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RACE AND CLASS

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Racial ideology and class inequality have profoundly shaped the last half millennium, but archaeologists have been oddly reticent about the material impression of the color line and its entanglement with class structure. An archaeology that examines race across time and space can underscore the complexity of the color line and illuminate the genesis of contemporary privileges. Politically, though, some archaeologists have been hesitant to wrestle with race and racism or to link color and class inequalities to contemporary systems of privilege. Instead, they have considered race as a social construction without critically examining the concrete realities of racial identities, the distinctive epistemic privileges of differing positions along the color line, and the ways in which an archaeology of race is compelled to scrutinize the impression of class on race. Archaeology risks ignoring perhaps the most fundamental structural

features of the colonial and postcolonial world if it evades questions about race and racism, casts class in reductionist terms disconnected from race, or poses these considerations as somehow methodologically or politically outside the appropriate sphere of archaeological scholarship. This paper focuses on how a broad range of archaeologists might profit from examining how American historical archaeologists have linked race and class in some forms but disregarded them in other ways that tend to squander many of the most interesting implications of an archaeology of race and class.

Linking Race and Class

Race has long been long approached by archaeologists as a social construction whose power is either largely rhetorical or so complexly interwoven with other dimensions of

identity that it cannot be evoked in material analysis. Virtually all archaeologists appear to have accepted that racism is a social process that has some generalized material dimensions, and race and racism clearly have had a profound impact on archaeological research since the late 19th century, but actual archaeological interpretations that explicitly use race as a framing mechanism are not especially common. Class shares a comparable prominence in its central role in shaping archaeological practice over the last century, and fundamental structural relations of inequality are a feature of every complex society. Class has been defined in myriad ways, and yet it has rarely been linked to race as a paired system of inequality in the post-Columbian world. Most scholars examining the last half millennium recognize that race privileged some agents over others, and few could dispute that material inequalities were routinely paired with various forms of racial inequality. When archaeologists minimize the interdependence of race and class, the discipline risks evading their status as fundamental constitutive features of modernity that are constantly reproduced in the intimate material details of life that archaeology so powerfully illuminates.

In 1945, Oliver Cox (1945) argued that racism was inextricably wound into class relations, suggesting that racism was a form of class exploitation that lay at the heart of capitalism and did not exist before 1492 (Hier 2001: 75). Cox portrayed capitalism as a patchwork of mutually reinforcing systems of oppression (cf. Brewer et al. 2002). Rather than paint racism as simply another form of timeless ethnocentrism, Cox criticized scholars who defined "race prejudice as essentially a belief," indicating that such a position "gives almost no attention to the materialistic source of the rationalization" (Reed 2001). Cox's broader analysis of capitalism and the colonial world eventually formed the basis of world systems theory, but his effort to focus on related systems of racism and class inequality has generally been ignored. W. E. B. Du Bois (1933: 104) saw the 20th-century world in similar terms, as shaped by class and racial exploitation, arguing that "the extension [sic] of the world market by imperial expanding industry has established a world-wide new proletariat of colored workers, toiling under the worst conditions of 19th-century capitalism, herded as slaves and serfs and furnishing by the lowest paid wage in modern history a mass of raw material for industry." Du Bois (1933: 118) soberly acknowledged the power of racial privilege, even in the face of a depression "that levels all in mighty catastrophe." Du Bois believed that while the "fantastic industrial structure of America is threatened with ruin . . . white labor is too frightened at Negro competition to attempt united action" (1933: 118).

Such challenges to acknowledge racism and class inequality as reinforcing systems of oppression remain largely unanswered in archaeology (exceptions include Babson 1990; Delle et al. 2000; Franklin 1997; McDavid 2004; Mullins 1999; Orser 1998; Perry and Paynter 1999; Schrire 1995; Scott 1994; see also McDavid and McGhee, this volume, chapter 37). Anthropologists have scrutinized race and racism in their re-

search and activism for well over a century, and few contemporary anthropological topics have a richer scholarly lineage (Baker and Patterson 1994). Archaeology has played an especially powerful role in both perpetuating and confronting racialized inequalities in scholarship on Indigenous peoples since the late 19th century, and race could be argued to be one of the central factors driving the development of comparative archaeologies since the 19th century.

