

In "The Archaeology of Atlantic Africa and the African Diaspora"

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ABSTRACT

This paper provides an anthropologically oriented overview of the newly emerging subfield of African-American maritime archaeology. The maritime-focused study of African-Americans holds considerable promise to open up new and different avenues of investigation towards examining cultural and historical linkages between Africa and the Diaspora. As in terrestrial archaeology, it can also reinforce or disprove historical accounts and can show differences between Africa and the Diaspora as well. At its core, African-American maritime archaeology is about agency, identity, and especially power. Slave ships, for instance, are important early places to investigate the manner in which agency was actually exercised during this particularly cruel form of culture contact. Similarly, the histories, networks, and stories of Black sailors provide important clues about the development of a unique Black maritime aesthetic, and the effects this globally developed structure of feeling had and continues to have on Black politics and identity.

The study of the seafaring component of the African Diaspora, particularly for African-Americans, has an almost intuitive appeal. So much of African and Diaspora life in one way or another revolves around maritime or sea-like themes and metaphors, as is well known. Examples include (and this is by no means an extensive list) Kongo cosmologies, wherein the water was seen as the conduit into the spirit world, in the Candomble goddess of the sea Yemanjá, who cares for and protects the men and women making their living in the seas off the Bahian coast, or in many of the traditions and practices observed by Garifuna seafarers along the central Belizian coast and elsewhere in Central America. Certainly the poetry of Langston Hughes (“The Negro Speaks of Rivers”) is another classic example of how important the role of water has been and continues to be in Black culture. It is also certainly not by accident, as Bolster (1997) points out, that the first six autobiographies written by Black men in the English language were written by mariners.

Although it could be approached from many directions, the major aim of anthropological African-American maritime archaeology is to figure out the role of the sea and seafaring in the development and ongoing cultural practice of Black identity. As many writers such as Paul Gilroy (1993) have noted over the years, the unique geographies of ships afford us singular and powerful vantage points from which to investigate the advent of modernity and the development of blackness within it. By identity, I essentially mean what Eric Wolf (2001: 354) noted in 1984 when he argued that “processes of identity-making and –unmaking refer to the creation and abrogation of the cultural markers and culturally informed activities by which populations define themselves and are defined by others in the process of incorporation.” Identity is a historical phenomenon which emanates “primarily from the dynamics of labor mobilization, as well as from the closely connected consolidation of competitive political power” (Wolf 2001: 368). Seafaring is in many ways the ultimate “everyday” practice; it is therefore a very fertile place to study these questions.

Methodologically, the African-American study of the sea owes much to the modern development of maritime archaeology as an accepted archaeological subfield. Regrettably, however, at present maritime archaeology has very little to offer theoretically to those interested in studying Black identity and the social and economic transformations its development engendered. Although the scene is beginning to slowly change, the field as a whole is marked by pervasive Eurocentricity and a somewhat clumsy scientism, which too frequently have limited the scope of maritime archaeological investigations to mostly pale, male and stale caricatures. The stereotype of the “macho” archaeologist/diver has also not helped things; it has distanced this field from seriously engaging the

larger African-American Studies community and the realities of contemporary Black life with which it is at least partly engaged. The amount of scientific information available about the transatlantic slave trade, for instance, is far more scarce than it need or ought to be, given the by now obvious truth that the trade in its entirety was perhaps the single most defining characteristic in the development of the modern world.

Conversely, although the plantation was an obvious early geographic choice for African-American archaeologists, it has now become apparent that the plantation was only one of many places where African and African-American culture and identity were exercised and negotiated. The maritime environment serves as a particularly powerful metaphor for the Black experience, in that the dynamic and intense circumstances in which so many Africans and African-Americans found themselves acted as a marker for the commonly acknowledged things that make contemporary Black culture so unique: improvisation, displacement, strength, spirituality, music, and so forth. Archaeological research is the primary method by which the ethnogenesis of varying “shipmate” identities (Blackburn 1997, Mintz and Price 1992) can and probably ought to be investigated.

