

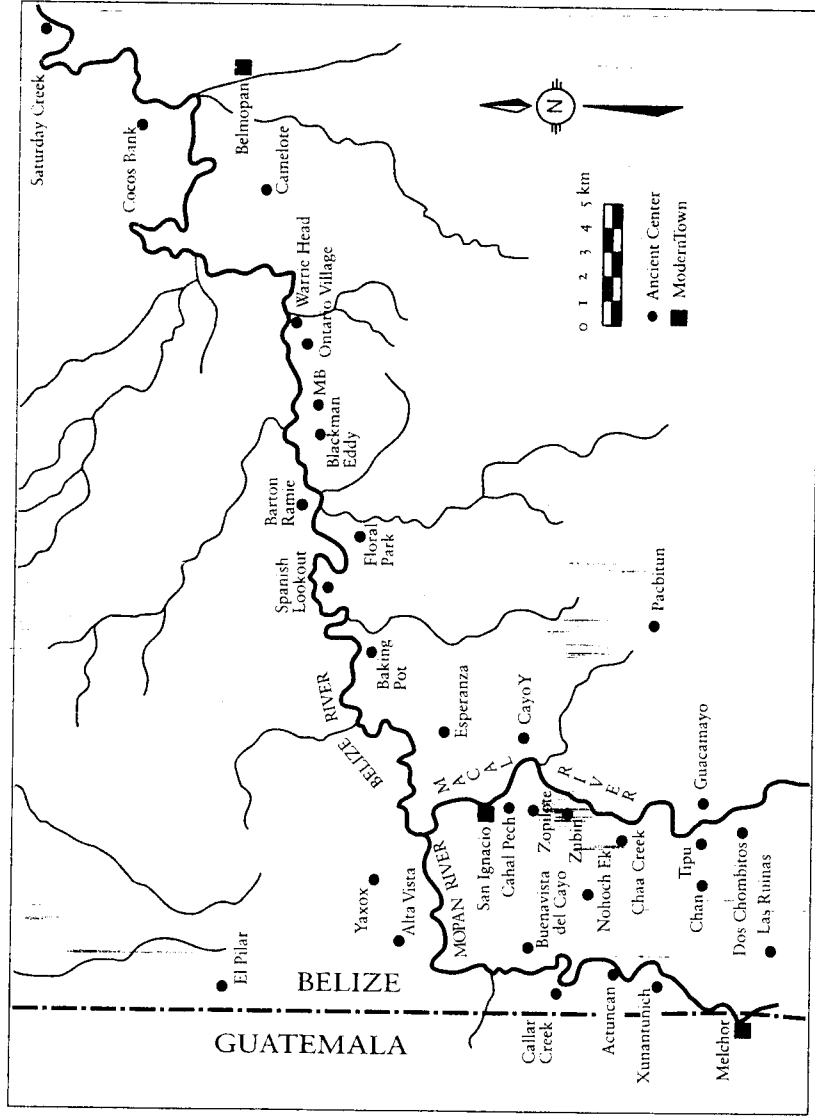
The Archaeology of the Belize Valley in Historical Perspective

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Half a century ago, Gordon Willey instituted the first formal settlement pattern work in the Maya area. Trained by Julian Steward in cultural ecology and already having successfully carried out similar work in the Viru Valley of Peru (Willey 1953), he selected the Belize Valley as the locus of investigation for demonstrating how settlement pattern archaeology could be applied to the Maya area (chapter 2; Willey et al. 1965:15–16). His focus on small unassuming housemounds rather than on a large spectacular Maya center revolutionized the field of Maya archaeology by causing researchers to examine non-elite remains. This work also indirectly produced questions concerning the organizational scale of ancient Maya society: chapters 17 and 18 (this volume) address these issues as they relate to the function and variability of “minor ceremonial centers” as defined in Willey’s initial study; chapters 9 and 11 (this volume) address these questions as they relate to “major ceremonial centers” as originally defined by Willey.

