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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

From Hell's Gate to the Promised Land: Perspectives on Poverty in Saba, Dutch Caribbean, 1780 to the Mid-Twentieth Century

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Abstract Archaeological research concerning poverty has expanded during the 21st century. Finding poverty in material things has become a challenge, and, consequently, research has been reoriented to understanding the social processes that produce and sustain poverty. Poverty is understood differently according to class and experienced differently according to scale, locality, race, and gender. By taking a whole-society approach to the small island of Saba, Dutch Caribbean, the materiality of Saba's classes can be made visible if the social processes behind them can be revealed. Designating groups, individuals, and landscapes as "poor," however, homogenizes these material vectors for projecting class. This gives poverty an ephemeral nature relative to those designating poverty to people and spaces. Therefore, poverty is best understood reflexively through powered perspectives and powered landscapes, rather than through a static pile of representative material objects.

Resumen La investigación arqueológica sobre la pobreza se ha ampliado durante el siglo XXI. Encontrar la pobreza en cosas materiales se ha convertido en un reto y, por consiguiente, se ha reorientado la investigación hacia la comprensión de los procesos sociales que producen y mantienen la pobreza. La pobreza se entiende de manera diferente de acuerdo con el enfoque de clase y se experimenta de manera diferente según su escala, localidad, raza y género. Al aplicar un enfoque de sociedad entera a la pequeña isla de Saba, del Caribe Holandés, la materialidad de las clases de Saba puede hacerse visible si los procesos sociales detrás de las mismas pueden ser reveladas. La designación de grupos, individuos y paisajes como "pobres", sin embargo, homogeneice estos vectores materiales para la proyección de clases. Esto le da a la pobreza una naturaleza efímera relativa a aquellos que designan la pobreza a las personas y espacios. Por consiguiente, la pobreza se entiende mejor reflexivamente a través de perspectivas dinámicas y paisajes dinámicos, en vez de un montón estático de objetos materiales representativos.

Résumé Les recherches archéologiques sur la pauvreté ont pris de l'ampleur au 21e siècle. On trouve de moins en moins de traces de pauvreté dans les objets matériels et en conséquence, les recherches s'orientent maintenant sur la compréhension des processus sociaux qui en sont responsables et qui l'alimentent. La pauvreté est appréhendée différemment selon la classe, et vécue de différentes façons selon l'échelle sociale, l'emplacement, la race et le sexe. En étudiant la petite île de Saba dans les Antilles néerlandaises sous la lunette de la société globale, la matérialité des classes de la région peut prendre forme si les processus sociaux sous-jacents peuvent être révélés. La désignation de groupes, personnes et paysages sous l'appellation « pauvres » homogénéise toutefois ces vecteurs matériels de projection des classes, prêtant ainsi à la pauvreté une nature éphémère parente à celle qui désigne les peuples et les

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espaces. La pauvreté est donc mieux comprise dans le contexte de la réflexion à l'aide de perspectives et de paysages vivants, plutôt que par l'étude d'une pile statique d'objets matériels représentatifs.

Keywords poverty · landscape archaeology · ideology · material culture · Caribbean archaeology

Introduction

> The other buildings of your High Mightinesses are a small venture; though they built a new church, the island of Saba is inhabited by poor people. They produce what little they may need, and catch turtles and fish to maintain their families, yet since the heavy hurricane several households have left the island [translation by author]. (de Windt 1773)

So wrote Jan de Windt, Jr., governor of St. Eustatius in 1773, describing the aftermath of the terrible hurricane several months earlier to the Heren X ("Ten Gentlemen") of the Dutch West India Company. St. Eustatius was in the midst of its "Golden Rock" era as one of the largest maritime trading centers in the world, and Saba, just 25 km to the north (Fig. 1), was governed from St. Eustatius during this time. Through a few pen strokes and his authority, he declared to the Heren X that Saba was an island inhabited by the poor, despite a variety of ideological vectors on Saba cleary demonstrating that Saban society was socially stratified.

De Windt's consideration of Saba as a poor island highlights the problem in identifying and situating poverty in the archaeological record, as notions of who is poor can shift depending on the powered perspective of the person or people making the designation. Effectively, there is a gulf between qualities and definitions of poverty and experiences of it. Poverty is understood differently according to class and experienced differently across scale, locality, race, and gender. It is this ephemeral nature of poverty that confounds direct correlations to materiality without understanding poverty's dialectic with landscape, race, class, and gender relative to the society in which these material things are embedded. The later colonial period of Saba serves as an excellent example to highlight this approach.

Theorizing Poverty in the Colonial Caribbean

Landscapes of Material Things

Landscape archaeology has provided a means of connecting ideology to geography through the partitioning, use/disuse, and organization of lands in the colonial Caribbean (Pulsipher 1977, 1994; Handler and Lange 1978; Armstrong 1990; Delle 1998, 2014; Singleton 2001; Hicks 2007; Armstrong et al. 2009; Ryczewski and Cherry 2015). This approach is ideal within plantation archaeology in the colonial Caribbean for identifying locations of structures and activity areas by viewing plantation landscapes as organized places

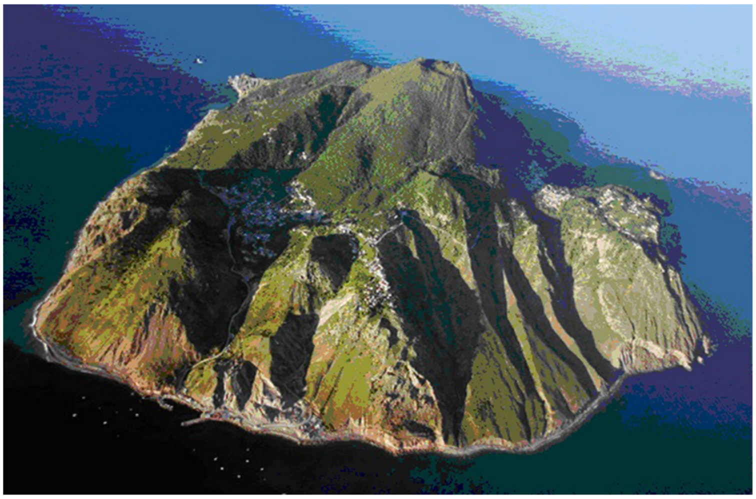

Fig. 1 Aerial view of Saba, looking toward the north. (Photo courtesy Saba Tourist Bureau, 2014.)

structured, in part, by power and economics-based relations. This has facilitated the identification of enslaved-African housing areas on Jamaican plantations (Armstrong and Kelly 2000) and, within the whole-society landscape of plantation colonies on small islands, has been used to locate Maroon sites on St. Croix (Norton and Espenshade 2007). The problem, however, arises in attempts to correlate materiality with landscapes. This has been accomplished in some part with studies involving locally manufactured ceramics specific to certain islands, such as Jamaica (Hauser 2006), St. Eustatius (Heath 1988), St. Kitts (Ahlman et al. 2009), Antigua (Handler 1964; Nicholson 1994), St. Croix (Gartley 1979), Montserrat (Petersen and Watters 1988), the Bahamas (Wilkie 1999), and the British Caribbean islands (Higman 2014), with respect to a broader scale of material culture. James Delle has argued that plantation landscapes represented "a class of material culture ... used to manipulate human behaviors" (Delle 1998:37; Hauser and Hicks 2007:256). Delle's work has been criticized for a limited engagement with Jamaican coffee-plantation material culture, as the bulk of his data was drawn primarily from map collections (DeCunzo and Ernstein 2006). Hauser and Hicks (2007:267–268) suggested that

> archaeologists of colonialism need to find ways to place the study of *materiality*—both the permeabilities between humans, objects and places, and also the contemporary sense of what "matters"—at the heart of their studies, rather than using objects and landscape to illustrate historical accounts, elite ideas or political observations already developed elsewhere.

This involves the additional step of tying materiality recovered from specific locations within powered landscapes to that recovered from other contexts within a given locale and region, and an understanding relative to the ways residents of these landscapes perceived and employed materiality on their own terms. This is not a straightforward task. The multiple sets of social relations that characterize an enslaved African plantation assemblage will not, for example, mirror those that produced a lower-class White household assemblage within a nearby village. This necessitates an understanding of the dialectic among landscapes, ideology, and materiality for the area and period concerned. Drawing relations between materiality and ideological landscapes requires identifying common ideological processes that were implicated in the production of materiality among the given contexts. Within the colonial Caribbean slave societies, three pervading elements of ideological social relations are race, class, and gender.

The Ideology of Poverty

Studying poverty in the European colonial world necessitates an understanding of common types of powered relationships that were present within colonial Caribbean society. This begins through ideology, summarized by Heather Burke (2006:128) as "an idea or ideas rooted in power." Understanding and dissecting ideology relative to poverty 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. Understanding Saban poverty within a dialectic of race, class, and gender means that they cannot be responsibly understood in isolation. For example, the suffixed title "esquire" was used throughout the late 18th to mid-19th centuries in the English-speaking colonial Caribbean, including Saba, to clearly denote the 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 with race and class that the title is understood to entrench White males in positions of power through habitus (Bourdieu 1977; Orser 2007:59).

A dialectical approach toward understanding poverty requires an awareness of the multiple social and material webs in which social agents participate. Indeed, as stated by Randall McGuire and LouAnn Wurst (2002:89): "[A]t 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."

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 and landscape contexts. This stresses the need for reflexive interpretations for a given archaeological assemblage, especially when associating it with ideological elements.

