1 Landscapes of Power in the Colonial Caribbean

On the morning of May 23, 1832, Samuel Sharpe was hanged in the Jamaican town of Montego Bay. The hanging of black men was a tragically common event in the colonial Caribbean, and this particular execution may well have slipped unnoticed into the annals of history had it not been for the fact that Sam Sharpe was the condemned leader of an uprising of Jamaica's enslaved population. Although insurrections of the enslaved working class were common in colonial Jamaica, the scale of this particular event was unprecedented in British West Indian history. The insurrection led by Sharpe, known alternately as the Baptist War, the Christmas Rebellion, and the Great Slave Rebellion, involved tens of thousands of people who took up arms, not against the planters who enslaved them, but against the sugarcane fields and industrial buildings in which they worked. During the two-week period between December 27, 1831 and January 5, 1832, some 100 plantations in the western parishes of Jamaica were destroyed; yet only about 17 white people were killed. The uprising was quickly suppressed by the well-armed Jamaica militia, and reprisals against the rebels were swift and brutal, resulting in more than 300 executions, including that of Sam Sharpe (Blackburn 1988; Hart 2002; Holt 1992; Reckford 1968; Watts 1990).

Although the events of 1831–1832 shed considerable light on the social world of colonial Jamaica, what that light reveals is complex and sometimes difficult to comprehend from a twenty-first-century frame of reference. On the surface, the uprising can be seen as a mass release of pent-up anger against the oppressive nature of the slave-based plantation economy of the colonial Caribbean. The system *was* brutal and the common use of dehumanizing corporal punishment *did* foment great resentment against the white planters. Yet little violent retribution was focused on the men and women responsible for the cruel infliction of those punishments. If one looks deeper into the colonial world of 1831, one can interpret the conflict that erupted that Christmastide as a microcosmic manifestation of ongoing and broader historical changes shaking the colonial order of the British Empire. By 1831, the global influence of the British West Indies, even

Jamaica, was receding as the focus of British colonialism shifted steadily east, to the consolidation of British interests on the Indian Subcontinent and, eventually, Africa (James 2000; Judd 2004). In England, industrialized production using wage labor was becoming commonplace, resulting in rapid urbanization as more and more people were employed in briskly developing factory towns (Hobsbawn 1999; Polanyi 2001). Urban dwellers, industrialists, and liberals successfully agitated for Parliamentary reform, a process that resulted in a great expansion of the franchise in Britain, a shift in the distribution of Members of Parliament as industrial cities received representation for the first time, and, in 1832, the election of a reform-minded Whig government at Westminster (Evans 1994, 2008; Phillips and Whetherell 1995). Industrialists, religious reformers, and republicans all agitated for an end to slavery in the British Empire, organizing boycotts and propaganda campaigns against the use of slave labor, especially in the production of West Indian sugar (Oldfield 1992, 1995). In Jamaica, Sam Sharpe and his many colleagues were aware of these global developments and, as many working people in Europe were doing, demanded the rights of free people, particularly the right to be paid fair wages for their work (Drescher 2004; Green 1976). In effect, the thousands of people who rose up against the system of unfree labor were seeking to put an end to what Tom Brass and Henry Bernstein have characterized as capitalism's general trend to limit workers' rights to their own labor (Brass and Bernstein 1992). The Baptist War did not go unnoticed in Britain, and Parliament quickly acted first to inform itself about what was happening in Jamaica, and then to legislate the end of slavery in the British West Indies (Bulter 1995; Draper 2010).

When Sam Sharpe was executed, he was hanged as a man who had organized a general strike demanding the end of slavery and the institution of wage labor for the Jamaican working class (Hart 2002). He lived, and died, at a crucial moment of change in the Western Hemisphere; within fifteen months of his death, the British Parliament had abolished slavery in its New World colonies, a labor and social system that had been in place in British America for the better part of two centuries. The British Empire, and the European colonial world more generally expressed, was experiencing a long moment of epochal change during which old colonies in the New World – including the unified Republic of Haiti under President Jean-Pierre Boyer – were establishing themselves as independent republics without any formal monarchical head of state (Hobsbawn 1996; Middlekauf 2007). Economists, industrialists, and statesmen had begun to seriously reconsider the long-standing use of price-controlling tariffs to support colonial production in places like Jamaica. Britons had begun contemplating the era of what would be variously called free trade or

laissez-faire capitalism (Polanyi 2001). Great political, economic, and social change was emerging as the nineteenth century blossomed, change brought on by the actions of people like Sam Sharpe.