Work in this arena is inherently political. It is also often polemical, but this is not necessarily a bad thing. Slave Trade Studies have been political since the publication of W.E.B. Du Bois’s landmark 1895 doctoral dissertation on the subject, and were episodically considered blasphemous by anti-abolitionists before then. Ultimately, albeit somewhat indirectly, this is policy oriented—and thus applied—work. The archaeological study of the transatlantic slave trade, one of the most sorry chapters in world history, cuts to the heart of ongoing debates about the origins and development of modernity, and stands to furnish further insight that can be used by reparations activists, for instance. The famous U.S. walkout of the 2001 World Conference Against Racism in Durban, South Africa, clearly illustrates that this subject remains quite significant. Moreover, the study of *internal* slave trading within New World countries is also important. In the American case it raises all sorts of important and interesting questions about the true meaning of American democracy and what “freedom” has historically meant in that country. It also sheds greater light (Bancroft 1933, Tadman 1996) on the business history of the United States and the importance of “free market” dynamics in the socioeconomics of “negro speculation” (a euphemism for slave trading). Lastly, the stories of African and African-American sailors constitute a novel, unique and primary literary and cultural genre that can be investigated archaeologically. The often ignored detail that a disproportionate number of Blacks worked on ships (whaling ships, for instance) up until the mid nineteenth century, and were eventually almost completely Jim Crowed out of existence is another emblematic story about the history of race in American

labor relations. It also explains a great deal about how the legal manipulation of work, life, and love can almost completely erase multi-generational traditions of “shipping out” and full participation in a maritime life. But the traditions remain embedded beneath the surface awaiting excavation.

WHAT MARITIME ARCHAEOLOGY IS

Casual observers may have some difficulty distinguishing between the different forms of archaeology conducted under or near water. Thankfully Staniforth and Delgado (2002) have produced generally accepted definitions that shed some light on the different emphases archaeologists have placed on submerged cultural material. Generally speaking, the term *underwater archaeology* refers to “the systematic study of past human life, behaviors, activities and cultures using the physical (or material) remains (including sites, structures and artifacts) as well as other evidence found in the underwater (or submerged) environment. Such evidence may exist beneath fresh (or inland) waters or beneath salt (or marine) waters. It may be visible on the bed of the water body (i.e. seabed) or buried beneath sediment. The term underwater archaeology simply refers to the environment in which the practice of archaeology is undertaken.”

The term overlaps with the following further definitions, which can be taken to mean that these are sub-specializations within underwater archaeology:

Maritime archaeology - the archaeological study of humans and their interactions with the sea and can include sites that are not underwater but that are related to maritime activities such as lighthouses, port constructions or shore-based whaling stations.

Marine archaeology – the archaeological study of material remains created by humans that are submerged in the marine (or saltwater) environment such as submerged aircraft.

Nautical archaeology - the archaeological study of ships and shipbuilding. Like maritime archaeology it can include sites that are not underwater but that are related to ships and shipbuilding including ship burials, shipwreck remains in the terrestrial environment or shipbuilding yards.

A maritime archaeology approach is probably the best-suited research vehicle for studying the African Diaspora, although in practice there is considerable overlap between the categories. It should be noted that for most maritime archaeologists it is *humans* and their interaction with the maritime environment where emphasis is mostly and ultimately directed, whereas most nautical archaeologists are trained to focus first on the *ship* and its construction. Both approaches provide mutually reinforcing information that have proved fruitful in investigating the diverse methods humans have used to adapt to the marine environment.