Class, Race, and Gender, and Poverty on Saba

Poverty is understood differently in different classes and experienced differently across race and gender within a given society. Multiple definitions of class have been employed by archaeologists as a means of understanding the archaeological record. Class structures are reproduced through time, which is an essential characteristic that distinguishes class from stratum (Foster 2006; McGuire 2008) or status (Shepard 1987; Spencer-Wood and Heberling 1987:59; Wurst 1999:7–8). Wurst (2006:194), as the basis for this research, defines class as "the surface appearance of a complex web of underlying social relations ... a label designating where an individual stands in relative social standing."

The relationship of race and gender to class (Wylie 1992; Dirks et al. 1994; Shaw 2001; Nelson 2004; Voss 2006) is better understood in a dialectic to account for the reflexivity of multiple social contexts that inform gendered relations. This is well encapsulated by the experiences of anthropologist Carolyn Martin Shaw (2001:103): "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." Unlike race and gender, class is an abstract of ideology that 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. This has direct implications for poverty, since rising in class from a designation of poverty is easier when it is not restricted by culturally derived limitations based upon one's race and gender.

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 potential gendered differences that may have existed between class and race. 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), as quoted in Wurst (2006:196), regards this as "the violence of abstraction." Rather, analyses of these roles and the powered gendered 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 the gender norms of the region.

The perspectives of class that are rooted in local and regional lived experiences are integral toward understanding social relations. Indeed, scale and locality (Wurst 1999; Hauser 2009) are defining elements of ideology. As Hauser (2009:5) states:

> [L]ocality 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 for understanding how ideological abstractions, such as class, race, and gender, were mediated between groups on Saba, and how these contributed toward designations of poverty across local and regional landscapes.

Poverty

The topic of poverty and inequality has increasingly caught the attention of historical archaeologists during the 21st century. Indeed, entire issues of journals (Orser 2011b; Spencer-Wood and Matthews 2011) have been dedicated to the topic, albeit mostly from a North American perspective. Archaeologies specifically addressing the issue of material culture and poverty in the colonial Caribbean have been limited to Barbados (Beckles 1988; Reilly 2014a, 2014b, 2014c, 2016).

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 that fostered poverty on Saba through structural inequality (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 into 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 2011b; Symonds 2011).

Several researchers have demonstrated that the creation and reification of poverty is a common result of the dialectic between race and class (Orser 2004, 2007, 2011a; Hall 2010:ii; Chicone 2011a, 2011b; Matthews 2011; Spencer-Wood and Matthews 2011; Symonds 2011). Spencer-Wood and Matthews (2011:2) understood 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 (2011b), similar to Matthews (2011:44–45), adds a 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 2011a:122). Poverty, Chicone (2011b:57) states, is "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 2011b:78).

This has implications for the applicability of approaches that depend on artifact patterns (South 1977; Deagan 2003) or behavioral 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 such spaces on Saba, as recipes, such as pig-tail soup, *sause*, and pig knuckles, are enjoyed across the island in the present with little regard for race and class. Reusing or repurposing 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 behavior that takes advantage of potential multiple uses of material objects that can understandably arise due to material deprivation. However, the existence of artifact reuse or multiuse 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.

While this approach seeks to understand the social process implicated in the materiality of poverty, one must still inquire who is considered poor to whom. Scale is integral to this approach because, in the region since the 18th century, Saba was often considered to be an island populated by "poor people," thereby homogenizing the entire population of the island as poor, despite the existence of local class structures. This demonstrates a common dialectic that exists between poverty and space, seen elsewhere through the designation of certain urban areas as slums (Mayne and 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 toward positioning poverty within Saban and regional social relations.

Considering poverty as a process on the part of the researcher proceeds with the somewhat contradictory acknowledgment that poverty within Saban society was itself not viewed as process by the general populace and colonial officials, but as a definable subset within a society of people with traits that characterized their deserving or undeserving poverty. This involves a dimension of power, wherein those in the lower 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.

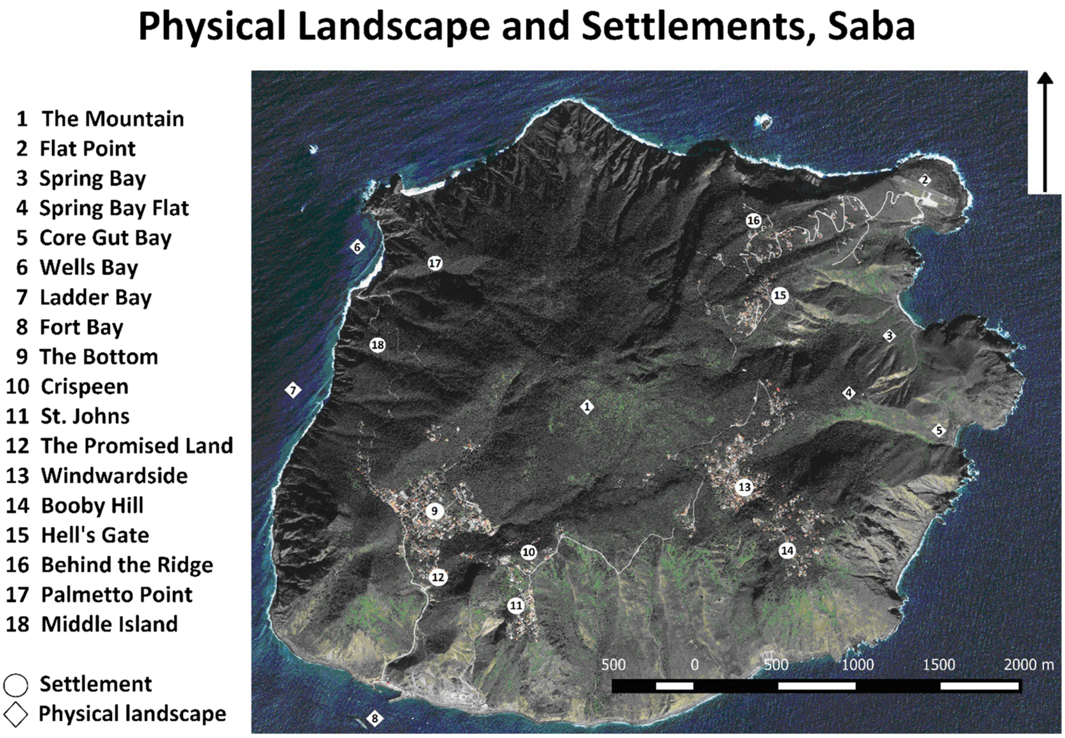
Physical Landscape and Settlements, Saba
1 The Mountain
2 Flat Point
3 Spring Bay
4 Spring Bay Flat
5 Core Gut Bay
6 Wells Bay
7 Ladder Bay
8 Fort Bay
9 The Bottom
10 Crispeen
11 St. Johns
12 The Promised Land
13 Windwardside
14 Booby Hill
15 Hell's Gate
16 Behind the Ridge
17 Palmetto Point
18 Middle Island
○ Settlement
◇ Physical landscape
500
0
500
1000
1500
2000 m

Fig. 2 Relevant physical landscape and settlements, Saba. (Figure by author, 2016.)

The social and material criteria employed by the governing class to officially qualify individuals and households on Saba as poor were, unfortunately, not specified. This absolute measure of poverty, though, would have created two classes from among Saba's preexisting lower class: those deserving and those undeserving of the charity associated with it. Those people considered among the deserving poor subsequently had their space and possessions bestowed with poverty as well, thereby trumping the capacity of higher-class spaces and materials to indicate otherwise. Consequently, possessions of the deserving poor will then embody a second set of social relations; they were once lower class and subsequently made poor. The same principle of "becoming" would apply to spaces considered impoverished. Identifying poverty based upon materiality and other ideological vectors is inherently problematic, as it embodies multiple social and spatial perspectives derived from powered relationships, giving it an ephemeral quality. It is this ephemeral nature of poverty that makes studies of a "culture of poverty" problematic (Orser 2004, 2007) and situates studies of poverty in Hauser and Hicks's (2007:268) call for archaeologists to situate the permeabilities of materiality "between humans, objects, places, and the contemporary sense of what 'matters'—at the heart of their studies."

Landscapes, Economy, and Perceptions of Saban Poverty

Environmental and Historical Contexts

Saba is presently governed as a "Public Entity" of the Netherlands along with St. Eustatius and Bonaire, a status that began in 2010 after the Netherlands Antilles was dissolved as a country. The island is the northernmost volcanic island in the active arc of the Lesser Antilles group, situated at approximately 17.38° N, 63.14° W, measuring around 13 km^2 in area and about 890 m in elevation. Saba is a young island, approximately 500,000 years old, consisting of a rhomb-shaped, single, active volcano rising to a central dome-capped peak that rises from the seafloor approximately 1,500 m below the surface (Roobol and Smith 2004:31). While the "Mountain" is the most ubiquitous dome on the island, it is surrounded by at least another 16 domes. The differences in rainfall relative to elevation have fostered three distinct ecosystems, ranging from xerophytic systems at the lower elevations down to sea level, mesophytic systems at mid-elevations, and the tropical montane ecosystem at the higher elevations of the Mountain. Due to Saba's small area, the corresponding geology has created a very steep topography, fostering a social premium on level landscapes. Saba has no permanent or seasonal streams, and there are just three potable springs, located at the aptly named Spring Bay, Wells Bay, and Fort Bay. Four historical wells were erected at Middle Island, Cove Bay, Core Gut Bay, and a second well at Wells Bay to catch water from ground infiltration. Households were mostly reliant upon cisterns to catch rainfall for their own water supplies, using wells as backups during periods of drought (Espersen 2013).