The purpose of this book is to interpret Jamaican colonial society during this moment of epochal change through the lens of Marxist-informed landscape archaeology. Viewed from this perspective, the opening decades of the nineteenth century can be seen as a moment of dialectical change for the British Empire. In the British Caribbean, eighteenth-century colonial society had been built on the success of agricultural production (Tomich 1990). In Jamaica as elsewhere in the Caribbean, that success was dependent on the social and physical realities of a mode of production driven by open access to enslaved labor (Dunn 2000; Holt 1992; Sheridan 2000; Tomich 1990). A goal of this analysis of Jamaican plantation landscapes as they existed at the turn of the nineteenth century is to better understand the material and social realities of the slave-based plantation system and to consider why, in the end, it failed.

This book interprets the historical realities of colonial Jamaica through an archaeological analysis of Jamaica's plantation landscapes. Based on archaeological fieldwork conducted between 1990 and 2012, this book analyzes plantation landscapes at multiple scales, from the island-wide settlement pattern of plantations across Jamaica, to the development of internally coherent regions in which enclaves of planters formed their class relations and social realities, to the plantation as a material component of a mode of production that mediated the negotiation of social relations between planters and the enslaved, to individual house yards located within the cramped plantation villages that were home to hundreds of enslaved men, women, and children. The methodologies of landscape archaeology allow for analyses at each of these scales; however, landscape archaeology is but a set of methodologies that needs to be structured by a theoretical framework through which we can endow the remnants of the past left to us – the archaeological record – with meaning. The theoretical framework used here to interpret those landscapes of colonial Jamaica is what is commonly referred to as Marxist Archaeology (McGuire 1992, 2008; Patterson 2003; Trigger 1989).

On Marxism and Archaeology

Archaeologists and historians of the Caribbean have utilized a variety of theoretical frameworks to understand the complex social realities of the plantation system, ranging from feminist approaches to understanding the gender dynamics of the slave system (e.g., Bush 1990; Morgan 2004; Reddick 1985) to adaptationalist perspectives defining ongoing

evolutionary processes (e.g., Galle 2011). The focus of research is similarly diverse. For example, some archaeologists of the colonial Caribbean have looked at the complexities of the informal economy developed by the enslaved (e.g., Hauser 2011, 2008; Reeves 2011; see also Mintz and Hall 1960), the emergence of Creole identities (e.g., Delle 2000; Loftfield 2001; Wilkie 1999, 2001), the development of interisland trading networks (e.g., Armstrong 2003; Curet and Hauser 2011), and the organization of colonial enterprise (e.g., Barka 2001; Kelly and Hardy 2011). Others have focused on understanding the dynamics of maroon resistance to the plantation system (e.g., Agorsah 2007; Goucher and Agorsah 2011; Orser and Funari 2001). Each of these approaches and foci has its merits and has made a significant contribution to our understanding of the colonial Caribbean.

As a work of landscape archaeology, this book is concerned with understanding how plantation landscapes were created and how those landscapes actively shaped human action under the colonial regime of early-nineteenth-century Jamaica. By the turn of the nineteenth century, the "plantation" was a well-defined locus of monocrop production of agricultural commodities, destined to be exchanged in global markets. The plantation was a privately owned, capitalized operation, often using enslaved or other forms of coerced labor to maximize the profits realized by its proprietor (Genovese 1989, 15). The work presented here focuses on plantation landscapes. Although many theoretical approaches to the past can be applied to understanding plantation landscapes, perhaps none is more effective in understanding the relationship between spatial structure and human agency than the dialectical approach essential to Marxist archaeological theory.

Although Marxist analysis has sometimes, and spuriously, been dismissed as simultaneously being "totalizing" and narrowly focused (e.g., Hicks and Horning 2006; Wilkie and Bartoy 2000), Marxist theory actually provides a robust and compelling framework for understanding the development and operation of class-stratified social systems, and has informed the practice of Anglo-American archaeology for decades (see Adams 1965; Brumfiel 1980; Childe 1936, 1950; Delle 1998, 1999; Gilman 1981; Kohl 1981; Leone, Potter, and Shackel 1987; Matthews 2005; McGuire 1992, 1993, 2008; Patterson 1986, 2003; Rosenswig 2012; Spriggs 1984; Tosi 1976; Trigger 1989, 1993). Far from being a fundamentalist philosophy of history, Marxist archaeology, as McGuire (2008) has noted, is a diverse tradition of thought emerging from a philosophy of history and practice that is simultaneously a way to know the world, a way to critique the world, and a way to change it.