THE MARITIME ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE TRANSATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE

There is an extensive body of historical information available on the slave trade, much of it produced by

eighteenth and nineteenth century abolitionists, and this body of literature, particularly the various slave narratives generated over the years, are important starting points. Research designs in this area are generally targeted toward establishing the living conditions onboard a typical slaver, for both cargo and crew, investigating the maritime design innovations brought about by the need to carry and safely transport human cargo numbering in the hundreds (and later the thousands), and gathering information about the types of material culture that were involved in the trade, such as the dreaded “speculum oris” a cruel device used to force open the mouths of newly enslaved blacks who refused or were incapable of eating (for some photographs of this device and discussion of its role in the development of dentistry and gynecology, visit the French Museum of Medicine website at <http://www.bium.univ-paris5.fr/aspad/expo09.htm>). In seeking answers to such questions, we are also able to understand how material culture usage and the individual ability to “express” one’s “culture” are constrained and enabled by the exercise of various forms of power. Thus the study of the transatlantic slave trade is also an important research site in the archaeological investigation of power (for some brief discussion of Foucault and Weber, see Blackburn 1997: 588).

The shipwreck of the British merchant/slaver *Henrietta Marie* is probably the most famous example of a vessel engaged in the transatlantic slave trade to have been studied by archaeologists. The wrecksite, which is still being investigated by the Mel Fisher Maritime Historical Society (MFMHS), has also produced the most extant middle passage artifact assemblage yet available. The MFMHS has done an admirable job of public outreach; since the late 1990’s the Society has coordinated a national tour of the shipwreck artifacts under the banner *A Slave Ship Speaks*, as well as a permanent display of some of the objects in its Key West headquarters. An accompanying book, titled *Spirits of the Passage*, provides a comprehensive discussion of the ship and its history, and provides a general discussion of the slave trade utilizing the noted narrative of the enslaved West African Olaudah Equiano. The society has placed much of the information available on the Henrietta Marie shipwreck on its excellent website at <http://www.melfisher.org>.

Transatlantic slave trading was big business. According to Roger Anstey (1975: 47), whose calculations on the British slave trade have stood the test of time pretty well, between 1761 and 1807 alone approximately 6000 voyages resulted in the landing of about 1.4 million enslaved persons, at a profit of about 4.4 million pounds. The Caribbean island of Barbados, “in 1699-1701 was the richest of the English plantation colonies. Although it had little more than half the total population of Virginia...its exports were worth nearly 50 percent more” (Blackburn 1997: 267). Jamaica’s sugar crop tripled in size in the second half of the eighteenth century, and the French island

of Martinique produced 6.5 million pounds of coffee in 1740, which began displacing the customary Arabian and Moroccan product in Europe (Blackburn 1997: 432).