Saba was first settled by the Dutch via St. Eustatius in the 1640s, initially for small-scale plantation agriculture and probably due to Saba's proximity to the excellent fishing available on the nearby Saba Bank. In the following decade, sugar production began on the island, but Saba never developed into a full plantation economy characterized by a large majority of enslaved Africans relative to free European-descent residents. Rather, the population of White residents, as opposed to that of enslaved Africans and free Sabans of African descent, fluctuated slightly around 50% up to emancipation in 1863. To date, only four to five plantations are known to have taken root on the island. The first two, dating to the 1650s, were focused on sugar and indigo production. They were located at Spring Bay and nearby Flat Point (Fig. 2). The former ceased operations by the early 18th century, while the latter was destroyed in the 1772 hurricane and was not rebuilt. A second, smaller boiling house was built upon a bluff within the Spring Bay plantation lands following the closure of the first boiling house closer to sea level. This second boiling house was in operation from the early 18th century to a few years prior to 1815. The third sugar plantation, whose origin is probably rooted in the 17th century and ceased operations by the 1820s, was located in the Bottom. A third indigo plantation may also have been located in the lands surrounding the village of Palmetto Point during the 18th century.

Following disastrous hurricanes in 1772 and 1780, sugar production declined on the island, followed, not coincidentally, by the first documented free people of African descent on Saba by 1780 (Dinzey 1780). By 1816 only the sugar-boiling house in the Bottom was operational, producing just 25,000 lb. of sugar annually, none of which was exported, as it was consumed locally (de Veer 1816:6). During the early 19th century, the only recorded exports from Saba were live cattle (Beaks 1820). Sabans, who lived on the lands considered marginal for plantation interests, took to shoemaking in the late 17th to early 18th centuries, but this industry faded by mid-century. By that time most Sabans were either subsistence agriculturalists or were engaged as seafarers in regional trade that became increasingly dominated by St. Eustatius in the 18th century and later by St. Bartholomew and St. Thomas during the first half of the 19th century.

By the mid-19th century and into the 20th, an increasing number of Saban men began seeking work abroad, either aboard ships or as laborers on other islands, giving Saba the reputation among foreigners of being an "island of women" (Raynal 1782:147). Emancipation in 1863 did not change the social and economic environment of Saba as radically as was experienced in Suriname or Curaçao, as most enslaved Africans were laboring in subsistence agriculture along with their owners. Shortly after oil refineries opened in Aruba and Curaçao in the early 20th century Saba experienced a dramatic decline in population, reaching a nadir of just 981 residents in 1960. In 1954, Saba was no longer administered as a colony of the Netherlands. In that year the six Dutch islands in the Caribbean, consisting of Aruba, Curaçao, Bonaire, St. Eustatius, Saba, and St. Maarten, formed an autonomous country within the Kingdom of the Netherlands, known as the Netherlands Antilles. The development of a small tourist industry, beginning in the 1980s, combined with the establishment of the Saba School of Medicine during this time, has helped the island recover economically.

A variety of environmental processes contributed toward the creation and maintenance of Saban poverty. Saba's stark topography provided few areas of flat land, which limits practical settlement to certain parts of the island. The prime lands were quickly claimed by plantations in the 17th century, mostly owned in absentia by merchants and government officials on St. Eustatius. Plantation landscapes soon permanently laid the foundations for poverty by occupying most of those lands that were flat, fertile, and provided ready access to anchorage and natural-water supplies. This is illustrated on Figure 3. Indeed, in the midst of Saba's second plantation boom, by 1717, Saba and St. Eustatius residents had already requested permission to colonize Tortola, as they considered both of their islands overpopulated (Nationaal Archief 1720; Knappert 1932). Though the last plantation, that of the Dinzeys, ceased operations in the 1820s, the estate's extensive landholdings across the western quarter of Saba were

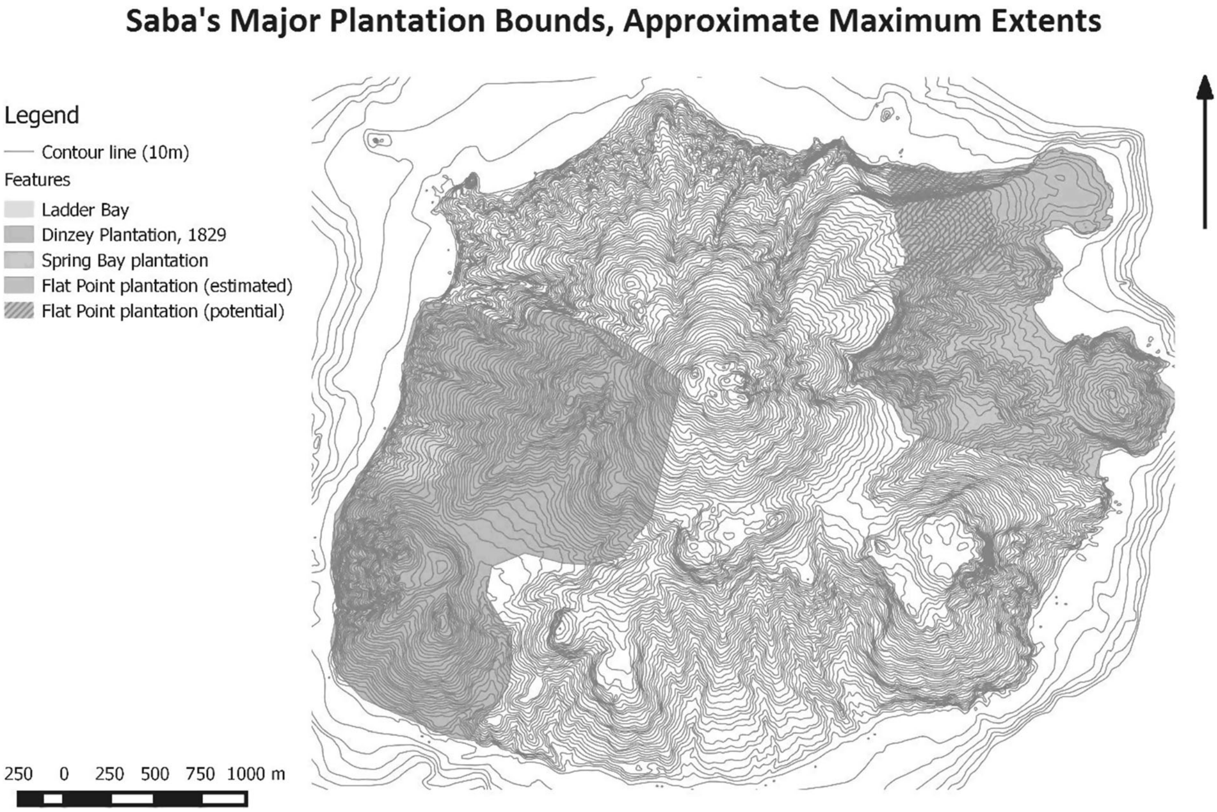
Saba's Major Plantation Bounds, Approximate Maximum Extents
Legend
Contour line (10m)
Features
Ladder Bay
Dinzey Plantation, 1829
Spring Bay plantation
Flat Point plantation (estimated)
Flat Point plantation (potential)
250 0 250 500 750 1000 m

Fig. 3 Saba's major plantation boundaries, approximate maximum extents. (Map by author, 2016.)

not parceled off and sold to Sabans to any meaningful degree until around the 1850s. This served to maintain the division of Saba between plantation and non-plantation landscapes, disenfranchising Saban residents from otherwise prime agricultural land. Households that relied upon subsistence agriculture often owned multiple small plots of land, but these were just as often scattered across the island, requiring hours out of the day in often steep travel just to access. Devastating hurricanes resulted in extensive material and subsistence deprivation, for example, the 1772 "Great Hurricane" that destroyed 140 of 180 houses on the island, all the crops and plantations, and forced some Sabans to live in caves until they could erect otherwise suitable shelter or rebuild their houses.

The stark and rugged topography of Saba also served to isolate settlements from one another to the point that, to the present day, there are five distinct accents on the island: the Bottom, Windwardside, Hell's Gate, St. John's, and the "Promised Land," descendants of residents from Palmetto Point who were evacuated from that now-abandoned village in 1936. One's village of residence was a strong class-based ideological vector in Saban society that continues to the present day. The Bottom, prior to the 20th century, was home to most of the island's upper-class residents, and the village became associated with this class by proxy. Tensions between villages existed among residents; marriages between people from the Bottom and Windwardside were rare, and many Sabans lived their entire lives without having visited other villages across the island (Crane 1971:231). Residents of the Bottom, rather, would either marry among themselves, with newcomers to the island, or find spouses abroad (Price 1934:53). Saban women, more so than men, were subject to strong village-based identities. Many never left the island in their lifetimes, and some residents of Hell's Gate were known to have never left the village (Will Johnson 2014, pers. comm.). The sense of identity with one's village was so strong that leaving for prolonged periods could result in senses of anxiety. In the 1950s, a new police officer from Hell's Gate was stationed full time in the Bottom, but resigned after three days due to separation anxiety from his village (Keur and Keur 1960:269).