The Belize Valley

The Belize Valley may be defined in terms of its waterways. It includes two topographical subregions. The first zone is referred to here as the “upper Belize Valley” and consists of the upland area characterized by hills and steep slopes above (west of) the convergence of the Macal and Mopan Rivers in western Belize. The second zone is referred to as the “central Belize Valley” and consists primarily of broad alluvial flatlands and bordering hills that occur along the western sector of the Belize River from the



Map 1. The Belize Valley (drafted by James F. Garber). The upper Belize Valley, characterized by hilly terrain, extends from the modern town of Melchor on the west to the conjunction of the Macal and Mopan Rivers to form the Belize River on the east. The central Belize Valley, characterized by settlement on flatter alluvial terraces, starts at the conjunction of the Mopan and Macal Rivers and extends to the marshy area just east of Cocos Bank. Note that El Pilar and Pachbitun are technically not in the Belize Valley.

juncture of the Macal and Mopan to an area south of the modern capital of Belmopan, where the river begins its descent into the low-lying marshy swamps and savanna that stretch another 30 km to the Caribbean Sea (map 1). In terms of landmarks on the river, the Belize Valley extends from the modern town of Benque Viejo del Carmen in western Belize to the eastern ruins at Cocos Bank.

Ancient Maya settlement in central-western Belize was conditioned by the Belize River and its surrounding terrain. The lowest part of the Belize River (east of Cocos Bank and Saturday Creek) runs through savanna and swamp that were not conducive to either large or small Maya settlements. Agriculture was not only difficult in the coastal plain immediately adjacent to the Caribbean, but also some 30 km inland, where poor soil conditions still prevailed. Only the alluvial soils along rivers that flooded and carried upland soils into these areas could readily support settlement. To some extent, these ecological conditions determined one of the areas where the ancient Maya would settle—in the flatter, sometimes flooded, areas along rivers where rich alluvial soils had been deposited. Thus, the densest ancient Maya settlement occurs along the banks of the Belize River above the point where it spills into the broad savanna plain.

During the rainy season from May through December, the level of water in the rivers associated with the Belize Valley occasionally rise as much as 12 m, causing severe flooding and depositing alluvium on the river terraces. Willey and colleagues (1965:23) reported that “the alluvium of the upper terraces seems to be at least 10 m. deep.” Limestone foothills dominate the western part of the Belize River Valley, essentially ending where the Macal and Mopan join to form the Belize River. The limestone foothills of the Maya Mountains also intermittently form the southern boundary of the Belize River between Floral Park and Cocos Bank. However, the zone between the modern town of San Ignacio and Floral Park is characterized by broad alluvial terraces on both sides of the river.

Probably because of the location of the modern road and the effect that this road has had on modern settlement, the majority of the sites known from the Belize Valley lie to the south of the Belize River (map 1). Apart from the work done by Willey et al. (1965) at Barton Ramie and the transect surveys carried out by Ford (1990) in the western part of the valley north of the Belize and Mopan Rivers, there has been little archaeological reconnaissance on the northern side of the river. Undoubtedly, other sites and settlements will be found there in the future.

Maritime trade was always of importance to the ancient Maya (McKillop and Healy 1989). Along with the Hondo River (D. Chase and A. Chase

1989) and New River (Garber 1989), the Belize River is one of the natural transportation and communication routes between the Caribbean Sea and the Petén heartland of Guatemala. The portage of long-distance trade goods would have been greatly facilitated by the use of the Belize River. Given its position, the Belize Valley would have served as the last gateway for the transport of goods into the Maya interior. The archaeological record correspondingly exhibits exotics from throughout the Maya area—much of it material that had been transported up or down the Belize River (Jackson and McKillop 1989). At the other end of the Belize River, Mojo Cay served as a trade entrepôt (chapter 16).

