Haunted Salt: The Saltpan of La Tortuga Island, Slavery, and Atlantic Sugar Economies, 1638–1781

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Abstract The saltpan of the uninhabited and largely forgotten Venezuelan island of La Tortuga was vital to the functioning of the British and French Atlantic sugar economies during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In this chapter I retrace the itineraries of La Tortuga's free and low-grade salt as it travelled in the holds of small Anglo-American ships returning to New England, where it was utilized in curing the low-grade category of "refuse fish." By reconstructing the commodity circuit of this salt, I then reveal how it returned to the Caribbean aboard the salt ships, preserving the fragile flesh of "refuse fish" that was sold as provender for the enslaved toiling on sugar plantations in the British and French islands. To this day saltfish has remained deeply embedded in the culinary practices of the region's inhabitants. Finally, I explore how more than a hundred individually sized punch bowls found in the excavations of the Anglo-American campsites are potent exemplars of micro-globalities, where the regional and global came to be nested in the local, specifically in the form of rum punch, the ingredients of which included sugar and rum—products of West Indian plantations. What results is a peculiar story of a haunted salt harvested on a desolate island, trailing spectral entanglements with slavery across the Caribbean.

Keywords Solar salt · Saltfish · Entanglements · Itineraries of things · Commodity circuits · Micro-globalities

> My mother wanted to boil the salt out of the fish,
> so much harsh salt, then chip that saltfish smaller
> and smaller, so she could cope with the hawked spit
> of her patients, their hatred gutting her raw
> so that some days she wanted to tell them,
> It's only skin, we bleed the same underneath,
> but she held it in. —Malika Booker, excerpt from poem "Saltfish", 2013

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Salt, cod, and sugar were all entangled within an early modern commodity circuit that began and ended on La Tortuga Island. Here, I aim to show how the saltpan of this desolate and largely forgotten Venezuelan island was central to the functioning of the British and French Atlantic sugar economies during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Furthermore, I use documentary analysis and archaeological excavation data to trace the movements of seafarers and the commodities they carried. By analyzing the things they left behind at campsites on La Tortuga, I tease out how people, both free and enslaved, and commodities, both sweet and salty, became variously entangled in this maritime realm and what these entanglements reveal. While the histories of these commodities may have already been told, a careful analysis of their itineraries through time and space shows we still have much to learn about them.

Demonstrating that the sea salt from La Tortuga was entangled in the larger Caribbean and Atlantic world can be done through a straightforward presentation of the historical evidence, as is done in the third section of this paper. Yet, in this chapter I seek a richer and more nuanced reading of what was going on below the surface of a routine commercial network. Much like the botanical analysis of a plant can focus on different aspects of the plant's biology depending on the resolution used—from the whole organism, to the organ, to the cell—the movement of things through space and time can be seen at different scales to reveal different aspects. It can also encompass multiple scales at once, demonstrating "the consequences of the universal for the particular and of the particular for the universal by equal devotion to the empathetic understanding and encompassment of both" (Miller, 2010: 20). Such a holistic approach necessitates the mobilization of several theoretical concepts to build a working framework. Here I dovetail the concepts of *itineraries of things*, *commodity circuits*, and *micro-globalities* to illuminate, respectively, the basics of the movement and relations of this sea salt in space and time, the mechanics of its multi-scalar flow, and the peculiarities of its global entanglements from a local vantage point.

1 Theoretical Concerns: Itineraries of Things, Commodity Circuits, and Micro-Globalities

1.1 Itineraries of Things

While the study of material things in archaeology is as old as the discipline itself, it is in the last three decades that things have been treated more seriously because of the "material turn" in the social sciences. Object biographies and their social lives came to the fore of anthropology in the 1986 seminal volume *The Social Life of Things* edited by Arjun Appadurai. The now classic theoretical contributions in this volume by Igor Kopytoff (1986) and Appadurai (1986) paved the way for a plethora of anthropological studies of the social lives and life cycles of objects (e.g., Hoskins, 2006; Keane, 1997; MacKenzie, 1991; Thomas, 1991). Not long after, archaeologists (e.g. Fontijn, 2002; Gosden & Marshall, 1999; Joy, 2009; Meskell, 2004; Renfrew, 1986; Thomas, 1996, 1999; Tilley, 1996, 1999) and, more recently, historical archaeologists (Beaudry, 2006; Brown et al. 2015: 21; Loren & Beaudry, 2006; Law Pezzarossi, 2015; Vitelli, 2015; White & Beaudry, 2008) began to adopt this approach. The biographical approach to objects postulates that they do not merely have *use-lives* but also possess *life-histories* as they are "born" and, through time, they move with or between people, undergoing constant transformation throughout their existence. By doing so, objects accumulate histories and biographies much as humans do (Gosden & Marshall, 1999: 170, 174; Tringham, 1995: 98).

More recently, the term *object itineraries* has been proposed in archaeology since the term *itinerary* is less anthropomorphic than *biography* (Fontijn, 2013: 192; Hahn & Weiss, 2013; Joyce, 2012a: 124; 2012b; Joyce & Gillespie, 2015: 11–12). I go further, however, and argue that the term *object* used in *object biography* and *object itinerary* is inadequate and limiting within the field of archaeology. *Object* is no straightforward term but a problematic concept towing considerable philosophical baggage. First, the static and inert nature of the *object* stands in opposition to the reality that things itinerate—that they are dynamic and vibrant. Moreover, things are "gatherings of materials in motion" and therefore, using the concept of *thing* is not limited to the artefacts (tools, vessels, art, etc.) that archaeologists commonly term *objects*, but rather, broadens our conceptual and semantic reach to include commodities, substances, and products of all sorts (Ingold, 2012: 439). Rather than envisaging the world we study as an assortment of discrete static objects, "we can think of the inhabited world... as a tapestry of interwoven *lines*" (Anusas & Ingold, 2013: 66), since things shorn of lines atrophy and collapse "in on themselves; lineless, they reduce to 'objects'" (Ingold, 2015: 16). It thus follows that objects cannot have itineraries; things, however, extend lines. It is by these very lines, or itineraries, that things become entangled—that is, involved in relations of positive dependence and negative dependency (Hodder, 2012)—with other things and with the lifelines of humans. These qualities that things possess also mean that they play a large part in the unravelling of linear time including retarding, accelerating, or layering it. It is for these reasons that I propose replacing the term *object itinerary* with the concept of *itineraries of things*.

