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

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Chapter 3: Theory and Methodology

This chapter outlines the theoretical and methodological structure that informed the collection and interpretation of the database used in this research. It begins with a discussion of ideology in structuring power relations between people, following to the process of abstraction as a necessity to understand the social and physical environments which we inhabit. It then proceeds to class, race, and gender as entry points for dialectical inquiry into the creation and maintenance of ideology (Eagleton 1996; Wurst 2006; McGuire 2008), and continues with a discussion regarding how these abstracts can be manifested in the social and material record. It then follows with an outline of the methodologies employed in archaeological fieldwork, together with document histories and the span of documents consulted for this research.

Ideology

Studying enslaved Africans in the European colonial world necessitates an understanding of the power relationships which were encompassed by the institution of slavery. This is well encapsulated by the concept of ideology. At a basic level, Heather Burke (2006:128) summarizes ideology as “an idea or ideas rooted in power.” This is derived from Goran Therborn’s concept of ideology, which is “central to the reproduction of social order, and does not function as an isolated body of thought, but as an ongoing social process that continually changes in response to its engagement with the world and patterning of relationships between social groups. (Therborn 1980:77-78; Burke 2006:132). Louis Althusser (1994) maintains that ideology operates at an unconscious level in a given society, rooted in both its material culture and social institutions, and integral to a person’s everyday lived experience (Burke 2006:129). This is a departure from the traditional Marxist dichotomy of true and false consciousness in ideology, wielded by those in power to conceal inequality and social contradictions. Rather, ideology is seen as “common sense” (Burke 2006:137), and thus taken for granted as the “way things are”.

This is similar to Pierre Bourdieu’s (1977) concept of *habitus*, which is not easily and succinctly defined, but is well summarized by Charles Orser (1999:59): “... we may think of (habitus) as a feature of human society that incorporates the rules, perceptions, expectations, ideas, and attitudes that are learned during the process of socialization. Because it is internalized, the habitus sets the parameters of social action within the social hierarchy for each class fraction. It sets limits within the social structure but at the same time generates perceptions and practices and allows for the creation of aspirations. These attitudinal features determine what is considered reasonable and possible and, conversely, what is unreasonable and out of the realm of possibility.” Understanding and dissecting

ideology is facilitated by locating common, pervasive vectors of ideology relative to a particular society. These elements are defined through the process of abstraction, the simple recognition that all thinking about reality begins by breaking it down into manageable parts (Ollman 1993:24; Wurst 1999:9). Terry Eagleton (1996) identified the abstracts of class, race, and gender as the “great triplet” for maintaining inequality. The interrelatedness of class and race was recognized during the Jim Crow era U.S.A. by W. E. B. Du Bois (1903), who concluded that they could not be understood in isolation as a means to understand the colour-line during this time in the U.S.A. These ideological vectors are well suited to understanding powered relations in Europe’s colonies during the period of the transatlantic slave trade.

Because the abstracts of race, class, and gender are studied as facets of ideology, they are intimately related, and thus cannot be responsibly understood in isolation. For example, the suffixed title “Esquire” was used throughout the late eighteenth to mid nineteenth century on Saba in the documentary record to clearly denote upper class. It is unknown how the title was assumed or conferred, but no examples are known among women or African descent Sabans, as it was the exclusive domain of white men. It is by studying the dialectic of the title to race and class that the title is understood entrench white males into positions of power through habitus.

The dialectic

Generally defined, “dialectics is a way of thinking and a set of related categories that captures, neither misses nor distorts, the real changes and interaction that go on in the world or any part of it” (Ollman & Smith 2008:4). Dialectics “study the relations between two or more elements, in the sense that it is the relationship between the elements that define them, and they cannot otherwise exist outside of this relationship.” (Wurst 2006:195; Harvey 1996, 2000; McGuire 1992:94; Ollman 1993, 2003; Sayer 1987). A common explanation of the dialectic involves the teacher and the student. It is precisely the relationship between these two elements that defines their existence as such. The teacher requires a student to realize the position as a teacher, and similarly, being a student necessitates the presence of a teacher. They cannot exist in isolation, for if they did, they would cease to be teacher and student and become different entities altogether.