While river traffic is possible up both the Macal and Mopan Rivers in the upper Belize Valley, rapids are encountered in each, making travel more difficult. South of the modern town of San Ignacio, the Macal River is characterized by steep sides with relatively little in the way of flat alluvial areas. Thus, the sites of Cahal Pech and Cayo Y effectively form the gateway community for the eastern extent of the Macal River throughout most of the Belize Valley's history (being replaced by Negroman-Tipu [Graham et al. 1985] in the Postclassic and Colonial eras). Interestingly, the jump-off station for travel to points in the interior remained on the Macal River throughout the Historic period with the town of San Ignacio, situated at the juncture of the uplands and plain, serving until relatively recently as the off-loading point for most travelers coming by boat (including archaeological projects; see pictures in Black 1990).

The Mopan River, characterized by rapids but also by a more direct interior route, appears to have had more settlement along its banks than did the Macal, probably because the terrain was gentler. This settlement, however, is not as dense as that documented at Barton Ramie, Baking Pot, or Spanish Lookout, all located along the Belize River in the central Belize Valley. Whereas Cahal Pech was the gateway community for the Macal River, a cluster of three sites seems to have served this purpose on the Mopan River—Actuncan in the Preclassic, Buenavista del Cayo in the Classic, and Xunantunich in the Terminal Classic. Ball and Taschek (chapter 9) explore the shifting political dynamics of this portion of the valley.

There are important compositional differences between the sites on the Belize River in the central Belize Valley and those above the confluence of the Macal and Mopan in the upper Belize Valley. Most of the settlement in the central Belize Valley is clustered on the sides of the Belize River and consists of many small mounds widely distributed over the landscape, much like Barton Ramie and Spanish Lookout. The sites at the Belize head-

waters, on or between the Macal and Mopan Rivers in the upper Belize Valley, appear to be more concentrated in their settlement and to consistently exhibit larger scale architecture; this phenomenon is addressed by Driver and Garber (chapter 18). Cahal Pech (chapters 7 and 8), Xunantunich (chapters 9 and 11), Buenavista del Cayo (chapter 10), and even El Pilar (chapter 15), all form fairly compact sites with clear focal centers. In the central Belize Valley, Baking Pot (chapter 5) mimics this focus, but its settlement and its habitation mounds are relatively numerous and more widely dispersed (consistent with other ancient occupation on the flatland alluvial terraces).

Gordon Willey and Barton Ramie in Historical Perspective

Although Willey and his colleagues (1955, 1965; Willey and Bullard 1956) excavated at several sites (Barton Ramie, Spanish Lookout, Baking Pot, Melhado) in the Belize Valley between 1954 and 1956, the bulk of their archaeological work focused on the site of Barton Ramie, where 65 out of 262 mounds were investigated, 13 of them intensively. Barton Ramie was seen as being typical of the settlement found in the Belize Valley (Willey et al. 1965:561); “so dense are these mounds that they form a ribbon strip of virtually continuous settlement for many kilometers along the alluvial flats and higher banks of the stream.” Few archaeological remains were located by Willey’s project at any distance from the river; most (like the site of Floral Park) were no more than 1 km distant.

Barton Ramie (fig. 1.1) was a fairly unassuming site best characterized as a settlement zone located on the floodplain of the Belize River approximately 5 miles from the Belizean district capital of San Ignacio. Unlike other sites that had been investigated before 1950 by the Carnegie Institution of Washington and the University of Pennsylvania, Barton Ramie was not characterized by large temple-pyramids, carved stone monuments, or standing stone architecture. Instead, the site consisted primarily of raised earthen mounds that upon excavation revealed stone facings and other architectural remains. Also revealed in these tumuli was a rather lengthy sequence of occupation. Initially, at least, these investigations were fit into a preexisting paradigm that dictated an uncomplicated village development with eventual abandonment of the site and valley at the time of the Maya collapse (Willey 1956a; Willey et al. 1955). More recent research has shown both greater complexity and time depth to this initial occupation (chapters 3 and 7).