It should follow, then, that if things accumulate histories over time, and we are drawn into their itineraries and temporalities, the relational entanglement between people and things may be revealed by tracing the trajectories of their lines; in other words, by tracing the itineraries of things. At this point some might argue there is already a similar and well-established concept of *commodity chains* (Hopkins & Wallerstein, 1986); why not use this? The reason is both practical and theoretical. Practically, *itineraries of things*, again, is a more flexible concept as it not reducible to commodities alone, but also involves other non-artifactual things. Theoretically, it is not only preoccupied with *vertical* and *linear* relationships and production, labor, and power, but attentively follows things through space and time and reveals their various entanglements with humans and other things, treating things as more than receptacles of economic value or intermediaries to meaning. This study will

therefore use the concept of *itineraries of things* to follow not objects but commodities such as sea salt and products such as casks of saltfish and kegs of sugar—things that have now altogether disappeared but the evidence for which can still be reconstructed through the documentary record. Salt, sugar, and saltfish leave few to no archaeological signatures but can be retrieved from textual sources and their itineraries through space and time can be preliminarily retraced.

1.2 Commodity Circuits

The concept of *commodity circuits* developed more recently as a response to the perceived limitations of studying commodity chains, although many of its central ideas are indebted to Mintz's seminal (1985) historical study of the sugar industry and Appadurai's (1986) and Kopytoff's (1986) launching of the study of the "social lives of things" in anthropology. Commodity circuits "highlight the position and power of consumers in a commodity chain in terms of the many creative ways in which goods are imagined, treated, and used to create identities and value," incorporating notions of gender, race, and class into the analysis of commodity flows (Millhauser & Overholtzer, 2020: 195). Such an approach to the circularity of commodity flows rather than merely their unidirectional movement not only prioritizes the final act of consumption but considers the cyclicality of the "spheres of production and consumption" (Beyer et al., 2020: 7), often leading to "inconspicuous" (Choplin & Pliez, 2015) and remote places (Tsing 2009). As we shall see, the uninhabited island of La Tortuga was precisely one such inconspicuous place. Commodity circuit approaches then offer a Geertzian "ethnographic thickness" (Martin & Marmont, 2023: 48) to the studies of the movement of things, emphasizing how these become variably entangled in the distinct phases of their circulation, entering and leaving different regimes of value as they itinerate.

Here I will be utilizing the concept of *commodity circuits* specifically to understand the mechanics of maritime trade and conceptualize the overall itineraries of the commodities discussed. In this sense, as shall be discussed below in Sect. 3.3, the itineraries of La Tortuga sea salt in the seventeenth and eighteenth century created a commodity circuit—a circular commercial flow—that began and ended on the uninhabited island. The commodity circuit approach provides a birds-eye view of the itineraries of things, which not only encompasses multiple spatial scales (local, regional, global) but also prevents overlooking significant details of how the production and consumption of things is entangled with cultural and social aspects such as gender, race, and class.

1.3 Micro-Globalities

The third concept will be used to reveal and explain the local manifestations and peculiarities of entanglements that itineraries of things or commodity circuits alone cannot illuminate. While in previous research I utilized the local–global dichotomy dissolving concept of *situated globalities* from the work of sociologists John Law (2004) and Anders Blok (2010), here I recognize the need for a standalone concept. In proposing *micro-globalities*, I find inspiration in the general impetus of situated globalities to level the hierarchies of scale so inherent in discussions of globalization and multi-sited ethnography. Moreover, I share its emphasis on "studying how 'the actual global' gets articulated in specific situations and sets of socio-material relations" (Blok, 2010: 524). While I am very keen on the emphasis on "situatedness" and "socio-material relations," for the concept to be useful in the field of archaeology, I consider it necessary to build off this perspective. I further flesh-out the nature of these socio-material relations—or more precisely, human–thing entanglements—and the everyday practices in which they were imbricated. Micro-globalities thus picks up where situated globalities leaves off, integrating it into a more full-orbed view of human–thing entanglements informed by practice and correspondence theory (Antczak & Beaudry, 2019). Micro-globalities is also informed by recent concepts such as *world sites* (Vasantkumar, 2017) and *glocalization* (Roudometof 2016), both of which capture the interpenetration of local and global phenomena and the fusing of the particular and the universal (Khondker, 2018). Micro-globalities, therefore, are instances of everyday life (De Certeau, 1984; De Certeau et al., 1998; Lefebvre, 2004, 2008) where spatial scales collapse in on each other, resulting in human–thing entanglements that manifest locally but whose constituent material things in fact evidence supra-local, even global, itineraries, towing non-local entanglements in their wake (Fig. 1). Such micro-globalities reveal nested relationships: paradoxical instances where the global (or large scale, for that matter) resides and is present locally in a discrete spatial and temporal context. Micro-globalities therefore conceptually epitomize the previously mentioned spirit of Miller's (2010) "extremist" anthropology that advocates for a study of the particular and the universal *in tandem*, with equal dedication to both.

In the following section I begin to employ the theoretical toolkit explained above in following the sea salt harvested from the saltpan of La Tortuga Island on its itineraries beyond the Venezuelan Caribbean. I then retrace the circular flows of this salt and its entanglements with other commodities of the time, including enslaved humans, in the commodity circuit it created. Finally, I discuss micro-globalities from the archaeological findings at the site of Punta Salinas on La Tortuga where, by the saltpan, the itineraries of some things came to an end, and the commodity circuit closed, as natural sea salt met plantation-produced sugar and rum in the makeshift tavern by the saltpan.

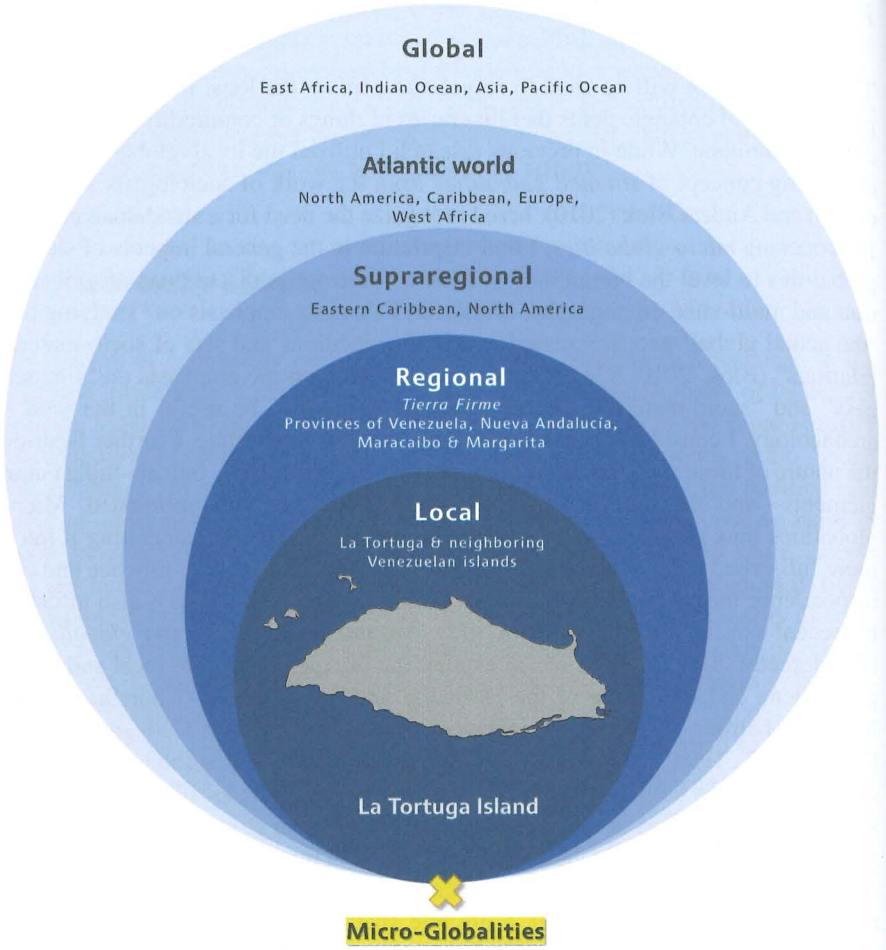


Fig. 1 Diagram depicting a micro-globality on the Venezuelan island of La Tortuga: an instance where multiple spatial scales all come together to reside in one localized point