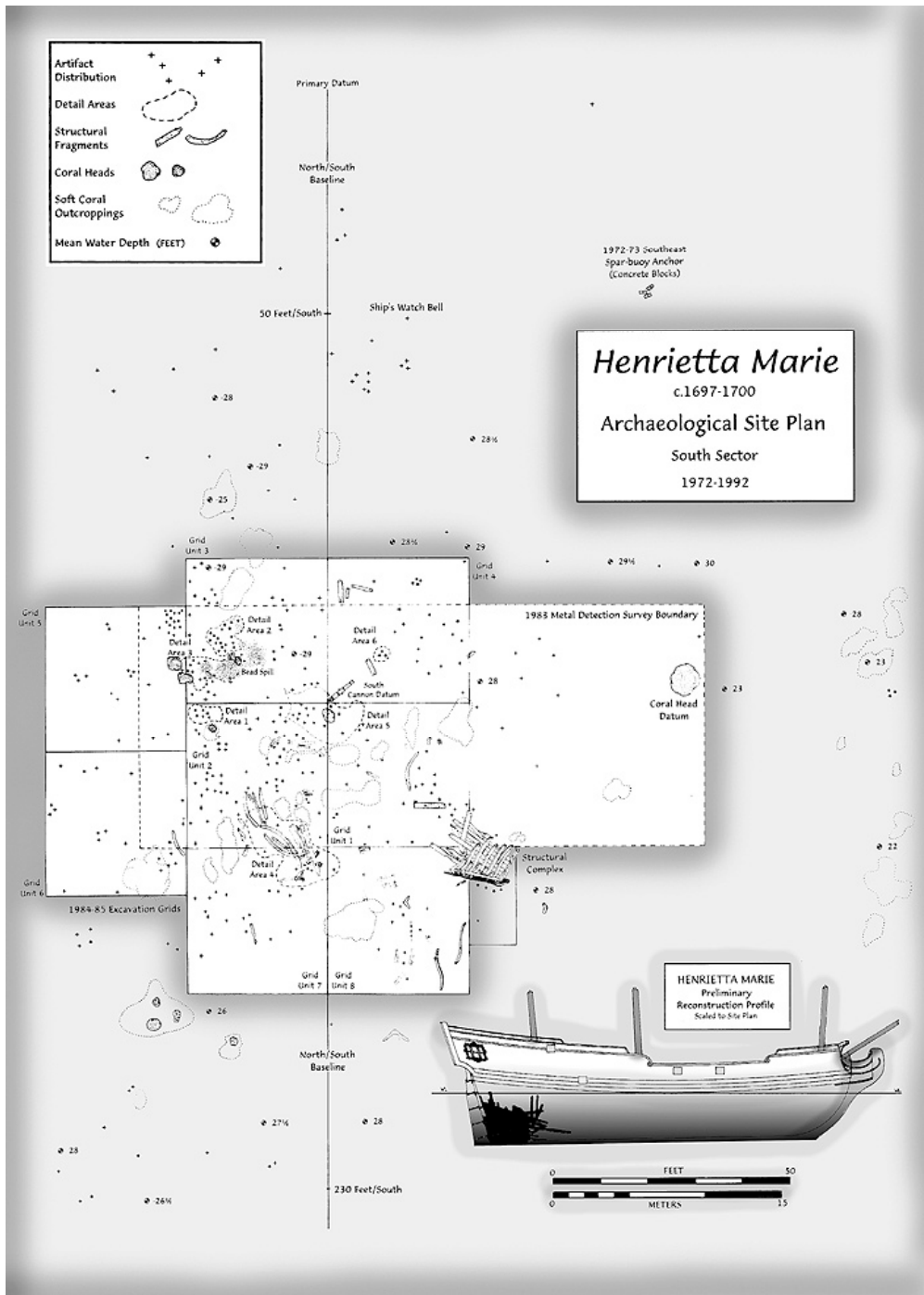


Figure 1:
Henrietta Marie
Archaeological Site Plan,
1972-1992.
Courtesy of the Mel
Fisher Maritime Historical
Society.
<http://www.melfisher.org>

The Henrietta Marie wrecked on New Ground Reef, approximately thirty-six miles west of Key West, FL in 1700. With the exception of the ship's bell containing the inscription "Henrietta Marie 1699" (used to positively identify the ship) the perhaps most famous and emotionally resonant artifacts from the shipwreck are the about 80

sets of shackles or “bilboes” found over the course of about twenty years of investigation between the early 1970’s and the 1990’s. Of varying sizes, made of iron, and forged in various weights, they were used to bind the ankles and/or wrists of the enslaved cargo. These, along with the presence of a sizeable copper cooking pot or cauldron found on the site are now signature markers being used by maritime archaeologists to identify slave ship sites.