The least-regarded village across Saba was known as Palmetto Point, found in Saba's northwest. The village was founded in the mid-18th century and evacuated in 1936 due to several factors, including poor access to medical care (Espersen 2017:245), an insecure water supply (Espersen 2013), and accounts of inbreeding (van Kol 1904:197; Price 1934:55–56; Hiss 1943:19) and schizophrenia (Price 1934:55–56). Palmetto Point was considered to be poor, lower class, and socially backward by both Sabans and early 20th-century visitors (Price 1934:55,56; Espersen 2009, 2017). During van Kol's visit to Palmetto Point in 1903, he noted that, among the 70 residents, there were 10 "idiots" (van Kol 1904:197). This stigma, with its origins in the pre-emancipation period, continues in the present relative to the area of the Bottom known as the "Promised Land," a formerly unsettled tract of land in the southeast corner of the village, to which the last residents of Palmetto Point were evacuated by the government of Curaçao in exchange for their lands in their former village. Regarding the new division of the Promised Land in the Bottom, John Keur and Dorothy Keur (1960:30) observed that "so strong is the habit of isolation, the former inhabitants of Mary's Point, now residing in the Bottom, still maintain solidarity as a group and have mingled only minimally with the general population." The strength of village-centered identity persisted also with regard to investment and infrastructure, even after the completion of cement roads to connect the harbor at Fort Bay with the Bottom, St. Johns, Windwardside, and Hell's Gate. Village-based identity and the desire for equal treatment in governance also resulted in inefficiency in delivering public services, leading to costs that could otherwise have been avoided by the island government. Larger villages, such as Windwardside and the Bottom, had duplicated public services, such as hospitals and libraries, for an island population that only rose from a nadir of 981 in 1960 to 1,097 in 1988. Indeed, as Keur and Keur (1960:30) noted in the 1950s: "[W]ith the breakdown in isolation the policy of most government officials is, 'What you do for one, you must do for the other.'"

Capitalism and the Local Economy in Later Colonial Saba

The organization and division of labor within 17th- and 18th-century colonial plantations, especially sugar plantations, have been considered as prototypes for those that developed in 19th- and 20th-century capitalism (Williams 1994; Leone and Potter 1999, 2015). In pre-emancipation colonial Saba these labor structures were limited to plantations and, again, applied mainly to enslaved Africans, as they constituted the majority in these contexts. Outside 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. The plantations were owned mostly by merchants and government officials from St. Eustatius, which, by the second half of the 18th century, was enjoying its Golden Rock era of free trade and had become one of the largest trading centers in the world.

The operation and sociospatial organization of sugar plantations operating on Saba, especially those owned in absentia by merchants and government officials on St. Eustatius, have much more in common with capitalist organization than the social relations that existed on Saba outside these contexts. This early capitalism was inscribed onto Saba's landscape through the strategic placement of plantation structures that existed in a dialectic pertaining to their function and location on the landscape, as a means to maximize profit and control of labor in a similar vein to what has been seen on Jamaica (Delle 1998, 1999, 2014; Armstrong and Kelly 2000).

The social relations that characterize capitalism were not active on Saba outside 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. By 1857 there were no regular wage laborers residing and working on Saba. Some people could earn *f* 0.5 to *f* 0.6 per day for manual labor, but visiting priest Father G. C. Gast (van Ufford 1885:213) noted few that were paid wages for field labor. Rather, the common practice was sharecropping, wherein one could regularly work land belonging to another in return for a third to half of the crop, or over extended periods for full ownership (Will Johnson 2013, pers. comm.; Harry Simmons 2013 pers. comm.; Franklin Wilson 2016, pers. comm.). Subsistence agriculture continued into the early decades of the 20th century, when so much land was under cultivation that "you couldn't find a place to tie a goat" (Keur and 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 1950s, about 40% of farmers continued to be engaged in this system (Keur and Keur 1960:75). In addition, still up to this time, a system of reciprocal help during the planting and harvesting seasons was practiced, known as "change work" (Keur and Keur 1960:75). By understanding the process and spread of pre-capitalism in the northern Lesser Antilles, especially with respect to Statia (St. Eustatius) in the 18th and early 19th 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.

During the 19th century, Saba had few sources by which money entered the island for circulation in the local economy. These were mostly limited to small exports of cattle during the early 19th century (Beaks 1820), cash earned through sporadic shipbuilding when the vessels were sold abroad, and wages earned by those engaged in seafaring. The social mobility afforded by wage labor was first apparent among those engaged in seafaring, either as sailors or captains. In 1857, a visiting priest on Saba, Father G. C. Gast, observed: "It was so that during my stay that several new houses and ships were built. However, the opportunities to get rich do not exist here. Most of the homes are built from the income from wages, which they receive from working on vessels" (van Ufford 1885:213).

A chronic lack of specie on Saba made the payment of debts through cash difficult, and by consequence encouraged a culture of lending and debt holding across the island. In 1854, all Dutch coinage on the island was collected by the *gezaghebber* (the Dutch name for the lieutenant governor of Saba) and counted in order to be exchanged for a newly minted series; the total collected amounted to just *f*500 in copper coin and *f*1,500 in silver coin (Beaks 1854). This was exchanged for *f*360 in 2.5 cent coins, *f*19.60 in 5 cent, *f*11.50 in 10 cent, *f*194 in 25 cent, and just *f*5 in 1 florin coins, for a total of *f*590.50. Sale prices of goods held in old guilders were deflated to adjust to the new "standard" currency. A male enslaved African, after 1854, could sell for between *f*80 to *f*120 in the new currency, which amounts to approximately one-fifth to one-sixth of all guilders in circulation on the island at the time. This, by consequence, necessitated other currencies and the existence of debtors and creditors. By that time up to six different currencies were circulating around the island. These included Portuguese dollars, also known as "joes" (C. Simmons 1826a), Spanish dollars, American dollars, French Guiana livres, St. Thomas dollars, and, later, the Netherlands guilder.

Often, debts were only payable upon the death of the debtor, whereupon his or her estate would be wholly or partially auctioned in public to repay them. Debt holding was so pervasive that, if all Saban debts were repaid, the island's economy would collapse, as debt greatly outstripped the amounts of actual currency in circulation. As a result, this economic environment fostered a reliance on lending and different forms of barter, rather than one that relied primarily on cash.

Exchange through barter, rather than currency, was common in Saba's internal economy, extending well into the 20th century (Crane 1971:33–34). In the early 19th century, some vessels sent from Saba to St. Thomas bartered Saban produce directly for goods, and, later, Saba lace (handmade needlework in styles specific to Saba) was sometimes bartered via mail to Eaton's in Canada and Sears in the U.S. (Crane 1971:33–34). Large debts could even be paid through a promise of lifelong service. John Hassell was manumitted by Henry Johnson on the condition that he provide his family with shoes for life as the means to repay a debt of 141.55 Spanish dollars (Hassell 1847b). Interestingly, following John's death around 1843, Henry brought his estate to court, claiming that he had not been adequately compensated for the bill of sale due to John's passing (Hassell 1847b).

Certain cultural norms in Saban society relative to pricing and purchasing were incompatible with a cash-based economy and could exacerbate poverty as capitalism made gradual inroads into the island during the 20th century. John Keur and Dorothy Keur (1960:125–129) made detailed observations of the local economy in Saba during the late 1950s. By the mid-20th century in Saba, there were 23 general stores scattered among the Bottom, St. John's, Windwardside, and Hell's Gate that sold goods for cash or credit. Shops were known by their owners' names, a practice that continues into the present. However, residents did not "shop around" stores for more favorable pricing, but instead patronized the same store, feeling a sense of attachment and belonging to "their" particular shop. Others would take advantage of credit offered by shops and acquire goods on credit from as many shops as possible. In some cases, debts were not repaid for over a year, and if cases were brought before a judge for debt collection it would make "bad friends," and the shop would experience a decline in customers, thereby discouraging active debt collection. Pricing was not fixed, and shop owners arbitrarily assigned prices to goods at their own discretion, without regard for pricing in nearby shops for similar or identical items. As Keur and Keur (1960:126) observed:

> [I]f a shopkeeper thinks a hat "pretty," she may charge accordingly, regardless of what she paid for it. An elderly shopowner, buying cigarettes at twenty Antillean cents per pack, reasoned, "I guess I'll sell them for thirty cents—that is not much profit," seemingly without realizing it is all of 50%.

Patrons would very often purchase staple goods in very small quantities, without regard for the longer-term savings that could be had by buying these items in bulk. Examples included buying butter by the scoop, buying coffee a quarter-pound at a time, or purchasing three tea bags.

After the last half of the 19th century, Saba's agricultural export economy was for the most part unsuccessful, despite its ability to produce surplus harvests. However, Sabans often encountered difficulty selling their agricultural surpluses abroad due to a conflict between local concepts of price and value and those of the region. During the first decade of the 20th century, exports included small amounts of potatoes, onions, and bay leaves (*Pimenta racemosa*). In one example, a potato farmer in Hell's Gate priced his surplus according to the hours he toiled per day, from seed to harvest, on the crops. The price was set by multiplying these hours by the hourly wage he would have earned by working for the government on the roads (Keur and Keur 1960:89). His surplus was not sold abroad, as it was considered far too expensive. This demonstrates Saba's continuous inability from the 19th and 20th centuries to integrate itself successfully into a regional economy increasingly characterized by capitalism.

External Perceptions of Saban Poverty

Saba's processes of poverty operated within powered social landscapes, both regionally and locally. Saba was known as an "island of poor people" among certain residents of St. Eustatius, despite internal class- and race-based differentiations within Saban society. The whole island of Saba was designated as "poor" by the governor of St. Eustatius prior to the 1772 hurricane (de Windt 1773), probably a commonly held assertion outside Saba during this time, but which obscured the real complexities of contemporary Saban social organization. A petition sent to the Dutch West India Company by Sabans in the aftermath of the devastating 1772 hurricane described their plight in detail. The petition, likely through the pen of government officials, characterized Sabans as poor to the extent that they would be unable to finance the reconstruction of the church in the Bottom: "[A]nd (which affects us most of all) whereas, God hath been pleased, no doubt as a just punishment of our aims, to smite his own house among us and lay it in ruins, a great labor and expence which the poor inhabitants could hardly bear" (P. Simmons 1772). While the hurricane certainly reduced large numbers of Sabans to living in conditions akin to poverty, Saban officials were applying the known external characterization of "poor Saba" prior to the hurricane to support their petition, while internally Saba's social organization maintained more discerning characterizations of poverty among its residents.