One of the main tenets of Marxian thought that applies specifically to archaeological analysis is the idea that the material conditions under

which people live shape not only their own lives but the very nature of social interaction within their given society. Marxist thought contends that there is a direct relationship between the tools and technologies used to make a living and the nature of the social relationships operating within a given society; changes in either – for example the invention of new technologies or a rapid increase in the number of people needing to be fed – could result in historical change that rapidly reconfigures how people live and relate to each other (Marx 1979).

Marx and Engels used an architectural metaphor to explain how the material realities of making a living shape the overall structure of a given society at any historical moment, a theoretical construct known as a "mode of production" (Engels 2007; Marx 1979, 2011, 1992). To Marx and Engels, the economy formed the base of a society and other manifestations of social interaction – religion, ideology, social consciousness, political organization – were built on the foundation of the economic base to form a social superstructure. The economic base of any society defined its mode of production and emerged from the interplay of contextually dependent historical phenomena and events. Despite this historic diversity, the essential components of all modes of production include what are known as the forces of production, which include the means of production (raw materials, tools, and knowledge necessary to use them). What are called the "relations of production" (social relationships within a society) determine what roles people play in the manufacture and use of material objects.

Another important concept within Marxism that has influenced archaeological theory is what is known as the "labor theory of value" (McGuire and Reckner 2002; Paynter 1999). This idea holds that anything that is produced by a society will have a value equal to the cost of the materials required for its production plus the value of the labor expended to produce it. If a manufactured object is sold for more than it costs to produce, the difference is known as surplus value (Marx 1984, 2000). Class relations develop when someone other than the worker who made something, sometimes called the primary producer, systematically collects the surplus value resulting from the exchange of goods. Under capitalism, workers are said to be alienated from the means of production, which means that they do not own the tools and raw materials they use to manufacture objects, nor do they own the final products of their labor (Marx 1961). In describing capitalism as a mode of production, Marx used the term "bourgeoisie" to describe the class of people who built the factories and owned the raw materials (e.g., cotton, iron, coal) required to produce commodities for sale. In the capitalist mode of production, the social relations of production are such that society allows the bourgeoisie

to own the surplus value derived from the sale of commodities. This results in the development of an unequal class structure in which the bourgeoisie and workers are in dialectical conflict with each other, which means that members of the two classes have their own specific set of interests existing in opposition to each other. Members of the bourgeois class wish to lower costs of production, including the cost of building and maintaining factories, and will thus try to avoid incurring surplus expenses. It is also in their best interest to minimize labor costs so as to maximize the extraction of surplus value (sometimes known as profit). Members of the working class, which Marx called the "proletariat," have a diametrically opposed interest to retain as much surplus value as possible through the receipt of high wages, investment in better and safer working conditions, pensions, health care benefits, and so forth. Significant structural change, including the emergence of new modes of production, can result when the conflict between classes reaches a crisis point and the society is no longer stable. To many Marxists, such dialectical conflicts between social classes are the engines of historical change (Marx 1992). In colonial plantation contexts like Jamaica, enslaved workers are further alienated from what Marxists refer to as their labor power – a commodity that workers sell for wages, but which enslaved workers are prohibited from owning, and thus from exchanging for wages (Brass and Bernstein 1992).

These key elements of Marxist thought have informed archaeological theory over the past four decades: (1) social and material forces work to construct and reproduce unequal social relations; (2) societies can be interpreted using the concept of the mode of production; (3) social stratification is a process based on class formation and struggle; and (4) relationships between social classes are dialectical in nature (see Adams 1966; Gilman 1981, 1984; Kohl 1981; Kus 1984; Leone 1995; McGuire 1992, 2008; Patterson 1986, 1991; Paynter 1982; Wurst 1999, 2011). Shaped by this tradition of archaeological thought, this book begins with the premise that material culture – objects fashioned, exchanged, and used by people – actively create and mediate social relations within a given historical context. The form of material culture analyzed here is the landscape, specifically coffee plantation landscapes in colonial Jamaica, a complex and dynamic form of material culture that can be analyzed on a range of analytical scales, from the settlement pattern of the island as a whole to individual houses within enslaved villages.

