Part II: Colonial Period and Earlier at the Entrance to the Karst
Chapter 5
The Search for Spanish Colonial Structures at Cedar Bank (Operations 40-44)

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During the XARP 2003 season, two major goals were accomplished with respect to archaeological work at Cedar Bank. First, a program of survey and mapping of the core plaza group and peripheral structures at the site was completed. While Steve Morandi, Christa Cesario, and Satoru Murata carried out total station mapping of the site core, David Buck and Patricia McAnany, and Lance Usher located and mapped outlying structures using GPS and tape-and-compass techniques. The total station map was linked into the “grid” of known survey markers along the Western Highway in a long traverse completed by Steve Morandi, Christa Cesario, David Buck, and Jessica King. Ideally, such traverses are closed loops that reduce the error built up through measurements taken at successive survey points. Such a layout was not possible in this case, but the traverse was tied into a known government survey marker on one end, and to several GPS points (with an accuracy of a few centimeters) on the other end in order to minimize error over its length. Though the final topographic map is still in production, a preliminary rectified site map, based on GPS and tape-and-compass work from the 2001 and 2003 seasons, is included here (Figure 5.1).

The second goal reached during the 2003 XARP season was the significant expansion of excavations at Cedar Bank beyond the initial test unit completed in 2001. A summary of the results of this excavation program follows.

Operation 40: A Midden at the Base of Structure 351

The excavation of Operation 40 began as a small test unit during the XARP 2001 field season (Morandi 2003). At that time, the operation was the 2 x 2 m cardinally oriented Square A, located on the southern edge of Structure 351 in front of two huge limestone slabs thought to have been part of the basal retaining façade of the edifice. The unit was placed to investigate the construction sequence of Structure 351 and also to obtain diagnostic artifacts for dating the Cedar Bank occupation. Due to the intriguing discovery of Spanish and British Colonial Period artifacts, Operation 40 was expanded during the 2003 field season to investigate further the extent of this late occupation at Cedar Bank.

The 2003 Excavation Expansion

Operation 40 soon included Squares B, C, D, E, F, X, Y, and Z (Figure 5.2). Square B was a 2 x 2 m excavation unit located directly east of Square A, while directly west of Square A lay Square Z, a 2 x 1.2 m unit aligned with the northern border of A. Square Y was located west of Square Z and is of identical size. Like Squares Y and Z, Square C was a 2 x 1.2 m unit placed east of Square B and aligned at the northern borders. East of Square C is Square D, yet another 2 x 1.2 m excavation unit. Excavation was limited to the western half of Square D, not only due to time constraints, but also because the eastern side of Square D was filled with large collapsed stone from the retaining wall of Structure 351 (Zones 19 and 20) that severely limited artifact recovery (Figure 5.2).
Figure 5.1. Preliminary map of Cedar Bank.
Figure 5.2. a) Final plan view of Operation 40; b) Enlarged portion of final plan view of Operation including Zones 23 sherds.
Figure 5.3. Cross-section of north wall, Operation 40.
Set north of Square A was the 2 x 1 m unit, Square F. Just west of Square F lay Square E, with identical length and width measurements. Square E also shared its southern border with the northern border of Square Z. Squares E and F were excavated to explore behind and below the two massive, slightly tabular, overturned facing stones (Zone 6) sitting on the southern slope of Structure 351, as well as to better understand the artifact distribution above the facing stones of the lowest terrace (Figure 5.2). Identical in size to Squares E and F, Square X was located west of E and shares its northern border with the southern border of Square Y. Only a 0.7 x 1 m area of Square X was excavated (Figure 5.2), as this square was intended to fully expose a large cut limestone block of the second terrace of Structure 351 (Zone 26) and recover diagnostic incised sherds (Zone 23).

Zone 1

The topzone of Operation 40, Zone 1, was a layer of semi-compact clay sediment characterized by a light density of artifacts. The Zone 1 matrix ranged in color across the entire unit: dark brown (7.5YR 3/2) in Square Z, very dark brown (10YR 2/2) in Squares B, E, and F, dark grayish brown (10YR 4/2) in Square Y, and very dark grayish brown (10YR 3/2) in Squares C, D, X. Zone 1 also contained many small rootlets and burnt cohune nut fragments as well as a medium density of gravel and cobble-sized limestone inclusions. Animal bone and pottery sherds were common artifacts recovered from all squares of Zone 1.

One small (less than 1 cm long) sherd of Spanish colonial period Blue-on-White majolica (tin-glazed earthenware) was recovered from Square B, as well as a light density of pebble-sized baked clay material (BCM) and FCR or fire-cracked rock. A cohune tree stump was located in the southwest quadrant of the square, and its removal will be discussed later in the chapter.

Both Squares C and D yielded animal teeth and chipped stone debitage. Two pieces of obsidian and a crude spindle whorl were additionally recovered from the Square C matrix. Square D yielded several significant historical period artifacts. Dating to the Spanish colonial period was a Sevilla Blue-on-Blue rim sherd, as well as several reconstructible Blue-on-White majolica sherds. Three stoneware sherds, diagnostic British colonial artifacts, were recovered along with remnants of what appears to be a corroded metal knife. Near the bottom of Zone 1, within Squares C and D, several large cut limestone blocks, presumably tumbled from an outset staircase of Structure 351 were uncovered (Zone 20).

A few artifacts were recovered from the topzones of Squares E, F, and X; all squares yielded comparable quantities of debitage, obsidian, and jute shell. The most notable artifacts from Zone 1 of Squares E and F were three olive jar sherds. Towards the bottom of Zone 1 in Squares E and X, the large slabs of cut limestone from the second terrace of Structure 351 appeared (Zone 26).

Squares Y and Z revealed debitage and jute shell along with a large, thin sheet of corroded metal (with associated fragments) from Square Y, and one metal nail head from Square Z. These metal pieces are modern debris, most likely remnants from the Mosquito Coast film crew. The most notable artifact recovered from Square Z is a clay fragment that, upon initial examination in the field, appears to be either a figurine fragment or an incensario appliqué piece. This clay artifact may be diagnostic due to its suspicious irregularity.

Initially uncovered during the excavation of Zone 1 in Squares E and X, Zone 26, is a large cut limestone block that served as a retaining wall along the second terrace of Structure 351 (Figures 5.2 and 5.3). At its maximum extent, the stone measures 158 x 36 x 56 cm. To avoid destabilizing the lowest terrace stones,
the lower part of the block was not completely excavated. In Square E, however, the backside of Zone 26 was excavated completely and two layers of construction-fill (Zones 22 and 25) were found behind and below the large stone.

**Zone 2**

A layer of construction tumble below Zone 1 was called Zone 2 and was found across all squares of Operation 40 (Figure 5.3). It is characterized by an initial layer of gravel and cobbled-sized limestone inclusions, overlaying loose, slightly loamy, silty clay with a medium density of gravel-sized limestone inclusions and rootlets. The Zone 2 matrix is very dark brown (10YR 2/2) in Squares B, E, F, X, and Z, dark brown (10YR 3/3) in Squares D and Y, and finally, black (10YR 2/1) in Square C. A medium-heavy density of artifacts was recovered from Zone 2, those common amongst all squares include debitage, obsidian, and pottery sherds.