Since dialectics studies the relationships between elements that result in their creation, applying this approach towards inquiries into past societies necessitates an awareness of the whole of spatial, temporal, and social elements of both of the society of study, and the society which is doing the studying. This has been referred to in terms of a past-present dialectic in Marxist traditions, and the “dialogue between past and present” common to the discipline of history (Carr 1987:29-30; Tosh 2010:168, 206-207). Humans cannot exist outside of society, and throughout their life they acquire a

particular set of lived experiences derived from the process of socialization, which will influence, enable, or restrict their capacity to act as individual agents in any given context. Agency, therefore, cannot be wholly divorced from the social environment in which it was fostered and interacts. “The postprocessual agenda”, argue McGuire and Wurst, “atomizes individuals and leads to the dangerous ground of identity politics. This path makes it virtually impossible to conceptualize any common ground or united struggle, either in the past or in the present” (McGuire & Wurst 2002:2). In a similar vein, Randall McGuire further states that “agency presupposes a web of social relationships and meanings, yet these social relations and meaning are themselves products of conscious human action,” therefore, “even the act of being a hermit is social” (McGuire 2008:43). Emphasizing group activity “is not, therefore, a denial of human individuality but simply a recognition that what the individual does in common with others usually has far greater impact, historically, than anything else he or she does” (Tosh 2010:10). Therefore, despite the capacity for human agency, archaeological assemblages produced by small groups or even individuals will bear certain hallmarks of the cultural ideologies within which their lives were rooted. Indeed, “the most powerful interpretations of agency,” states Paul Mullins, “are clearly contextualized in relationship to dominant practices, ideology, and power” (Mullins 2008:160).

A dialectical approach requires an awareness of the multiple social and material webs in which social agents participate. This is not to say that a complete understanding is necessary of all aspects of a given society, but rather the dialectic fosters an accountability to multiple lines of evidence for a given element. It is therefore impossible to study an element isolated from its relation to other social and material contexts. Ollman (2008:9) refers to this as the “Humpty Dumpty problem”: “After the fall, it was not only extremely hard to put the pieces of poor Humpty together again, but even to see where they fit. This is what happens whenever the pieces of our everyday experience are taken as existing separate from their spatial and historical contexts, whenever the part is given an ontological status independent of the whole.” The elements comprising dialectical study with a society, however, do not always ‘fit’ neatly together. The relationship between owner and enslaved, for example, is ambivalent at best, and violent, dehumanizing, and oppressive at as it approaches the worst. This relationship is also not static, as members of these respective elements will enter into a variety of different social contexts throughout their lifetime where these matter more, less, or are otherwise insignificant. In mid nineteenth century Saba, for example, a person can be a free mulatto woman from Middle Island, a mother of three, Catholic, and a small landowner living through subsistence agriculture who sells a small surplus in The Bottom on Sundays, but she is not simply the sum of these identities (McGuire & Wurst 2002). “At work, church, leisure or among friends, this individual will become reconstituted as a different social agent depending on the context, since there is no pure

context where we are dealing with only one set of relations” (McGuire & Wurst 2002:89). Secondly, the issue of accountability to the whole is compounded when applying this approach towards archaeology. “Even if all the material items in a culture are related to its non-material aspects, the archaeological remains may be so limited, altered, or destroyed that a complete description of the past cannot be reconstructed from them... because the complete past is simply not reflected in the material that remains” (Watson, LeBlanc, and Redman 1971:21, in Handler & Lange 2006). The limitations of the material record can be accounted for both by focusing research upon multiple related, contemporaneous sites, and by employing a multidisciplinary approach that goes beyond materiality alone as a means of understanding the past. Searching for social and material vectors for class, race, and gender rooted in local culture harkens to Jaime C. Brandon’s (2009:12) call for a “holistic cultural analysis... to analyzing competing categorical registers (i.e., class and race). If applied in a non-reifying manner, a cultural analysis may reveal the complex linkages between different, but often simultaneously manifested, identities”. This approach reinforces the importance of locally-situated ideologies that are implicated in material things, and particularly, does not seek to prop up one facet of ideology over another in terms of overall importance or utility. Indeed, since there is no social and material context in which people engage in a pure, singular set of relations, the relevance of particular facets of ideology shift according to the given cultural context. Therefore, the process of selecting and excavating archaeological sites relevant to this research proceeded by identifying individual sites that, when compared in context with other excavated contemporaneous sites on Saba, material differences relative to class, race, and gender can be discerned due to their predominance among the variety of social relations present among them.

Class

Multiple definitions of class have been employed by archaeologists as a means of understanding the archaeological record. Raymond Williams (1983:60-69; in Wurst 1999:7) outlined three commonly used definitions of class in archaeology:

- 1) Objective group: class as a discrete social or economic category
- 2) Rank: Class as relative social position by birth or mobility;
- 3) Formation: Class based upon perceived economic relationship; social, political, and cultural organization.