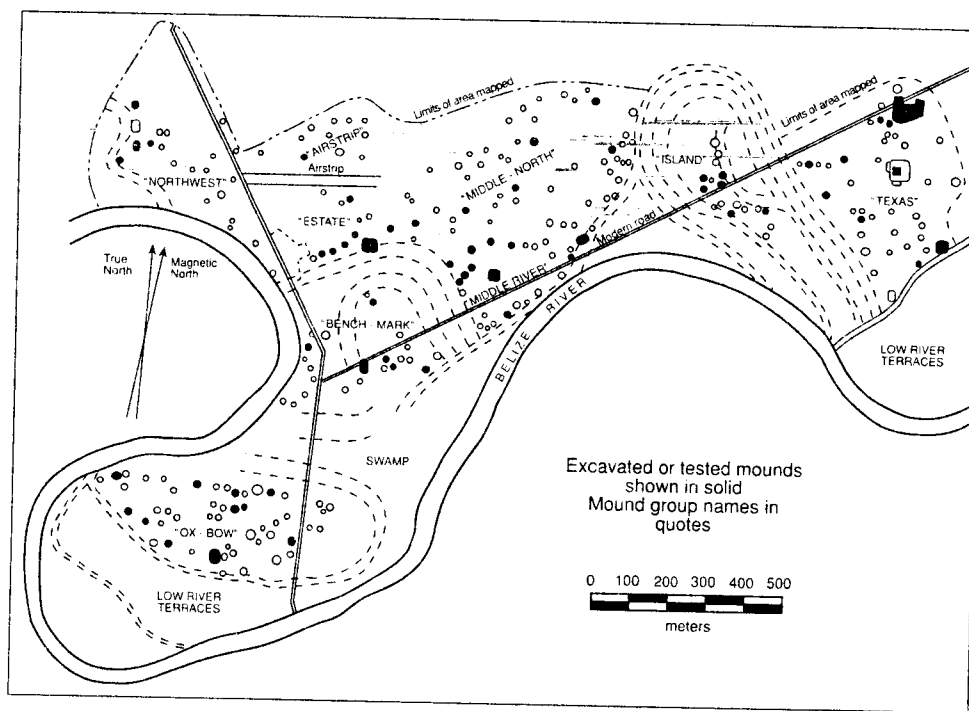


Fig. 1.1. Plan of Barton Ramie showing the structures excavated by Willey (drafted by James F. Garber after Willey et al. 1965:277).

Rather than fitting neatly with what was already known about the Maya elsewhere, however, the Barton Ramie ceramic sequence was found to be related to, but still peripheral to, the developments in the central Petén (Gifford 1976). The ceramics were not simply copies of those already known from Uaxactun (Smith 1955) or San Jose (Thompson 1939). The temporal faceting of these materials was also different from that assigned to central Petén ceramics (Gifford 1976).

Regional Chronology

Archaeological research undertaken in the Belize Valley in the half century since Willey et al.'s (1965) original work at Barton Ramie has served to confirm and broaden the cultural historical sequence that he initially established—with only slight changes. The original ceramic sequence defined by Gifford (1976:23) spanned “at even a conservative estimate, perhaps two thousand years.” With the potential exception of its earliest and latest archaeological remains, the Belize Valley cultural sequence accords

well with developments known from elsewhere in the southern lowlands. The earliest part (Middle Preclassic or Middle Formative) of the Belize Valley sequence dates back to approximately 1000 B.C. (in spite of radiocarbon dates that indicate a potentially even earlier dating; Hammond 1977:62) and is characterized by variability in the ceramic remains. Some of these ceramics, called the Kanocha and Cunil Ceramic Complexes, have led to the postulation that there may have been non-Maya populations in the Belize Valley at this early date (Ball and Taschek 2000, 2003). Other early remains, termed the Jenney Creek Ceramic Complex and dated to approximately 600–900 B.C. at Barton Ramie (Gifford 1976), are quite different from the Mamom-related materials (Smith 1955) excavated throughout the central Petén of Guatemala, but still could be related to early Maya groups. The more recent archaeological work has recovered the Cunil Ceramic Complex from basal deposits at Cahal Pech (chapter 7), Xunantunich (LeCount et al. 2002:42), and the Kanocha Complex at Blackman Eddy (chapter 3).