Nevertheless, for many scholars, race's status as a social construction appears to render it an inappropriate analytic category. Archaeologists occasionally invoke race as one of many dimensions of a generalized identity, but such analyses rarely probe how racial subjectivity was fashioned in material consumption or how systemic racializing processes impacted even the most prosaic everyday details of material life (Epperson 2004: 101–102). Class was long disconnected from race and routinely expunged from prehistoric archaeologies, which once took kinship as the central organizing principle in prehistory and placed class on the historic side of the divide (McGuire 1992: 182). Randall McGuire (1992: 182) argues that until the 1980s, most prehistorians who employed the term "class" used it to refer to craft specialization or a functional division of labor. LouAnn Wurst and Robert Fitts (1999: 1) argue that historical archaeologists have rarely defined class in terms of exploitative social relations and instead favor a notion of a gradational class ladder based on income, occupation, and status distinctions. While class has an exceptionally rich scholarly pedigree distinct from that of racial inquiries, this chapter focuses on how race and class might be most productively coupled in archaeologies that examine the development of capitalism over the last half millennium. Questions of race and class are pertinent to any critical assessment of archaeology's history and practice, and scholarship linking race and class could be foregrounded in virtually any archaeological inquiry (e.g., see González-Ruibal [chapter 2], Atalay [chapter 4], and Orser [chapter 14], this volume).

Dismantling Race

Scholars in many disciplines have productively de-essentialized race since the 1960s, but this has often been accompanied by the sentiment that such dispassionate deconstruction will inevitably dispel unfounded prejudices (cf. Olson 2001). In archaeology, the effort to push "beyond" race and racism has deemphasized structural determinism and shifted the analytical focus to individuals, small social collectives, and hyperfragmented identities. This has certainly complicated archaeological identity, but efforts to dismiss race as an organizing principle for social life and deny its existence in "color blind" analysis hazards becoming its own racist discourse (Harrison 1998: 610). Terrence Epperson (2004) acknowledges that race is indeed a social construction without any claim to biological reality, but he argues that archaeological efforts to anti-essentialize race must still recognize it as a lived reality with concrete material consequences that archaeologists are well situated to interpret.

Racism is a material process that positions social subjects based primarily on physical variation and a now-transparent ideological appeal to biology as a mechanism of distinguishing social collectives. Much of what is accepted as the salient evidence of race is bodily ideologies and color hierarchies that were most clearly defined in the post-Columbian world. It is not unreasonable, of course, to suggest that physical variations were used to distinguish between social collectives much earlier (Gosden 2006). Yet bodily distinction in itself means nothing unless those characteristics are situated within a defining framework, and that framework has been quite distinctive in the last half millennium. Colonialism rooted such distinctions in a geographical place, as with the connection between Blackness and Africa, situating race in spaces that were being contested by European states. Biology also was invoked, providing a scientifically verifiable interpretation for apprehensible reality. Perhaps more importantly, in the colonial world race has been a basis for legitimizing power inequalities.

In the 1970s, historical archaeologists began to extend the discipline's reach throughout the world and confront the power tensions between European colonizers and Indigenous peoples, a move that lay a foundation to examine broadly shared systems of race and class inequalities. One of the first statements championing worldwide archaeologies came from Robert Schuyler (1970: 84), when he advocated for a historical archaeology that examined the "expansion of European culture into the non-European world." Schuyler (1970: 87) envisioned in

European colonization an "overpowering and global presence" in which colonizers negotiated "indigenous cultures ranging from the band level to civilization." Such positions championed a global historical archaeology that recognized broad colonial inequalities and the migrations and dispersals that capitalism fostered, all essential to an archaeology of either race or class. For instance, an archaeology of plantations emerged that initially simply documented captives' presence, then stressed their African cultural continuities, and gradually expanded its scope to transatlantic power relationships. Nevertheless, little of the work following Schuyler's ambitious challenge explicitly considered race and the color line, and considerations of class were restricted to reductive notions of status hierarchies (e.g., Otto 1977). This is especially true of the many ethnic archaeologies that surfaced during those years; these produced rich archaeological evidence from a wide range of ethnic collectives, but rarely linked racism and inequality to concrete material patterns. Race and racism, in particular, tended to be subsumed within and conflated with ethnic subjectivities, naturalizing categories like Irish American and overseas Chinese, and inelegantly sidestepping how those categories were themselves born from racist inequalities.