Class is best viewed in relational terms rather than a static social position. An essentialized understanding of class, such as traditional Marxist elements of working class and the bourgeoisie, are fixed and were defined relative to nineteenth and twentieth century Euro-American capitalist society, and thus will have little to no explanatory capacity when applied outside of this context. Class

structures are reproduced through time, which is an essential characteristic that distinguishes class from strata (McGuire 2008; Foster 2006) or status (Wurst 1999:7-8; Shepard 1987; Spencer-Wood and Heberling (1987:59). Though this characteristic of class is similar to “rank” as outlined by Williams, a relational concept of class views this as an aspect within a myriad of different elements which comprise class within a culture. Given the variety of social and material components that compose class during this period on Saba, it becomes clear that another term plucked from its capitalist context, “socio-economic status”, is inapplicable and misleading as it reifies the notion that “social status and economic status are somehow equivalent” (Cook et al. 1996:51). Socioeconomic status “conflates wealth as an overarching component of “status” without accounting for the culturally and temporally specific components of what together compose class among the people being studied, while disregarding race and gender” (Wurst 2006:4; Chicone 2011a). A formational view of class sees it as a historical relationship rather than a thing, a point widely promoted by the sociologist Edward Thompson (1963). “Class,” he states, “is a social and cultural formation (often finding institutional expression) which cannot be defined abstractly or in isolation, but only in terms of relationship with other classes; and ultimately the definition can only be made in the medium of time... class itself is not a thing, it is a happening” (Thompson 1965:357).

Thompson’s definition of class is effectively dialectical as it requires the existence of other classes in a given moment of time to realize itself. Indeed, class as a “happening” describes class as an ongoing social process. The author agrees with Thompson in that a class requires another class to realize itself. By extension this necessitates the existence of class consciousness; but how this manifests will vary at an individual or group level depending on the social context. Therefore, Thompson’s definition is somewhat homogenizing as it is not spatially reflexive. The medium of place, in addition to time as mentioned by Thompson, is required as it accounts for the differences in social contexts where one’s class, or components of class, (whether class consciousness exists or not) will matter more or less than others. This research employs LouAnn Wurst’s (2006:194) definition of class, wherein class is reproduced through time, and composes “the surface appearance of a complex web of underlying social relations... a label designating where an individual stands in relative social standing”, which accounts for the reflexivity of both time and social context. However, unlike race and gender, class is an abstract of ideology which is not immutably imposed upon individuals from birth. It is the immutability of race and gender that separates them from the relative malleability of class. As a result, class can be changed over time, but always within the limitations imposed by a given individual’s race and gender, and further enabled or constricted due to other class vectors of the individual and his or her community. Due to the reflexive nature of class, this research does not strive to create a “final list” of classes, but rather to identify certain vectors of class, including race and

gender, that will tend to predominate over others relative to given contexts in the archaeological and documentary records. In this way, the dialectic between particular vectors and materiality can be discerned.

Returning to the notion of class consciousness, nowhere in Saba's indigenous documentary record, or in the many conversations that the author has had with Sabans, few people, families, or groups have been referred outright in explicit terms of class. None were referred to as "low class" or "upper class", or a similar concoction. Outside of racialized or gendered references, a general notion of class composing multiple spatial and social components is "thinking someone or a family is better", usually in reference to the person or group making the statement. These "degrees of betterness" will be referenced through the terms "upper class" and "lower class" throughout this research.

The perspectives of class that are rooted in local and regional lived experiences are integral towards understanding social relations. Indeed, scale and locality (Hauser 2008; Wurst 1999) are defining elements of ideology. As Hauser (2008:5) states, "...locality is equally abstracted as a generalization where identities such as creole are at the same time ubiquitous categories of human classification but simultaneously particular to the historic context in which it is used... vantage point is also extremely useful in defining locality in that people experienced different scales of locality—different freedoms of movement, social relationships and economic ties depending on their position within colonial society." This is important to understanding how ideological abstractions such as class, race, and gender were mediated between groups on Saba, how Sabans were perceived regionally and saw themselves on this scale, and how scale and locality changed through time relative to particular ideological vectors. This has implications towards racialization on Saba, changes in Saban class structures, and the development of poverty. Saban poverty in particular was subject to competing perceptions dependent upon scale and locality.

Poverty

Poverty is an experience which arises from structural inequality and a lack of opportunity (Matthews 2011). Defining poverty can be done objectively, such as in absolute measurements of a "poverty line" based upon a household's annual income. "Poverty-lines" and other absolute measurements of poverty will bifurcate people in similar social and material circumstances between the "deserving poor" and the "undeserving poor" based upon criteria designated by powered groups such as governments, upper class individuals and groups, and charitable organizations. The "deserving poor" may qualify for organized altruism such as social or material assistance, whereas those "undeserving poor" do not qualify for assistance, often because their poverty is perceived to be the result of a personal failing (Chicone 2011a; Symonds 2011).

