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Scale Locality and the Caribbean Historical Archaeology

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Abstract Historical archaeologists have become increasingly concerned with regional analysis focusing on the interconnections between different archaeological sites in order to develop a better sense of social relations. This development is in part due to the realization of many years of research and subsequent topical and theoretical syntheses. It also reflects a shifting concern in research towards fluidity of landscape and translocality (Hicks in World Archaeol 37:373–391, 2005; Lightfoot K (2005). University of California, Berkeley; Orser CE Jr (1996) A historical archaeology of the modern world. Plenum, New York; Wilkie LA, Farnsworth P (2005) Sampling many pots: an archaeology of memory and tradition at a Bahamian Plantation. University Press of Florida, Gainesville). The Caribbean as a world area highlights the need for broader regional analyses where tensions between local specificities and global/translocal processes are mediated. These tensions have been explored through discussions of identity, agency, colonialism and political economy. In this volume we explore the utility of scale of analysis in the framing of colonial landscapes between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries in the Caribbean. Contributors to this volume have concentrated on the ways in which scale as a concept is explicitly analyzed or implicitly employed to shape how we as archaeologists focus on topics associated with the African Diaspora in the Caribbean to draw out narratives of everyday life.

Keywords Caribbean archaeology · Regional analysis · Translocality

Archaeologists working on issues of scale related to the African Diaspora and the Caribbean have been focused on two distinct yet related issues. Some archaeologists have attempted to put in tension communities as discerned through material culture

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and the European colonial regime within which they are producers and consumers. Charles Orser's call for a mutualist approach in the archaeology of the modern world (1996) focuses on the commodity as one unit of analysis which links the local with the global, and disparate communities through a chain best understood in the context of emergent capitalism. Indeed, the research of James Delle, Jean Howson, and many others have shown the ways in which eighteenth- and nineteenth-century world in which Caribbean plantations operated were anticipatory if not foundational to globalization. Alternatively scale has been approach in a manner which attempts to position the individual within broader social milieu. Laurie Wilkie and Paul Farnsworth (1999) rightly identify the need for multiscalar approaches to archaeology of Caribbean plantation society as a mechanism understand the creation of local identities. Specifically they focus on the ways in which access to local and regional markets enabled enslaved Africans on Providence Island to actively consume material culture which in turn shaped their every-day life (Wilkie and Farnsworth 1999, p. 123). While Wilkie and Farnsworth are drawing on both Giddens and Bordieu's construction of scale, which places agent and social structure in constant tension, there approach also has a necessarily spatial component.

Such approaches follow a methodological cue from George Marcus's multi-sited ethnography (1998) where its practitioners are freed to cross economic, political and insular boundaries in order to get at the set of social relations of the people they are most interested in learning about. Indeed, the parallels in this methodological turn are important in that the multi-sited framework does not take modern transnational capitalism (Ong 1999) or emergent globalization in the eighteenth-century Caribbean as mere systems that act upon subjects, but provides a mechanism to see human interaction with these systems close-up. Methodologically this approach "designed around chains, paths, threads, conjunctions, or juxtaposition of locations" (Marcus 1998, p. 90) can become overly cumbersome for the ethnographer. As Africanist historian Fredrick Cooper points out, for the historian it potentially leads to "story plucking, leapfrogging legacies, doing history backward, and the epochal fallacy" (Cooper 2005, p. 17). It can become especially problematic for the archaeologist where the depth of interpretation that has become the hallmark of historical archaeology is sacrificed for potentially more shallow comparative analysis as the people we are most interested in learning about become nothing more than the agents of abstracted flows. Indeed, if we are to have an "actor up" (Wilkie and Farnsworth 2005, p. 8) approach to the archaeology of the African Diaspora, greater attention needs to be placed on the ways in which we specifically define the local, the region and the global.

The papers in the volume describe "local" phenomenon couched within emergent "global" contexts, thus mindfully following calls for multiscalar analyses presented by Orser (1996) and later by Wilkie and Farnsworth (1999). It is important to note, however, that "local" is a highly abstract concept. As many have argued, the way we as archaeologists employ abstraction is not something that should be uncritically assumed rather something that should be theorized situated and operationalized in historically and socially grounded moments (Ollman 1993; Sayer 1987; Wurst 1999: 11). Bertell Ollman delineates and LuAnnWurst summarizes three levels of abstraction used in dialectical thinking: extension—the delineation of spatial and temporal boundaries; generalization—the movement between and beyond the

particular; and vantage point—the angle through which people comprehend the social relations in which they are integral (Wurst 1999, pp. 10–11). Within Caribbean plantation societies, as with many other loci of historical archaeology, the abstraction of "local" is not only an abstraction of extension, but also levels of generalization and vantage point. Locality can defined political boundaries in space and time where the insularity of colonies and shifting political alliances might frame the way in which social relations are expressed in material culture. 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. Finally, 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.