Race brings with it sticky philosophical and political issues that reach deeply into the ways in which contemporary archaeologists define identity in a global context characterized by dislocation, migration, and inequalities. To some extent, archaeology's apparently delayed attention to race and racism

reflects that colonial archaeologies found their first substantial foothold in the 1960s. The archaeology of the colonial world was initially the province of archaeologists in the eastern United States whose research focused on famous figures, old sites, and conventional historical questions that steered clear of issues of inequality. A few of the earliest historical archaeologists, though, envisioned a discipline that would weave counter-narratives or at least relate tales of everyday life that featured marginalized peoples otherwise ignored in dominant narratives. In 1971, for instance, Robert Ascher and Charles H. Fairbanks examined a 19th-century Georgia slave cabin, arguing that conventional histories and first-person narratives had largely distorted or ignored African-American captives' experiences. They creatively incorporated what they called a "soundtrack," a series of African-American textual voices ranging from Frederick Douglass's autobiography (1845) to Solomon Northrup's 1855 study, *Twelve Years a Slave*. Ascher and Fairbanks aimed to complicate plantation histories with a rich picture of captives' everyday lives, an effort that remains a commonplace ambition of archaeologists who aspire to give "voice" to historically ignored peoples. Their modest inclusion of African-American voices countering dominant narratives resisted painting life along the color line in monolithic and implicitly white terms.

The equation of certain goods with a particular collective ethnic identity is similar to archaeologies of class that revolve around analyses of material value, assuming that expensive goods and assemblages reflect affluence within an economic continuum. This departs from Marxian usage focused on consciousness and the ways in which marginalized peoples experience and articulate shared oppression, and it does not acknowledge race and class as mutually constitutive systems of inequality. Class has often been reduced simply to relative poverty, failing to contemplate the racist symbolism routinely linked with impoverishment and ignoring the multivalent meanings of otherwise commonplace things. Scholarship on agency has complicated reductive notions of class as a monolithic social ladder by focusing on consumption as the product of individual decision-making, but such scholarship often has evaded broader structural constraints and ideologies that lurk within consumption's perceived self-empowerment (Mrozowski 2006; Wurst and McGuire 1999). Charles Orser (2004: 170) argues that the archaeological fixation on the household unit has also moved attention away from race and class, fabricating the household as a locus for consumer decision-making ambiguously linked to either structural influences or consumer agency.

Conventional archaeological definitions of ethnicity and class have been gradually destabilized and complicated, and this has had a paradoxical effect. On the one hand, it has illuminated dynamism and contextual power relations, but, on the other hand, it has also produced some reluctance to embrace any concrete subjectivity, which has yielded especially fluid definitions of identity (McGuire and Wurst 2002). Lynn Meskell (2001: 200) has championed an archaeological focus on "vectors

of difference" that de-essentialize identities while situating them within structural inequalities. Archaeological attention to marginalized social groups, though, has increasingly revolved around somewhat ambiguous notions of "identity" that do not systematically assess power and inequality that are routinely invested in class and racial structures. The destabilization of ethnicity in particular and identity in general has encouraged a hyper-contextualized scholarship that revolves around the specificities of a given place, time, and consumer that tends to distance social agents from dominant determining mechanisms. This apparent scholarly wariness of structural determinism and the movement toward an archaeology of specific contexts and individuality has often taken aim on race and class, suggesting that such categories focus on structural determinism and misrepresent individual agency.

