

***The Archaeology of Black Markets: Local Ceramics and Economies in 18<sup>th</sup> Century Jamaica.* Mark W. Hauser, 2008, 320p, ISBN 13: 978-0-8130-3261-0**

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Mark Hauser's book takes on the daunting task of looking for social connections between slaves archaeologically. Hauser returns to the subject of internal slave economies in Jamaica, first studied by anthropologists in the 1960s, but which has become a major subject of interest by Caribbean historians and archaeologists in the past few decades. Using historical sources, oral histories, ceramic typologies and analysis of inclusions in ceramics, Hauser makes a strong argument for an active slave internal economy on the island. Hauser first looks at the historical evidence of these local economies in Jamaica. Historical documentation, including photos, travelers' accounts and colonial laws, establish slaves' involvement in local trade. However, Hauser suggests that the local markets were a space of contested power, which caused tensions in the colonial period. Slaves in the market were referred to as thieves and undesirables, reflecting the fears of the controlling elite over a space they had little control. However, Hauser also points out that slave participation was a necessity on the island; imported goods, infrequent and insufficient, could not entirely fill the demands of the locals, therefore allowing a point of entry for slaves' production. Hauser suggests that, while they may have attempted to control the market by enacting laws, elites were still tied to the local slave controlled markets through necessity of trade.

The methods employed by slaves to engage in market activities seem to have varied on Jamaica. The market day, Sunday, would have coincided with slaves' free day, allowing for travel by slaves to local markets. Historical accounts suggest that slaves would travel for miles on Sundays from the inland plantations to participate in the weekly market. However, Hauser also mentions the role of peddlers, who travelled throughout the island during the colonial period trading items; peddlers would have facilitated the movement of slave produced items as well as helping to maintain social ties between slaves on isolated plantations.

Given the lack of archaeological visibility for many trade items, including foodstuffs, the archaeological focus of the book is on ceramics. Hauser explores the problems that have occurred in African Diaspora archaeology by attempting to connect ceramics with ethnicity and identity. “Colonoware,” the much debated low-fired earthenware found on the East Coast of the United States at slave sites, has been expanded into the Caribbean, with archaeologists suggesting ceramics found there be included in this controversial typology. In addition to citing the numerous arguments brought up in the United States over the difficulties of attaching the manufacturers’ identity to “Colonoware,” Hauser points out the diversity of people in Jamaica contributing to the ceramic tradition, including Amerindians, African slaves of different origins, and various European groups. His argument, like many recent arguments over low-fired earthenware in America, points to a creolization of ceramic traditions in the creation of “Colonoware.” However, rather than focusing on the issue of ethnicity, Hauser chooses to look at the evidence of social connections between various groups as evidenced in the ceramics.

Hauser’s next step in establishing the internal market of ceramics is to build typologies from ceramics found at numerous sites across Jamaica, including both rural and urban sites. His work looks largely at *yabbas*, the low-fired earthenware cooking vessels whose presence in the local markets of Jamaica was well documented in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries before largely being replaced by industrially-manufactured metal pots. Hauser uses classic archaeological techniques to create ceramic typologies and allow for comparison amongst the varied sites; based on rim styles and decorations, he divided the low-fired earthenware into types and shows how the ceramic industry changed over time, with distinctive periods of popularity for each type.

All of the types of ceramics he describes are found throughout the island, suggesting the market forces of supply and demand were working on the production of locally made ceramics. While it could be argued these changes were the results of a single center of ceramic production, Hauser’s following analysis of ceramic inclusions make this explanation highly unlikely.

After completing the typological analysis of the ceramics, Hauser looked at the inclusions in the ceramics to determine if the ceramics from each site were being locally

made or if they indicated networks of local trade. Based on the composition of the inclusions, Hauser divides the ceramics into five types. While it might be expected, based upon the perceived self-sufficiency of plantations, that each plantation had their own individual type of ceramic and urban sites, via trade, had a mixture, the evidence proves contrary: all five types of ceramics were found on both urban and rural plantation sites. Based on this analysis, Hauser concludes that ceramics were being traded around the island through local slave controlled trade networks.

Hauser's book, while giving compelling evidence of slave trade networks, does have areas, which could be strengthened by further analysis or research. While Hauser questions the role of ethnicity in the creation of ceramics, he does not seem to question the role of gender, referring frequently to women as being the manufacturers of ceramics in Jamaica. Historical documentation for the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries in Jamaica's history do seem to suggest this is the case; but given the well-documented preference for male slaves both by African slavers and by sugar cane planters, the presence of sufficient female slaves in Jamaica in the 18<sup>th</sup> century is an unaddressed problem. In many slave-owning societies, it wasn't until the end of the slavery period that natural reproduction amongst slaves was sufficient to allow for a more equal population of males and females; even in Amerindian women were producing ceramics, with the rapid decline of their population, the availability of skilled potters would have been declining as well. For his study, emphasizing the skill of ceramic production was, in most Amerindian and African societies, a largely gendered skill could have strengthened the argument for the necessity of an internal slave trade: all plantations may not have had skilled potters. Given the amount of time Hauser spends questioning the relationship between ethnicity and ceramics, some exploration of the relationship between gender and ceramic production would seem to be appropriate.

The analysis of the inclusions does strengthen Hauser's argument for a local trade network by slaves on the island, but the conclusions he draws would be greatly enhanced by the location of the clay sources used or a production site on the island. Inclusions in ceramics can be caused by naturally occurring elements in the soil or by elements added to the clay by potters to give the vessel increased strength; Hauser does not state whether he believes his inclusion typology is naturally occurring or supplemental materials added

by the potter, but in either case, the occurrence of ceramics with similar inclusion patterns across the island could be explained by alternate means. Establishing the origins of these inclusions, locating the sources of the clay and attempting to find a ceramic production area on the island would seem to be the next step to strengthening Hauser's argument.

Mark Hauser's book shows the potential for the integration of archaeological sciences with highly contextual historical research to understand behaviors in the past. Through his research, he establishes the social connections between slaves were present in the colonial period and local markets, so important to the post-emancipation period in Jamaica, had their roots in slavery. Such research further emphasizes the diversity of ways in which slaves sought to control their own lives and highlights their agency; through the necessity of trade goods in the markets of Jamaica, slaves found a niche for themselves in the local economy, one which they would continue into the period of freedom.