Indeed, the levels of abstraction can be collapsed and operationalised into the scales of analysis through which an archaeologist tackles their particular problem. Marquardt (1992, p. 102) points out people experienced their world on multiple scales in space and time and archaeologists should constantly move between different scales until the "effective" scale (where patterns begin to emerge) is achieved (Crumley 1979, p. 166). In Caribbean historiography there has been increasing emphasis on examining the imperfect fit between past actors and colonial regimes of political and economic control (see Burnard 2004; Higman 1999; Olwig 1992; Perotin-Dumon 2001; Scott 2004). Probably the most well documented study of the ways in which European colonialism and capitalism became inscribed on the Caribbean landscape comes from James Delle's work on blue mountain coffee plantations in Jamaica (Delle 1998, 1999, 2000a, b, 2002). The spatiality of these plantations not only reflected hierarchies manifest in race and colonial subject, but also reflected very local articulation of difference among the enslaved laborers. While his research highlights the need to not leave the "global" and its concomitant ideologies unexplored, it also leaves room for the examination of reaction to these ideologies and local practice (2002; see also 2008).

What is at issue here is the definition of "local." Whether that local is an enslaved village in St Croix (Lenik), a Plantation on St. John (Armstrong); economies on Jamaica (Hauser) and Guadeloupe (Gibson); a port city in Barbados (Smith); or the colonial boundaries of the Caribbean as a whole (Kelly) these papers focus on the fluidity of its definition as an embodied experience in space, time, and perspective.

Abstracting the Local

Arjun Appadurai (1995, p. 204) argues that we should focus on the ways in which locality, as something which assumes the airs of a social reality with fixed boundaries, is produced. This is especially salient in the archaeology of the African Diaspora in the Caribbean where "the local" has been employed as an analytical construct and unit of analysis with very little theorizing of its meaning. In my own work, I have applied the term local as a taxonomic classifier of colonial ceramics (Hauser and DeCorse 2003) and as a qualifier of ancillary economic behavior among the enslaved with little attempt at defining the ways in which past actors defined and experienced the local in

space and time. Archaeologists who work on this topic have sometimes used the work of Gilroy (1993), Bhaba (1994), Thompson (1983) to frame their construction of Diaspora and explore the potential connections between disparate communities across the Atlantic world (See Fennel 2007 for review). Such work has tended to focus on the material expressions between Africa and the Americas as a way to draw specific maps and histories between multiple localities (see Clifford 1994, pp. 318 for maps/histories formulation). This project goes beyond methodological concerns of establishing scales which potentially reflect the patterns of behavior in past communities, but entails the ways in which can generalize the specificities of the particular contexts in which we operate (what is history) and more importantly the multiple perspectives in which locality is experienced (whose history).

Community

The colonial Caribbean has been defined as a context of analysis for community oriented studies of transplanted peoples in which, "the Caribbean... because of 'the particular circumstances' of its history, contains within itself a 'culture' different from, though not exclusive of Europe" (Brathwaite 1971, p. 113). Indeed, while much of the scholarship has moved away from the African attributions ascribed by Melville Herskovits (1958) and Robert Farris Thompson (1974, 1983, 1990) it has become generally accepted that practices, beliefs and technologies learned in different communities in Africa shaped the ways in which communities formed (Mintz 1974; Mintz and Price 1976; cf. Lowenthal 1972) in the Caribbean and the ways everyday lives of their members are expressed in material culture (Agorsah 1994; Armstrong 1990; Goucher 1999; Handler and Lange 1978; Price and Price 1999; Thompson 1983).