By 300 B.C. (the onset of the Late Preclassic or Late Formative), however, the valley had been subsumed into broader ceramic traditions found in the southern lowlands and most of the centers in the Belize Valley had been established. However, a Late Classic florescence of Xunantunich is argued for, based on “the overall paucity of evidence for occupation from the Late Preclassic to Early Classic” (LeCount et al. 2002:43). The integration of the Belize Valley with the broader southern lowland area, at least ceramically, continued from the Late Preclassic through the Early Classic to the early part of the Late Classic period (A.D. 600–700).

Originally, the Barton Ramie archaeological data loomed large in considerations of the transition from the Late Preclassic to the Early Classic period. A ceramic complex (named Floral Park) was defined that was viewed as being intrusive into the area (Willey and Gifford 1961), and arguments were made for an influx of people into the Belize Valley at the end of Late Preclassic. These migrants were viewed as being refugees from a volcanic eruption in the El Salvadoran region. They were also believed to have introduced a new style of pottery into the Maya lowlands and to have helped usher in the Classic period with the introduction of new social and political systems (Sharer and Gifford 1970). The postulated ceramic connections between Belize and El Salvador were later forcefully refuted (Demarest 1986:173–186; Demarest and Sharer 1986), but the appearance of a new style of ceramics in the archaeological record, especially in burial contexts, at the onset of the Classic period has yet to be adequately explained (see also Brady et al. 1998).

During the Late Classic period, the Belize Valley ceramics became increasingly regionalized, focusing on types and forms generally not found in surrounding regions. A better understanding of the Late Classic ceramic relationships for the Belize Valley probably would be gained through clarification of the archaeological picture at Naranjo, Guatemala, and a definition of that site's ceramic sequence. Terminal Classic ceramics show widespread variability at the sites in the valley and could not be faceted in the original Barton Ramie sample (Gifford 1976:226). Both Xunantunich (in terms of architecture) and Buenavista del Cayo (in terms of ceramics) exhibit ties to the northern lowlands, raising questions about the possible presence of "foreign" populations.

While most of the upper Belize Valley sites were largely abandoned after the Terminal Classic (e.g., Xunantunich; LeCount et al. 2002), the extensive riverine settlement in the central Belize Valley is almost uniformly characterized by Postclassic peoples who used ceramics that are similar to those found around the many lakes in the central Petén of Guatemala. This could be interpreted as indicating that the Belize Valley was integrated into broader sociopolitical and economic systems throughout the Postclassic era. Colonial period remains, including a Spanish visita church and ceramics that are very similar to the Postclassic remains in the central Belize Valley, have been extensively documented from the upper Belize Valley site of Negroman-Tipu (Graham et al. 1985). When viewed in conjunction with the modern town of San Ignacio, the archaeological data from the Belize Valley provide evidence of almost 3,000 years of continuous human settlement.

Like its early remains, the latest ceramics from Barton Ramie were problematic. Initially, the Postclassic occupation of Barton Ramie was considered to be minimal. In an early synthesis of the Barton Ramie data, Willey (1956a:781) noted that "not a single one of the numerous test excavations in the Belize Valley has brought to light ceramic or other evidence that would demonstrate a Postclassic period occupation of any of the village house mounds." Subsequent ceramic analysis actually revealed it to be widespread, occurring in 62 of the 65 mounds investigated (Gifford 1976:288; Willey et al. 1965). The relatively abundant Postclassic artifactual material and construction levels were not recognized during the fieldwork (possibly because no interments with recognizable Postclassic pottery were recovered) but instead were recognized during the subsequent ceramic analysis. Thus, the contextual linkages of this material are not secure and even the exact relationships among the Barton Ramie Postclassic ceramics are still largely unresolved (Bullard 1973; Cecil 2001;