The majority of artifacts recovered from Square B were found within the eastern half of the square and in front of Zone 6, the two large cut limestone blocks of the first terrace of Structure 351 (Figure 5.2). Additional animal remains found within Square B include snail shell (likely modern) and the right side of a peccary mandible. This square yielded a large number of chipped stone tool fragments such as medial and distal biface fragments, one 4-cm long projectile point fragment, and a possible fragment of Pachuca obsidian. Other notable artifacts include several small clay net weights, a tiny clay vessel handle, a small green stone bead measuring 0.5 cm in diameter, and a spindle whorl (or, possibly, figurine head) fragment. An 8-cm long speleothem was recovered from this square—no surprise given the widespread presence of caves in the Cedar Bank/Gracy Rock area.

Several diagnostic historic-period pottery fragments were encountered within the Zone 2, Square B matrix, including olive jar sherds and one rim with a neck and partial shoulder from a “Shape B” (or rounded) olive jar (Figure 5.4). One small Sevilla Blue-on-Blue sherd and several Columbia Plain sherds can be more precisely dated to the Spanish colonial period, as can the beige glaze/salmon temper sherds (a variant of Columbia Plain) and Blue-on-White *majolica*. The final historical period artifact remains found in Square B were a few lead plate fragments and two square-headed nails.

![Figure 5.4. Olive jar rims from Operation 40, Zone 2: a) Type A jar rim; b) Type B jar rim.](image-url)
The Square C matrix yielded a negligible quantity of BCM and FCR, as well as a crystalline rock fragment of unknown provenance (Figure 5.3). Animal bones and teeth were encountered in high frequencies. Chipped-stone tools included the proximal fragment of a projectile point, one possible Pachuca obsidian medial blade fragment, and the medial section of a side-notched projectile point that is diagnostic of Postclassic or later periods. Also recovered from the Square C matrix were small clay net weights and several spindle whorl fragments. Definitive colonial period artifacts encountered in Square C included olive jar sherds and the ring base of a large Columbia Plain plate. Several reconstructible Blue-on-White majolica sherds were recovered from the eastern wall of Square C, which are from the same vessel as those found in Zone 1, Square D. Towards the bottom of the zone, a cut limestone block (Zone 19) appeared and likely formed the corner of an outset staircase at the southeastern end of Structure 351 (Figure 5.2). We also continued to uncover Zone 20, the three large cut limestone blocks tumbled from the structure.

Unlike the rest of Zone 2, Square D yielded only a light density of artifacts (Figure 5.3). This fact likely is due to the reduced area of excavation within Square D, as well as the presence of four large cut limestone blocks (Zone 20), which occupied close to fifty percent of the square (Figure 5.2). Along with a few large pieces of BCM and unknown crystalline rock, Zone 2, Square D yielded animal bone and teeth. While artifact recovery in Square D is minimal, the remains are significant: olive jar sherds, a fishing net weight, and a pink granite metate fragment. Finally, a complete vessel foot that may be indicative of Postclassic-period occupation at Structure 351 was excavated from Square D. Square E yielded two vessel feet (diagnostic of the Postclassic or Colonial period) as well as net weights and clay nodules that may be figurine fragments or incensario appliqués. A parrotfish jaw fragment was recovered among the large quantity of jute shell and animal bone.

A lighter density of artifacts came from the Square F matrix, though animal bone was common. Pottery included one Sevilla Blue-on-Blue sherd and one Columbia Plain sherd. A few clay nodules recovered from Square F may be figurine fragments or incensario appliqués. A small quantity of artifacts was recovered from Square X, due, in part, to the reduced area of excavation. Animal remains included bones and teeth, jute shell, and one unworked conch shell. Square X also yielded two clay net weights, but no obsidian. Zone 2, Square Y contained one unworked conch shell, and yet another unidentified crystalline rock fragment. A sizeable collection of historic period artifacts was recovered from this square, including olive jar sherds and a rim with partial neck from a “Shape A” (elongated) type olive jar (Figure 5.4). Also encountered were several fragments of green glass and a complete square-headed nail.

Zone 2, Square Z yielded a large quantity of animal bones and teeth, including two robust mandible fragments with rooted teeth (possibly bovine) and a large fragment of an unworked conch shell. Clay net weights and a spindle whorl fragment were also recovered. Historical period artifacts include a Columbia Plain sherd and two lead plate fragments. As in Squares C, D, and Y, several unknown crystalline rock fragments were found. Their presence at Sibun Valley sites seems rare enough to prompt closer examination for some kind of relevance to the Spanish colonial period occupants of Belize. Three travertine fragments and a large flowstone were recovered from Square Z, measuring between 10 and 15 cm in length. Due to the prevalence of caves in the Cedar Bank/Gracy Rock area these stones may indeed be speleothems, though, it is more likely that they were formed by river flow and brought to the site because of their resemblance to cave formations.
Zone 6

In Squares A, B, Y, and Z was a row of large cut rectangular limestone blocks with smoothed faces, designated Zone 6. These stones, oriented east-west, formed a retaining wall along the first terrace of Structure 351 (Figures 5.2 and 5.3). It was difficult to pinpoint the exact construction phase associated with Zone 6. However, it appeared to be sitting atop and within the construction-fill layer of Zone 7.

Zones 21 and 24

A layer of construction-fill, Zone 21 was composed of semi-compact, silty clay, with a medium to high density of gravel and cobble limestone inclusions. Zone 21 was below Zone 2 in Squares E, F, and X (Figure 5.2). Overlying Zone 21 at the interface between Squares E and X was Zone 24, a decomposing plaster surface (Figure 5.2). The plaster was fairly smooth with a very light density of pebble-sized BCM and limestone inclusions. It is evident that Zones 21 and 24 functioned together as a tread between the first and second terraces of Structure 351. The tread is constructed of plaster-covered fill, as opposed to a large cut limestone block. To avoid destabilizing the lowest terrace facing stones (Zone 6), which were exposed during the excavation of Squares Y, and Z, Zone 21 was not excavated.

Zones 19 and 20

Zone 19 was a cut limestone block measuring roughly 54 x 38 x 12 cm, was unearthed during the excavation of Zone 2 in Square C. The stone was oriented east-west, and thus, aligned with Zone 6. Zone 20 consisted of seven large cut limestone boulders randomly distributed throughout Squares C and D, with some stones exhibiting more precise cuts than others (Figures 5.2 and 5.3). Despite its level placement, it is unlikely that Zone 19 was a tread for the first terrace of Structure 351. The tread construction method was plaster over cobble construction-fill, as determined through the excavation of Zones 21 and 24. Instead, it seemed that Zone 19 was the corner of an outset staircase, located at the southeast edge of Structure 351, where the Zone 6 retaining wall abruptly ended. The large tumbled stones of Zone 20 were presumably part of this outset staircase but had been displaced over time because of the lack of large facing stones, such as those of Zone 6, to anchor them in place.