Each of the subsequent chapters of this book explores a primary theme within Marxist thought by archaeologically analyzing Jamaican plantation landscapes from a different point on the spectrum of landscape analysis. Chapter 2 examines the historical context within which the social relations of production formed in colonial Jamaica, by reviewing the island-wide

settlement pattern history of Jamaica as it relates to the shifting realities of the colonial experience. Chapter 3 explores the plantation mode of production as it existed in Jamaica at the turn of the nineteenth century, when large-scale coffee production was first introduced to the island. In so doing, this chapter examines landscapes at the local plantation scale of analysis. Chapter 4 analyzes the development of class consciousness among the planters, exploring how regional landscapes between plantations were active agents in the development and maintenance of class consciousness and solidarity among planters in the early nineteenth century. Chapter 5 explores the nature of dialectical relations between the planters and the enslaved from the perspective of the households located within enslaved workers' villages, and Chapter 6 expands from the preceding chapters to explore how dialectics can be used to understand historical change, while emphasizing the totality of the lived experience of the people of colonial Jamaica. Following the comparative Chapter 7, which considers the plantation complex of seventeenth-century Virginia, the main arguments of the book are summarized in the concluding Chapter 8. Before delving into the specifics of the analysis, however, it might be best to explain the theoretical framework used for each of the chapters in a bit more detail.

The Material Context of Colonial Jamaica (Chapter 2)

In the opening decade of the nineteenth century, Jamaica – an island about equal in landmass to the American state of Connecticut or to Britain's East Anglia – led the world in the production of both sugar and coffee (Higman 2005). The eighteenth century had been a time of great prosperity for Jamaica's planters. Although it was occasionally threatened by military action, Jamaica had not been successfully invaded since the British conquest of 1655. In contrast to Jamaica, many of the smaller Caribbean islands had changed colonial hands multiple times as a result of the many colonial wars fought between the British, French, Dutch, and Spanish (Dunn 2000; Sheridan 2000). Similarly, although there had been numerous uprisings within Jamaica's enslaved population, before 1831 none had significantly threatened the colonial regime on the island (Hart 2002). Although there was a significant population of sovereign black people, known as Maroons, living in Jamaica's interior, the colony was on peaceful terms with them at the conclusion of the eighteenth century. A series of guerrilla wars fought against the Maroons in the hinterlands had resulted in a truce; in return for the guarantee that the white Jamaicans would not threaten their independence, the leaders of Jamaica's Maroon communities agreed not to fight against the plantation system and, perhaps

more significantly, to return any escaped slaves that sought refuge in Maroon communities (Campbell 1988; Dallas 1803; Price 1996). In contrast, the wealthiest of all the Caribbean colonies, the French colony of St. Domingue, had witnessed a successful revolution of the enslaved against the planters that could not be suppressed even by Napoleon's expeditionary forces; by the opening decade of the nineteenth century, St. Domingue's plantation society had been destroyed and replaced by the black republic of Haiti (Blackburn 1988). Jamaica was, from the perspective of Caribbean planters, a relatively peaceful and stable place to grow vast fortunes.

And grow they did. By the middle of the eighteenth century, slave-based agro-industry, based primarily on sugar production, was an engine that drove the accumulation of great wealth – for those who controlled the means of production (Dunn 2000). Higman proposes that by the middle of the eighteenth century, investment in sugar production had made the largest Jamaican planters among the wealthiest men in the world (Higman 2005: 5). The agricultural system they developed was very complex and resulted in the formation of a diverse society of planters, agents, attorneys, merchants, artisans, financiers, and wharfingers – yet this society composed but a small fraction of the population of Jamaica. The vast majority of the population consisted of enslaved Africans – brought to Jamaica against their will to toil for life in servitude – and their island-born descendants who, until 1834, inherited the condition of enslavement.

To contextualize the archaeological analysis of Jamaica's plantation system, Chapter 2 provides a historical overview of the development of plantation society on the island, including a consideration of the island's historical demographics and an overview of the shifting settlement history of the island. In archaeology, the examination of how places are distributed across a broad landscape is usually referred to as settlement pattern analysis (Delle 1989, 1994). Several historical archaeologists have used settlement pattern analysis to interpret how the positioning of settlements within a large area can impact the development of social relationships and give shape to a given mode of production. For example, Robert Paynter (1981, 1982, 1983, 1985) has demonstrated how the historic settlement patterns of rural western Massachusetts served to maximize the flow of surplus value to regional centers known as entrepôts, and thus spatially supported the maintenance of class-based inequality. Although not explicitly concerned with class dynamics, Ken Lewis (1984, 1985) examined the settlement pattern of the colonial South Carolina frontier, concluding that the social structure of colonial South Carolina was dependent on a hierarchically arranged system of frontier towns and settlements. Lewis hypothesized that economic changes – and thus shifts in class relations – would precipitate changes in spatial forms (Lewis 1984: l–7, 17–27, 107–113).

