

British Honduras, the invention of a colonial territory

Mapping and spatial knowledge in the 19 Century

Odile Hoffmann

The purpose of this monograph is not to retrace the genesis of a nation, but more modestly, to recount the invention of a colonial territory. No territory exists on its own; only social, political, symbolic and emotional constructions grant it substance and reality. Through descriptions, narratives and maps, this monograph brings the territory into existence and displays the articulation between the collective imaginaries, the subjectivities, and the spatial practices of the social and political actors—political authorities, residents, cartographers—who interacted in the territorial construction of Belize.

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The collection of maps reproduced in this book is itself priceless. Odile Hoffmann adds to it her analysis which shows that maps are not neutral instruments. Maps reveal the purposes and power of those who make them and so are part of the historical process of domination and contestation that shaped Belize's history. Maps contribute to territorial claims and disputes both between and within states, and Hoffmann's book helps us to understand the conflicting visions and versions that created first the colonial and then the national territory of Belize. O. Nigel Bolland, Charles A. Dana Professor of Sociology and Caribbean Studies, Emeritus, Colgate University.

This timely work will greatly help to nurture the debate on the events that shaped the development of Belize. It demonstrates how maps, and more importantly their interpretation, are critical to the analysis of the historical control of Belize's territory over time. Nigel Encalada, Director, Institute of Social and Cultural Research (ISCR).

Odile Hoffmann demonstrates masterfully how maps record colonial conquests, the power play between imperial powers, and how they register the domination of the victorious within a space. This book opens up new and promising areas of research. Dr. Myriam Cottias, Historian at CNRS, Director of Centre International de Recherche sur les Esclavages (CIRES).

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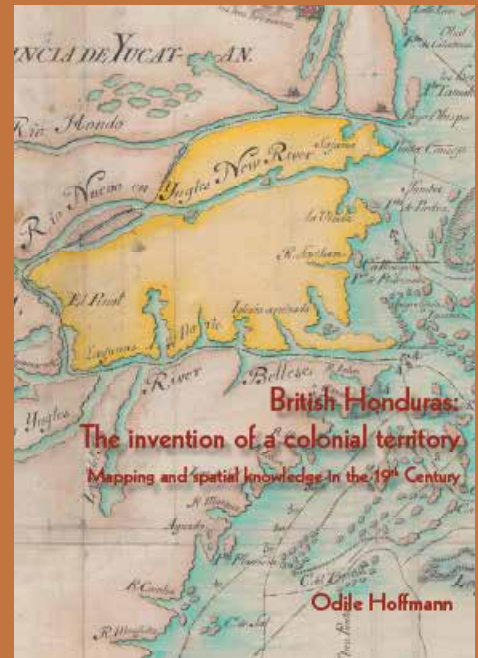
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About the Author

Dr. Odile Hoffmann is a geographer at the Institute of Research for Development (IRD), member of the Research Unit on Migration and Society (URMIS) in Paris (www.unice.fr/urmis). Formerly, Hoffmann was the Director of the French Centre for Mexican and Central American Studies (CEMCA), Mexico. Her research focuses on agrarian and political dynamics in Mexico (Veracruz), multiculturalism and black communities in Colombia (Pacífico), and more generally on processes of racialisation and space in Mexico, Belize and Colombia. Her last book, co-authored with Elisabeth Cunin, is *Blackness and Mestizaje in Mexico and Central America* (2013, Africa World Press).