Zone 12

Zone 12 consisted of two large shaped limestone blocks found facing side down, and aligned east-west in the northeast quadrant of Square B. The blocks sat fairly level, directly south of the eastern-most stone of Zone 6. The eastern block had maximum dimensions of 69 x 38 x 10 cm, while the western block measured 48 x 34 x 10 cm. Due to the size of these blocks and their location near the southeastern edge of the structure, it was highly probable that Zone 12 originally also was part of the outset staircase of Structure 351 (in addition to Zones 19 and 20).

Zone 13

Below Zone 12 was Zone 13, an earthen layer of semi-compact, very dark brown (10YR 2/2) silty clay with a light density of gravel and cobble-sized limestone inclusions. This zone averaged 20 cm in depth, and was predominantly a result of the pedestaling of the Zone 12 blocks. The Zone 13 matrix was essentially the same as that of underlying Zone 3 but slightly more compact due to the pressure of the
Zone 13 yielded a light density of artifacts including animal bone, debitage, obsidian, *jute* shell, and pottery sherds, most notably one possibly diagnostic historic period rim sherd.

Zone 23

Zone 23 was a cluster of pottery sherds that comprised parts of 2-4 vessels. All sherds were found resting above the decomposing plaster surface of Zone 24 (Figure 5.2). Some sherds are potentially diagnostic and postdate the terminal phase of the terrace construction. The first sherd cluster (Vessel 1) was incised with a scroll design possibly representing smoke, water, or a cloud. The post-slip incising is located just below the outflared vessel rim. Red slip was found on both the inside and outside of the sherds, which had an oxidized salmon-colored paste. Not all sherds are incised, but many of pieces are reconstructible. Next, we encountered a single, highly eroded, ring base sherd with a trace of red slip. The sherd exhibits a subtle incurving at the ring base, and a paste that is lighter in color than that of the Vessel 1 group (though still may belong with that collection). The third sherd cluster (Vessel 2) exhibits a fine grey paste. These sherds indicate that the vessel would have had an outflaring rim, with vessel thickness thinning out at the body. And finally, a few random eroded sherds were recovered, and may not be associated with any of the others.

Zone 22

A layer of construction-fill located behind the large second terrace facing stones of Structure 351 (Figure 5.2), Zone 22 was directly underneath Zone 2 in Squares E, F, and X, beginning just below the top surface of the large cut limestone blocks of the second terrace. The construction-fill was composed of a loose, very dark brown (10YR 2/2) silty clay sediment, with a medium density of cobble-sized limestone inclusions, and a light scatter of BCM and FCR. Excavation was restricted to Squares E and F where a light density of artifacts was recovered, including animal bones and teeth, debitage, obsidian, pottery sherds, and *jute* shell. In addition, Square F yielded a distal biface fragment and one clay net weight. A speleothem was recovered from Square E, along with a vessel foot fragment and a clay nodule, which appears to be a spindle whorl fragment or *incensario* appliqué. Since no carbon-14 samples were recovered, these latter two artifacts should be examined further to determine a date for this construction episode.

Zone 25

Zone 22 terminated at the base of the stones (a depth of about 35 cm), where a zone change was made to maintain stratigraphic control throughout this deep layer of construction fill. The new zone, labeled Zone 25, was a continuation of the Zone 22 matrix. Animal bone, debitage, pottery sherds, and *jute* shell were recovered from the fill. Additionally, Square E yielded one potentially diagnostic sherd, which could be used to date the layer. The sherd exhibited red slip and three small thumbprints in a contiguous, horizontal line. A preliminary examination identified it as Kaway Impressed, made with a Pine Ridge carbonate paste. This is the local variety of Chaquiste Impressed, which is associated with the Late
Terminal Classic period. Below Zone 25 was Zone 7, a layer of construction fill found throughout Operation 40.

Zone 11

Zone 11 was a lens of semi-compact, very dark brown (10YR 2/2) silty clay characterized by a high density of charcoal flecks and chunks, as well as a light scatter of pebble-sized BCM and gravel-sized limestone inclusions. Located directly south of Zone 12 in Square B, Zone 11 overlays the layer of construction tumble of Zone 3. The lens was roughly 7 cm in depth, yielding a few pottery sherds and one debitage flake. Several liters of sediment were collected for flotation analysis.

Zone 3

A layer of construction debris underlying Zone 2 in Squares B, C, D, Y, and Z was called Zone 3. Characterized by loose, very dark brown (10YR 2/2), silty clay with a high density of gravel and cobble-sized limestone inclusions, Zone 3 contained a light density of artifacts, including animal bone, debitage, and pottery sherds found within all five squares. Zone 3 was unevenly distributed across Square B, beginning at a level that is roughly 40 cm higher in the northwest corner, than in the remainder of the square. This is predominantly due to the presence of Zones 11, 12, and 13, which overlay Zone 3 in the eastern half of Square B. Artifacts unique to Zone 3, Square B include jute shell, and a 3-cm long speleothem fragment.

Excavation of Zone 3 in Square C yielded obsidian, a vessel foot (possibly diagnostic of the Postclassic period or later), Spanish colonial period Blue-on-White majolica, and much later British colonial period stoneware. An equally minimal quantity of artifacts was recovered from Square D, including olive jar sherds and three jaw fragments retaining teeth, which resemble those of a dog.

Artifact recovery from Square Y was low, with two historic period sherds and one travertine fragment, which appeared to be formed by river flow. Square Z, yielded a slightly higher quantity of artifacts than the rest of Operation 40, including jute and unworked conch shell. A vessel foot (again likely dating to the Postclassic period or later), a few potential figurine fragments, and a travertine fragment, comprised the more notable artifacts to come from Square Z. Some decomposing plaster pieces were also recovered, though most likely associated with Zone 24, having fallen from the first terrace during the collapse phase that created Zone 3. Underlying Zone 3 throughout Operation 40 was Zone 7, a construction-fill layer.

Zone 4

A lens of loose, black (10YR 2/1), organic clay sediment, Zone 4 had a medium density of fine-gravel to cobble-sized limestone inclusions. Roughly 10 cm in depth, Zone 4 was located against the western wall of Square B within and below Zone 3. An identical lens was found along the eastern wall of Square A (see Morandi 2003:154), and, when taken together, the two lenses appear to be the result of a
decomposed tree. Zone 4 yielded a light density of artifacts, including animal bone, debitage, pottery sherds, and jute shell.

**Zone 18**

A long, narrow pit found within Square C, Zone 18 measured roughly 23 cm in maximum length. Zone 18 began within the Zone 3 matrix and extended down through the cobble surface of Zone 8 (Figure 5.2). The sediment within the pit was very loose, very dark brown (10YR 2/2), silty clay, devoid of any inclusions, artifacts, or carbon-14 samples. Zone 18 was most likely an animal burrow. As the pit reached a depth of about 40 cm, it shifted from a vertical pit to one that angled to the northeast.

