

African Diaspora Archaeology Newsletter

Volume 10
Issue 4 December 2007

Article 27

12-1-2007

The Cambridge Companion to Historical Archaeology

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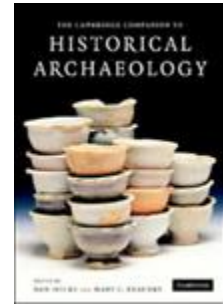
Recommended Citation

Hicks, Dan and Beaudry, Mary C. (2007) "The Cambridge Companion to Historical Archaeology," *African Diaspora Archaeology Newsletter*: Vol. 10 : Iss. 4 , Article 27.
Available at: <https://scholarworks.umass.edu/adan/vol10/iss4/27>

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Book Review

Dan Hicks and Mary C. Beaudry, editors. *The Cambridge Companion to Historical Archaeology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006. xvi + 404 pp., illustrations, maps, integrated references, index. \$85.00 (cloth), ISBN-13 978-0-521-85375-0; \$37.99 (paper), ISBN-13 978-0-521-61962-2.



Reviewed for the African Diaspora Archaeology Newsletter by John P. McCarthy, S&ME, Inc., Mt. Pleasant, SC.

This is a big book full of big ideas, and it is one that every historical archaeologist should find the time to at least peruse, if not immerse themselves in. Hicks, now of Oxford University, and Beaudry, of Boston University, have assembled a wide-ranging review of historical archaeology on an international scale through 17 essays commissioned especially for this volume. The themes addressed include: documentary archaeology, the writing of historical archaeology, colonialism, capitalism, industrial archaeology, maritime archaeology, urban archaeology, material culture, the archaeologies of landscapes, buildings, and households, and the place of historical archaeology in broader context. While the archaeology of the African Diaspora is not explicitly and individually considered, it is a theme that recurs in various places in the volume, as I will discuss further. In sum, I have to concur with the volume's "blurb" who asserts that, "This book is essential reading for anyone studying or researching the material remains of the recent past."

One might be tempted to assume that a volume of this sort is just for students. However, that is not the case. While certainly suitable for upper division undergraduate or graduate course use, the essays present timely and well-balanced overviews of their subject material of use to anyone wanting to review the central concerns of the discipline at this point in time.

Following an introduction by the editors, the book is divided into five parts. The first, *Archaeology and History*, includes three chapters: Laurie Wilkie discusses documentary archaeology, Gavin Lucas discusses time in historical archaeology, and Rosemary Joyce considers the process of writing historical archeology.

Part II reviews key themes in the discipline beginning with Susan Lawrence and Nick Shepherd discussing colonialism. In the following chapters Tadhg O'Keeffe and Rebecca Yamin discuss urban archaeology; John Schofield and William Johnson consider archaeology, heritage and the recent and contemporary past; Randall McGuire looks at Marxism and capitalism; Jim Symonds and Eleanor Casella review industrialization; and Joe Flatman and Mark Staniforth discuss maritime archaeology of the historic period.

Part III, *Historical Archaeology and Material Culture*, presents two papers. Matthew D. Cochran and Mary C. Beaudry review the role of material culture studies and David Barker and Teresita Majewski discuss ceramic studies.

Historical Archaeology and Landscapes is the subject of Part IV. Cornelius Holtorf and Howard Williams discuss landscapes and memories. Lu Ann De Cunzo and Julie Ernstein then consider landscapes, ideology and experience in historical archaeology.

Part V focuses on the historical archaeology of buildings. Dan Hicks and Audrey Horning provide an overview of the topic, followed by Julia King discussing difference and identity in household archaeology.

Barry Cunliffe provides an afterword that situates historical archaeology in the wider discipline of archaeology. This is a refreshing perspective since most archaeologists in North America are trained to think of archaeology as one of the four subfields of anthropology.