It is important to define *Saban* poverty relative to this research, including those who determined who is poor, and those groups who had vested ideological interests in maintaining the status quo which fostered poverty on Saba through structural inequality. The creation and reification of poverty is a common result of the dialectic between race and class (Orser 2011, 2007, 2004; Chicone 2011a, 2011b; Symonds 2011; Matthews 2011; Spencer-Wood and Matthews 2011). This is well articulated in a quote from heavyweight boxer Larry Holmes: “It’s hard being black. You ever been black? I was black one – when I was poor” (Oates 1987:62, in Orser 2011; in Chicone 2011a). Poverty therefore is best understood relative to its intersectionality between major vectors of ideology such as class, race, and gender. Christopher Matthews (2011:44-45) points out that “the problem is the reification of ‘the poor’ as a culture, class, or similarly definable group that may be conceptualized, separated, and *contained*”. The “culture of poverty” thesis considers poverty the result of a certain behavioural patterns through which it was fostered and maintained. Indeed, considering poverty as a culture unto itself, as advocated by Oscar Lewis (1965), can easily reify poverty according to the class biases of the (most often middle class) observer, and can foster assumptions about social behaviours that promote and entrench individual responsibility for poverty despite systematic inequality that is inseparably entrenched within the society it operates (Green 2006; Matthews 2011). In post-emancipation Barbados, for example, the economic conditions of poverty were similar between “poor whites” (redlegs) and African descent Barbadians, but their lived experience of poverty was tempered by their race and landscape (Reilly 2016). Barbadians considered the poverty of the redlegs to be a result of idleness, while presumably being African-descent was a contributing factor to poverty among Afro-Barbadians. While this research must proceed through abstraction, and thus “poverty” must be referred to as a concept, it does not have to be reified as a “thing” if it is viewed as a social process that changes through time.

Suzanne Spencer-Wood and Matthews (2011:2) understand poverty in relational terms, wherein poverty is created structurally through “social classes, races, ethnic groups, genders, and other social groups, often through their interactions in institutions”. Sarah Chicone (2011a) adds temporal dimension to this approach by considering poverty as a process and tracing its development through time. Understanding poverty as a process examines “how poverty has embodied a number of shifting positions across space and time, and how it takes on different manifestations depending on one’s social and economic position” (Chicone 2001b:122). Poverty, Chicone (2011a:57) states, “not reducible to a single variable; instead, its production is located in part with the social relations that constitute it... the revealing inquiry rests in the way competing interest groups used materiality together with disparate ideological constructions of poverty in conflicting ways”. Poverty, in other words, cannot simply be reduced to a self-reflective pile of objects; when poverty is viewed as a

process, “changes in materiality alone did not fundamentally alter the reality of its lived experience” (Chicone 2011a:78).

This has implications towards the applicability of approaches that depend on artifact patterns or behavioural predictions rooted in poverty. Inferring poverty through cuts of meat present at a site (Landon 1996) may be relevant in a Saban plantation context, but may bear little inferential use outside of these spaces on Saba as recipes such as pig tail soup, “sausage”, and pig knuckles are enjoyed across the island in the present with little regard for race and class. Re-using or re-purposing artifacts has been linked to material deprivation (Busch 1987) with some taking a further step to associate it with poverty (Reilly 2016). This is a behaviour towards the potential multiple utilities of material objects which can understandably arise due to material deprivation. However, artifact re-use or multi-use cannot be directly attributed to poverty or other ideological constructs present within Saba’s colonial history without first understanding the social and material contexts present on the island throughout its pre-emancipation colonial period. The presence of valuable wares such as Chinese porcelain within an otherwise “poor” assemblage, for example, does not negate the lived experience of poverty (Chicone 2011b). Similarly, it is not necessarily an attempt by the household to demonstrate respectability despite one’s impoverishment, since the actual reason for acquiring the item will remain unknown to the archaeologist unless a bill of sale or similar evidence can be found. As Chicone (2011a) points out, these object-centered approaches can obfuscate real social and material hardships experienced by people, especially when experiences of poverty become seen as cross-culturally homogenous rather than situated in particular cultural, regional, and temporal contexts. Scale is integral to this approach, as since the eighteenth century, Saba was often considered in the region to be an island populated by “poor people”, thereby homogenizing the island as poor despite the existence of local class structures. This demonstrates a common dialectic which exists between poverty and space, seen elsewhere through the designation of certain urban areas as slums (Mayne & Murray 2001; Yamin 2001), and particular rural areas as poor (Horning 1999; Barnes 2011). The existence of poor spaces on Saba during this time compounds the importance of scale and locality towards positioning poverty within Saban and regional social relations.