2 Sea Salt, Bad Cod, and Sugar Plantation Slavery: The Itineraries and Commodity Circuits of Saltertuda Salt

2.1 Beginnings of La Tortuga Salt Trade

La Tortuga Island, not to be confused with the Haitian island of Tortuga, is the largest island of the Venezuelan Federal Dependencies and the largest remaining uninhabited island in the Caribbean. The island lies some 100 km northwest of the present-day port city of Puerto La Cruz and features three smaller islands at its northwest end: Tortuguillo del Este, Tortuguillo del Oest, and Cayo Herradura

(Fig. 2). Semi-arid and uninviting to permanent human settlement, La Tortuga is approximately 24 km long by 10 km wide, with kilometers of mangrove forests on its southern shores and a large saltpan at its southeastern end, at Punta Salinas. In precolonial and early colonial times, the saltpan was sporadically visited by indigenous peoples from the central Venezuelan coast; intensive salt harvesting only began in 1624, with the incursions of Dutch *zoutvaerders* (salt carriers) desperate to obtain the important mineral to preserve their commercially valuable catches of Baltic herring (Antczak et al., 2015).

By the time the Dutch seafarers were definitively deterred by the Spanish in a short confrontation in 1638, La Tortuga's saltpan had already been modified by the former's semi-industrial saltworks and the latter's flooding of a large portion of the saltpan after a previous skirmish, forming today's Los Mogotes Lagoon (Antczak, 2018: 61–62). Surprisingly, following 1638, the abandoned saltpan continued to be productive and it soon drew the attention of Anglo-American merchants from the British colonies of New England, as well as Bermuda and some British Caribbean islands. These merchants set their eyes on La Tortuga because its salt was abundant and free; furthermore, it was conveniently located on the return voyage to North America from the main British sugar-producing island of Barbados. The first recorded Anglo-American salt foray to La Tortuga occurred in 1638 when the ship

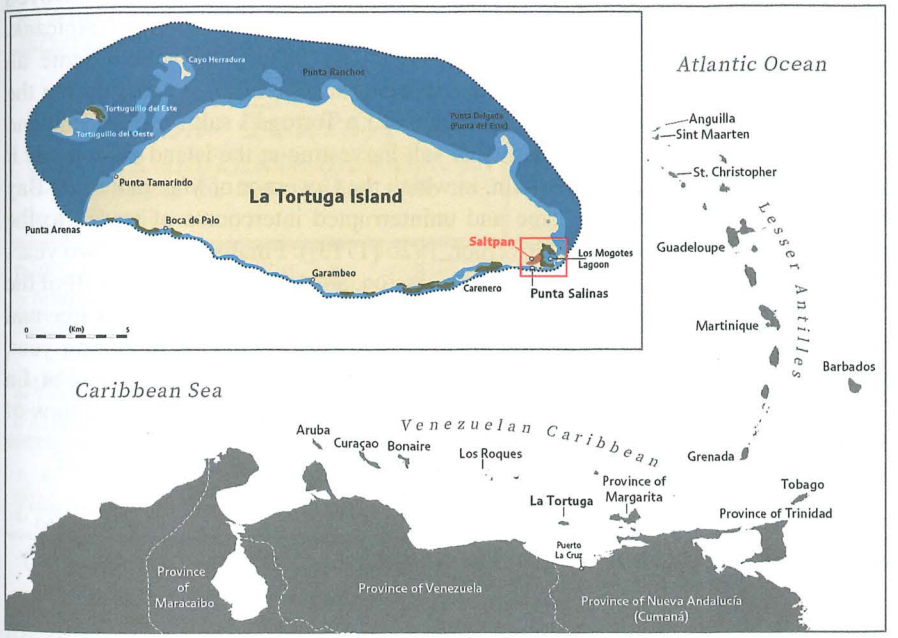


Fig. 2 Map of the island of La Tortuga and its adjacent islands, indicating the location of the saltpan and the archaeological site of Punta Salinas, and situating them within the broader Caribbean region

Desire returned to Salem, Massachusetts Colony, loaded with sodium chloride (Newton, 1914: 260).

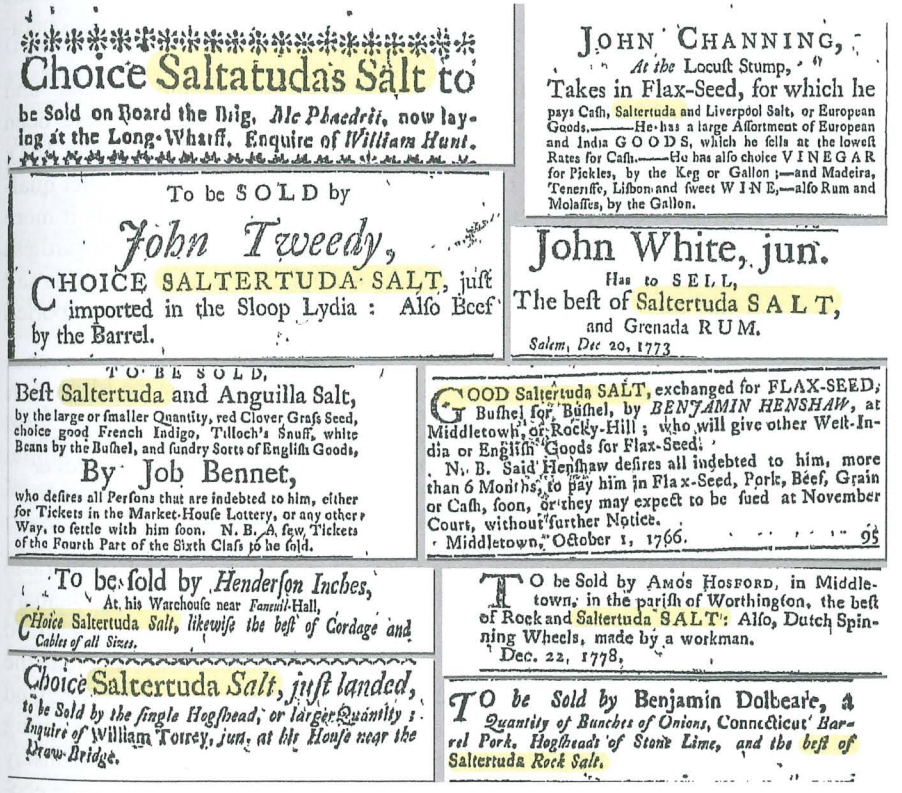
The documentary record for the following decades is scant, yet from the available sources it is clear that by the 1680s the island had become a prime salt destination. In 1682 pirate naturalist William Dampier (1699: 56) visited the saltpan and remarked that it was already "much frequented… by Merchant Ships, that come thither to lade Salt". Although there were larger saltpans on other Caribbean islands such as Dutch Sint Maarten and Bonaire, and British Anguilla and various islands in the Turks and Caicos, La Tortuga was unique because it was uninhabited and therefore the saltpan had no tenure rights and rakers did not have to pay taxes nor hire a local labor source (Fig. 2). The legality of these Anglo-American ventures to the Spanish island was, however, a contentious matter as no international treaty explicitly allowed the foreign salt harvesting activities. The Anglo-Americans grounded their rights to La Tortuga salt in a literal reading of Article VIII of the 1670 Treaty of Madrid, in which the uninhabited and therefore physically unpossessed island did not fall within the inhabited Spanish havens to which the British were prohibited to sail and trade (Hertslet, 1878: 45).