**Zone 7**

Zone 7 was a layer of construction-fill found across Squares B, C, D, E, F, Y and Z (Figure 5.2), was compact, dark brown (10YR 3/3) silty clay characterized by a medium density of BCM and a high density of gravel and cobble-sized limestone inclusions. Across Squares B, C, D, Y, and Z, Zone 7 was immediately beneath Zone 3 but, in Squares E and F, it was stratigraphically below Zone 25. Presumably, had Square X been excavated completely, Zone 7 would have been found below Zone 25 as well.

Within Square B, Zone 7 yielded a light density of artifacts including animal bone, jute shell, debitage, obsidian, and pottery sherds (Figure 5.6). Additionally, a granite metate fragment was recovered, which may match with that found in Zone 2, Square D. Because historic period artifacts ceased to be found in Zone 7, excavation in Squares C, D, E, F, Y, and Z was discontinued.

**Zone 14**

A circular lens of very loose, very dark brown (7.5YR 2.5/2) sediment, Zone 14 was a silty clay loam located within Zone 7 in the southwest quadrant of Square B. The lens measured roughly 22 cm north-south, 15 cm east-west, and 18 cm in depth. Zone 14 was uncovered after the removal of a cohune tree stump, during the excavation of Zone 7. This small lens contained a high density of artifacts including the reconstructible fragments of a rectangular green glass “case” bottle and stoneware vessel (probably British colonial period in date), as well as one Sevilla Blue-on-Blue sherd. Zone 14 was likely formed by bioturbation that transported the vessels down from an upper level.

**Zone 15**

A compact construction-fill layer, Zone 15 was unevenly distributed below Zone 7 in Square B (Figure 5.3). Zone 15 sediment was differentiated from that of Zone 7 by its lighter color, increased grain size and higher density of limestone inclusions. The matrix was characterized by a sandy clay sediment, grading in color from a dark yellowish brown (10YR 4/6) in the northeast to brown (10YR 4/3) in the southwest, as well as a light density of BCM, a high density of gravel and cobble-sized limestone inclusions. A light density of artifacts was recovered from this zone, including debitage and pottery sherds. It is
possible that Zone 15 was the result of a fusion between Zone 7 and Zone 16 (a decomposing plaster surface), thus explaining the increase in grittiness and lightening color (Figure 5.3).

**Zones 8 and 16**

Together, Zones 8 and 16 constituted the basal layer of Structure 351. Zone 16 was a decomposing plaster surface, preserved only in the northern half of Square B, in front of Zone 6 (Figure 5.3). Zone 8 was a compact cobble surface with dark yellowish brown (10YR 4/4) silty clay packed between the stones. These two zones yielded a very light density of artifacts including debitage and pottery sherds. In the southern half of Square B, where the plaster surface is no longer preserved, Zone 8 underlies Zones 7 and 15.

**Zone 9**

Zone 9, a non-cultural, alluvial layer of semi-compact, dark yellowish brown (10YR 4/6) clay loam, underlies Zone 8 in Square B (Figure 5.3). Not only was it devoid of inclusions, but only a negligible quantity of debitage, obsidian, and slipped pottery sherds were recovered. It is likely that these artifacts were brought to Cedar Bank during flooding periods of the Sibun River. To determine the extent of artifact depth, a posthole (Zone 17) was dug to probe below the excavated alluvial layer (Figures 5.2 and 5.3). The Zone 17 matrix is identical to that of Zone 9. It yielded only 5 artifacts (debitage and pottery sherds) and was completely sterile throughout its basal 30 cm.

The recent excavations at Operation 40 have enabled us to offer a brief description of the architecture of Structure 351. The basal layer of this structure was a plaster-covered compact cobble surface (Zones 8 and 16) built atop a non-cultural alluvium earthen layer (Zone 9; Figure 6). Overlying this plaster and cobble surface was a thick layer of construction-fill (Zone 7), which acted to support the first and second terrace facing stones (Zones 6 and 26) of Structure 351 (Figure 5.3). The tread between these two terraces was comprised of a plaster-covered construction-fill surface (Zones 21 and 24; Figure 1). Finally, the eastern and western corners along the front of Structure 351 appeared to have accommodated an outset staircase.

**Operation 41: A Residence on the Top of Structure 351**

Due to the relatively high density of Spanish colonial period artifacts recovered in Operation 40, it was suspected that a contemporaneous residence might exist at the top of the slope. The fact that several large pieces of limestone protruded from the surface on top of Structure 351 corroborated this hypothesis. Operation 41 was placed on top of Structure 351 and designed to investigate the central and eastern portions of the mound. It was a cardinally oriented 6 x 6 m unit divided into nine 2 x 2 m squares (lettered A through I, with A in the northwest corner and proceeding west to east in three rows; see Figure 5.5).

Even before excavations began, it was apparent that the mound had been disturbed. A gaping looter’s pit had taken a giant bite out of its northern edge. Large cohune and fig trees and old cohune pits dotted its surface. Excavations indicated that the damage was more widespread than even this scarred surface suggested.
Zone 1

Zone 1 appeared to be material deposited on the surface of the eastern end Structure 351 due to insect activity, as it represented the base of a large anthill. The sediment of this zone was lighter than the surrounding matrix and probably transported from deeper layers. Rounded nails and glass recovered from this zone indicated modern activity.
Zone 2

Zone 2 consisted of wooden planks, one in Square B and one in Square C. These were likely left over from the Mosquito Coast film crew (1985-1986), which, according to local informants, built scaffolding on the top of Structure 351 (Figure 5.5). The plank in Square B was removed intact from the modern ground surface, while the one in Square C was badly deteriorated and removed in small pieces. Neither plank was saved for lab analysis due to its obvious recent date.

Zone 3

An earthen layer that overlaid many limestone cobbles, Zone 3 contained most of the colonial artifacts found in Operation 41 (Figure 5.6). It also contains pre-contact artifacts, and thus is likely a disturbed layer with several time periods represented. Among the colonial artifacts were iron strapping (alternatively, knife fragments), clay pipe fragments, and British earthenware.

Zone 4

An earthen layer of the same texture as Zone 3, Zone 4 was slightly darker in color (Figures 5.5 and 5.6). It is located on the north side of Operation 41 and may be the result of some post-depositional processes that altered Zone 3 in this area.

Zone 5

An earthen layer immediately above a cobble surfaces and a free-standing wall, Zone 5 contained primarily pre-contact artifacts but also a few modern artifacts (Figures 5.5 and 5.6). This mixing indicates that the disturbance to the mound is not limited to near-surface contexts.

Zone 6

A pocket of sediment likely formed by the decomposition of a cohune tree stump, Zone 6 contained only a few artifacts and is considered to represent highly disturbed sediment (Figure 5.5).

Zone 7

Zone 7 represents a deteriorating free-standing wall built on the north side of the top of Structure 351 and running east-west parallel to the edge of the mound (Figures 5.5 and 5.6). It appeared to be a two-course wall made of roughly squared limestone blocks with no dimensions larger than 30 cm, and was best preserved toward its western end. This wall appeared to be part of a superstructure on the mound, though the date of its construction is unknown.