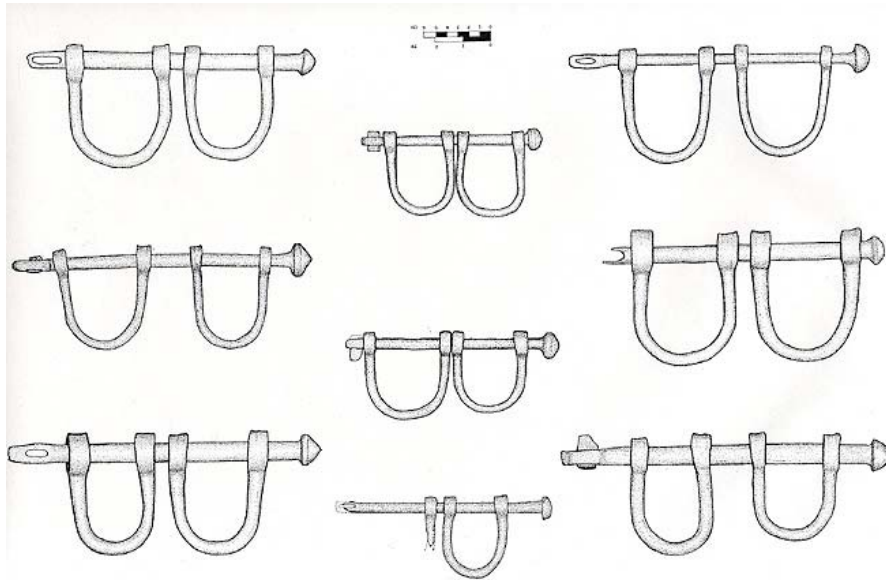


Figure 2:
Differently sized shackles or
“Bilboes.”

Courtesy of the Mel Fisher
Maritime Historical Society.
<http://www.melfisher.org>

A fairly impressive pewterware collection dating to the reign of William III (1689-1702) was also recovered, and includes basins, flagons, plates, spoons, and tankards among others. Pewter eating and serving utensils are also beginning to be used as diagnostic markers for British slave ship sites. For instance, the wreck of the *Queen Anne’s Revenge* off the North Carolina coast, the flagship of the notorious brigand Blackbeard, contained pewter plates and chargers bearing inscription marks similar to those found on the *Henrietta Marie*. Eight ivory elephant tusks and thousands of beads were also recovered from the site (for fuller discussion and photographs of the artifacts, see Burnside & Robotham: 1997, and Steinberg: 2002). These artifacts are of particular interest because they provide tangible evidence for the sorts of transactions that would take place on the African coast, and demonstrate how quickly the British could act in their usurpation of previously existing Portuguese, Spanish, and Dutch human commerce. Great Britain’s concerted efforts in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries to establish Caribbean and North American colonies entailed the chartering of various slave trading concerns such as the Royal African Company. By 1700, European merchants had developed a sophisticated understanding of the trading patterns of West Africans with whom their ships and supercargoes came into contact.

It is clear that both ivory tusks and beads were valued highly in pre-atlantic slave trade Africa. Ivory

bracelets and carvings dating from the eleventh century onwards were found, for instance, at Begho in Ghana (Anquandah 1995: 649), and glass trade beads of Mediterranean and Asian origin, have been found in many places in the continent's interior, including at Kgaswe B55 in Botswana by James Denbow (Kiyaga-Mulindwa: 388), and in southern Malawi at the Matope Court site ((Juwayeyi: 394).

The Venetian beads from the Henrietta Marie shipwreck can likewise provide meaningful information not only about the value of the objects to both Africans and Europeans, but about the contexts in which they functioned as media of exchange. Beads found in terrestrial sites (the Jordan plantation, for instance; see Brown and Cooper 1990) are often interpreted to be "example[s] of the slaves' reinterpretation of manufactured objects to meet their own cultural uses" (Singleton 1991: 148). The Henrietta Marie assemblage, however, opens up another perhaps complementary interpretation that has already been well established historically: slave trading Europeans made beads to fit African tastes and attempted to produce tradeworthy material that the Africans would find attractive and bargain for. On one occasion, for instance, slave trader James Barbot noted that a local African king "objected much against our basins, tankards, yellow beads, and some other merchandise, as of little or no demand at the time.... the blacks objected much against our wrought pewter and tankards, green beads and other goods, which they would not accept of" (cited in Burnside 1997: 116).