A. Chase 1982; A. Chase and D. Chase 1983; D. Chase and A. Chase 1988; Graham 1987; Rice 1985, 1987; Sharer and Chase 1976). Even though more recent archaeological data relating to the Terminal Classic and Early Postclassic remains in the Belize Valley have been recovered (e.g., chapter 19), the problematic interpretation of the sequences, dating, and meaning of the latest Barton Ramie “New Town phase” material serves as a cautionary note for modern researchers to conjoin laboratory and field operations as fully as possible.

History and Retrospection

The excavations at Barton Ramie did not actually define the entirety of that site’s settlement patterns. What they did define was the form and longevity of Maya structures and groups that were interpreted as being common households and living areas. This alone was a major advancement for Maya archaeology (see Taylor 1948). Thus, the value of Willey’s work at Barton Ramie lay in its emphasis on Maya remains that were considered to be typical households of the lower stratum of Maya society. These were not elite remains. This was a level of people about whom little was known. Only a few earlier researchers had bothered to even investigate this class of remains (see chapter 2). Thompson (1931) had excavated a series of test excavations within residential groups located in the Mountain Cow area of the Vaca Plateau; he (1939) had also investigated larger palacelike structures that were clearly residential at San Jose. Limited samples of housemounds also had been intentionally excavated at Uaxactun (Wauchope 1934), but these had been located in fairly close proximity to the large central architecture of that site (Ricketson and Ricketson 1937; Smith 1950).

The excavations at Barton Ramie, however, did not address issues of how these structures and groups physically articulated with more elite remains—even those at Barton Ramie itself, as Coe and Haviland (1966) pointed out. This type of research was later attempted with the settlement work undertaken at Tikal, Guatemala (Puleston 1983). Barton Ramie was assumed to have been a small “rural” village within “a large but well-integrated network of theocratic stations and substations” that included three identified “ceremonial sites of middling size (Banana Bank, Banking Pot, Cahal Pech . . .)” and “one impressive ceremonial center at Xunantunich” (Willey 1956a:778)—“the nearest ceremonial or organizational center of consequence . . . some 20 kilometers upriver to the west” (Willey 1976:vii). But how this articulation actually worked was not speci-

fied and still engenders considerable debate (see chapters 9, 11, 17, 18, and 20).

The concentration of settlement at Barton Ramie is substantial (Ford 1990; Fry 1990) and much denser than settlement around the larger architectural concentrations of Cahal Pech or Xunantunich in the upper Belize Valley (but not as dense as ridgetop settlement outside of the valley proper [chapter 15]). The comparative implications for this density were never fully explored by Willey or others. Was Barton Ramie independent? Was it a cluster of nonrelated households? Was it a tightly organized group of people? Did it have different societal levels and an elite stratum? How were these people organized socially, politically, and economically? When Willey and his colleagues excavated Barton Ramie, Maya archaeology was not ready to answer these questions. Rather, the collected data were important in establishing the existence and dating of Maya residential groups. However, Willey's work also presaged many other questions that continue to plague Maya researchers. For example, exotic remains were found in association with the simple constructions at Barton Ramie and such remains were fairly widely distributed (Willey et al. 1965). Willey (1956a:778–779) himself contemplated what this meant for interpretations of how complex ancient Maya society was and for how it was organized, but could come to no firm conclusions regarding site or regional organization. Since Willey's study, the site of Blackman Eddy (chapter 4), located less than 3 km from Barton Ramie, has been discovered and investigated, providing new clues to the integration of the Barton Ramie settlement into the valley system.