Considering poverty as a process on the part of this research proceeds with the acknowledgement that poverty within Saban society was itself not viewed as process by the general populace and colonial officials, but as a definable subset of people within society with definable traits that characterized their deserving or undeserving poverty. This involves a dimension of power, wherein those among the low class and those considered poor lost control of the social narrative surrounding the designation and reification of poverty (Matthews 2011). The ability to maintain control of poverty’s narrative, in this case relative to Saba, shifts relative to given spatial and social

contexts, as this research will demonstrate. Perspective, both of those classes who designated certain areas as poor, together with those of the archaeologist, is critical when interpreting poverty and its associated materiality. The danger arises when archaeologists, who largely hail from middle-class backgrounds, unconsciously project their own middle-class ideologies upon the poor and the processes which produce and maintain poverty (McGuire 2008; Symonds 2011; Wacquant 2002). Loïc Wacquant (2002:1521, original emphasis) identified this process among sociologists who produced three works upon the urban poor of the late twentieth century U.S.A:

The failure to construct a properly sociological problematic independent of the common sense of agents... of mainstream poverty scholarship... or of journalists and policy makers... leaves an embarrassing residue that cannot but resuscitate the original stereotypes- for there are plenty of homeless men who do not engage in “honest” street peddling, ghetto residents committed to the “street code,” and youths who seek subsistence and success in the illicit economy rather than submit to the ignominy of substandard wage labor. This residue mandates the crafting of *bifurcated ethnographies of sameness*, in which the poor are first cleaved into two subgroups, the good and the bad, before the good ones are revealed to be just like you and me: homeless sidewalk vendors, regular folks, and low-wage workers in the ghetto have the same moral thirst for “self-worth,” the same attachment to “decency,” and the same “work ethic” as the middle-class reader; only their “opportunities differ”.

In this sense, “it is worth stating that for some people, things can never get better” (Symonds 2011:564). The idea that individuals can “pull themselves up by their bootstraps” shifts responsibility for poverty upon the poor themselves, and ignores the processes which continually produce and maintain poverty. These processes should be seen as a result of locally-situated race, class, gendered, and spatial relations within a dialectic with larger cultural, political, economic, and spatial contexts.

Race

Unlike class, race and gender are ideological abstracts that are externally imposed upon individuals and cannot be transcended without a radical change within a culture’s ideology itself. Charles Orser (2003, 2007) has provided an excellent theoretical framework for investigating the archaeology of race, which has been adopted for this research. Race is herein defined as “a discrete group of people who share actual or imputed physical differences” (Cox 1970:320, in Orser 2007). Assigning people to particular races “creates social grouping where they may not have otherwise existed and seeks to naturalize distinction as an objective feature of human existence” (Orser 2007:5). The term “race” is intentionally employed rather than “ethnicity”, since race is imposed, immutable, and inextricably grounded in powered ideological relations, whereas the latter is considered more socially fluid and self-conceptualizing; consequently, the utility of ethnicity flounders as a functional abstract when confronted with the powered relations inherent within racism (Orser 2003, 2007; Brandon 2009). Indeed, Sabans can maintain conversations among each other regarding nationality,

village of residence, and skin colour, which could be considered components of ethnicity, but once these are referred to in terms of race, a strong dimension of power is introduced, which tangibly alters the tone and content of the discussion. The process of racialization begins by constructing categories for individuals based upon these real or perceived qualities, based largely around “elite society’s perception of biology and its categorization of some individuals as biologically inferior” (Orser 2004:43). Important distinctions exist, however, between perceptions of the “colour line” of North America versus that of other cultural-geographic areas, such as the Caribbean (Armstrong 2008). It is therefore critical that studies of the African diaspora and diachronic racialization processes are grounded in local realities rather than a singular, Pan-American notion of racism (Armstrong 2008; Brandon 2008).

Because of the hierarchical nature of race and the powered social relations that result, this consequently results in an unequal distribution of wealth should manifest itself in the archaeological record (Orser 2007; Mullins 1999a). Therefore, Orser (2007) states, by structuring the process of racialization, the material dimensions of racialization can become visible in the archaeological record. Orser’s structured approach towards the study of race in the archaeological record involves studying the process of racialization through time, understanding the social organization of a given society, applying the socio-spatial dialectic to reveal and understand the dynamics of race and class upon the landscape, the effect of habitus on entrenching race and racialization, field, and capital (Orser 2007:51-52).

Race, however, exists in a dialectic with class which problematizes direct ascriptions of race to the archaeological record. For example, slavery, as a legal and thereby class-oriented institution in the Caribbean, cannot be understood without acknowledging Europeans’ racialized preference for Africans to fulfil this role. Orser remarks that “where racialization exists alongside capitalist economics – and I would argue that this has been the case throughout the entire modern era- archaeologists may find it extremely difficult to separate the material assemblages of the various ‘races’... and it may very well be the case that the archaeological analysis of class may have greater analytical merit than the archaeological investigation of race. At present, historical archaeologists have yet to resolve this important issue” (Orser 2007:69). Saba’s pre-emancipation colonial social environment, being a small island with few inhabitants and little immigration throughout this time, inherently minimizes the social variables that compound the difficulties in disentangling race from class in the archaeological record that are otherwise present in larger islands or mainland archaeology, thereby creating an ideal setting to confront this challenge.