Zones 8 and 9

An irregular scatter of limestone cobbles, Zone 8 was found only in Squares A-D. The size of the cobbles ranged from 3 to 30 cm in length and few exhibit any flat surfaces. Due to their lack of patterning, they likely were not in situ. The closely related Zone 9 was composed of closely packed regular and irregular limestone cobbles that covered the southern portion of Square D and all of Square G (Figure 5.5).
Figure 5.6. Cross-section of a) west and b) north walls, Operation 41.

The edge of this surface paralleled the Zone 7 free-standing wall and is thought to have been part of the Structure 351 superstructure.

Zone 10

Zone 10, an earthen layer that may be a decomposed fired clay surface, was located between Zones 7 and 9 (Figure 5.5). It contained small and large pieces of baked clay material (BCM). The largest pieces of BCM contain charred plant fibers and some nodules were discovered in-situ, pressed against limestone cobbles. These pieces of baked clay not only carried the impressions of the cobbles, but also contained a flat top surface that was likely part of a floor. These features provided good evidence that clay containing plant materials was pressed into place and then fired in-situ to produce a hardened living surface.

Zones 11, 12, and 13

Zone 11, excavated only in Square D, Zone 11 was a compact clay layer beneath the decomposed clay surface of Zone 10 (Figure 5.6). Zone 11 represented construction fill of the Structure 351 mound (deduced by comparison with the adjacent looter’s pit), and contained a light density of artifacts. Zone 12 was a continuation of Zone 11 separated purely for stratigraphic control. It was arbitrarily ended after 20 cm and contained only a single piece of obsidian. Zone 13 was a further extension of this matrix, again separated for stratigraphic control. It was arbitrarily ended after 20 cm and contained no artifacts.

Operations 42 and 43: Investigations of Structure 357

After the completion of Operations 40 and 41, we decided to test one of the structures in the northern plaza of Cedar Bank. Structure 357 was chosen because of its long, low shape, east-west axis, and curious rise on its eastern end. Two transverse trenches were positioned across Structure 357: Operation 42 and 43.
Operation 42

Operation 42, a 4 x 8 m unit divided into eight 2 x 2 m squares, was oriented cardinally with its long axis aligned north-south, and ran from the center of Structure 357 off the north side of the mound at its western end (Figure 5.7). This unit was positioned in order to collect information about the architecture of the structure as well as its function.

Zone 1. A topzone containing small roots, leaves, and other plant material, Zone 1 covered all squares and exhibits slight variation in color across the operation (probably due to moisture content), but was considered one zone because all squares contained sediments with the same texture, compactness, and lack of inclusions. Zone 1 was excavated only in the eastern row of the Operation 42 squares (specifically, B, D, F, and H) and contained no artifacts (Figure 5.7). Zone 1 is thought to be an alluvial layer deposited by occasional flooding of the Sibun River to the south.

Zone 2. Found directly beneath Zone 1 in all excavated squares of Operation 42 (B, D, F, and H), is Zone 2 also a silty-clay. This zone lacked any inclusions aside from a few small pieces of charcoal.

Zone 3. Zone 3 was a “test pit” on the western edge of Square H at the bottom of Zone 2, undertaken to determine the contents of the raised area on the eastern end of Structure 357. It turned out to be a product of bioturbation activity (several small burrows were noted in this zone), and Structure 357 should be thought of as one long flat platform with no special structure on its eastern end.

Zone 4. An earthen layer below Zone 2, Zone 4 blankets Structure 357. Below Zone 4 were the first traces of the underlying platform structure. The first artifacts of the excavation appeared in this zone, including large pieces of Columbia Plain pottery, a Spanish colonial type of majolica.

Zones 5, 6, 7, and 8. Zone 5 was an earthen layer located to the north of the northern retaining wall of Structure 357. The density of artifacts increased within this zone. Zone 6 represented tumbled stones from the northern retaining wall of Structure 357 while Zone 7 was the sediment below the Zone 6 tumble that rested against the northern retaining wall of Structure 357. Zone 8 is an earthen layer north of Structure 357, below Zone 5. This zone contained a light density of pottery sherds and debitage.

Zone 9. The northern retaining wall of Structure 357, Zone 9 was comprised of naturally shaped limestone cobbles chosen for their flat sides (though a few are quite rounded). The retaining wall was oriented at a bearing of roughly 100° and appeared to have been three courses high in its original state (Figure 5.7 and 5.8).

Operation 43

A 2 x 14 m excavation unit cardinally oriented perpendicular to the long axis of Structure 357, Operation 43 was located approximately 14 m west of Operation 42 (Figure 5.7). The operation was divided into seven 2 x 2 m squares, labeled A through G from north to south. The excavation was designed to examine the final occupational phase of Structure 357 and determine if the structure had been utilized during the Spanish colonial period.

Zone 1. Found across all squares, the topzone (Zone 1) of Operation 43 is a layer of loose, dark brown (10YR 3/3) silty clay sediment with a very high density of rootlet inclusions (Figure 5.9). This zone is
Figure 5.7. Plan view of Operation 42 and Operation 43.
Figure 5.8. Cross-section of west wall, Operation 42.
Figure 5.9. Cross-section of west wall, Operation 43.
quite thin, ranging from 1 to 7 cm in depth throughout the unit. Three surface cobbles were removed from the topzone of Square B, with one partially buried boulder remaining. Additionally, one cobble lay in Square C and two partially buried cobbles in Square F, all appearing to be tumble from the northern and southern retaining walls of Structure 357 (Zones 9 and 10).

**Zone 2.** Zone 2 was encountered directly below Zone 1 in all squares of Operation 43 (Figure 5.9), and was an earthen layer of semi-compact, dark yellowish brown (10YR 3/4) silty clay. A light density of small pebble-sized pieces of baked clay material (BCM) was found in Squares B, C, and D. Toward the bottom of Zone 2, along the east wall of Square B and south wall of Square F, we began to see the remnants of retaining walls (Zones 9 and 10, respectively). There are several cobble and boulder-sized limestone inclusions throughout Squares A, B, C, and G, which are likely to have tumbled from the retaining walls of the structure.

The first artifactual remains encountered at Operation 43 came from Zone 2 of Squares C, D, E, F, and G. These squares yielded a small scatter of chert debitage, obsidian, and poorly preserved sherds, which continued to be found consistently throughout Operation 43. Square D also revealed a large, 20 cm long chert adze that exhibited heavy polish at its beveled edge. This adze is likely not in situ, but rather, brought to its location just below the topzone by a flooding event or other post-depositional processes. A few large Columbia Plain sherds that date to the Spanish colonial period were recovered from Square E. Finally, Square F yielded a 7-cm long medial fragment of a chipped stone tool.

**Zone 3.** An earthen layer of semi-compact, dark yellowish brown (10YR 4/4), silty clay, Zone 3 was found below Zone 2 across all squares of Operation 43 (Figure 5.9). The artifact density within Zone 3 is light, with typical artifacts being obsidian, debitage, and poorly preserved sherds.