In as much as most of the contributors are well known figures in the field, it almost goes without saying that each of these essays is authoritative and well written. Rather than try to provide a summary of each, I will focus instead on how the archaeology of the African Diaspora is addressed.

Wilkie is the first of the authors in this volume to explicitly mention the archaeology of the African Diaspora. Her essay mentions the importance of oral sources to the study of African-American sites, in particular, and she discusses oral sources as used in her doctoral research at Oakley Plantation to highlight the way that written and oral sources can be combined with archaeological data to construct more holistic histories than are possible by relying on any one source in isolation.

O'Keeffe and Rebecca Yamin make reference to the African Burial Ground project in New York City and to the controversy over the possibility of material associated with the slaves owned by President George Washington at the Liberty Bell Center at Independence National Historical Park in Philadelphia to highlight the public and political natures of urban excavation projects. Their more substantive discussions consider issues of ethnicity and class, but focus on groups other than African Americans.

McGuire's survey of the influence of Marxism mentions James Delle's research on a Jamaican coffee plantation as a landscape of structured race and gender relations. He also references Paul Mullins' study of African-American consumer behavior in Annapolis and Mark Leone's work on African-influenced spiritual practices. None of these are discussed in any depth, but rather are seen as examples of research applying critical archaeology and anthropological political economy.

Symonds and Casella's discussion of the archaeology of industrialization notes a trend toward the social lives of workers, wider understandings of power, class relations, domestic relations, patterns of residence, etc. addressing how working people lived as well as labored. Gradwohl and Osborn's work on the African-American coal-producing community of Buxton, Iowa is offered as an example of a study that took into account workers' racial identities and consumer behavior.

Flatman and Staniforth discuss at some length the potential of maritime archaeology to contribute to the archaeology of the African Diaspora. They see the documentation of maritime trade, and slave ships in particular, as important sources as a compliment to the story told by terrestrial sites. They note that this potential is as yet unrealized, but they are optimistic about its potential.

Barker and Majewski include a discussion of Colonoware in their review of historic ceramic studies. They are particularly taken with the creolized nature of this artifact type and the apparent blending of African, Native American, and European traditions that this ware type seems to represent. They also consider ceramic vessel forms in their discussion and what they may indicate about foodways, citing Otto's work on ceramics used on Lowcounty plantations which noted the wide-spread use of bowls on slave and overseer sites relative to those of planters where plates were better represented.

Finally, King's essay on household archaeology returns to Colonoware noting that studies as diverse as those of this ceramic ware and of the contexts of storage pits at slave houses have been read by some structuralist archaeologists as evidence of everyday forms of domination and resistance.

To this reviewer, the above taken in total, suggests that the archaeological study of various aspects of the African Diaspora is now well integrated into the historical archaeology enterprise writ large. This volume is important not only for making this point clear, but also for the broad context it offers for studies concerned with the African Diaspora. Issues of identity, race, gender, cultural transmission, etc. are no longer unusual, but are routinely addressed in investigating sites associated with the African Diaspora and evidence from such sites is routinely applied in comparative contexts.

As evident in my opening paragraph, I am enthusiastic about this volume and its usefulness to both experienced practioners and students alike. It is evidence that historical archaeology has found a place as an important part of the archaeological world, disputing, if not eradicating, the notion that historical archaeology can only contribute relatively unimportant minutia as "handmaiden to history."

Finally, while the contributors are overwhelmingly academics from the United Kingdom and the United States, two other European counties, Australaisa (two contributors) and South Africa are also represented. It is clear that historical archaeology, while still capable of fine-grained local studies, is increasing a global enterprise, concerned with big issues and big questions. The African Diaspora is among these. But as Cunliffe notes, it is an Anglophone global enterprise at this time, and we must take care that historical archaeology not become, "just an Eurocentric archaeology of capitalism (p. 318)." Understanding the African roots of African cultures in the Diaspora is one means of achieving this end; one that the readers of this newsletter are fully engaged with.