The golden age of piracy and increased Spanish policing of the Venezuelan Caribbean in the late seventeenth century resulted in several unprotected Anglo-American ships being robbed and harassed at La Tortuga. These incidents led to the hiring of private armed escort ships by Anglo-American merchants and the subsequent formation of the official "Saltertuda Fleet" in 1700, which was convoyed every winter and spring by a British man-of-war stationed in New England (Antczak, 2022: 66–74; Bellomont, 1910 [1700]: 196). The Saltertuda Fleet became an Atlantic world institution and is recorded to have sailed at least 25 times during the eighteenth century. The growing importance of La Tortuga's salt for New England and the contested issue of the legality of salt harvesting at the island soon made it into a letter to Queen Anne of Britain, in which the Governor of Massachusetts Bay requested the negotiation of "free and uninterrupted intercourse of trade" to the Spanish island (Address of the Governor, 1926 [1713]). Finally, in 1715, two years after the end of the War of the Spanish Succession, an entire article, Article III of the Treaty of Commerce signed at Madrid, explicitly granted British subjects free and uninterrupted access to La Tortuga salt (Hertslet, 1878: 82). The following year, probably boosted by the favorable treaty, a great fleet of 60 ships arrived at La Tortuga, with each ship estimated to have loaded an average of 46 metric tons of sea salt.

2.2 *From Saltpan to Sugar Via Saltfish*

After 1688, the documentary record improves and we gain a better perspective of the dimension and frequency of salt raking at La Tortuga. My analysis of the eighteenth-century Naval Office Shipping Lists (NOSL, n.d.) for Massachusetts (including ports such as Boston, Salem, and Marblehead), New Hampshire

(Piscataqua), New York, and Barbados, as well as dozens of Anglo-American newspapers, reveals that from 1700 to 1775 at least 958 ships entered the Eastern Seaboard carrying La Tortuga salt. The documentary records are, nonetheless, fragmentary and the actual figures were probably much higher, with the saltpan being unproductive only on four occasions, because of exceptional storms. In fact, La Tortuga's importance and renown in New England was such that not only was the trademark name of "Saltertuda salt" frequently advertised in newspapers during the eighteenth century (Fig. 3), but I have recorded 133 English exonyms in Anglo-American documentary sources including Tartuga, Saltodudos, Saltertuda, Saltaturga, Salt-Tarbooda, Tortoogoes, Tartoudies, and Tuda. Most of these imaginative exonyms derive from "Salt Tortuga", the combined English and Spanish toponym for the island. To my knowledge, this is the greatest number of exonyms given to any island in the Caribbean, a case in point for how many times it must have rolled off the tongues of Anglo-American mariners in the age of sail. Astonishingly, the uninhabited Spanish island was so ingrained in the Anglo-American collective imagination that Captain Giles Seaward of Piscataqua, who sailed to La Tortuga


Choice Saltatudas Salt to be Sold on Board the Brig, *Ile Phaedrii*, now laying at the Long-Wharff. Enquire of *William Hunt*.

JOHN CHANNING, *At the* Locuſt Stump, Takes in Flax-Seed, for which he pays Caſh, Saltertuda and Liverpool Salt, or European Goods.——He has a large Aſſortment of European and India GOODS, which he ſells at the loweſt Rates for Caſh.——He has alſo choice VINEGAR for Pickles, by the Keg or Gallon;—and Madeira, Teneriffe, Liſbon and ſweet WINE,—alſo Rum and Molaſſes, by the Gallon.

To be SOLD by *John Tweedy*, CHOICE SALTERTUDA SALT, juſt imported in the Sloop Lydia: Alſo Beef by the Barrel.

John White, jun. Has to SELL, The beſt of Saltertuda SALT, and Grenada RUM. *Salem, Dec* 20, 1773

TO BE SOLD, Beſt Saltertuda and Anguilla Salt, by the large or ſmaller Quantity, red Clover Graſs Seed, choice good French Indigo, Tilloch's Snuff, white Beans by the Buſhel, and ſundry Sorts of Engliſh Goods, By Job Bennet, who deſires all Perſons that are indebted to him, either for Tickets in the Market-Houſe Lottery, or any other Way, to ſettle with him ſoon. N. B. A few Tickets of the Fourth Part of the Sixth Claſs to be ſold.

GOOD Saltertuda SALT, exchanged for FLAX-SEED; Buſhel for Buſhel, by *BENJAMIN HENSHAW*, at Middletown, or Rocky-Hill; who will give other Weſt-India or Engliſh Goods for Flax-Seed. N. B. Said Henſhaw deſires all indebted to him, more than 6 Months, to pay him in Flax-Seed, Pork, Beef, Grain or Caſh, ſoon, or they may expect to be ſued at November Court, without further Notice. Middletown, October 1, 1766. 95

To be ſold by *Henderſon Inches*, At his Warehouſe near *Faneuil*-Hall, *Choice* Saltertuda *Salt, likewiſe the beſt of Cordage and Cables of all Sizes.*

TO be Sold by AMOS HOSFORD, in Middletown, in the pariſh of Worthington, the beſt of Rock and Saltertuda SALT: Alſo, Dutch Spinning Wheels, made by a workman. Dec. 22, 1778.