More notable artifacts recovered from Square A included a spindle whorl and a large reconstructable portion of a Columbia Plain dish, including rim, body, and ring base sections. It is possible that these sherds are associated with those recovered from Zone 2, Square E.

While excavating in Square B a fishing net weight was recovered. Within the northern half of this square, the excavation of Zone 3 exposed the top layer of a northern retaining wall (Zone 9) oriented roughly east-west, as well as a large layer of tumbled stones associated with the wall of Zone 6. The southern half of Square B, as well as Squares C and D were not excavated, as they were located inside of the retaining wall.

The southern extent of Square F revealed a southern retaining wall (Zone 10) oriented roughly east-west as in Square B. The remainder of Square F was excavated down to the level of Zone 10. At the surface of Zone 3, Square G, were five boulders, clearly displaced from Zone 10. Further, within the Zone 3 matrix a mano fragment, possibly of pink granite, was recovered.

Despite its location inside of the Structure 357 retaining walls (Zones 9 and 10) Zone 3 of Square E was excavated further in an effort to locate the surface of the structure. As we reached the top level of the retaining walls (Zones 9 and 10), no gravel or cobble surface was found. However, the sediment became completely sterile, and it is possible that instead of a cobble surface, Structure 357 had a surface of compact clay.
Zone 4. Located in the center of Square A, at the interface of Zones 3 and 5 (earthen layers), Zone 4 was a pit of dark brown (10YR 3/3), loose silty clay, measuring approximately 65 cm in diameter and 20 cm in depth. The Zone 4 matrix exhibited a very high density of wood charcoal flecks and chunks (1-2 cm), fire-cracked rock pebbles, and BCM. The semi-charred remains of three wooden sticks (10 cm in length by 3 cm in diameter) were recovered, as well as one large cobble that had most likely tumbled from the wall of Zone 9. Zone 4 yielded few artifacts, specifically a modern corroded metal nail and several small metal flakes. The evidence suggests that the pit is the result of a modern burning event.

Zone 5. Lying below Zone 3 in Square A was Zone 5, an earthen layer of compact, dark yellowish-brown (10YR 4/6), silty clay sediment (Figure 5.9). Only three cobble and boulder-sized inclusions were found in Zone 5, presumably tumbled from the northern retaining wall (Zone 9). Few artifacts were recovered from this layer, only the usual obsidian, debitage, and pottery sherds.

Zone 6. Located below Zone 3 in Square B, Zone 6 was a small layer of cobble tumble associated with the northern retaining wall (Zone 9). Zone 6 began directly north of the top course of Zone 9, spilling further northward slightly into Square A. The depth of Zone 6 ranged from approximately 5 cm at its northern extent to about 25 cm at its southern extent.

Zone 7. Zone 7, an earthen layer of compact, dark yellowish-brown (10YR 3/6) silty clay, located in Square B below the cobbles of Zone 6. This zone was created to distinguish the sediment directly below the Zone 6 tumble from the surrounding sediment in Squares A and B, specifically Zones 3 and 5. There were virtually no inclusions within the Zone 7 matrix that yielded only a light density of obsidian, debitage, and pottery sherds.

Zone 9. As mentioned above, Zone 9 was a retaining wall located on the northern side of Structure 357 (Figure 5.10). While the excavation units were oriented north-south (as it appeared that Structure 357 extended east-west) the wall ran diagonally across Square B at a bearing of 100°, in alignment with the wall uncovered in Operation 42 (Figure 5.7). This wall was composed of large cobbles and boulders, held together by a very compact, mottled clay (10YR 3/3 dark brown, 10YR 3/4 dark yellowish-brown, 10YR 4/6 dark yellowish-brown). The remains of the wall indicate that, at one time, it was three courses high. The second and basal courses were still intact, while the only indication of a top course is one large boulder oriented directly above the second course (Figures 5.7 and 5.10). It seemed possible, and highly likely, that part of the Zone 6 tumble once comprised this top course of stones, especially when compared with the section of wall excavated in Operation 42 to the east.

Zone 10. Discovered after the excavation of Zone 3, Zone 10 was a retaining wall on the southern side of Structure 357 (Figure 5.7 and 5.10). Like Zone 9, Zone 10 ran diagonally across the north-south oriented excavation unit at a bearing of 100° (Figure 5.7). While the wall was poorly preserved and barely intact, it appeared that 2 courses remained, composed of large limestone cobbles and boulders held together by a very compact, mottled clay (2.5Y 4/3 olive brown, 10YR 4/6 dark yellowish brown) matrix. Over time, the top course had shifted northward, past the basal course. It is possible that, like Zone 9, this wall had a third, uppermost course, indicated by the large cobbles and boulders found in Square G (Zones 2 and 3), which are presumably wall collapse. Again, few artifacts were recovered, specifically obsidian, chert debitage, and pottery sherds.

Zone 8. In Squares F and G, Zone 3 overlaid Zone 8, an earthen layer of loose, dark yellowish-brown (10YR 4/6), silty clay sediment (Figure 5.9). Zone 8 was excavated in steps, from the southern
extent of Square G down to the face of Zone 10. As is characteristic of this excavation unit, only a light density of obsidian, chert debitage, and pottery sherds were recovered from Zone 8, along with two animal bone fragments.

Zone 11. Zone 11 was an earthen layer of compact, dark yellowish brown (10YR 3/6), sandy clay located in Squares A and B (Figure 5.9). In Square A, Zone 11 underlay Zone 5 and was left unexcavated. Within Square B, though, Zone 11 was excavated in front of and below the retaining wall. As in the rest of the unit, a light density of obsidian, chert debitage, and pottery sherds were recovered. However, one unique ring base sherd came from the matrix and could potentially be diagnostic. Excavations did not continue below Zone 11, as it was already deeper than the basal course of Zone 9.

Zone 12. Zone 12 was an earthen layer of semi-compact, dark yellowish-brown (10YR 5/6), silty clay, underlying Zone 8 in Squares F and G (Figure 5.9). Zone 12 was excavated in front of the Zone 10 wall to probe for any additional courses of stones—none were found. A light density of obsidian, chert debitage, and pottery sherds were recovered from Zone 12, as well as a large distal biface fragment found in Square F. As was the case with Zone 11, excavations did not continue below Zone 12, as it was already deeper than the basal course of Zone 10.

Operation 44: A Test Unit in the Northern Plaza

Operation 44 was a 2 x 2 m test unit located in the northern plaza of the Cedar Bank center (north of Structure 351). This location was chosen by Tori Saneda who had conducted a magnetometer survey within the plaza and identified a magnetic anomaly. As the only plaza test, this unit also provides a comparison to the other architectural contexts investigated at the site.

Zone 1

A loose silty sediment containing many roots and a high density of burned cohune nut fragments, Zone 1 yielded a light density of artifacts, including a chipped stone tool fragment.