Race and Class in Ethnic Archaeologies

Overseas Chinese archaeologies reveal many of the persistent shortcomings of ethnic identity archaeologies and suggest how an archaeological analysis of race might profoundly shape at least one corner of archaeological thought. Overseas Chinese archaeological research began to be conducted in scattered reaches of the American West, Australia, and New Zealand in the 1970s. Much of this scholarship was framed in terms of acculturation, aspiring to assess the degree to which overseas Chinese embraced dominant Western material practices and culture. Acculturation has a rich

anthropological lineage, with John Wesley Powell (1883: 206) defining it in 1883 as "subjective adjustment of the lower to the higher" and Franz Boas (1896: 11) arguing that acculturation embodies "the mutual transformation of the old culture and the newly acquired material." The transparent melting-pot dimensions of acculturation models declined significantly in the 1960s in favor of perspectives that stressed cultural boundary maintenance. Archaeologists contributed by examining a host of ethnic collectives, but these studies championed clear and unique ethnic material patterns that distinguished individual collectives. Internal variation in such categories was largely evaded, and virtually no attention was devoted to exactly what defined the backdrop against which difference was being defined and evaluated.

The archaeological scholarship on the overseas Chinese was especially rigid. Archaeologies of overseas Chinese painted a picture of Chinese immigrants as overwhelmingly insular communities removed from the otherwise dynamic social landscapes around them (Voss 2005: 426). To some extent, this notion of segregated Chinese enclaves reflects the scholarly belief that Chinese immigrants rejected dominant practices because they were "sojourners" who migrated simply to accumulate resources for their return to China. The stereotype of utter insularity and cultural resistance among Chinese immigrants is remarkably similar to that wielded by 19th-century racists who peripheralized the Chinese by criticizing their apparent material and social distinctions. Contemporary ar-

chaeologists risk reproducing such stereo-types by recurrently painting the Chinese as protecting cultural traditions, resisting assimilation, and otherwise fortifying ethnic difference (Voss 2005: 427–428). It is unlikely that many archaeologists examining acculturation among overseas Chinese communities embrace its potential racist implications, but acculturation remains a powerful theme in overseas Chinese archaeologies long after its demise in most other corners of the discipline.

The gravitation toward unique patterns considered to be ethnic boundary mechanisms is commonplace throughout historical archaeology. African-American archaeology has long focused on goods associated with African cultural practice, what are commonly referred to as "Africanisms," despite the overwhelming predominance of mass-produced European goods within most African-American contexts (cf. Ferguson 1992). Yet those material patterns that seem to distinguish collectives may simply reflect ideological assumptions scholars make about specific groups; that is, the "recognition" of a specific identity is conditioned by disciplinary frameworks that encourage archaeologists to search out particular goods, ignore conflicting or anomalous evidence, and reinforce contemporary assumptions about specific collectives.

The argument has often been made that overseas Chinese assemblages exhibit significant material distinctions from mainstream patterns (cf. Voss 2005). This reflects that archaeological assemblages from overseas Chinese sites included Asian goods that were rarely, if ever, found in other assemblages.

Many archaeologists interpreted this as evidence for cultural self-segregation that generations of previous scholars had attributed to overseas Chinese. This maneuver opposes the sway of Chinese tradition to Western modernity and fortifies a commonplace Oriental/Occidental polarization, but it conveniently ignores whether such ethnic isolation is truly reflected in material culture. Barbara Voss (2005: 428) suggests that significant portions of Chinese material assemblages are composed of standard mass-produced goods that upset the picture of conscious self-exclusion from dominant practices. Yet archaeologists' attention to overseas Chinese material culture has revolved around distinctive goods, including opium bowls, coins, and gaming pieces, while mass-produced goods pass without equally thorough analysis.

Very little archaeology has looked closely at class as an expression of consumers' consciousness of racial subjectivity by examining the material tactics that consumers use to negotiate interdependent class and racial inequalities. The most significant exception is Orser's (2004, 2007) work on racialization which examines overseas Chinese, 19th-century Ireland, and African America. Orser's (2004) analysis of Irish consumers argues for dual racial and class consumption strategies among 19th-century residents of Ballykilcline who resisted definition as a lowly racial group through material consumption and grassroots activism. Orser argues that the Irish cultivated what Du Bois called "double consciousness," with the Ballykilcline residents conscious of their conflicting identities as British citizens and Irish subjects. He suggests that printed ceramic

patterns with idyllic pastoral scenes were one of the material forms that provided a symbolic means to distance community consumers from racist and class caricatures of Irish rural life.