External perceptions of Saban poverty would also have been fostered through the island's economy. Sabans' use of barter as a medium of exchange in St. Thomas was an overt means of projecting their poverty to residents in the surrounding region. During the first years of the 20th century, the Dutch government commissioned the researcher Henri van Kol to travel throughout the islands of the eastern Caribbean and Venezuela and give an account of the geography, society, and economies of each. He observed that Saba was poor, in part due to the rugged geography, an undeveloped agriculture-export industry, exhausted and unfertilized soil, and the few opportunities to earn wages on the island (van Kol 1904:196,201–202). After visiting Saba, he wondered whether the island was still worth inhabiting and recommended that all residents from Saba should be moved and resettled on nearby St. Eustatius (van Kol 1904:202–203).

Referring to Saba as a "poor island" creates a landscape of poverty that encompasses the whole island and all residents, either trumping or ignoring local social organization. It served to homogenize class, race, and gendered vectors on Saba that may have signaled otherwise to the designator. This problematizes interpretations of poverty in Saba's material record, as assemblages can encompass multiple understandings of poverty depending on the observer, oscillating between poor and not poor. Archaeological interpretations of poverty and poverties, therefore, must be rooted in scale and locality relative to the group or individual designating poverty upon a household or Saba's landscape.

Immaterial and Material Vectors of Poverty in Later Colonial Saba

Immaterial Vectors of Poverty

Although Sabans clearly maintained (and continue to maintain) class distinctions among themselves, in Saba's indigenous documentary record and in the many conversations that the author has had with Sabans, few people, families, or groups have been referred to outright in explicit terms of class. None were referred to as "lower class" or "upper class," or a similar concoction, with the notable exception of the use of "esquire" in the documentary record, and the office of *gezaghebber* of Saba. Outside racialized or gendered references, a general notion of class composing multiple spatial and social components is "thinking someone or a family is better" or "better than we," usually in reference to the person or group making the statement. These "degrees of superiority" will be referenced using the terms "upper class" and "lower class."

By the mid-19th century, Saban households began to have increasingly larger families. While this coincides with the introduction and spread of Catholicism to Saba, a definitive correlation has yet to be established. Nonetheless, it was common to see subsistence-agriculturalist Saban households with upwards of 10–12 children living in a small two-room house. Saba's population increased continuously into the 20th century, reaching an apex of 2,488 residents by 1915. This trend continued into the mid-20th century. After 1915, population pressure on the land and economy was eased, in large part by emigration to Aruba and Curaçao to work at the Lago Oil refinery. This occurred to such a degree that by the early 1960s Saba's population declined to a nadir of just 976 (Johnson 2014:176).

The immutability of race and gender significantly restricted the ability of non-White and female Saban residents to improve their social and material dimensions of class relative to the whole of the island's society. The opportunities for women to earn wages was limited to jobs or tasks considered feminine. Women could not serve as captains, sailors, shipbuilders, carpenters, or in government. After the late 19th century, exclusively feminine means to earn money were limited to the production of Saba lace. The job of porter was open to both genders, though its practitioners were composed almost entirely of free African-descent Sabans. Being widowed as a dependent spouse imposed visible difficulties upon women seeking to support themselves. Through the rest of their lives, as a means to obtain income, many had to sell off land or even their houses in a piecemeal fashion until their property was completely gone.

Free African-descent Sabans faced their own unique restrictions that could contribute to their poverty. Regardless of the time period concerned, while freedom was granted to enslaved Africans through manumission, it also entailed the end of an owner's legal requirements toward them relative to housing, clothing, and shelter, potentially leaving them landless, homeless, and with few (if any) personal possessions, depending on the whim of the previous owner. This could have been mitigated, to varying degrees, by support available to these individuals through their social networks. These issues were implicitly addressed during the 19th century by some owners in their wills, wherein enslaved Africans were manumitted together with bequests, such as housing, land, cisterns, and cash. Conditional manumissions imposed a form of extralegal forced labor upon some African-descent Sabans that diverted their own resources or time toward their previous owners. This involved conditions, such as furnishing a family with shoes for life (Hassell 1847b) or working one day out of every week for an appointed person, either until death or until slavery ceased to exist (Hassell 1849). Judges in Saba's court of justice meted out disproportionate sentences to African-descent Sabans, further contributing to their social disenfranchisement. In the first half of the 19th century, exile was a sentence handed down exclusively to free African-descent Sabans, occurring in no less than five cases (Espersen 2017:104–106).

African-descent Sabans, both free and enslaved, tended to participate in the island's public markets separately from White Sabans. In all the late 18th- and 19th-century sales records, African-descent buyers are rare and most often were recorded as purchasers from the estates of other African-descent Sabans. The notable exception was Mary Ann Johnson, who appeared to have a degree of disposable income sufficient to purchase at least three enslaved Africans and a variety of goods, including an umbrella, from the traveling merchant Robert Ferrier (C. Simmons 1826b). Of the 152 recorded sales by this merchant, the goods sold consisted mainly of thread, patterned cloth, and muslin, but from this total, just 17 were sales to women. Among these women, one was known to be of African descent (Mary Ann Johnson) and two were probably such (Miss Bey and Susan Hassell). The last, Ann Horton, was probably White and likely either unmarried or widowed.

Therefore, based upon the purchases by gender within the "Vendue Books," married male heads of households among White Saban families, and probably among African-descent families as well, generally assumed control of finances and irregular purchases. Racially, most purchasers during estate auctions, with few exceptions, were White Sabans. However, regarding the estate of Sarah Gumbs, a free African-descent woman, all identifiable purchasers were of African descent, such as Daniel Woods, Pleasant Hassell, and Charles Hassell (Hassell 1853). The only other purchaser, H. (Henry) Hassell, was one of several contemporaries with the same name and, thus, cannot identified as a particular individual. Otherwise, purchases by African-descent Sabans during auctions of White Sabans' estates were rare: Pleasant Hassell bought an enslaved African, named Phetita, from the estate of Rebecca Simmons in 1825, and Charles Hassell bought four milk mugs and flowerpots from the liquidated estate of Arthur Gozales (Hassell 1860). Enslaved Africans were not wholly barred from participating in auctions, at least by the mid-19th century, nor did they actively participate either. There is only one recorded instance, an enslaved African purchaser (Hassell 1847a), by the name of Manerva, who bought two blue china cups for *f*0.38. This demonstrates that, in large part, White Sabans and free African-descent Sabans sold and purchased material goods among themselves as discrete groups. Though the reasons for these purchasing practices among African-descent Sabans are unclear, it appears they are at least rooted in social marginalization due to race.

Housing and Cisterns as Vectors of Poverty

The house and home ownership occupy a central place in Saban class consciousness; in fact, there are no recorded instances of rental arrangements among Sabans in the documentary record prior to 1863. Instead, homes and cisterns could be owned in shares or percentages in an identical fashion to holding shares in a ship. In some mid-19th-century instances, home ownership was split between Sabans at 50% each, while, in one example, a widow successively sold her house in shares to the point at which she owned just 10% of it (Hassell 1857). Among Sabans, house ownership, architecture, and maintenance was and continues to be one of the predominant means of projecting class. Throughout Saba's colonial period, houses, regardless of their size, were carefully maintained with a pride and attention to detail not seen on other regional islands (Labat 1831:342; Teenstra 1837:367; Price 1934:49–50). Sabans' pride in maintaining the appearance of their own homes was such that "they still do even if it means going without bread" (Crane 1971:237). Similarly, John and Dorothy Keur (1960:27) observed that

> the poorest-type houses on Saba are not so decrepit as many on St. Maarten. In general people take excellent care of their homes. These are one story high. There are only four or five two-story houses on the island, among them the administrator's residence and the government guest house.

They further noted that the only unkempt homes on the island were to be found in the boroughs of "Niggertown," a section of the Bottom inhabited by African-descent Sabans; in English Quarter, another African-descent borough of Windwardside; and in the Promised Land (Keur and Keur 1960:269–270).

A Saban style of domestic architecture was identified by Frans Brugman (1995), who conducted an extensive survey of Saban houses across the Bottom, St. Johns, Windwardside, and Hell's Gate (excluding the Behind-the-Ridge area), together with their means and date of construction and dimensions. However, his survey notably excluded formerly inhabited areas, along with two-room houses within these villages that were abandoned but still intact. Nonetheless, his database allows for comparisons with house foundations in abandoned villages.

The conception within the island's governing class of what constitutes a "house" on Saba is visible on the 1861 Saba census. This census also recorded the "Number of Houses, including Thatch ones, in which Thee persons, are also located" (Beaks 1861). The Saban definition of what constitutes a "house," in this case, did not commonly extend to thatched-roof houses. Rather, it would have been expected that the roof of a "house" would have been constructed from wooden trusses topped with red-painted cedar shingles.

