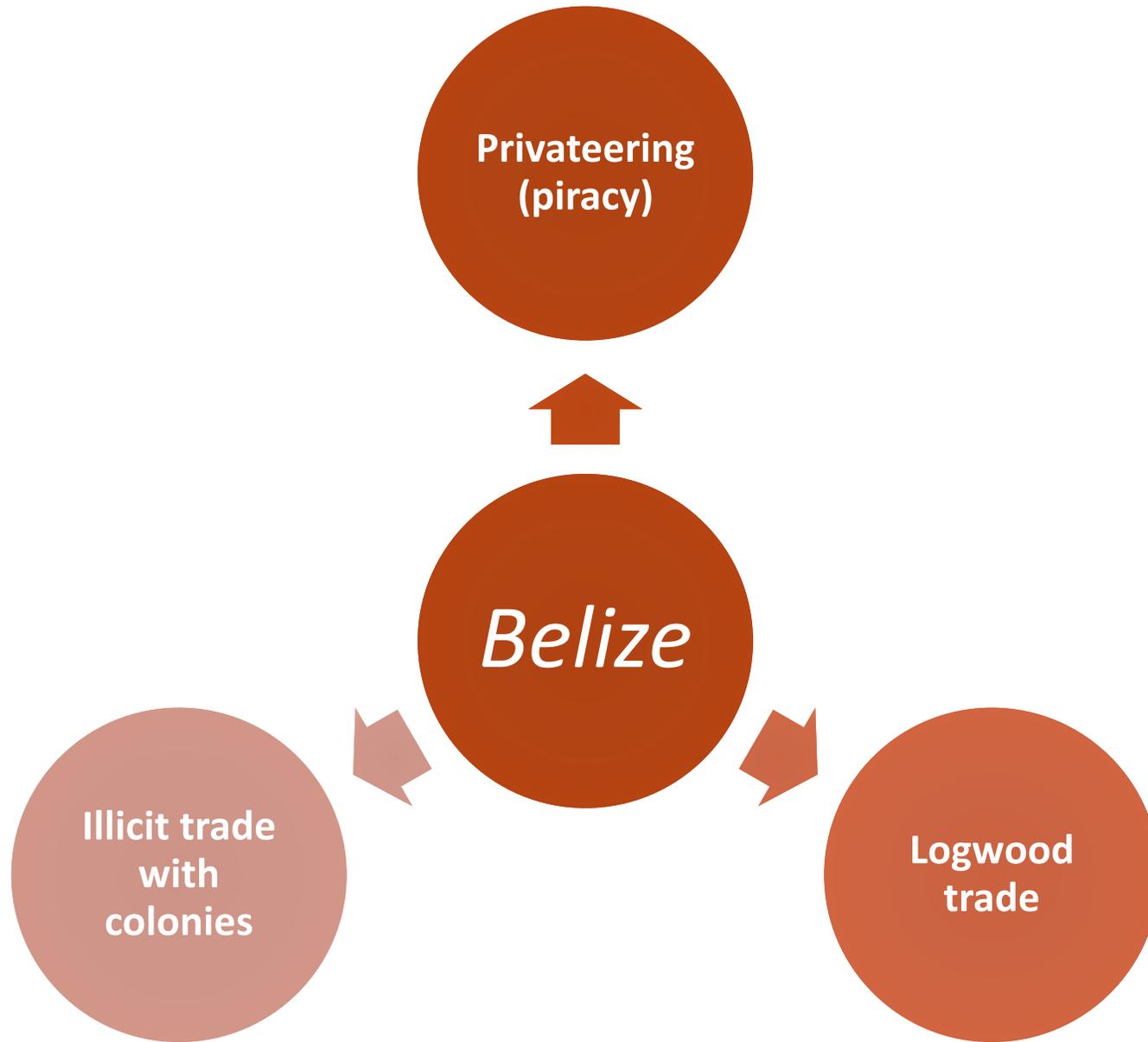
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*Add. MSS. 12404, Long Papers*

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British policy towards settlement at Belize driven by English merchants and colonial and political figures with an interest in commerce in the Indies

- *merchants in the cloth and dye industries*
- *merchants involved with colonial trade (including from Jamaica)*
- *colonial governors in Jamaica*





“find out the most useful trades and [ways for] improving the relations with Spain in the Indies.”

## Sir Thomas Modyford

- 1<sup>st</sup> cousin of Earl of Albermarle
- part of King Charles II cabal on F.A.
- former Governor of Barbados and large land-owner
- Governor of Jamaica (1664)
- commissioned privateering ventures, most famously Morgan (attacked Spanish settlements in C.A.)
- Council of Jamaica alongside merchant Robert Bindloss
- viewed logwood trade as step towards despoiling Spain's monopoly in Indies

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“...about a dozen vessels that only ply this trade; they were privateers, but will not leave the trade again. They go to places either inhabited by Indians or void, and trespass not at all upon the Spaniard, and if encouraged, the whole logwood trade will be English, and be very considerable to his Majesty.”

Despatch from Governor Modyford to Sec. Lord Arlington

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“it is in our interest ... to have letters of marque granted against the Spaniard, because it furnishes the island with many necessary commodities ... including logwood and provides great security ... and seems to be the only means to force the Spaniards in time to a free trade.”

Minutes of the Council of Jamaica: St Jago de la Vega, C.O. 140/1

## William Pitt

- Son of Thomas “Diamond” Pitt – worked for East India Company

- Belizean logwood merchant

- driven out from the Bay in Spanish attack in 1730

- established Black River settlement and continued to influence affairs in Belize from there: colony thrived on contraband and shipping of logwood

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“interested in dominating trade in region by dominating the route connecting the Caribbean & Pacific”

Imperial ideology advanced the legal argument of *res nullius* as a way of justifying colonial acquisition of territory – effective occupation of “areas deserted, void or otherwise uninhabited”

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STATE OF THE LOGWOOD TRADE, PRO 30/47/17



Logwood  
trade

Britain's policies towards Belize were on the whole consistent with the long standing English attention towards gaining a hold on the trade in the New World, but

- ❑ *driven by merchants and key colonial and political figures with **commercial** interests in Spanish America*
- ❑ *based on an imperial ideology predicated on a puritan idea which assumed that **commerce** held the keys to improvement*
- ❑ *territory was valuable to England for economic (value of logwood trade) and strategic purposes (foothold from which to conduct trade with Spanish colonies in Central America)*