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Stellingen

Better Than We: Landscapes and Materialities of Race, Class, and Gender in pre-Emancipation Colonial Saba, Dutch Caribbean

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1. Tensions between the “incomplete hegemony” of colonial authorities and plantation agriculture with Saban residents resulted in a dialectic between local landscapes, materiality, and ideologies of class, race, and gender. By studying these as temporally-sensitive processes rooted day-to-day interactions during this period, they can become visible in particular aspects of Saba’s material and documentary records.
2. Plantation architecture on Saba did not follow the “Saba style” of domestic architecture, due to foreign ownership largely through St. Eustatius. This is visible especially through the use of roof tiles and dry stone enslaved African domestic structures on eighteenth century plantations.
3. The division of Saba’s colonial landscape into plantation and non-plantation contexts was foundational for Saban poverty, and served as a prime factor in Saba’s participation in regional trade.
4. Thomas Dinzey represented the merger of colonial and plantation interests with those of Saban residents. This is visible especially through his grave marker, which introduced an upper-class style of marker from St. Eustatius to Saba in 1825.
5. Race, class, and gender are facets of ideological relations that cannot be responsibly studied in isolation. Race and gender represent two ideological vectors that are immutable and cannot be transcended by the individual without a radical change in the *habitus* of the society. They require no formal or informal introduction between people to function as an ideological vector between people in a given social context in Saban colonial society. Non-material class vectors, conversely, are not static and can change over time. Therefore, their relevancies require some form of personal familiarity between individuals to take effect, and are best understood depending on the given social context.
6. Material culture studies must account for local processes that were implicated in the use of material things. Saban conceptions of ceramics from the late eighteenth to mid nineteenth centuries, in a pointed example, focused primarily on function, with descriptions of decoration limited only to “Queen’s ware”, “white”, and “Chinese” wares.
7. Defining individuals or groups as poor is difficult, as poverty is dependent upon scale, locality, and powered perspectives. Archaeologies of poverty are better off addressing how poverty was sustained, how it can simultaneously exist and not exist in an assemblage depending on the social and regional context of the observer, and how it was used in powered relations, rather than how it can be *seen* in material things.

8. Low class and slavery are most visible on powered landscapes rather than through material objects alone; indeed, throughout this research, the material objects and diets associated with spaces associated with low class and slavery verged from similar to identical.
9. Poverty is not monolithic, and is a lived experience of inequality rather than a “thing”. Therefore, measures that define poverty, such as poverty lines and charity, can never actually address its root causes.
10. Saba’s proto-capitalist landscape divided it into plantation and non-plantation contexts. The plantation contexts did little to contribute to Saba’s local economy; instead, they were oriented primarily towards resource extraction to enrich merchants and officials in St. Eustatius. Their labour force received no compensation for their work, and Sabans were relegated mostly to second rate lands for subsistence agriculture and habitation due to the limitations imposed by plantation bounds and Saba’s physical landscape. This was a prime contributor to poverty among Sabans, and has strong parallels to present-day capitalist practices of large corporations engaged in resource extraction in impoverished countries.