European slave traders' responses to diverse African tastes, therefore, played a significant role in the evolution of the trade, and, of course, on the sorts of materials recovered from slave shipwrecks. What matters most in interpreting these sorts of situations, is attention to context (especially geography) and especially power. In the late seventeenth century, African polities still possessed a considerable range of options with which to influence the manner and style of slave trading transactions, and European supercargoes had to respect that. An enslaved African *American*, on the other hand, was probably operating under a rather different set of power constraints, although plantation archaeology has, of course, revealed the remarkable degree of agency disempowered and enslaved African populations in the New World were able to still exercise under relatively horrific conditions.

DISPLACED GEOGRAPHIES

For Paul Gilroy (1993: 16-17) ships "...need to be thought of as cultural and political units rather than abstract embodiments of the triangular trade. They were something more—a means to conduct political dissent and possibly a distinct mode of cultural production

Gilroy's ambitious efforts to reposition the cultural geography of race beyond the borders of the modern

nation-state were an important theoretical development. His formulations, such as his focus on a “new topography of loyalty and identity” (1993: 16) creatively dynamized identity formation processes. The idea of a Black Atlantic and of the ship in its creation were powerful metaphors for Gilroy because they reinforced the simultaneous resilience and flexibility of Black identity formation under complicated geographies in motion. Gilroy pointed out that a focus on nation-states was inadequately encapsulating of the fluidity of what he termed the “Black Atlantic” experience. The logic of his argument can and should be extended to include the rest of the planet, because the European conquest and colonization of the Pacific and Indian Oceans took place at about the same time as the “development” of the Atlantic world, and also played a very important role in the development of modernity. Both the extension of the “roots” and the various “routes” Gilroy discusses were more than simply an Atlantic phenomenon. African American scholars have long recognized this. When W.E.B. Du Bois, about a century ago, posited that the color line was going to be the problem of the twentieth century, he did not limit his discussion to North and/or South America, or even to the Western Hemisphere. He was making a global argument about the relationship between the “darker and lighter races,” in, among other places, “the islands of the sea.”

Hawai’i is a good example. The post-contact history of this fascinating archipelago is bursting with exciting cross-pollinations of varying diasporas, including the African Diaspora. Not only were Black seamen part of the eighteenth century English and French expeditions to the Pacific (something which the traditional Eurocentric and the “newer” Pacific Islander histories of the region have been rather slow to acknowledge), but many Black mariners took the opportunity to escape potential enslavement in North or South America to fashion new lives for themselves in the islands. One noteworthy example is Anthony D. Allen, a New York native and sailor who came to Hawai’i from Boston in 1810 and stayed until his death in 1835. Allen acted as a confidant of Kamehameha the Great, received a land grant near present-day Punahou School, and operated a business on O’ahu provisioning the increasing numbers of ships making port calls in Hawai’i. Allen married a Hawaiian woman. Their descendants eventually blended into the “local” culture that developed during the course of the nineteenth century in Hawai’i.

The influx of Portuguese descended Blacks from southeastern New England who came to the Pacific onboard whaling ships starting in 1820 has also left distinctive traces in both places. In Hawai’i, the men who stayed behind to make new lives for themselves were initially identified as “African” or “Portuguese” in nineteenth century census records, but over time came to be identified as “Part-Hawaiian” as their descendants assimilated. In New England, the stories these men brought back were part of the extensive “informal” (informal only in the sense

that it took place “under the radar screen” as it were) communication networks that kept Blacks well informed on the condition and status of the “darker races” around the world, especially in relationship to themselves and their always tenuous freedom. The discovery of a whiskey bottle near a nineteenth century settlement now occupied by Hickam Air Force Base (McGhee & Curtis 2002) reinforces similar points made by James Deetz (1996) in his historical archaeology classic *In Small Things Forgotten* (artifact similarities between Virginia and South Africa) and by Charles Orser in a *Historical Archaeology of the Modern World* (similar artifact relationships between Palmares, Brazil, and Ireland). The glass bottle found near the Fort Kamehameha portion of Hickam Air Force Base bears a striking resemblance to similar bottles found during African-American Archaeology excavations in the five points section of New York City. Travelling artifacts that are redeposited and reused in novel ways are a hallmark of what make historical archaeology truly “global” and interesting.