While house size would certainly have been a prime vector of class among Sabans in the colonial period, it is not as readily applicable when comparing plantation and non-plantation landscapes on the island. At the Spring Bay Flat sugar and indigo plantation, the area of the Big House (30.37 m^2) approaches the area of the smallest house surveyed by Brugman at 28.01 m^2 (Brugman 1995:66), the interior of which was divided into three equal rooms by two parallel walls. It happens to be a house from Palmetto Point dismantled prior to 1934 and reconstructed in Hell's Gate. This

Table 1 Price range of selected goods, in pieces of eight (p/8), Saba Vendue Book 1780–1825

Item	Count	Low	High	Average
Barrel (water)	1	0.125	0.125	0.125
Beacon stone	5	3.375	5.500	4.775
Bed and bedstead	11	6.000	40.000	27.000
Bedsack	1	0.500	0.500	0.500
Book	1	0.500	0.500	0.500
Bookcase	1	6.750	6.750	6.750
Bosset	2	6.000	6.000	6.000
Broom	1	0.675	0.675	0.675
Buckle (knee)	2	1.375	1.550	1.456
Buckle (shoe)	1	5.625	5.625	5.625
Button (gold, pair)	1	5.000	5.000	5.000
Candle stick	4	0.125	0.550	0.418
Chair	16	0.500	11.000	4.459
Chest	8	1.000	9.000	2.818
Clock	1	4.000	4.000	4.000
Cow	7	40.000	60.000	49.600
Cupboard	1	0.500	6.000	3.250
Desk	4	2.250	30.000	17.062
Flour (barrel)	14	3.125	7.250	5.342
Frying pan	1	0.375	0.375	0.375
Glass (wine)	4	1.125	2.020	1.572
Gun	4	3.500	6.625	5.060
Gun (pepper box, old, silver)	1	1.500	1.500	1.500
Hatchet	1	4.375	4.375	4.375
House	22	33.000	600.000	311.000
Kettle (tea)	3	0.875	3.125	2.166
Kettle (wash)	2	1.500	7.250	7.250
Land	78	3.000	400.000	51.000
Large Bible	1	0.500	0.500	0.500
Musket	1	3.000	0.000	0.000
Pig	1	3.250	3.250	3.250
Rum (cask)	1	25.000	0.000	0.000
Schooner	1	999.000	999.000	999.000
Shoes, pair, with knee buckles	1	5.125	5.125	5.125
Slave boy	16	50.000	276.000	172.625
Slave girl	15	66.000	352.000	181.066
Slave man	32	30.000	483.000	225.500
Slave woman	32	6.000	400.000	201.156
Table	21	0.375	22.000	6.529
Tobacco (cask)	1	7.687	7.687	7.687

house would have be considered an average-sized house among those that comprised Palmetto Point (Espersen 2017:240). The size of the Big House at Spring Bay Flat, therefore, reflects the negligible value of this plantation to its former absentee owners on St. Eustatius. In the late 18th century the owner was

Abraham Heyliger, a former governor of St. Eustatius and wealthy plantation owner, followed by Carel Seelig, the last owner, who was himself a merchant. Despite the diminutive size of the Big House at Spring Bay Flat, it still stood as the pinnacle of power within the plantation landscape and its social environment, despite its size comparable to the average house within Saba's "poorest" village. This emphasizes the importance of space in negotiating the bounds of poverty relative to materiality.

Cistern ownership could also be used as a form of social leveraging within Saba's internal economy (Espersen 2013). Not every household owned a cistern, as their construction was relatively expensive; some were owned in shares with other households or individuals, while others had no access at all and relied instead upon well water or water caught on rooftops and stored in water jars. At Middle Island, for example, the population consisted of up to 75 residents in 1865, but the village had only five cisterns, two of which were built side-by-side and owned by the inhabitants of the settlement's largest house. Water-consumption models, based upon average monthly rainfall, cistern size, and catchment areas, combined with a series of water consumption volumes per person per day determined that the cisterns at Middle Island were incapable of supplying even minimal water requirements for the entire village in 1865, requiring many inhabitants to obtain water through other means (Espersen 2013:21–22). Those who did not own or have shares in a cistern, especially those living in thatched houses, would instead have to obtain their water from the small well in the village or at Well's Bay. Otherwise they would have had to obtain water through Middle Island's internal economy, creating the potential for powered relationships between those with access to water through cisterns and those without, especially in times of drought. This situation was not unique to Middle Island and would have occurred across the whole island.

The house and its upkeep were central tenets of class on Saba. Houses, though, did not vary largely in their dimensions or exterior decor. It was the location upon Saba's landscape that served as the prime designator for class and poverty. The necessity of cisterns as the primary water supply also fostered their use as a class and poverty vector; due to their expense in construction, not every household owned a cistern, and those that did not either owned shares with other households or had to rely upon well water of irregular quality.

Other Material Vectors of Poverty

Gast noted that Sabans only spent their saved money upon furniture, and especially clothing: "The craving for luxury in furniture, but especially in clothing, is great. It is therefore only for this that their money seems to be disposable" (van Ufford 1885:213). A Saban's material priorities would also have included one's house and its maintenance, as previously discussed. Unfortunately, clothing styles (beyond fasteners) and furniture do not preserve in Saba's archaeological record, though insights are available through late 18th- and 19th-century probate inventories and sales records. Table 1 lists the low, high, and average price of individually purchased goods in the Vendue Books 1780–1875. The prices are listed in pieces of eight (p/8), with bits and stivers converted to their proportional amount in decimal-based currency.

From the data presented on Table 1, a house could be furnished with a simple table, four chairs, banana-leaf bedding (no cost), ceramics, and other basic household items for less than 14 p/8. Ceramics were intentionally omitted from Table 1, due to discrepancies in pricing and other factors that are discussed later. A wide variety of goods were recorded in the Vendue Books, ranging from everyday household items, such as a broom and chairs, to items beyond the affordability of many, which included large tracts of land and a whole schooner. Unfortunately, it cannot be determined whether the items listed per estate are remainders after benefactors received their inheritances, or if they represent the entirety of an estate. Therefore, only partial inferences can be made concerning each estate owner and the associated items. Prices of enslaved Africans on Saba declined gradually as the 19th century progressed. However, higher prices could be fetched by selling to other islands, which occurred on occasion despite the abolition of the Dutch slave trade in 1818. The prices set for individuals differed primarily by age and gender, but also by skills.

The range in value between certain furniture articles, such as chairs, tables, and beds with bedsteads, demonstrates that these were employed as a means to project class. The three most expensive tables, priced at 11.5.0, 18.0.0, and 22.0.0 p/8, were all made from mahogany. This was followed by a round tea table for 12.0.0 p/8, a mahogany table for 11.5.0 p/8, and, finally, a small mahogany table for 8.2.0 p/8. The only other wood type mentioned in the list, a square maple table, sold for 4.0.0

p/8. A broken mahogany table sold for 3.0.0 p/8, more valuable still than two unspecified dining tables and three deal tables, the latter of which refers to a softwood, such as pine or fir. Mahogany was a valuable furniture wood across colonial Europe, and this clearly extended to Saba and continues as such into the present day. The wood is very resistant to decay, which also provides utilitarian value on Saba given conditions at higher elevations in Windwardside and Booby Hill that are highly conducive to the growth of molds and fungi, especially upon dark surfaces.

Bed and bedstead ownership was indicative of class, both during the colonial and early post-colonial periods. Those estates that owned them were also auctioning other items associated with displays of higher class, such as items made from lignum vitae and mahogany, high-priced houses, silver cutlery, and groups of enslaved Africans. Out of all 20 bedstead sales, most prices ranged between 25 and 93 p/8; the two outliers priced at 6 p/8 probably represented those in need of repair. The majority of Sabans during this time, in contrast, would have slept on beds of straw or banana leaves. This latter practice continued on the island up to the mid-20th century (Will Johnson 2013, pers. comm.; Lorna Simmons 2014, pers. comm.).

Cattle were evidently expensive when compared to other livestock, such as pigs, and shareholding cattle was a common practice on Saba at least by the early 19th century (C. Simmons 1820). Therefore, a low-income household could be expected to own chickens, a pig, or goats, and perhaps shares in a cow. Outright ownership of cattle, especially of a pair capable of reproducing, would have served at least as a supplemental source of income. It is therefore unsurprising that some residents took to breeding and exporting cattle in the early 19th century. This continued into the 20th century and, by 1951, of the 79 Sabans engaged in surplus agriculture, 42 of them owned "mixed" farms composed of several plots of land scattered about the regions of the Bottom, Windwardside, and Hell's Gate, and owned one to two cows each (Keur and Keur 1960:75).

A class-based difference in diet among residents of Saba was visible in the consumption of intertidal shellfish. These include *Purpura patula*, locally known as Frenchman's whelks; *Cittarium pica*, known as whelks; *Fissurella nodosa*, the keyhole limpet; *Chiton* spp., known locally as longbacks; and even the diminutive *Littorina* spp., often no larger than 10 mm in diameter. These were common in peripheral 19th-century villages, such as Palmetto Point (Espersen 2017:231–241), Middle Island (Espersen 2017:241–267), and Behind-the-Ridge (Espersen 2017:300–305), and within enslaved African domestic areas at the Flat Point (Espersen 2017:152–164) and Spring Bay Flat (Espersen 2017:166–200) plantations. They were notably absent across Windwardside and at sites identified as upper class, such as the mid-17th- to late 18th-century Fort Bay Ridge homestead (Espersen 2017:214–222) and an 18th- to mid-19th-century household privy pit from the Bottom (Espersen 2017:222–231), which also contained significantly higher proportions of material from large fauna.