Archaeological settlement pattern analysis of the plantation era has been conducted on a variety of Caribbean islands, including St. Eustatius, Tobago, and St. John. In each case, archaeologists demonstrated that the shifting location of settlements across island landscapes was directly tied to the historical development of the plantation system. On St. Eustatius, the number and size of plantations fluctuated as many small plantations were consolidated into a relatively few larger and more equally distributed estates, as the local economy of the island shifted. As St. Eustatius declined in importance as a trading port, the number of plantations decreased, as did the overall population of the island, resulting in a rationalization of land use on the island. At the end of the American Revolution, local planters became increasingly focused on the efficient production of sugar, and the distribution and size of plantations shifted accordingly (Delle 1989, 1994). On Tobago, British planters, who did not consolidate control of the island until the 1760s, carefully weighed the resource needs of sugar and rum production (e.g., access to fresh water) as a determinant of both the location of their plantations on the landscape and the internal arrangement of the components of the plantation infrastructure within each plantation (Clement 1997). On St. John, the spatial arrangement of houses within a free black community existing on the fringes of the plantation world was analyzed in the context of a slave-based plantation economy (Armstrong 2003).

Chapter 2 applies settlement pattern analysis to the island of Jamaica, and in doing so draws on the work of one of Jamaica's leading historians and historical geographers, Barry Higman, who has spent decades examining the nature of the Jamaican plantation system (e.g., Higman 1976, 1986, 1987, 1988, 1998, 2005). This analysis considers how the placement of plantations shifted as the plantation economy expanded, specifically considering how the geographic realities of late-eighteenth-century Jamaica allowed for the rapid development of a successful coffee plantation system in areas of the island not developed for sugar production.

The Plantation Mode of Production (Chapter 3)

One of the primary tenets of Marxist historical analysis is that society simultaneously produces and is produced by the relationships that exist between individual people and between people and the material world around them. A distinguishing characteristic of Marxist approaches to social analysis is the contention that the basic relationships that exist between people and nature are primarily economic; people manipulate nature and enter into social relations with other people to meet the basic needs of survival, including finding food and shelter. Unlike most animals, humans have the innate ability to use their intelligence and

imagination to manipulate the environment, but in so doing, humans create new needs for themselves, and often create new forms of social relationships to attain those needs. Take, for example, a hypothetical hunting and gathering society that has invented a new weapon to hunt for food – say, the atlatl. The tool increases the efficiency of hunting but requires the use of specific kinds of wood and stone. This hypothetical society has thus created a need for the raw materials required to make elastic spear shafts and lightweight projectile points, and the knowledge and ability to make and use these complex tools. Hunters might enter into new cooperative arrangements for taking down animals and sharing the meat of their quarry; the society might also enter into trade relations with other groups who have a ready supply of the kinds of wood or stone needed to make the new hunting tools. Human innovation, through the invention of this specific tool, can thus have multiple results, changing the way people interact with members of their own group, members of other groups, the animals they are hunting, and the landscapes they must traverse to find both the raw materials they need to make hunting tools and the animals they are seeking to kill.

Marxists define this complex relationship between physical needs (both long-standing and newly invented), the tools and technologies required to fulfill those needs, and the social relations that exist to produce and use those tools and technologies as a mode of production (Marx 1979; Patterson 2003; Rosenswig 2012). Any given mode of production is composed of historically contextual relationships between people, which result in the production and use of objects to fulfill perceived physical and social needs; these relationships are known as the social relations of production (Marx 1979). The second set of components of a mode of production includes the forces of production, sometimes called the productive forces (Marx 1976). The forces of production are composed of both objective and subjective factors, the latter including individual mental and physical abilities, training, and skill levels, as well as the technical division of labor. Objective factors include tools, raw materials, industrial buildings, and landscapes. The objective factors are sometimes referred to as the means of production and form the archaeological record of a given mode of production.

Although Marx identified diverse modes of production that had existed in a variety of historical contexts, the one that most interested him was the capitalist mode of production (Marx 1992; Rosenswig 2012). Marx was, among other things, a social critic. He understood that capitalism as it existed in the middle of the nineteenth century was simultaneously generating great wealth for those who controlled the means of production and conditions of dependent poverty for those who had no choice but to sell