Gender

Differential access to power in a given culture can also manifest according to one's gender. The biology of female and male is referred to as sex, while gender encapsulates "the cultural construction of men's and women's roles and identities" (Voss 2006:107). Margaret Conkey and Janet Spector (1984) and Louise Sørensen (1988) pioneered the application of feminist critique to archaeology, helping to expose the androcentrism of the discipline, and the uncritical application of westernized notions of gender to past societies, such as the division of labour. The application of feminist theory and gender studies to Americanist historical archaeology grew in the 1990's with studies focusing on how the archaeological and documentary records could be employed together to garner insights into gender in material objects (Beaudry et al. 1991; Little 1994; Spencer-Wood 1991, Yench 1991).

The connection of gender to power, race, and class (Nelson 2004; Shaw 2001; Dirks, Eley, & Ortner 1994; Wylie 1992; Scott 1994; Voss 2006) is better understood in a dialectic to account for the reflexivity of multiple social contexts which differentially inform gendered relations. This is well encapsulated by the experiences of anthropologist Carolyn Martin Shaw: "From outside my community, my body was racialized in pernicious ways. Inside the black community, it was again the body that defined me – this time in terms of gender and sexuality." (Shaw 2001:103). The approach to this work does not automatically assume that common vectors of powered gendered relations such as task differentiation, the public/private dichotomy, and other gendered roles existed throughout the entirety of Saba's colonial history (Conkey and Spector 1984; Poovy 1988; Voss 2006). Such a "top-down" approach obscures the potential gendered differences that may have existed between class and race. This approach extends to interpreting material culture such as "artifact patterning" (South 1977) with regards to gender, such as the "Augustine Pattern" from St. Augustine, Florida (Deagan 2003). This can result in form of ideological colonialism relative to the *Saban* archaeological record, as the social relations that resulted in this patterning did not necessarily exist on the island. This approach was cautioned by Wurst (2006:196) relative to class, whereby one defines an ideological abstraction, in this case certain vectors of powered gendered relations, "without examining the social relations present, and thereby reifies those categories". Sayer (1987; in Wurst 2006:196) regards this as "the violence of abstraction". Rather, analyses into these roles and the powered gender relations between Sabans that result will begin with those evinced in Saba's documentary and archaeological record, along with oral history accounts and ethnographic research conducted by the author. These will be subsequently informed by gender norms of the region.

This research will also proceed by understand gender, along with race, as immutable elements of ideology that are imposed upon the individual by others from birth. It is this key element that

separates class from race and gender. While one's class can change over time or according to the given social context, race and gender can never be transcended by the individual except through a radical shift in the society's ideology.

Capitalism as a heuristic device for colonial Saba

The organization and division of labour within seventeenth and eighteenth century colonial plantations, especially sugar plantations, have been considered as prototypes for those that developed in nineteenth and twentieth century capitalism (Williams 1994; Leone & Potter 1999, 2015). In pre-emancipation colonial Saba these labour structures were limited to plantations, and again applied mainly to enslaved Africans as they constituted the majority in these contexts. Outside of the plantations, which occupied significant proportions of the best arable land on the island, Sabans were largely subsistence agriculturalists, with a minority that were engaged as sailors aboard ships in the regional trade, while an even smaller minority served as ship captains or owned shares in regional trade vessels. These plantations were owned mostly by merchants and government officials from St. Eustatius, which by the second half of the eighteenth century was enjoying its "Golden Rock" era of free trade and became one of the largest trading centers in the world by that time. Indeed, even Adam Smith (1981:571) noted the Statia's economic successes due to unrestricted trade, and it has been argued that the trade practices, and in particular the capital derived from trade in St. Eustatius was an important contributor to the Industrial Revolution in Europe (Gilmore 2012).

Capitalism is not easily succinctly defined. Mark Leone & Parker Potter (1999:4) define capitalism as such:

Capitalism is a set of social relations, including those that exist among people in a workforce who own neither land nor any other form of wealth by which to sustain themselves. People in a workforce sell their labor to earn a living. Resources, such as land, money, raw materials, and property of all kinds, are owned privately. Public lands and public wealth on which anyone can depend is limited; little is owned in common. Capitalist society is characterized by owners, governments, and their agents continuously introducing technical changes that alter the structure of labor, and pushing these changes into areas, cultures, and classes where they did not exist before, or where they become intensified. Owners and their agents expand markets in a deliberate search for customers, as well as for other peoples' resources, including labor, so as to bring them into the production process. In this system, production produces money, which is distributed according to a hierarchy of control. Wages are what workers receive for their labor – the rest is profit. Profit exists when the wealth produced through selling the worker's effort is controlled by the owner of the product, the capitalist.