Ceramics as Vectors of Poverty

Sales of ceramics on Saba were found only in the Vendue Books, parts of which are split between the Dutch National Archives in the Hague and the Saba Planning Bureau on Saba. This source lists Saban sales and probate-inventory auctions from 1780 to the 1870s. The only other documented instance specifying ceramics appears in the Government Log Book (C. Simmons 1823), where a crate of "Qurins warr" is included in a list of goods that were subject to import duties for the year 1823. This probably referred to "Queen's ware," the creamware pattern defined by its rim shape popular in the late 18th century, but, in this instance, may have simply referred to white-hued, undecorated, inexpensive ceramics. In the Vendue Books, ceramics were often grouped under the term "household goods" or "household wares" sold in a lot of miscellaneous wares, including wine glasses and spoons, or simply "earthenware." Out of 63 sales in the Vendue Books, all but two of them describe a form and function, such as plate, pot, bowl, tureen, or teacup. In most cases, they are simply referred to as such with no other descriptors. The other two refer to groups of ceramics, either as "crockery wares" or "earthenware," and the latter is the only entry in the Vendue Books that refers directly to fabric. Just 13 entries referred to color or style: this included 3 instances of "white plates," and 10 for "China," "Chinea," "Chinny," or "Chinese" ceramics. Of the Chinese ceramics, three were referred to as "blue." "Chinny," in this case, was recorded in a Saban dialect and pronounced with a long *i*, and refers to "Chinese." Hand-painted and blue transfer-print pearlware was commonly referred to in Staffordshire as "China glaze" after 1775 (Miller 1991:8), further compounding the problem of identification through records. While in two instances ceramics were referred to as "Chinese," this does not necessarily mean that they were Chinese porcelain. These references date to 1782 for the "Chinny plates" and 1824 for the blue "Chinese" punchbowl and can thus also describe blue hand-painted ware or, in the case of the latter, also transfer-print pearlware. Both were refined earthenwares originally manufactured as popular imitations of Chinese porcelain. Blue transfer-print ware with Chinese scenes was popular in Europe and the New World at this time, especially during the late 18th century (Samford 1997). Whether pearlware or actual Chinese porcelain, the "Chinese" aspect of the wares in the Vendue Books was significant enough to merit their description as such. This also applies to "white" as a descriptor for otherwise undecorated plates. The 1782 sales of "white plates" probably refer to creamware, white salt-glazed stoneware, or undecorated or minimally decorated white tin-glazed ware.

Ceramic prices were, at times, wildly inconsistent relative to their descriptions. In one instance in 1817, a lot of 30 "China plates" was sold for just 1.4.0 p/8. It was purchased by Richard Dinzey, son of Thomas Dinzey, who can be assumed to have had some sense of ceramic styles and values; each piece in this lot would have cost about 2.5 stivers each, a great bargain regardless of whether they were actual porcelain or transfer-printed refined earthenware. In pieces of eight, the price per plate is the lowest among all ceramic sales in Saba's documentary record. In the same year, two China plates were sold at a separate estate auction for 1.6.0 p/8. The second extreme of this auction lies in the quantity of plates (30), the largest lot of plates sold at once. While 30 Chinese porcelain plates would likely have been expensive at the time in most other locales in the eastern Caribbean, the sheer quantity of 30 plates would have been impractical for most Saban households. Other price inconsistencies were noted. Both the "white plates" sold in 1782 and the "Chinny plates" sold the following year were sold for nearly the same price: the bulk purchase of the former equaled 0.2.0 p/8 each, while the latter amounted to 0.2.1 p/8 per plate. Their relative values in Europe, however, would have been substantially different at the time. The "Chinese" plates, whether actual Chinese porcelain or European blue hand-painted or transfer-print pearlware, would have sold for a considerably higher price than either white salt-glazed stoneware or tin-enamel ware, both of which were falling out of fashion, and creamware, which was both popular and affordable in most varieties (Miller 1991:1). These price inconsistencies demonstrate a gulf between those elements of ceramic form, fabric, and decoration that were valued by potters and connoisseurs, vs. those that were considered important or irrelevant to Sabans.

At the absentee-owned plantation at Spring Bay Flat, however, conscious choices about ceramic types that were provided to enslaved Africans by the plantation owner or manager are apparent (Espersen 2017:166–199). While late 18th- to early 19th-century transfer-print wares were found in the boiling-house assemblage and in surface contexts associated with the Big House, only one very small sherd of it was found within the nearby enslaved-African housing area. Transfer prints were popular in Europe during the last 20 years of the 18th century, especially on pearlware, and this corresponded with a purchasing price rivalled only by Chinese and European porcelains (Miller 1991:8,15). Since Spring Bay Flat was foreign-owned by wealthy Statian plantation owners during its "Golden Rock" era, their tastes and values in ceramics would most likely have corresponded to ceramics currently in vogue among the upper classes of Europe, rather than to Saban tastes. Therefore, during this period enslaved Africans on the Spring Bay Flat plantation were correspondingly furnished with cheaper wares according to St. Eustatius market values, rather than those upon Saba.

It is clear from these records that the form and functionality of ceramics were generally of more importance to most Sabans than decoration, despite the wide variety of ceramic-decoration types that are present in archaeological assemblages on sites contemporary with the Vendue Books 1780–1825, such as Spring Bay Flat, Mary's Point, and the Fort Bay Ridge homestead site. This demonstrates that utility generally took precedence over decor among Sabans outside the upper class and, given the nonchalance of appraisers toward the descriptions of vessels offered for sale, ceramics were evidently not a primary means of projecting class among most residents in pre-emancipation Saba relative to the more important material vectors, such as one's house, lands, and furniture. The prevalence of utilitarian ceramics is further highlighted in Figure 4. Saucers, plates, bowls, and cups comprise 77% of the total sales, discounting the single lots of breakfast plates and tea plates.

A reason for the preference for utilitarian ceramics appears to be the lack of many equivalent households on Saba that would be considered among the highest echelons of the upper class in a regional context. The estate of Thomas Dinzey is comparatively modest when placed within a contemporary regional

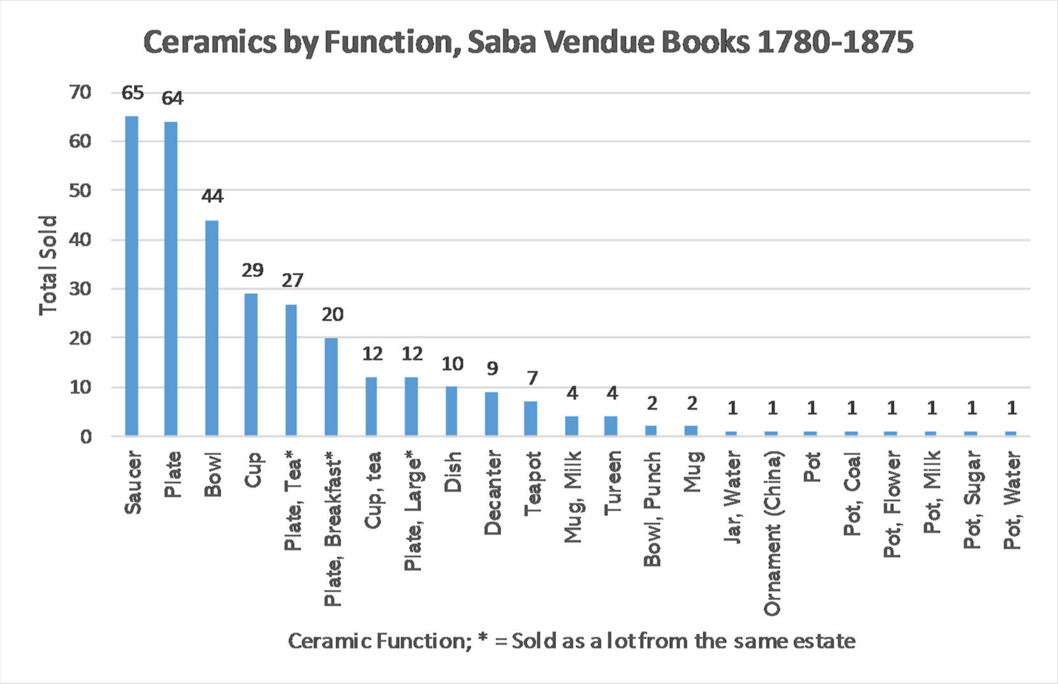

Fig. 4 Ceramics by function, Saba Vendue Books, 1780–1875 (Espersen 2017:289).

perspective, though on Saba his household would still have represented the uppermost of the island's upper class. His position as governor aside, his regional class was on par with a successful small plantation owner, but with social networks both on Saba and abroad approaching that of the region's elite, such as his contemporary, former governor Johannes de Graaf on St. Eustatius. Dinzey's lands encompassed approximately 200 ha (the majority too steep or rocky for sugar production), or about 14% of the island's surface area. The inventory of his estate was valued at 9,025 p/8 (Beaks 1827) vs. 246,382 p/8 for de Graaf (Groebe 1814). While Dinzey represented the highest-class household on Saba, his landholdings and material goods are far more comparable to a small plantation owner or a successful merchant on contemporary St. Eustatius. It is clear that not only Dinzey's class, but all local class structures must be considered in both local and regional contexts when relating them to material things.

Poverty and Artifact Reuse on Saba

Artifact reuse and repurposing on colonial Saba has been noted in the archaeological and oral-history record. At the Flat Point plantation, an Amerindian awl made from St. Martin greenstone, still sharp, was found within an 18th-century dry-stone structure associated with intertidal shellfish processing by enslaved Africans (Espersen 2017:152–164). Archaeological pedestrian surveys across Saba by the author have noted an abundance of 18th-, 19th-, and 20th-century glass- and stoneware-bottle remains in previously farmed areas, evidently reused to carry water. In particular, Dutch gin bottles made of stoneware (often "Blankenheym's Eer Oude Genever") were reused as torches for travel in the dark (Eddie Hassell 2008, pers. comm., 2012, pers. comm., 2013, pers. comm., 2016, pers. comm.; Will Johnson 2013, pers. comm.). This was done by extracting oil from the "moonfish" or "old wife" (Queen triggerfish, *Balestes vetula*), which was caught fishing in deep waters from Saba's cliffs and burned using a cloth wick stuffed inside the bottle. Ceramic sherds modified into circular "tokens" have been found across non-plantation sites throughout Saba. These have often been called "game pieces" by archaeologists, but their reuse as buttons has been noted by Jay Haviser (2015, pers. comm.), in which a piece of cloth was wrapped around the sherd, twisted, and sewn shut to provide an attachment to sew onto a garment. Nails were often reused as well. An excellent example is an interior support beam of a mid-20th-century house in Crispeen, which is embedded with wrought, cut, and wire nails (Fig. 5).