The “displaced geographies” include other anthropological and biological linkages between the Atlantic and Pacific, including the famous British attempt to transplant breadfruit from the Pacific for use by enslaved Caribbean plantation workers (immortalized by the famous “Mutiny on the Bounty”) and the noteworthy Indian and Chinese labor migration to the Caribbean which have left their mark on islands such as Trinidad, Cuba, and Jamaica (not to mention Mississippi on the American continent. For discussion see Loewen 1988). Certainly the “global” nature of the African Diaspora has not gone unacknowledged (Harris 1992); however the generation of more specific evidence establishing the worldwide character of the dispersal and its linkages is another challenge that lies before maritime archaeologists and historians. How can one fully acknowledge the geographic variety and vibrancy of the Black diasporic experience while appreciating the utility and necessity of regional approaches? Investigations of “internal” slave trades may be one answer, because their investigation furnishes examples of specific political, social, and economic situations where identities were forged.

THE NINETEENTH CENTURY INTERNAL SLAVE TRADE IN THE UNITED STATES

The nineteenth century United States saw the movement of over one million enslaved African-Americans from the states of the Upper South such as Virginia and Maryland to Lower South states such as Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas. The trade grew in size and sophistication over the course of the century and shifted the maritime center of this commerce from ports such as Richmond and Charleston to ports such as New Orleans, Mobile, and Galveston. Although much of this trade was conducted inland via the movement of slave coffles or the settlement of migrants on newly acquired lands in the west, a significant portion of this trade was conducted—as one might expect—via the

sea. Perhaps the most famous illustration of the turns this trade could take involved the famous slave insurrection onboard the *Creole*, an American vessel which was transporting an enslaved cargo from Richmond to New Orleans. On November 7, 1841, 135 *African-Americans* (as opposed to Africans in the famous Amistad case) under the leadership of Madison Washington revolted and forced the ship to sail to the Bahamas, where they were eventually freed by the British Government.

In many ways what happened on board the *Creole* mirrored events on the *Amistad*: a group of enslaved people of African heritage rose up against a slaveholding crew of European heritage, took control of the vessel, and demanded to be taken somewhere where they would be free...the case of the *Creole* differed from that of the Amistad in one crucial aspect: the *Creole* rebels were from the United States and had been legally held as slaves by the state from which they escaped. Because of this, the ways in which the rebels were represented, and their rebellious acts were interpreted, differed dramatically from reactions to the Mendians in the Amistad affair. Their differing status according to U.S. and international law made them into completely different kinds of subjects (Sale 1997: 121).

The *Creole* case is notable for many reasons, including the conflicts it engendered between the United States—which regarded the rebels as lost and compensable property—and Great Britain, which had abolished slavery in 1833 and regarded the insurrectionists as persons. Sale (1997: 144-145) goes on to note that the claims commission which eventually awarded the former slaveholders \$110, 330 in compensation, based their decision on the premise that the revolt was in reality a conflict between white persons and their recognized nations, not as a conflict between a group of enslaved persons seeking their freedom and their enslavers. The ruling “erased the agency of the rebels—and Nassau’s black population—by figuring the conflict as a struggle between armed national entities. It thereby drew upon, displayed, and supported the logic of nation-states, which not only authorized but only acknowledged the existence of the (white) citizens of recognized nations” (Sale 1997: 145). The significance of “internal” slave ship revolts such as the *Creole* affair lies in their affirmation that much of the Black experience has been about the fight for freedom, and the fight for full acknowledgement of Black humanity, and by extension recognition of Black folks’ rights as human beings, something which nineteenth century America was not prepared to do. By thus keeping a sharp focus on this central contradiction within the Black experience, the maritime archaeologist/historian is able to shed further light on the processes involved in the struggle for human rights and later on full citizenship.