Choice Saltertuda *Salt, juſt landed, to be Sold by the ſingle Hogſhead, or larger Quantity: Inquire of* William Torrey, *jun. at his Houſe near the Draw-Bridge.*

TO *be Sold by* Benjamin Dolbeare, a *Quantity of Bunches of Onions, Connecticut Barrel Pork, Hogſheads of Stone Lime, and the beſt of* Saltertuda *Rock Salt.*

Fig. 3 Various advertisements for La Tortuga salt in eighteenth-century New England Newspapers with the trademark name "Saltertuda salt" highlighted

seven times, christened his brigantine "Tortuga" and Captain Josiah Burnham of New London named his sloop "Saltatuda."

Solar sea salt raked from saltpans and salt ponds on other Caribbean islands with man-made saltworks involving dikes, sluices, pumps, concentrating ponds, and crystallizing pans manned by the year-round labor of salt workers guaranteed a high-grade sodium chloride free from impurities. Saltertuda salt, however, was of inferior quality as it crystallized naturally, entirely dependent on the whims of the climate and only aided by the fierce tropical sun and the warm and steady trade winds (Antczak, 2018). This resulted in a salt that was coarse, large-grained, and reddish (Sloane, 1707: lxxxviii). There was much debate in New England regarding the quality of this salt during the second half of the seventeenth century. Many condemned Saltertuda salt as detrimental to quality saltfish since it was more "fiery":

> More salt-burnt dried cod came from New England than from Newfoundland because the Tortugas salt used at the former place was more fiery than the milder salt from Lisbon and Bay of Biscay that was in use at Newfoundland… Tortugas salt was condemned as being injurious to the best quality of cured fish. (McFarland, 1911: 66, 95–96)

Because the Anglo-Americans only harvested it once it had crystallized without their intervention, it would have precipitated together with numerous other minerals from the bittern, minerals that were normally purged in industrial saltpan operations, making the salt unpalatable and indeed "fiery."

In 1670, Saltertuda salt was specifically criticized for containing "shells" and other "trash" and for leaving spots on the fish, something that could have been avoided by more careful salt harvesting (Felt, 1849: 212; Innis, 1954: 161). Curiously, some merchants in 1750 claimed that the island's salt was of better quality than its English counterpart, suggesting its strong characteristics made it more favorable to the curing of pork and other provisions (Stock, 1941: 401). Regardless of the variability of opinion, the consensus in New England was that Saltertuda salt was not suitable for curing the top-quality fish that was principally exported to Iberia:

> A part of the salt came from Spain and the Straits, and a part came from the island of Tortuga, where it was produced by a well-known process… This salt, although of low grade and not usable with 'merchantable' fish, was indispensable, particularly for 'refuse' fish, which found ready market in the West India trade. When storms destroyed the salt beds or pirates captured the salt-bearing vessels, the New Englanders suffered great inconvenience. (Colonial Society of Massachusetts, 1927: 241)

This excerpt highlights why Saltertuda salt was so important to Anglo-American merchants in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Every year between January and May, Anglo-American fleets would harvest the free and naturally crystallized salt, requiring only the labor of their small ship crews to rake, cart, bag, and load the mineral. These Saltertuda Fleets would then set sail and arrive back to New England in late April and early May, just in time to supply the salt necessary for the spring fisheries (McFarland, 1911: 97; Pares, 1963: 631). These fisheries were a mainstay of the British colonies of North America and La Tortuga's salt was of strategic economic importance to these fisheries and, specifically, to the Caribbean sugar

plantations, as was made plainly clear in a 1714 letter from the Council of Trade and Plantations to Queen Anne:

> We take leave to lay before your Majesty, the consequence of your Majesty's subjects being prohibited to fetch salt at Tertudos, wch. will in part appear from the number of ships using that trade, being as we are informed, one year with another about 100 sail. The salt carryed from thence to New England, is used cheifly for curing fish, which is either cadelscale fish or mackrel, the former of which is the principal branch of the returns made from the continent of Great Brittain by way of Spain, Portugal and the Streights, for the woollen and other goods sent from this Kingdom thither; besides which the scale fish and mackrell are of such consequence, that the sugar islands cannot subsist without it; their negroes being cheifly supported by this fish. So that if they were not supply'd therewith from New England (which they cannot be, if your Majesty's subjects are prohibitted getting salt at Tertudos) they would not be able to carry on their sugar works. This has been confirmed to us by several considerable planters concerned in those parts. (Council of Trade and Plantations, 1926 [1714]: 289)

Therefore, unlike the premium-grade "merchantable" cod exported principally to Iberia which was cured with finer salt, the coarse and bitter Saltertuda salt was used to preserve "West India"-grade saltfish—that is, badly dressed or cured, undersized, spotted, damaged, and spoilt fish that was deemed "unmerchantable" or "refuse" fish to be sold to the English and French sugar plantations of the Lesser Antilles (Francis, 2022: 93; Hunter, 1996: 86; Pope, 2004: 26–27). On these islands, where sugar crops had overtaken much of the arable land, this refuse saltfish was the primary source of protein fed to enslaved laborers toiling on the plantations. In fact, planters were "so intent on planting sugar that they rather buy foode at very deare rates than produce it by labour" (Vines, 1947 [1647] in Clausnitzer, 2018: 115).

The documentary evidence reveals that La Tortuga was New England's most important Caribbean salt island in large part due to the provisioning of refuse saltfish—cured with Saltertuda salt—to enslaved West Indian sugar laborers. Refuse saltfish became a big business in eighteenth century New England, with roughly half of the fish exports from Salem being refuse cod (Innis, 1954: 162). As we have seen, every year Saltertuda salt itinerated northward in the holds of small Anglo-American sloops, brigantines, and schooners, leaving the tropics and arriving in New England to preserve the delicate and mistreated flesh of refuse fish. Then, within that mistreated flesh, it itinerated once again, back to the warm waters of the West Indies to be consumed by the enslaved who powered British and French sugar plantations. As a matter of fact, the saltfish most often itinerated aboard the same ships that had brought the salt to New England in the first place. The New England ships that would later assemble at Barbados in December and January of every year to form the Saltertuda Fleet, would first sell refuse saltfish to Caribbean planters along with other indispensable goods vital to the plantations such as horses, lumber, staves, shingles, cask hoops, whale oil, bricks, candles, apples, and onions (Antczak, 2019: 83). This refuse saltfish was very important, so much so that the brigantine *Nestor* and the schooner *Boca Chica*, which set sail from Piscataqua (New Hampshire) for Jamaica and the West Indies on June 30, 1732, respectively carried 38 and 22 hogsheads of "fish Salt Tortuga," which was undoubtedly refuse fish salted with Saltertuda salt (NOSL C.O. 5968). It may be then clearly argued that salt

