



Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

“Better than we”: landscapes and materialities of race, class, and gender in pre-emancipation colonial Saba, Dutch Caribbean
Espersen, R.

Citation

Espersen, R. (2017, February 9). *“Better than we”: landscapes and materialities of race, class, and gender in pre-emancipation colonial Saba, Dutch Caribbean*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/45747>

Version: Not Applicable (or Unknown)

License: [Licence agreement concerning inclusion of doctoral thesis in the Institutional Repository of the University of Leiden](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/45747>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Cover Page



Universiteit Leiden



The handle <http://hdl.handle.net/1887/45747> holds various files of this Leiden University dissertation

Author: Espersen, R.

Title: "Better than we": landscapes and materialities of race, class, and gender in pre-emancipation colonial Saba, Dutch Caribbean

Issue Date: 2017-02-09

Acknowledgements

It's been a long road. Fortunately, I've had help from people, places, and music to get me going, point me on the right path, and to encourage me forward. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the Faculty of Archaeology at Leiden University and to the Marie Curie program through the European Union. The Marie Curie 7th Framework EUROTAST research group and the Faculty of Archaeology at Leiden University has provided me with unparalleled opportunities for archaeological research and professional development. Thanks goes out to the Island Government of Saba for their vested interests in preserving and promoting Saba's cultural heritage, and for their continuous support for my research and for funding the Saba Archaeological Center.

My first introduction to Caribbean archaeology came through the St. Eustatius Center for Archaeological research, under Grant Gilmore and Gay Soetekouw in 2007. I spent one month on the island before heading to the Chontalpa in southern Oaxaca to assist Danny Zborover with his PhD research, and then proceeded to meet with my future supervisor for my Masters degree at Leiden, Prof. Dr. Maarten Jansen. I wasn't aware, though, that he was on his second year of a two-year sabbatical, so when I arrived to Leiden I ended up searching for new direction. Prof. Dr. Corinne Hofman suggested that I pursue research concerning the village of Mary's Point on Saba, as to date no ground had been broken expressly for research into that island's period. Nine years later, I have no regrets and I thank her for that first opportunity. Corinne has taken a vested interest in my research and dealings with Saba, and both her and Prof. Dr. Menno Hoogland have been a consistent fount of support. I met Jay Havisser shortly after my first round of fieldwork for my Masters, and since then we have embarked on numerous stints of fieldwork and adventures around the world. Jay has a passion for people and social welfare matched by few, and his guidance in doing locally relevant and publicly engaging archaeology has been central to this endeavour and for SABARC.

The other EUROTAST fellows, being Erna Johannesdottir, Jessica Hendy, Judy Watson, Carlos da Silva Jr., Tanja Heinz, Cesar Fortes Lima, Marcela Sandoval Velasco, Hákon Jónsson, Petr Triska, Anuradha Jagadeesan, Sarah Abel, and Winston Phulgence, and the coordinators Temi Odumosu, and Colleen Morgan have become good friends with whom that I have shared many fond memories. Without the funding and flexibility provided with this program and institution, this research would not have been possible. A special thanks goes out as well to Tom Gilbert and Hannes Schroeder for all their efforts in making EUROTAST a reality. My gratitude and thanks to Jason Laffoon and Gareth Davies of the Geology and Geochemistry Cluster at the Vrij Universiteit Amsterdam, who conducted isotope analyses on teeth samples collected from excavations on Saba. Thanks also extend to Hayley Mickleburgh, who conducted bioarchaeological analyses on the teeth as well. Together this data proved instrumental in interpreting Saban ideology relative enslaved Africans. Thank you to Till Sonneman, who had the patience to see me through my teething months of learning how to produce

maps in QGIS. Thanks also to Philippa Jorissen, who studied the faunal remains from Middle Island, Palmetto Point, and Behind-the-Ridge for her Bachelor's thesis, which provided important datasets to reference for this research.

Great thanks go out to my parents, sister, and grandparents for their love, support, and guidance. I should also take this chance to particularly thank my dad (Steen Espersen) and grandfather (Fritz Kiewning) for teaching me how to fish, not only for a given day's catch, but for the patience and perseverance it provides you for a lifetime. I think I can safely say that if it were not for Aaron Dove I would not be defending a PhD thesis. Aaron consistently challenged me to be my best throughout my childhood, whether in sports or scholastics, and encouraged me to always seek the next horizon. Working as a forest firefighter for eleven years with the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources not only helped to fund my education, but also taught me how to work and thrive under pressure. Judith Hamilton was an intellectual and moral compass during my teenage years, and she instilled a fine balance of appreciating your achievements at the moment while always striving for improvement. I will always have fond memories of the late David Humiston Kelly when I had the opportunity to take a one-on-one course with him on reading and interpreting the Mixtec codices. On Thursdays after navigating a walking trail through the reams of notes and stacks of books on the floor to the beachhead tenuously held by his office chair, I would discuss the week's codices and reading assignments for about three hours, then Dave would assign me a codex and several books for the next week. Despite half of them being written in Spanish (which was rudimentary), his only reply, unapologetically, was that "well... you've got to learn".

Special thanks goes out to Chanita Toelsie and Menno Hoogland for their help in translating the English summary to Dutch on very short notice. Particular gratitude goes out to the 2013 archaeological fieldwork crew: Charlotte de Hoogd, Nienke Pedormo, Elizabeth Webster, Patricia Korzeniewski, Mike de Booi, Philippa Jorissen, Fred van Keulen, Marolijn van der Storm, Carlo Manuels, Tom de Rijk, James van der Weiden, Vivian van Heekeren, Hylke Tromp, and Andy Warners. This project was not without long, faceless days of artifact washing and cataloging, which obliges me to thank Ween and The Pixies for seeing me through. Writing was made possible in part by Conor Oberst and the Mystic Valley Band, Alice in Chains, Mad Season, Soundgarden, Pearl Jam, Dwight Yoakam, Cat Stevens, and Radiohead. Barbara Schaeffer, Wolfgang Tooten, and Eddie Hassell on Saba provided me with countless Friday nights out on Saba. Will Johnson is a walking encyclopedia of Saban lore and he is often the first to be consulted when I have a question regarding particulars of Saba's history. Lastly, I'd like to thank the people of Saba, to whom this work is dedicated.

-Ryan Espersen, Crispeen, Saba, 2017