All of the projects that have worked in or near the Belize Valley have followed Willey's tradition of emphasizing the study of ancient settlement. This is specifically seen in research undertaken at Xunantunich, Cahal Pech, Baking Pot, Buenavista del Cayo, and Valley of Peace. Where the more modern projects have diverged from Willey has been on their almost universal focus on large architectural concentrations. The majority of recognizable architectural concentrations or "site centers" on the south side of the valley have been investigated. Yet with the exception of the Xunantunich Project (Ashmore 1998) and the work done in the western part of the valley (Ford 1990; Fedick 1994), most of the archaeological projects have not attempted to systematically record and test settlements between centers or to block-map broad areas as Willey et al. (1965) did at Barton Ramie and Spanish Lookout (see also Caracol; A. Chase and D. Chase 2001a).

The Barton Ramie research undertaken by Willey and his colleagues (1965) was heralded as a breakthrough in methodology for Maya archaeology (Sabloff 1994:68–72). It was multidisciplinary and regional in scope and examined non-elite Maya settlement. Of particular note, it was fully published with relative speed. All of these were goals aspired to by later long-term Maya archaeological projects. Willey's work firmly entrenched settlement pattern studies in Maya archaeology (e.g., Ashmore 1981). Yet it is only with the more extensive, often small-scale, research projects that have been carried out subsequent to Willey's work that we have actually started to gain a sense of the broader settlement patterns of the Belize Valley.

The Belize Valley in Current Archaeological Perspective

It is rare in Maya archaeology, especially in the southern lowlands, for large areas to be mapped and surveyed so that the various settlement nodes, locales, and distributions situated in a given region can be compared and contrasted. This is possible in the southern lowlands with the sites of Tikal (Puleston 1983), Calakmul (Folan et al. 2001), and Caracol (A. Chase and D. Chase 2001a; A. Chase et al. 2001). Laporte (1994, 1996a, 2001) also has provided much regional data for the southeast Petén. The Belize Valley is the only other part of the southern lowlands that has comparable areal coverage. Thus, the true value of the Belize Valley archaeological data lies in the continued, incrementally additive regional research that has ensued in this location since Willey's Barton Ramie Project in the 1950s.

It was fortuitous that Willey (chapter 2) selected the Belize Valley for his settlement research. While the settlement and farming activities in the valley can be destructive, they also can be conducive to archaeological survey. Willey and colleagues (1965:15) noted that “the bulldozer-made clearings” at Barton Ramie were “worth thousands of man-hours to the archaeologist” and “too good to pass up.” Since Willey's research, development in the Belize Valley has kept pace with the modern world, revealing (and destroying) more sites and Maya settlement (as testified to by many of the chapters in this volume). But the proximity to modern urban communities has also lured archaeologists to the Belize Valley because of the ability to maintain some semblance of modern creature comforts rather than having to effect an “Indiana Jones–Early Explorer” mode of archaeology of the kind still found in archaeological camps in the more undeveloped

parts of the southern lowlands. Given this proximity to “civilization,” the Belize Valley has become one of the most intensively worked areas in the Maya lowlands.

Even before Willey (1998) had relaxed in the Stork Club and the Western Club in San Ignacio, others had already sought temporary haven in these refuges (chapter 2). But none of the other early researchers had carried out a long-term project in the Belize Valley. Rather, their efforts were fleeting. Linton Satterthwaite (1950, 1951) of the University Museum (University of Pennsylvania) had gotten Willey interested in doing archaeology in the Belize Valley and had carried out limited work at both Cahal Pech and Xunantunich. J. Eric S. Thompson (1940), no stranger to jungle fieldwork, had worked briefly at Xunantunich (Pendergast and Graham 1981). Gregory Mason (1940:98) had popularized the ruins in the area by writing about a spur-of-the-moment excavation at an undesignated site 4 km south of San Ignacio. Two Harvard students also carried out short-lived excavations in the upper part of the Belize Valley, specifically at Nohoch Ek in 1949 (Coe and Coe 1956).