The social relations which characterize capitalism were not active on Saba outside of plantations prior to emancipation, as the island was self-sufficient through fishing and subsistence agriculture, and residents either owned or had access to land through which they could sustain themselves. This continued into the early decades of the twentieth century, wherein there was so

much cropland that “you couldn’t find a place to tie a goat” (Keur & Keur 1960:76). If land was not owned, cultivation by others was possible through arrangements with the owner; commonly this involved one third of the crop due to the owner, with the other two thirds to the agriculturalist (Johnson 2014). By the 1950’s, about 40% of farmers continued to be engaged in this system (Keur & Keur 1960:75). In addition, still up to this time, a system of reciprocal help was employed during the planting and harvesting seasons was practiced, known as “change work” (Keur & Keur 1960:75). By understanding the process and spread of pre-capitalism in the northern Lesser Antilles, especially with respect to Statia in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, regional context is provided for Saba’s role in this area and early capitalism’s influence upon the social and material vectors of race, class, and gender on Saba during this time.

The operation and socio-spatial organization sugar plantations operating on Saba, especially those owned in absentia by merchants and government officials in St. Eustatius, bear much more in common with capitalist organization than the social relations which existed on Saba outside of these contexts. This early capitalism was inscribed onto Saba’s landscape through the strategic placement of plantation structures which existed in a dialectic pertaining to their function and location on the landscape, as a means to maximize profit and control of labour (Delle 1998, 1999, 2014; Armstrong & Kelly 2000).

The socio-spatial dialectic

Tying ideology, materiality to landscapes begins by understanding the cultural and powered elements that contributed to the organization of structures and social divisions within. Upon sugar plantations in the colonial Caribbean, the socio-spatial dialectic provides a means of predicting powered social relations that result from the planned use of space (Orser 2007). This provides a means of predicting the locations of structures such as enslaved African housing. On Saba this is facilitated due to the physical and practical limitations imposed by the geology and topography of plantation sites such as Spring Bay Flat and Flat Point. The distance between plantation structures, such as the Big House and enslaved African housing, can be a surrogate measure for the social relations enacted in that place. Sugar plantations can be understood as powered landscapes, wherein common plantation features such as the owner or manager’s house, the boiling house, mill, cane fields, and enslaved African housing are intentionally positioned as a means to control enslaved labour and maximize profits (Higman 1987; Orser 1988, 2007; Armstrong 1990; Delle 1998, 2014; Armstrong & Kelly 2000). Shifts in the use of space, or the redistribution of activity areas on plantations has been linked to changes in the social and economic environments (Orser and Nekola 1985; Ryczewski & Cherry 2015). Douglas Armstrong and Kenneth Kelly’s spatial analysis of eighteenth and early

nineteenth century sugar plantation across northern Jamaica found that “African villages were located in hilly, rocky, or other areas on the margins of fields unsuitable for cane cultivation, in close proximity both to cane fields and processing works. Planter or managerial housing was positioned between the key economic variables: labor, fields, and works” (Armstrong & Kelly 2000:375). The powered use of space across these colonial-period plantations is prominently rooted in a dialectic with race and class. Analyses of powered landscapes in historical archaeology are not, however, unique to plantations, and similar approaches have been applied towards the study of real and imagined class and racial characterizations of urban slums (Orser 2011; Giles & Jones 2011; Chicone 2011a; Murray and Mayne 2001; Yamin 1998) and rural communities (Horning 1999).

Interpretation, sources, and postcolonialism

This research has been conducted to a great extent with the intent to understand elements of Saba’s pre-emancipation colonial ideology in terms of a dialectic between Sabans and both local and regional power structures. Perhaps the most important element of de-colonizing this research stems from the author’s time living on Saba during the research, working as a teacher at the Saba Comprehensive School, and engaging the community through public archaeology via the Saba Archaeological Center. Up until the present the author has lived on Saba between 2011 to 2016, with some time spent in The Netherlands in 2013 and 2014. The author is in good rapport with governing officials and many residents across the island, and is by now known as the “island archaeologist”.

Archaeological sites were selected for research according to their capacities to express particular vectors of race, class, and gender relative to the dominant sets of social relations that these places would have fostered among people. A significant proportion of this research stems from the documentary record. Henri Foucault (2010:57-58) argues that all discourses are rooted in power and knowledge, which by consequence fosters different ways for groups and individuals to understand the world around them. By applying this approach coupled with critical theory to reading the documentary record, negotiations between ideology and powered interests can become apparent. Documents originating from Saban pens were sought as much as possible in order to glean power structures as they were represented locally, either explicitly or implicitly. In this way, colonial assumptions relative to expected results could be mitigated. Court records from nineteenth century Saba are particularly valuable in his regard, as they describe cases between individuals across the whole spectrum of Saban society, and other elements of Saban daily life that otherwise were not commonly recorded. Colonial sources, such as documents from governing officials in St. Maarten, St. Eustatius, and Curaçao, provided insight into external perceptions of Saba. This provided a means to understand the tensions which existed between Sabans, Saba’s landscape, and colonial interests, and

laid the foundations for understanding the “incomplete hegemony” of governing officials and plantations on Saba throughout the period concerned.