Understanding the peoples of the Caribbean within their own context has been a major contribution of African Diaspora historiography and archaeology. While critiques of such approaches have tended to focus on the ways in which nativist/nationalist projects of the 1960s and 1970s used this anthropological discourse as a mechanism to verify claims of authority (Scott 1999, p. 121), it is important to emphasize that some scholars have tended to focus on Europeanness of Caribbean cultural heritage and landscapes (see Lowenthal 1972). Again this is an issue of the ways in which scale effects the unit of analysis in description of the Local. Lydia Pulsipher and Conrad Goodwin have conducted one of the most extensive archaeological examinations of a plantation in order to understand "the human landscape surrounding Galways" (Pulsipher 1994, p. 203). Combining oral history with archaeological survey, this research focused on the ways in which enslaved laborers took the most marginal pieces of land on the plantations "where they first seized the right to grow their own food crops and then expanded production to sell surplus crops on market" (Pulsipher 1994, p. 203). More importantly, they have explored the "ideational role" of slave gardens as places in which slaves not only escaped the surveillance of the planter but also "construct[ed] a decent life for themselves within a hostile system" (Pulsipher 1994, p. 217, cf. Pulsipher 1990). This system was one in which order and observation were mechanisms through which planters and overseers exerted authority and were able to enforce regimens of slave life. Spaces which fell outside of planter scrutiny enabled the enslaved to

impose their own order onto West Indian landscapes in the form of gardens (Pulsipher and Goodwin 1999) and creole economies (Pulsipher 1990).

As Carol Allen (2002, p. 57) has argued the concept "creole" implies, among other things, a "nativisation or indigenization, marking the point of recognition of that new type as belonging to the locale... which does not become fixed in form... making context and point of view crucial to understanding." Understanding the ways in which people experienced locality becomes an important point of departure in developing effective scales of analysis. In the second article of this volume, Stephen Lenik emphasizes the need to examine the particularities of creolization at Estate Bethlehem in St Croix. Implicit in this analysis is a "then" and "now" where the specific locality of the enslaved village was created in the past at the interface of local and regional social relations and is now referenced through rooted and fixed markers (a tamarind tree and cemetery).

Temporal scales become important in assigning some gauge of change, transformation and creolization where events, as those interactions which are localized into time and space, become its mile markers. As Frederick Cooper (2005, p. 18) argues historical analysis must avoid using the past as "succession of epochs" in that it "assume a coherence that complex interactions rarely produce." In her article, Heather Gibson examines closely the change in village structure and material life on Guadeloupe in a period whose history is usually described as epochal. The French revolution put an end to the *Ancien Regime* and on Guadeloupe brought about the *première emancipation*, which was shortly followed by re-enslavement by Napoleon and eventual emancipation in 1848. Evidence from the ground up showed that rather than epochal, such histories are dubious from the vantage point of the laborers. Reliance on provision grounds and local economies "buffered" emerging creole lifeways from the anticipated effects of political and economic turmoil in the métropole.

Vantage point is absolutely essential in defining locality. It is also important in defining regionality. In the fourth article, Marco Meniketti argues that we must not only define locality in terms of context, but try to define the region within which local actors operated, outwardly. Following trends in recent Caribbean historiography and archaeology, Meniketti, proposes a course of research in which Nevisians continually redefined the Caribbean the various economic and social inks which cross-cut different economic strata of society.

While community has been an important trope in Caribbean historical archaeology this has generally been configured in terms of plantation communities (see Armstrong 1990; Higman 1999; Wilkie and Farnsworth 2005). Very few archaeologists have attempted to look at urban communities and how they intersected with the Atlantic world. In the fourth article of this volume, Fredrick Smith and Karl Watson examine two urban centers in Barbados at the beginning of "King Sugar." They argue that residents of these communities understood that they were at the interface of the Local in the Anglophone Caribbean and the bourgeoning Atlantic world. The cities' position as such were not inevitable, Barbados' centrality in England's colonial agenda in the West Indies came from enormous effort among local merchants to facilitate trade and "celebrate" the urbanity of Bridgetown. What is interesting in this article is that Smith and Watson do not take for granted Bridgetown's role in the sugar industry, rather they place it squarely in a spatial and

temporal interstices where "diluted social distinctions between free people and gave Bridgetown the appearance of a cosmopolitan city." This in turn made it a good place for business. We are again confronted with the question of utility of scales developed with in plantation contexts in order to understand the entirety of the Caribbean colonial experience in time and space.

Colonialism

Locality has also been defined as an articulation of emergent global economic processes. The colonial Caribbean as a field of study encompasses the dizzying intersections of historical events, structural trends, and cultural flows that present a primary problematic of the region as a region. As a region it has been defined in terms of its colonial experience written as a hinterland to métropole Europe and North America and its people as distinctly non-indigenous (Trouillot 1992) where the "natives" are forcibly taken to the region and naturalized into the creole landscapes (Allen 2002, p. 57) through a set of technologies including the manipulation and production of space through cartography, the racialization and (class)ification of colonized and Diaspora peoples, and a series of legislative mechanisms in efforts to make colonial control complete. The effect of these technologies, David Scott (2004, p. 3) has argued, was to turn, "Caribbean peoples... [into] the first overseas conscripts of modernity." Indeed, it is commonly argued that in the post conquest period, the Caribbean was a laboratory of European modernity in which emergent empires experimented with strategies of production, methods of distribution and technologies of control (Mintz 1985).