Race and Class in Contemporary Historical Archaeology

Many archaeologists with interests in race and class inequalities have assertively focused on how such historical inequalities reach into the contemporary world. Mark Leone, Parker Potter, and Paul Shackel's (1987) formulation of critical theory argues for a self-reflective archaeology that concentrates on capitalist inequalities and embeds the scholarly discussion of them in public interpretation programs. Their case study in Annapolis, Maryland, contends with the ideological separations made in mainstream Annapolis histories, in which the division between black and white was especially prominent. They argue that the presentation of black and white history as separate phenomena evades contemporary racial tensions, so they instead advocate an archaeology that probes how race was constructed and reproduced in everyday material culture. Elaine-Maryse Solari's (2001) study of urban renewal in Oakland, California, links the landscape of Oakland to contemporary inequalities, examining the relationships between racism and landscape transformation and arguing that resistance to renewal projects fostered community politicization among African-American targets. Solari positions Oakland's historic landscape in relation to recent urban re-

newal projects that rationalized themselves by seeing Oakland as a slum landscape peopled by poor African Americans and European descendants (cf. Mayne and Murray 2001).

Increasingly, more archaeologists have begun to wrestle with the power inequalities between scholars and descendant communities, and these discourses along class and color lines are particularly contested (cf. Franklin 1997; McDavid 2004; Singleton 1997). Ultimately, relationships along and across the color line seem infeasible without acknowledging color and class privilege (Singleton and Orser 2003). Terrence Epperson (2004) argues that archaeologists' willingness to ignore race, suggesting that it is simply a social construction or yet another dimension of identity, is itself an effect of white racial privilege by scholars who either cannot recognize, or hope to evade, their own racial privileges. A central challenge likely will be to move beyond simply dismantling racist and class caricatures. For instance, Lu Ann De Cunzo (1998: 43) reaches the surprising conclusion that racism's "influences and injustices have received heightened attention in archaeologists' stories about African Americans in recent years," so she advocates an archaeology that produces less "inaccurate images" shaped by racist stereotypes. This sentiment aspires to paint African-American life in some form that is not determined by racism, but it risks artificially isolating African America from the social and structural influences of race. Illuminating white privilege in the past, situating it at the heart of colonial and postcolonial life, and connecting it to contemporary

inequality carries much more transforma-
tive potential.

Michael Blakey (1997) argues that archae-
ologies of the color line are inevitably dis-
courses about contemporary life, and the
most productive archaeological discourses
must acknowledge the continuity of racism
and confront its relationship with class in-
equalities. In 1933, W. E. B. Du Bois main-
tained that scholars and activists must ac-
knowledge the connections between racism
and class inequality, but it "is no sufficient
answer to say that capital encourages this op-
pression and uses it for its own ends. This
may have excused . . . some of the poor
whites of the South today. But the bulk of
American white labor is neither ignorant nor
fanatical. It knows exactly what it is doing
and it means to do it." For Du Bois, racism
was indeed a social construction, but it was
also one that privileged people willingly ac-
cepted (cf. Roediger 1991). The archaeolog-
ical challenge may be to confront this con-
scious 500-year acceptance of racism and
examine how concrete material consump-
tion patterns reproduced racial inequality
while other consumers used the same goods
hoping to defuse racism. Stressing the mu-
tually dependent structural frameworks of
race and class will not inevitably rob con-
sumers of agency, but it will productively
complicate agency and privilege. Ultimately,
this will paint a half millennium in which a
vast range of consumers negotiated color
and class lines in distinctive ways that were
creative and thoughtful, but this scholarship
also will underscore the remarkable persist-
ence of class and color privileges shaping
everyday life. Archaeologists are especially
well positioned to illuminate the most inti-
mate material details of everyday life and ex-
amine how apparently commonplace con-
sumption resisted, embraced, and complexly
negotiated class and color lines.

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