Zones 2 and 3

Zone 2 was an earthen layer also containing a high density of roots, but almost no cohune nut fragments. The density of artifacts continued to be very light, with only one piece of debitage and a handful of sherds recovered from this zone. The matrix of Zone 3 was nearly identical to that of Zone 1, but more compact and with no roots. Large limestone pebbles and a few limestone cobbles were found within this sediment. The density of artifacts remained light, but the artifact assemblage included a highly retouched obsidian blade fragment.

Zone 4

A dark-stained area at the bottom of Zone 3, Zone 4 may have been formed by the deterioration of wood. The artifacts are similar to those of Zone 3, with a few sherds, pieces of debitage, and one unusual ground obsidian disk.
Zone 5

Beneath the Zone 4 layer was a zone of very compact, olive brown sandy clay, labeled Zone 5. A few pottery sherds and a piece of obsidian were recovered from this zone. Due to the difficulty of screening this sticky clay, only 50% of the excavated material was sieved.

Zone 6

As with Zone 4, Zone 6 was a dark-stained area of sediment that also may have been formed by the deterioration of plant material. After Zone 6, only the southern half of the 2 x 2 was excavated due to the difficulty of screening the excavated sediment.

Zone 7

Zone 7, red and orange mottled clay, was found in the southeast corner of Operation 44. Debitage and pottery were recovered in light densities in this zone, continuing the pattern of sparse artifacts throughout the excavation unit. No further excavation was completed due to time constraints and the difficulty of screening the sediment. Overall, the cause of the magnetic anomaly was not discovered, though perhaps it was due to the dark staining in Zones 4, 6, or 7. Few artifacts were recovered from this unit, although two unusual pieces of obsidian were found: a ground disk perhaps used as a gaming piece and a highly retouched blade fragment (see discussion of artifacts in Chapter 16, this volume).

Discussion

The midden feature uncovered through excavation of Operation 40 left us with the conclusion that a Spanish Colonial Period residence probably existed on the top of the basal platform Structure 351 at Cedar Bank. The broad exposure of Operation 41 revealed a narrow floor of hardened clay bordered by low retaining wall on its north side and a cobble surface to its south. This may represent a change in architectural style similar to that in early Colonial Period Tipu, where covered cobble “porches” were located adjacent to residences (see Graham 1991: 321-3). Operation 41 excavations produced few artifacts, though more British Colonial than Spanish Colonial in number. This low frequency suggests that the superstructure, originally used by pre-contact Maya, regularly would have been swept clean. Perhaps the higher frequency of British Colonial Period artifacts represents a final phase of occupation whose residents left it strewn with their garbage.

Overall, surprisingly few artifacts were recovered from Operation 42 and 43, especially off the northern edge of the structure. The stratigraphy was very difficult to determine, and both the living surface of Structure 357 and the contemporaneous ground surface off its northern edge barely could be distinguished (Figure 5.11). Significantly, several of the limited sample of artifacts were sherds of Spanish colonial pottery, indicating that Structure 351 was not unique in bearing artifacts from the early colonial time period. The presence of Spanish colonial artifacts in all operations reinforces the significant, if difficult to tease out, occupation at Cedar Bank during this time period. Clearly, future analyses and investigations will reveal additional information about the Xibun Maya in the early colonial period.
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Chapter 6
Anglo-Colonial Occupation in the Area of Gracy Rock

Daniel Finamore

Diplomats and government officials of the eighteenth century viewed the Sibun River valley as a zone of light occupation on the margins of the British Bay Settlement. Later historians have pursued an ephemeral documentary trail that has confirmed the marginal nature of the region relative to the Belize and New River Valleys to the north, but which has also indicated the probability of significant undocumented habitation there as well (Waddell 1961: 20; Finamore 2004: 41). During the 2003 season of the Xibun Archaeological Research Project, investigations of British colonial-period occupations were focused on the section of the valley locally known as Gracy Rock and officially called Transect 4 (Figure 6.1). A transitional area within the valley, Gracy Rock marks the end of the lowlying mangrove estuary and the beginning of the towering Sibun-Manatee karst. Archaeological investigations undertaken at this key locale included three components: a shovel test pit and surface survey of the riverbanks where the river flows out of the karst terrain; excavation of a late nineteenth and twentieth century midden in Cedar Bank Village; and a reconnaissance survey of the Runaway Creek drainage.

Gracy Rock/Cedar Bank Survey

The 2001 season of survey illustrated that techniques employed to locate British colonial-period sites in other Belize river valleys would not be effective along the Sibun, which is prone to far more severe flooding, sediment deposition and bank erosion than rivers to the north (Finamore 1994: 114; Finamore 2003: 74). Consequently, a program of surface survey combined with shovel test pitting was instituted, taking into account small-scale topographical features as well as information gleaned from archival research.

Historical records indicate that several Anglo-colonial settlements had been established in the area by the 1780s, including woodcutting works of Sullivan, Jackson and Colonel English. One of the largest landholdings in the valley, identified as the claim of William Tucker, was located on the west side of the river directly downstream from Gracy Rock. Tucker’s house was just south of the first hills in the valley (PRO CO700 BH no. 13). Initial reconnaissance identified several points of high ground along the riverbanks, the most prominent of which is a cluster of Maya platforms at the site of Cedar Bank. This area, tested in 2001, had yielded pre-Columbian, Spanish colonial and Anglo colonial-period artifacts (Morandi 2003: 159-164). More expansive excavations at Cedar Bank resumed during the 2003 field season (see Morandi and Cesario, Chapter 5).

Other areas of high ground were investigated in a program of twelve shovel test pits positioned at various points along the bank, each 50 cm on a side (see Figure 6.1). The first was located on the Brakeman property, just to the south of Gracy Rock itself, on the west side of the river. A diffuse scatter of eroded Maya ceramics was recovered in a zone beginning 52 cm below the surface within a matrix of uniform reddish brown sand, evidently an alluvial river deposit.

Two additional test pits (2 and 3) were excavated atop Gracy Rock which, according to local lore, is said to have been the home of a Miss Gracy two or three generations ago. She was reputed to access the hilltop
Figure 6.1. Map of Gracy Rock-Runaway Creek portion of the central Sibun River valley showing surface collection and subsurface testing areas.
via steps built into the south side of the karst tower, the remnants of which could not be located. The ascent to the summit was extremely difficult, and the excavated units were sterile.

The remaining nine shovel test pits were excavated at intervals along both sides of the river in areas that appeared to be less prone to flooding and more likely to yield preserved ground surfaces of some antiquity (large, old trees served as an indicator). Several of these units yielded discrete lenses of historical period and Maya artifacts, but all appeared to be water-worn secondary deposits, most likely from episodes of flooding.

Two test pits (8 and 10) were placed atop the riverbank near one of the Maya platforms at the site of Cedar Bank (see Figure 5.1). This area is enclosed by a meander bend that provides a natural southern and eastern boundary while a dirt road provides a western perimeter. Within this area, the land is heavily disturbed from construction and excavation. Local reports indicate that this was one of several film locations used for *The Mosquito Coast* (released in 1986). Large pits with modern refuse, including pvc pipe fragments, is visible through the overgrowth. Excavation in these units yielded broken concrete fragments and more pvc, evidently remnants of set construction.