By the eighteenth century, the plantation had become the dominant economic institution in the Caribbean and by far the most evident expression of European strategies of production and control on the island landscape. Discussions of plantation life have proved to be a fertile ground for understanding the ways in which people act simultaneously as agents, actors, and subjects within the context of emergent global capitalism (Trouillot 1995, p. 23). Indeed, as William Mitchell (1994, p. 2) has argued "landscape circulates as a medium of exchange, a site of visual appropriation, a focus for the formation of identity." Mimi Sheller (2003) has usefully argued that a scenic economy associated with sugar monoculture arose "in which tropical landscapes came to be viewed through a painterly aesthetic constructed around comparative evaluations of cultivated land versus wild vistas" (Sheller 2003, p. 37). Nineteenth-century landscapes of the Caribbean emphasized a pastoral natural environment devoid of the impacts of industrial sugar production and demands of enslaved labor. In the words of Lennox Honychurch (2003, p. 1)they catered to a market in which "the plantocracy favoured a selective depiction of reality."

In this volume several authors attempt examine the totalizing effects of the colonial systems of control and its impact on the material life of Caribbean peoples. Indeed, it is somewhat clichéd to say that all plantations are idiosyncratic and all plantation islands are socially and historically unique. But at what level can comparisons be drawn? In the fifth article of this volume, Kenneth Kelly takes to task the ways assumptions of scale implicit in the colonial partition of the Caribbean have effected the units of analysis archaeologists have used to frame their research. Specifically, he argues the vague constructions of "regional" that is often characterized by the "the

broad strokes of the *longue duree*" and localities that are more often than not contextualized as "British." While broad comparisons can be drawn between the Anglophone and Francophone Caribbean, the material implications of enslaved life loses resolution outside of the specific French colonial contexts.

As Barry Higman (1986a, b, 1987, 1988) has demonstrated in his work on demography, spatial economies of plantations and surveying technology in Jamaica, cartography was a technology of the colonial state which defined locality in figurative and material ways. James Delle (1998, 1999, 2000a) argues that these technologies shaped the everyday life of the enslaved including the development and cementing of structures of inequality. Since technology can be seen as lying at that interface between colonial regimes and locality, it is therefore important the ways in which these technologies varied from one colonial regime to the next. In article six, Douglas Armstrong examines the ways in which Peter Oxholm's two maps (1780 and 1800) were used to detail property ownership in St John at three different levels: island-wide, quarter-wide, and site-specific. Unlike those kinds of surveying technologies employed in the English islands resulting in highly detailed property maps Oxholm's two maps, which were the only systematic survey of properties in the Danish colonial period (1718–1917), belied incredible fluidity in property ownership and control.

Colonial technologies of control did not only extend to spatial technologies and systems of classification they were implicit in the histories that were and continue to be written. Frederick Cooper warns us that historians should "sensitive to the disjunctures between the frameworks of past actors and present interpreters" (Cooper 2005, p. 19). In other words, concepts of analysis and system organizations of those concepts we find useful in understanding the world today (core and periphery; north versus south) might not have been salient in the past. In the final article of the volume, Anna Agbe-Davies demonstrates the ways in which colonial forces continue to shape the ways in which scale and locality is understood in the Caribbean. In a research project initiated to draw North American tourists to a specific heritage site in Barbados, namely a residence briefly occupied George Washington, Agbe-Davies exposes an irony implicit in the shifting centers of power between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries. With her excavation, Agbe-Davies places in time and space a landscape in which Mount Vernon, Virginia, in material and figurative ways was peripheral to what Washington considered to be the cosmopolitan center of Bridgetown.

The global world continues to emerge and to bracket its geography and place book ends on parts of its history. This inevitably dictates the narrative detailed by the interpreter. In this volume we are interested in the ways in which locality was experienced during the period when the Caribbean basin was perceived as economically important to Western European colonial interests. Archaeological interpretations of these sites can be indefinite in that the people who inhabited them all share constructions of "here" and "there"; "then" and "now"; and difference and belonging. As localities of consumption and production they were also loosely linked spaces of translocal commerce and relationships. This ambiguity must be understood outside of a prelude to modern transnationality and described within its own context. By loosely focusing on the different scales of impact and trade and employing multi-site analysis we can begin to understand the broader social relations of the Caribbean and their impact on its political economy.

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