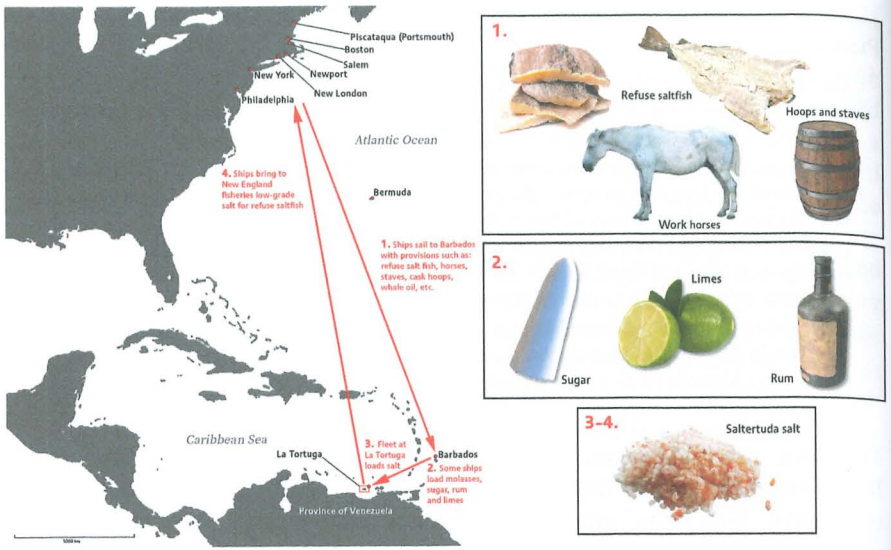


Fig. 4 Map of the Caribbean and North American regions highlighting the smaller triangular trade created by the Saltertuda Fleets and illustrating the commodities that moved within this circuit

from La Tortuga fueled the muscle of empire and, for more than a century, helped power Atlantic sugar economies.

Surprisingly, Spanish La Tortuga became an essential cog in the mercantile capitalist system of the British Empire. Moreover, the yearly voyages of New England's Saltertuda Fleets with refuse saltfish and provisions to the West Indies, their subsequent month-long stopover to harvest salt at La Tortuga, and their return to their homeports loaded with the free sodium chloride charted an unmistakable triangular trade pattern within the larger and more notorious Triangular Trade in the Atlantic world (Fig. 4). Anglo-Americans became entangled with the island and its free salt in a bindingly tight dependence, demanding on various occasions that the Spanish recognize their right to rake salt there and obtaining important international treaty articles enabling them to do so. It was only after 1781, when a Basque corsair expelled what were probably New England salt rakers from the saltpan, that the island would no longer be visited by Anglo-American ships, ending La Tortuga's era in the Atlantic limelight, and returning it to its original obscurity (De Amezaga Aresti, 1966: 94).

The steady, clockwise movement of Saltertuda salt for nearly 150 years in the Atlantic world formed a commodity circuit that began at the saltpan of La Tortuga and—via New England refuse saltfish—flowed through to Caribbean sugarcane plantations producing sugar and its derivatives such as molasses and rum. This circuit, I argue, did not close on Barbados, or Martinique, or Anguilla. It continued with the Saltertuda Fleets that congregated and parted from Barbados every year, and returned to the very saltpan where it began.

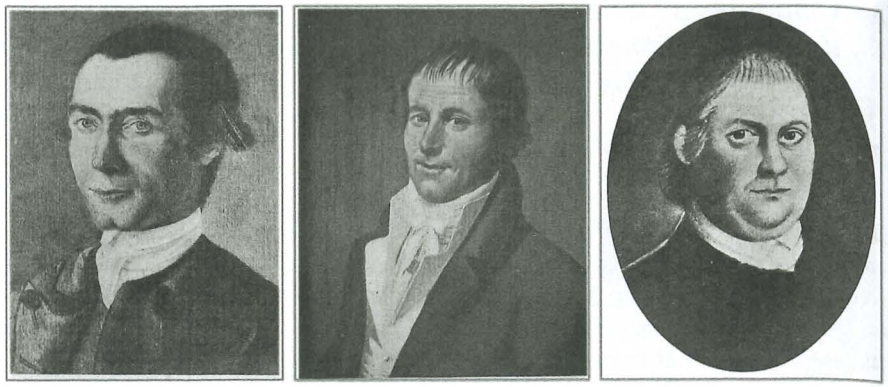
3 Campsites by the Saltpan: Anglo-American Seafarers, Enslaved Mariners, and Consumption of Sugarcane Derivatives on La Tortuga Island

3.1 Race and Slavery at the Saltpan

Before we turn to discuss the archaeological discoveries from La Tortuga's saltpan, and what these reveal about micro-globalities, we have to better understand who were the seafarers arriving at the island. To be clear, while concepts such as *itineraries of things* and *commodity circuits* seem to only refer to the movement of things and not people, things themselves do not have wilful agency; therefore, any discussion of their itineraries *must* address the people who moved them. In this case, the seafarers that arrived at La Tortuga to gather salt from the seventeenth to the late eighteenth century were mostly Anglo-American colonists from New England. On occasions, however, Bermudians, as well as mariners from other British islands such as Anguilla, St. Kitts, Nevis, or Barbados made their way to the island.

Tonnage figures derived from my analysis of the New England NOSL indicate that the average burden of the ships heading to La Tortuga during the eighteenth century was 55 t—just over a third the size of the average 150-t vessel used in transatlantic voyages. These New England vessels generally consisted of an assortment of unarmed brigs, brigantines, and sloops; on average, they had seven people on board including the captain and mate. They formed the bulk of the salt fleets to La Tortuga and were chiefly manned by white seamen. As regards hierarchy on board, it is probable that, since these vessels were so small and the ship's complement so reduced, what prevailed at sea was a generalized collectivism. My analysis of the NOSL and of Anglo-American newspapers has, furthermore, revealed the names of hundreds of ship captains arriving at La Tortuga from 1688 to 1775, a few of whom we have extant portraits from the eighteenth century (Fig. 5).

While most of the seamen aboard these vessels were probably white, this does not preclude there occasionally being free or enslaved seamen of color at the saltpan. Although more common in the West Indies, black seafarers were not unusual in eighteenth-century New England, as the work of historian W. Jeffrey Bolster (1997) reveals. Bolster suggests that race might have played a less determining role in the maritime lives of enslaved seafarers on small New England ships due to the generalized collectivism that prevailed on board (1997: 79–83, 93–96). Documentary evidence for enslaved seafarers at La Tortuga is only linked to Bermudian vessels, which would visit the saltpan independently of the Saltertuda Fleet and outside of the fleet's season (February–May). Quite uniquely in the Atlantic world, by 1720 on average more than a third of the crew of a Bermudian sloop consisted of enslaved sailors (Jarvis, 2002; Maxwell, 2009:146). The earliest mention of an enslaved seaman at La Tortuga dates to 1709 and refers to a Bermudian man by the name of "Dick Negro," the property of Justice of the Peace Dickinson, laboring aboard the vessel *Ruth* of James Basset along with five other men (Maxwell, 2009: 146). Another instance of a probably Bermudian enslaved mariner comes from a letter by