In addition to subsurface testing, several areas along the riverbank yielded surface deposits of 18\textsuperscript{th}-20\textsuperscript{th} century artifacts. These five surface scatters were designated Areas A-E (see Figure 6.1). Most of these artifacts appeared on sand banks, strongly indicating that they had been carried downriver during periods of high water. In a few areas, artifacts were also embedded in the sides of the sloping banks and it is possible that they had eroded from primary refuse deposits.

In the course of surface survey along the riverbanks, a few residents showed us historical material they had found in the river after floods receded or while conducting small-scale mining of sand bars for construction material. While most of the objects dated from the late nineteenth century, one British-made glass bottle bore characteristics of early eighteenth century manufacture, being of the “mallet” style (Jones 1986: 73). This artifact offered tantalizing evidence of an illicit British occupation of the Sibun River Valley at a time when it was beyond the boundary of their treaty with Spain.

A sand bank on the east side of the river opposite the Cedar Bank sand operation truck ramp contained a secondary surface deposit identified as Area A. This area yielded many of the artifacts that local people had discovered while excavating sand for construction projects. Area B, downslope from a subsurface test unit, contained three large glass bottle fragments that perhaps had eroded from the bank above, but which more likely had been transported there by floodwater. Area C yielded a large piece of industrial iron machinery, perhaps a capstan or gear mechanism that was located on the ground surface near a footpath. Though it was measured and drawn, no artifacts were collected from Area C.

On the east side of the river at a locale designated Area D, a sand bank measuring approximately 50 m in length and 12 m in width contained a significant surface scatter of 18\textsuperscript{th}-20\textsuperscript{th} century artifacts. The densest concentration existed at the upriver end and was mixed with course sand. Downriver, to the north, there were fewer artifacts and finer sand indicating that—like the sand—the artifacts were sorted by the river according to weight. Large bottle fragments were also eroding from the riverbank at the upriver end of the sand spit. Far more 18\textsuperscript{th} and 19\textsuperscript{th} century material than 20\textsuperscript{th} century material was collected from the surface suggesting that occupation, or at least deposition into the river, was greater in the more distant past. Such a distribution of artifacts indicates trash disposal into the river, perhaps complemented by the erosion and transport of artifacts from the surrounding land during overbank events. Assemblages such as that in
Area D are representative of large upriver areas, perhaps greater than a single specific settlement in the immediate area. How broad a catchment area the scatter represents is not known.

A large square-cut wedge of wood was located approximately 2 m off the south tip of the sand bank in an eddy of the river. Although the squared sides are smooth, one side is cut diagonally and bears a whittled appearance that is suggestive of an ax rather than a saw cut. At 75 cm in width, 36 cm depth, and 64 cm on the angle, the wood appears to have been cut to the shape of a wedge to hold mahogany logs and prevent them from rolling or sliding when stacked (Figure 6.2). The species of wood has not yet been identified, but it appears to have been cut from the end of a squared log of marketable timber such as mahogany, and then faceted with the diagonal cut into the desired shape for a wedge. The wedge was collected and has been accessioned into the holding of the Institute of Archaeology.

Figure 6.2. Wood wedge from the Cedar Bank area of the Sibun River, Surface Collection Area D.

Young Family Yard and Midden (Operation 69)

Investigations around the Young family house and property at the elbow of the road at Cedar Bank Village began with surface collecting at the river bank (Area E) and continued with excavation of a trash midden designated Operation 69. The property is strategically located at the point at which the Sibun River
departs the karst for flatter terrain, directly abutting the last karst hill along the bank. The grounds around the Young house are well manicured and are a popular picnic destination on weekends. Glass and ceramics are eroding from the hillside; grounds keepers collect this material and deposit it in the crotch of a tree located on an old colonial trash midden.

The property owner, a widow named Mrs. Young, said that she remembers the midden as an active trash dump a generation ago, but that she hasn’t used it. Her husband’s family has occupied this piece of land at least as far back as his grandparents’ time. Her husband’s uncle, a professional mahogany cutter, lived there as well.

A 1 x 1 m excavation unit was laid out over the midden, the north half of which was occupied by the tree and roots and so could not be excavated. Large quantities of artifacts were recovered with very little soil matrix, so the unit was only excavated to 20 cm below the highest point of ground surface. This excavation undoubtedly yielded a representative sample of Young family household refuse, but did not reach the bottom of the feature, preventing us from definitively assessing the earliest Anglo-colonial occupation at the property. The site was capped and backfilled, allowing continued investigation in the future. Although analysis will follow during the 2004 summer lab season, artifacts suggestive of settled domestic life, including lamp chimneys, medicine vials, and a glass table centerpiece, are an immediate indication that the assemblage varies significantly from seasonally occupied historical period sites investigated elsewhere (Finamore 1994).

Runaway Creek Reconnaissance

One of the least accessible areas of the Sibun River drainage is Runaway Creek, a completely unsettled waterway that flows due north, converging with the Sibun approximately 5 km upriver of Cedar Bank village. Managed by an organization known as Birds Without Borders (a joint project of the Zoological Society of Milwaukee and the Foundation for Wildlife Conservation, Inc.), the property is off-limits for hunting, logging or farming. No recorded Maya sites or archival documentation of historical period settlement exists for this area, but no known archaeological reconnaissance had been conducted in and around this tributary. The origin of the name “Runaway Creek” is not known, but with several recorded incidents of slaves running away up the Sibun drainage, it was determined that an investigation was warranted (Bolland 1988:40; Burdon 1934:2: 184; Finamore 2003:73; McAnany 2002:213).

With cooperation and participation of Mario Teul from Birds Without Borders, project surveyor David Buck, Cedar Bank resident Lance Usher, and the author conducted a two-day reconnaissance of the area. The headwaters of Runaway Creek were accessed from the Coastal Road, and the reconnaissance team explored down stream toward the confluence with the Sibun River. A relict logging road was identified, running north-northeast from the savanna toward the creek, situated between karst formations and areas of standing water. Investigations of the surrounding karstic hills resulted in the discovery of numerous small caves, several of which contained minor evidence of Maya occupation, but no historical period artifacts. Several valleys within the karst appeared to possess arable land. The mature forest also included 50-100 year old mahogany trees, indicating that the area had not been logged for many years.

Farther down river it became difficult to follow the relict logging road along the eastern bank of Runaway Creek due to thick undergrowth and trees. No hunting trails or clearances were encountered, slowing progress considerably and inhibiting a visual survey of the topography. The survey extended
northward and concluded at the peak of a steep karst tower with a wide cave mouth that had been first sighted high above the forest canopy from a citrus grove off the Coastal Highway, approximately 5 km to the south. Though enormous in size, the cave sloped downward to the mouth, and there was no evidence of occupational debris within. If this drainage is so named because it was a thoroughfare for those escaping enslavement, those on the run most likely kept heading from the headwaters of the creek south across the Bocotora Pine Ridge into the next range of hills.

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