In the midst of this earlier work, however, two focal sites emerged. Xunantunich on the Mopan River was repeatedly investigated from both a research and a tourist perspective (chapter 11; Ashmore 1998; LeCount et al. 2002; Leventhal and Ashmore, this volume; MacKie 1961; Thompson 1940; Willey et al. 1965:315–316) with its stucco facade receiving early attention and restoration (Satterthwaite 1950). Another focal site was Baking Pot, first excavated by Ricketson (1929), then by Anderson (Willey et al. 1965:304), then by Willey (et al. 1965:305), then by a Royal Ontario Museum expedition (Bullard and Bullard 1965), and most recently by the Belize Valley Archaeological Reconnaissance Project (Awe, personal communication, 2002; Moore 1997).

Subsequent projects have added significant coverage to these two focal sites, both inside and immediately outside the Belize Valley. In the upper Belize Valley, research has been undertaken not only at Xunantunich and its immediate settlement area (Ashmore 1998) but also at the major sites of Buenavista del Cayo (chapters 9, 12; Ball and Taschek 1991) and Arenal (Las Ruinas; Taschek and Ball 1999), as well as at Negroman-Tipu (Pendergast et al. 1993) and Chaa Creek (Connell 2000). Cahal Pech has been the subject of more research than any other upper Belize Valley site, actually having been excavated by two different projects. One project focused on earlier remains and outlying settlement (chapters 7 and 8; Awe and Grube 2001; Awe and Healy 1994; Healy and Awe 1996). The other focused on the excavation and stabilization of the site’s

palace compounds (Ball 1993). Settlement has also been examined north of the Mopan River (Fedick 1994; Ford and Fedick 1992) with most research focusing on the site of El Pilar (chapter 15; Ford 1990:chap. 15) just outside the Belize Valley proper. In the valley itself more work has been undertaken at Baking Pot (Awe, personal communication, 2002; Moore 1997), and the site of Blackman Eddy has also been a locus of major research (chapters 3 and 4; Garber et al. 1998). Investigation immediately south of the valley has focused on the sites of Ponces (Morris, personal communication) and Pacbitun (chapters 13 and 14; Healy 1992, 1999; Healy and Awe 1996). To the east, salvage work has been undertaken in the Valley of Peace (chapter 6; Awe and Topsey 1984; Morris 1984). Taken together, this research permits a better understanding of regional development and spatial relationships in the Belize Valley that both complements and supplements that gathered for Barton Ramie by Willey and his colleagues (1965) some 50 years ago.

Summary

Fifty years of research have expanded our knowledge about the archaeology of the Belize Valley. Based on the continued excavation of unassuming housemounds and smaller sites in the valley, we know much more archaeologically about this part of the Maya world than we do about most other regions. The Belize Valley exhibits a continuous occupation history from the dawn of Maya civilization to the present. Its riverbanks are lined with almost solid ancient settlement. The larger nodes of settlement that have been identified in the valley display a uniformity in their distribution that seems to be consistent with central place theory; we have no answer for exactly why this is. In spite of all the data that have been collected and all the sites and transects that have been mapped, the ancient organizational systems and internal and external relationships that must have existed in the Belize Valley are still a matter of debate. To some extent the debate is due to the use of conflicting models in an attempt to answer broad anthropological questions. And, to some extent there is simply healthy disagreement over the interpretation of the extant archaeological data. In spite of the disagreements, the archaeological data that have been gathered as a result of 50 years of research in the Belize Valley are key to understanding Maya social and political organization both here and elsewhere. When Willey undertook his initial settlement research at Barton Ramie so long ago, he could not have foreseen that he was laying the groundwork for such long-term regional archaeology.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank Diane Chase, Norman Hammond, and an anonymous reviewer for comments on an earlier version of this chapter. Hammond also kindly related details (which he attributes to Joseph Ball) about why Gordon Willey did not find Buenavista del Cayo, one of the largest sites in the Belize Valley: “According to one of Willey’s local informants from the 1950s in the Western Club, he ‘asked about little mounds like those at Barton Ramie, but he didn’t ask about big mounds, so nobody told him.’”