Capt. James Buffinton
(1738–1775)
Master of the *Tryal*

1774 on La Tortuga

Capt. Edward Allen, Merchant
(1735–1803)
Master of the Brigt. *Hope*

Prob. 1764 on La Tortuga

Capt. William Bartlett
(1741–1794)
Master of the Brig. *Charlotte*

1763 on La Tortuga

Fig. 5 Portraits of three Salem captains who are known to have probably sailed to La Tortuga for salt during the eighteenth century (in Tapley, 1934: 88, 192, 157)

D. Francisco Fajardo sent from a small town in the east of the Province of Venezuela to the Governor of Caracas in September of 1775, in which Fajardo mentions that a negro arrived near his town on a boat from La Tortuga, having escaped from his captain (Acosta Saignes, 1967: 85). One last mention, dated 1766, refers to an attack by Basque corsairs on a fleet of Bermudian vessels gathering salt at La Tortuga. In the flurry of cannon fire that ensued, according to the court testimony of the mate of a Bermudian sloop named Daniel Keele:

> [T]here being five Negroe Sailors on Board his [Keele's] said Sloop who were more fearful of falling into the hands of Pirates, than White Persons were, as soon as they saw they were likely to be made Captives, jumped overboard in order to Swim to the Shore, all which the Deponent [Keele] hath been since informed by some of the said Negroes since his the Deponents return to these Islands [Bermuda], got on Shore except one (by the name of Daniel, a Slave the property of one George Chaplin of these islands) who was drowned. (Minutes of His Majesty's Council [MHMCB], 1996 [1766]: 220)

While this curious case of enslaved mariners who, rather than seek their freedom on the Spanish Main, returned to slavery in Bermuda is discussed elsewhere (Antczak, 2019: 154–55), for the purposes of this chapter, from the available evidence, it can be concluded that beyond the Bermudian crews, the presence of enslaved seafarers in the Saltertuda Fleets was not the norm. Even though it is difficult to determine how many Bermudian ships went to the island during the eighteenth century, since the Bermuda NOSL are very fragmentary, the bulk of ship names I researched from New England newspapers indicate that most vessels arriving on the Eastern Seaboard with salt from La Tortuga were from the New England region, and therefore—again—most seafarers who raked salt on La Tortuga were probably white Anglo-Americans and not enslaved mariners.

This is a peculiar finding, as salt-raking was a ruthless task—due to the prolonged exposure to corrosive brines in the fierce tropical sun—chiefly assigned to enslaved salt workers as was the case, for example, on Dutch Bonaire in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries or on the British Turks Islands in the nineteenth century (Prince, 1831; Stelten & Antczak, 2023). In fact, on most other Caribbean saltpans and salt ponds, sea salt was cultivated and harvested by local enslaved laborers or raked from saltpans on uninhabited islands by largely enslaved Bermudian crews. Unlike the enslaved salt rakers who had to toil on saltpans most of their lives, the white Anglo-American seafarers were waged laborers who would have only been working on the saltpan of La Tortuga for a few weeks a year when they arrived with the Saltertuda Fleet. This did not make their temporary work easy or overseeing them more manageable for their captains, but it resulted in the salt harvested from the saltpan of La Tortuga being mostly raked through the sweat and toil of white seamen, in much the same way as the cod on the Grand Banks was caught mostly by white fishermen.

So, through an exploration of the human dimension of the itineraries of Saltertuda salt and its intersections with race and slavery in the ruthlessly racialized eighteenth-century Atlantic world, we are made aware that this maritime commodity circuit was unconventional. On La Tortuga, white men performed a task assigned everywhere else to the enslaved, and white fishermen in New England then used Saltertuda salt to produce a commodity that sustained the West Indian slave populations. We shall now see that race and— whiteness in this case—was also the determining factor in *who* consumed the final products of the sugar plantation slaves' brutal toil, as the commodity circuit of Saltertuda sea salt, having done its round in the Atlantic world, came full circle at the site of Punta Salinas with another yearly arrival of the Saltertuda Fleet to rake salt.

3.2 *The Excavations by the Saltpan*

The archaeological site of Punta Salinas (TR/S), located by the large saltpan at the southeastern end of La Tortuga was discovered in February of 1993 during initial survey of the area by archaeologists Andrzej and Maria Magdalena Antczak (Fig. 2). In May of that year, a four-week expedition involving extensive test pits and large-scale trench excavations followed at the site, revealing the Anglo-American campsites by the saltpan and determining the contours of the activity areas (Fig. 6). Three weeklong expeditions were held at the site more recently, once in 2009 and twice in 2010. The excavations at Punta Salinas have generated an abundance and variety of material things left behind by hundreds of seafarers on their salt harvesting ventures to the island, primarily dating between 1700 and 1781. Serendipitously, the entire site was sealed with a *terminus ante quem* since the saltpan was abandoned after Basque corsair Vicente Antonio de Icuza ousted the last Anglo-American salt rakers from the island in 1781. This exceptional circumstance, along with the sheer diversity of archaeological finds and the rare fact that—unlike the sites of

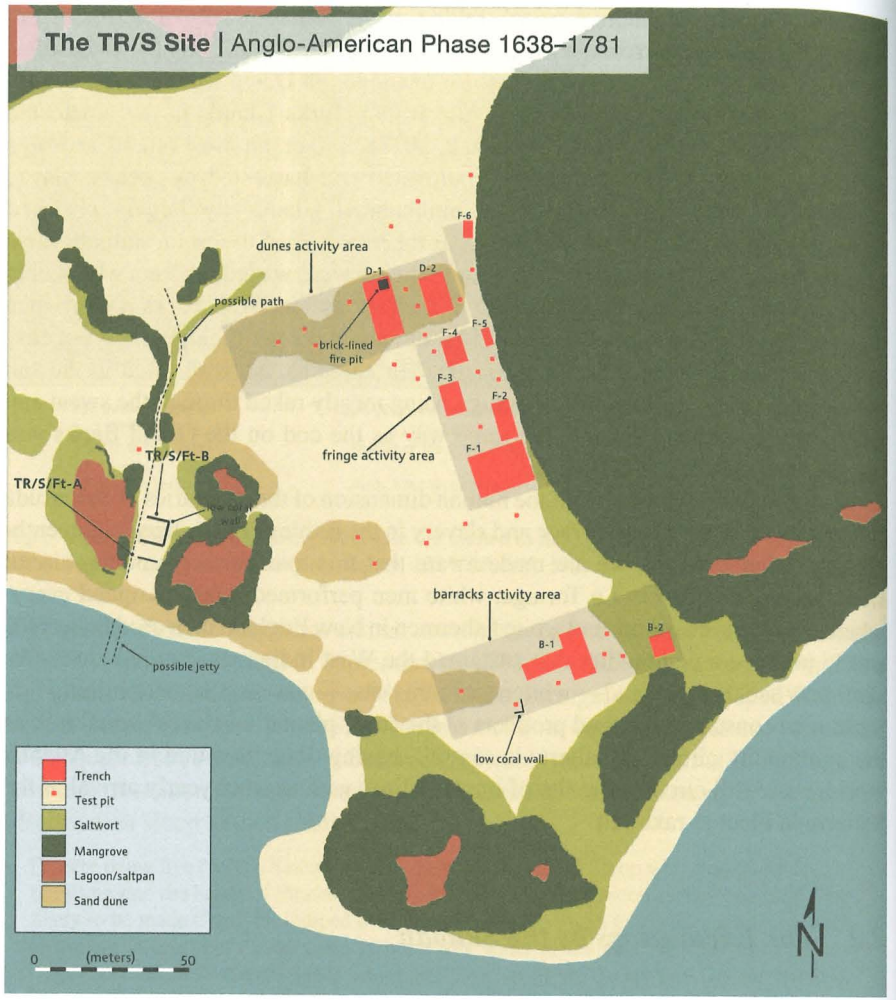


Fig. 6 Map of the site of Punta Salinas (TR/S) on La Tortuga, with Anglo-American occupational period features and activity areas and the test pits and trenches excavated within these highlighted