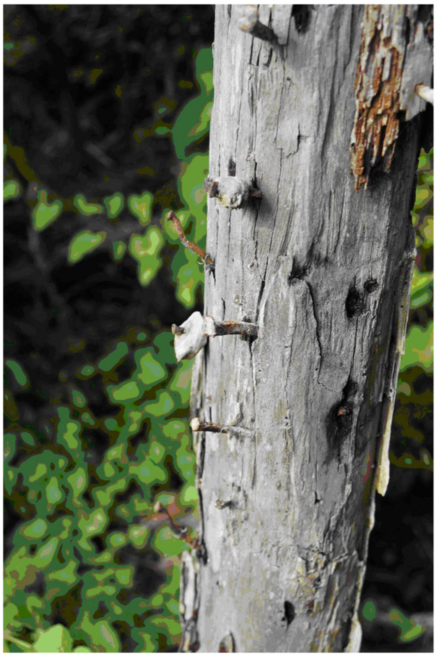

Fig. 5 Interior support beam from a mid-20th-century house in Crispeen, Saba, showing wrought, cut, and wire nails. (Photo by author, 2017.)

Due to the pervasiveness of artifact reuse and repurposing on Saba, it is problematic to associate the evidence in the archaeological assemblages with poverty. Rather, it indicates material deprivation, but, on Saba, that in itself is not necessarily indicative of lower class either. Saba's small population, poor anchorage, and primarily subsistence-based economy combined to make visits by trade vessels infrequent from the 19th century to the present day. This would have restricted the variety and availability of material goods to the island, creating difficulties in supply. This problem continues to the present day both on Saba and St. Eustatius across the social and economic spectrum, best exemplified by auto repair. The issue is not so much the cost of repair, but the availability of parts. As a result, car owners often have to wait as long as four months for the necessary parts to arrive. By necessity, infrequent shipping and small local supplies of goods on Saba incentivized the reuse and repurposing of materials, which problematizes direct correlations of these practices to class and poverty.

This analysis of late 18th- to 19th-century material culture on Saba demonstrates that a lower-class assemblage could be identified by understanding the geographic and social processes in which it was situated. Being considered lower class among Sabans was further informed by one's race and gender. However, a "poor" assemblage could not be identified without recourse to an analysis of powered landscapes. Within the village of Palmetto Point, class differences were visible through domestic architecture and cistern ownership, though within Saba the village was considered "poor," thereby homogenizing these material-based class differences. This stigma continued with the relocated residents in the Promised Land and would probably have applied to Middle Island as well. Regionally, the island of Saba itself was homogenized as poor, especially among regional trade hubs. This began with the first known reference in 1773 from the governor of St. Eustatius, then one of the largest trading centers in the world (Gilmore 2012), and continued into the 19th century on St. Thomas, when Sabans continually demonstrated their lack of currency by engaging in barter. The island's poverty was also noted by visitors like Gast in the 1850s and Grenfel Price in the 1930s. These discrepancies in identifying poverty relative to the observer point not so much to the presence or absence of material things, but the experience of poverty among residents relative to the expectancies of the observer.

Conclusion: Situating Scales and Localities of Poverty in Later Colonial Saba

This research demonstrates that there is a gulf between how one defines poverty relative to how it is experienced by another. Poverty in later colonial Saba was a process that involved a dialectic between particular vectors of class, race, and gender relative to the social and spatial environment of the island and region. Poverty is understood differently according to class and experienced differently according to race, gender, and the social landscape. By considering poverty as a process rather than a "thing" that can be directly reflected by objects, changes in the materiality of poverty did not alter the lived experience of the poor (Chicone 2011b). By studying poverty in terms of space and powered perspectives, the class of the materiality of people inhabiting a given poor space changes relative to people or groups that could enforce and maintain their powered perspective of places they considered poor and those they did not. Effectively, Saba's deserving and undeserving poor had lost control of their own ideological narrative and fluctuated between poor and lower class depending upon the landscape they inhabited and the expectancies of observer.

Among Sabans, a lower-class household on the island was materially indistinguishable from those considered poor. In 19th-century Saba, government remittances designated for poor residents created a class of poor Sabans. Those residents living under similar or identical circumstances, but considered unworthy of this aid, would only have been considered to be among Saba's lower class. While the specific criteria for poverty according to the government are unknown, the contributing factors within Saba's colonial history have been discussed relative to class, race, gender, and powered landscapes, together with comparisons of contemporaneous material assemblages from across the island.

From the late 18th century and throughout the 19th century, members of a poor or lower-class household would be expected to be subsistence agriculturalists that supplemented their diet through inshore fishing and intertidal shellfish. They would have owned a two- to three-room house on dry-stone foundations, possessed a small plot of land with sharecropping arrangements with other landowners across the island, owned a simple table with chairs made of less desirable wood (with the potential exception of locally sourced mahogany), kept small livestock and perhaps shares in a cow, slept upon beds of straw or banana leaves, and may even have owned enslaved Africans through inheritance.

The experience of poverty was tempered by one's race and class. Poverty as a free African-descent Saban widow in the pre-emancipation 19th century differed in ways unable to be experienced by a White Saban male in otherwise similar material and spatial circumstances. On Saba, almost all free African-descent Sabans would have been considered lower class during the 19th century. Free Sabans of African descent were likely eligible to have been considered among the deserving poor, but the racial discrimination prevalent throughout Saba's 19th-century legal system suggests that it may have been more difficult for them to obtain this recognition along with corresponding support than for White Sabans under otherwise identical circumstances. Enslaved Africans almost certainly did not qualify as poor, since slavery constituted its own legal class, and their owners, rather than themselves, were legally responsible for their welfare. The lower class and slaves on Saba are archaeologically indistinguishable from one another due to different social processes that produced similar materiality, save for the notable exceptions of the sociospatial dialectic and enslaved-African domestic architecture (Espersen 2017). The close association of housing with class on Saba, especially among the island's upper class, implies that government officials probably considered lower-class housing as a prime constituent of deserving poverty, especially relative to thatched houses.

Poverty was best seen through Saba's powered landscapes, wherein certain villages and areas were considered poor, thereby bestowing poverty upon these inhabitants' material things. Palmetto Point was a primarily White Saban village that was considered poor and backward by Sabans, and even "degenerate" and "inbred" by foreign visitors. The former stigma continues to the present among residents of the Promised Land, that section of the Bottom to which residents of Palmetto Point were relocated in 1934. Middle Island was inhabited primarily by African-descent Sabans and would likely have been viewed in a similar vein by other Sabans. Despite the associations with poverty attached to these two villages, within the villages themselves a certain class hierarchy existed among residents that could be seen in the material record. Larger houses with cut-stone and mortar foundations were present alongside dry-stone foundations supporting small, two-room houses; the small number of cisterns relative to houses created a social premium for cistern ownership; differences were seen in burial markers; and some households displayed evidence of literacy. Residents of the Bottom viewed themselves as a higher class of Saban than residents of the rest of the island, which manifested in a tangible rivalry with the village of Windwardside, whereby marriages between their residents was rare.

Plantation vs. non-plantation landscapes on Saba were also instrumental in framing Saban poverty. The negligible value of the Spring Bay Flat plantation to Abraham Heyliger and, later, Carel Seelig is reflected in the size of the Big House, which was smaller than the size of the average "Saban-style" house documented by Brugman. More comparable house sizes were to be found at Palmetto Point; once again, a village that Sabans generally considered socially backward and poor. This highlights the importance of space in defining class relative to people and materiality, and the limitations that Saba's landscape imposed upon the dominance and profitability of its plantations.

Sabans' purchasing practices also served to exacerbate local and regional conceptions of poverty among residents. Many Sabans would have reified the notion of "poor Saba" abroad on St. Thomas during the mid-19th century by employing barter rather than specie as a means of exchange, even acquiring goods there that could have otherwise been obtained on Saba itself. Barter effectively became a symbol of their poverty abroad and a symptom of the lack of currency in circulation on Saba by that time. Sabans did not shop around for better prices, but, rather, tended to patronize "their" store and buy in small quantities. Meanwhile, shop owners and surplus-producing agriculturalists priced their goods arbitrarily based more on whim than a sense of local or regional competition. The ability of this type of economy to persist on Saba despite the gradual spread of capitalism in the region during the 19th and 20th centuries testifies to the island's social and economic insularity during this time. To residents of Golden Rock era St. Eustatius, 19th-century St. Thomas, and travelers from the 19th century to the 1960s, Saba was an island of poor people. Sabans, meanwhile, maintained their own conceptions of poverty among themselves, which was understood differently according to class and experienced differently through one's place in the landscape, by one's race, and by one's gender. Despite changes in the material possessions of Sabans, they would be simultaneously poor and not poor depending where they lived on the island, and regardless of whether properties and possessions may have expressed otherwise, according to Saban norms and expectancies or their own.

By studying poverty in terms of space and powered perspectives, the materiality of the people inhabiting a given poor space changes relative to people or groups that could enforce and maintain their powered perspective of places they considered poor, and those they did not. The concept of scale allows for a range of interpretations of poverty of the material culture of a given group or area based upon the expectations of the observer. This emphasis on the experience of poverty highlights the importance of multiple powered perspectives, both external and internal, in designating and reifying poverty. Due to the ephemeral nature of poverty relative to space and perspective, its associated materiality is best understood reflexively through powered perspectives and powered landscapes, rather than through a static pile of representative material objects.

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