A Theoretical Structure for Discerning the Social and Material Vectors of Class, Race, and Gender on Saba

Studying social organization proceeds through the process of abstraction, where aspects of society are divided into manageable parts of a social and temporal framework, which are then analyzed together to see how they relate to and inform the whole. A dialectical approach studies these components in terms of their relationships to each other, whereby it is the relationship between given components that defines them, and they cannot otherwise exist outside this relationship without becoming a new or different social abstraction. The discreet “structuring structures” which comprise the *habitus* of a given culture foster the potential for powered relations among its members. Those facets of *habitus*, the “ideas rooted in power” which encapsulate ideology, can manifest among multiple, overlapping social abstracts such as class, race, and gender.

As Orser (2004) describes in practice theory relative to race, the process of uncovering the social and material vectors of class, race, and gender on Saba through time begins by understanding the creation and maintenance of social institutions and the socio-spatial dialectic of a given region of study, together with the shared experiences among people considered as members of particular classes, races, and genders. Since documentary or archaeological expressions of ideology is the result of many factors, documents and sites were chosen that were able to best express and isolate particular ideological vectors within its material, social, spatial, and temporal context, that become apparent when compared to others where these vectors are identical, similar, irrelevant, or absent. For example, excavations within house foundations and trash pits at Palmetto Point, a poor white hamlet of several dozen residents between the late eighteenth century to 1934, provides an excellent comparative assemblage to identical spatial contexts in Middle Island, a contemporary hamlet of the same relative size populated by mostly free Sabans of African descent by the last half of the nineteenth century. However, the lived experience of Saban residents, despite their race, class, or gender, may not be directly reflected in material assemblages attributed to them by artifacts suggestive of wealth, as would what Chicone identifies as an object-centered approach, or other material anomalies that may suggest a deviation from socio-material norms, as would be in what she terms a representational approach (Chicone 2011a). Rather, the materiality of class, race, and gender of Saban residents is co-constitutive of their lived experience. Therefore, for ideological facets such as class, race, and gender to be visible in objects, materiality must be understood in terms of how it is implicated in ideological relations between groups on Saba. *Habitus* relative to social inequality, for example, may not be

readily apparent in the materiality between Palmetto Point and Middle Island, but becomes apparent in the court records throughout the nineteenth century from Saba's Delegated Bench of Justice through differential regards for gender titles dependent on race, together with sentencing according to race among free Sabans. The 1863 emancipation compensation documents for slave owners required their signatures, thereby revealing literacy rates among them as some signed their names, while others marked an "X" as they could not sign their own name due to illiteracy; these individuals can subsequently be researched in Saban sales records that extend from 1780 to 1874 to potentially correlate literacy to levels of wealth and material culture among them. In a last example, Governor Thomas Dinzey was considered the richest and most powerful man on Saba during the late eighteenth to early nineteenth century, but to officials in St. Eustatius, he lived on "an island inhabited by poor people", whose estate was valued at just some 10% to that of his contemporary, St. Eustatius Governor Johannes de Graaf (DNAr 1.05.01.02 #629:2/2/1773).

Searching for social and material vectors for class, race, and gender rooted in local realities harkens to Brandon's (2009:12) call for a "holistic cultural analysis... to analyzing competing categorical registers (i.e., class and race). This approach bridges into post-colonial theory, whereby it can help mitigate against unconscious colonial influences within archaeological practice, such as the uncritical application of predictive models to Saban archaeological assemblages, or assumptions relative to race relations. If applied in a non-reifying manner, a cultural analysis may reveal the complex linkages between different, but often simultaneously manifested, identities". By understanding changes in the social organization of Saba throughout its colonial period, the dialectic between ideology and materiality changes as well. Therefore, it will be possible to identify the materiality of race, class, and gender in certain individual artifacts and assemblages on Saba relative to particular periods.

Clearly, there are many avenues for applying dialectical analyses of class, race, and gender throughout the island's pre-emancipation colonial period. Louann Wurst correctly stated that "archaeologists cannot, as mere mortals, study the totality of any social context, but we must recognize that we proceed with abstractions of the internal relations that form a totality" (Wurst 2006:201). Saba, being a small island with scant immigration throughout its colonial period, serves as an excellent example for demonstrating the efficacy and potential of dialectical approaches that stress accountability to totality in historical archaeology.

Closing remarks

The theoretical structure of this research demanded a broad selection of sites differentiated by space and time. The databases and methodologies required to engage this topic were diverse, and

the fieldwork logistics necessitated the participation of many workers, made possible by many archaeologists, including in particular archaeological field school students from Leiden University. The next chapter provides the historical context for the theoretical approach. It introduces the colonial history of Saba, with particular detail to people and events pertinent to the development of local ideology and the maintenance of inequality.