The Texas example is also illustrative of the wide influence of “negro speculation” in American westward “migration.” As Michael Tadman (1996) has so eloquently shown, the westward movement of Africans and African-Americans across North America should not be considered to be an “immigrant” experience. The truth is that slaves that accompanied their masters westward mostly did so involuntarily. In fact, a large percentage of the

movement of enslaved persons to new nineteenth century American colonies such as Louisiana, Missouri, and Texas is directly attributable to the internal slave trade. When Stephen F. Austin began settlement of a Texas empresario land grant his father had been able to obtain from Spanish authorities in 1820, the Negro population of the area was small. About forty years later, the enslaved population of Texas stood at nearly 200,000. Both internal and external slave trading contributed to this fairly remarkable increase, which dramatically influenced Texas economics, politics, and culture.

The dynamics of slave trading in Texas were complex and consisted of both illicit smuggling of enslaved people from Latin America or the Caribbean to slave markets in New Orleans via Texas, or “legal” importation of *African-American* slaves from the Upper South or older Lower South states. Between 1820 and 1836 the political status of slavery in Texas was uncertain; Mexico’s position on the matter was somewhat inconsistent-- understandable given the revolutionary climate of the time and the difficulties inherent in the establishment of a new nation--but the abolitionist sentiments of Mexican officials was a matter of record, particularly the attitude of Afro-Mestizo president Vicente Guerrero, who outlawed slavery in Mexico in 1829. Not surprisingly, the cauldron eventually boiled over; when it became obvious that the Mexican government took the abolition of slavery seriously, the insurrectionists in Texas took matters into their own hands in order to safeguard their investments in “life, liberty, and property.” The colonists understood that their future economic prosperity depended on the Texas property right to possess, acquire, and control enslaved Africans and African Americans. In fact, proceeds from slave trading were utilized to finance the Texas Revolution. It is a well known fact that James W. Fannin, later martyred in the “Goliad Massacre,” was an active slave trader who purchased a cargo of 152 souls in a Havana slave market shortly after arriving in Texas from Alabama in 1834 (McGhee 2000: 159).

Whereas Cuba served as an important purchase point in the 1820’s and 1830’s, Nicaragua figured prominently in Texas history in the 1850’s as various “filibustering” schemes sought to extend American-style slavery south of the border . The entire Gulf of Mexico teetered with vessels carrying enslaved cargoes, and smugglers seeking to avoid capture sought refuge in the navigationally difficult barrier islands near the Texas gulf coast, in addition to Honduran “Bay Islands” such as Roatàn, Utilia, and Guanaja. Following the navigational routes of these ships produces unexpected and swift lines of connection that clearly demonstrate how disparate yet interconnected trade routes *within* regions could be. These back and forths open up conceptual space to keep scholarly focuses “regional” while acknowledging the hybridity, pace, and depth of commercial maritime linkages.

CONCLUSION

Racial formation (Omi and Winant 1986) entails simultaneously global and localized processes that dynamically interpenetrate and produce a rich diversity of experiences and identities. Maritime archaeology can contribute much to this discussion. Its insights are inherently cross-disciplinary, and its primary strength lies in its ability to traverse geographic boundaries; indeed ships are geographies unto themselves. Maritime archaeological insights can expand understandings of how racial formation works, and can also stretch the theoretical paradigm in newer directions by demonstrating how *even more* complicated racial meanings can be when investigated at a more global level. Eric Wolf, one of the earliest proponents of an “interconnected” and process oriented approach to the study of humankind famously noted over twenty years ago (Wolf 1982: 1) that “only by understanding these names [such as “nation,” society,” and “culture”] as bundles of relationships, and by placing them back into the field from which they were abstracted, can we hope to avoid misleading inferences and increase our share of understanding.” The Hawai’i examples I furnished in this chapter demonstrate that “blackness” is not immutable, and perhaps never has been. Recent attention in interracial relationships and the increasing hybridity of twenty-first century youth culture may seem like hot topics today, but the phenomenon is in fact nothing new whatsoever. Maritime archaeology’s insights into the development of modernity can historicize these sorts of discussions into practically innumerable new directions.

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