shipwrecks—Punta Salinas contained things intentionally brought to land, used, and left behind by seafarers make the Venezuelan site a remarkable historical archaeological case study for obtaining a better understanding of early modern seafaring lives and the itineraries of things.

Nearly every year between 1700 and 1781, once the Saltertuda Fleet had anchored in Punta Salinas Bay, the saltpan and its surroundings came alive as the captains and crews came down on land and set up their tarps, camping here for up to a month at a time. In most of the other Atlantic ports they sailed to, taverns were seafarers' favorite places to socialize and spend leisure time while on land; therefore, an extended stay at La Tortuga required such a place. At Punta Salinas—hemmed in by

the Caribbean Sea and constrained by the island's dry and unforgiving landscape—the seafarers improvised an unusual seasonal tavern of sea chests, barrels, and tarps. It is to this peculiar tavern that seafarers brought their personal possessions, many of which they broke, lost, discarded, or even purposefully left behind, which then formed a rich archaeological record. I have taken up the task of reassembling the hundreds of plates, punch bowls, shoe buckles, pipes, and fishbones recovered from the campsites of Punta Salinas into vibrant assemblages of practice; these paint a vivid picture of the everyday lives of ordinary merchant seafarers, their consumer choices, their tastes for fashion, and their entanglements with material things. It is in this context that micro-globalities will be discussed.

3.3 *The Micro-Globalities of Punch Drinking by the Saltpan*

At Punta Salinas, I have identified 790 individual ceramic, glass, and metal vessels pertaining to a diverse range of forms and functions. The abundant contextual archaeological evidence and zooarchaeological remains, as well as the breadth and detail of the documentary sources including lists of perishable items on board a number of ships anchored at La Tortuga, allowed for the reassembling of dining and drinking practices with remarkable detail. Here I will be primarily focussing on the Dunes activity area of the site (Fig. 6), which I suggest was the place where most captains spent their leisure time and from where they oversaw the work of their ship crews working on the saltpan beyond. It is the analysis of this activity area in particular that brings to light the peculiarities of their material entanglements; the Anglo-American ship captains would socialize here with their peers, bringing from onboard their ships elegant tablewares, exotic ingredients, and sundry paraphernalia. The assemblage of drinking practices from Punta Salinas, accounting for nearly 74% (Minimum Number of Vessels = 584) of all the vessels, is large and diverse and the drinking of punch was its focal point.

Punch is the foundational drink of modern mixology and consists of five ingredients: spirit, sugar, spices, citrus juice, and water (Wondrich, 2021). A quintessentially global and cosmopolitan drink with deep maritime roots, punch grew greatly in popularity in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and was closely associated with British masculine sociability (Harvey, 2012). The recovery of a minimum number of 142 ceramic punch bowls from Punta Salinas, many of which were found in the Dunes activity area, is a clear indicator that punch drinking was a prevalent practice at La Tortuga (Fig. 7). What is striking, however, is that these punch bowls were not the typical multi-liter vessels known from New England taverns and parties but were much smaller, handheld, and individually sized "sneakers," averaging 15.5 cm in diameter—half the size of standard communal punch bowls (Archer, 1997: 283). In the makeshift tavern of tarps and barrels at Punta Salinas, rather than share a bowl of punch, as they would at other taverns in the Atlantic world, captains drank the alcoholic beverage from their own small bowls, underscoring their individuality and keen eye for the latest goods from Britain.

Fig. 7 Punch and punch-related artefacts recovered at Punta Salinas, La Tortuga Island: (1) English white-salt glazed stoneware punch bowl, *c.* 1740–1778; (2) rare, molded English creamware punch bowl, *c.* 1762–1810; (3) five small English delft punch bowls or "sneakers," *c.* 1720–1760; (4&5) Rhenish stoneware mineral water bottles, *c.* 1750–1780 with various source marks of the Selters brand; (6) Dutch or Belgian *langhal* or long-neck utility bottle, late eighteenth century; (7) English onion-shaped bottle with short neck and untooled string rim, *c.* 1680–1725

For the purposes of this chapter, what I would like to highlight here is that the spirit in the punch that was consumed on La Tortuga was most often rum and the indispensable sweetener was sugar—two products of the sugarcane plantations of the West Indies—the first of which was consumed more locally and regionally, and the latter of which was the driver of British and French Atlantic economies (Smith, 2005). Pirate naturalist Dampier once again offers a remark from his visit to the saltpan 1682 in which he describes the contents and underscores the popularity of the punch being drunk on the island:

> I have seen above 20 Sail at a time in this Road [La Tortuga] come to lade Salt; and these ships coming from some of the Caribbe Islands, are always well stored with Rum, Sugar and Limejuice to make Punch, to hearten their Men when they are at work, getting and bringing aboard the Salt; and they commonly provide the more, in hopes to meet with Privateers, who resort hither in the aforesaid Months, purposely to keep a Christmas, as they call it; being sure to meet with Liquor enough to be merry with, and are very liberal to those that treat them. (Dampier, 1699: 56)

Documentary evidence demonstrates that rum stores continued to be abundant aboard ships arriving at La Tortuga well into the eighteenth century—more than 80 years after Dampier made his observations. For example, the inventories of three Bermudian vessels hijacked by Basque corsairs at the saltpan in 1766 offer an excellent window into the supplies of beverages on board ships anchoring at Punta Salinas (Minutes of His Majesty's Council [MHMCB], 1996 [1766]). All three vessels carried large quantities of rum—from 40 to 45 gals of the spirit (150–170 l)—and the *Porgey* and the *Roach* also had 4 and 9 gal respectively of "old spirit." In case we think this was only a Bermudian custom, a few years earlier the New-London sloop *Gull* carried a barrel of "British West India Rum" on board (Ship papers of the sloop Gull, 1761–1765). These were likely designations for aged rum and would most certainly have been used in the rum punch described by Dampier (Frederick Smith, pers. comm. 2014). Interestingly, the *Gull* carried only half this amount of rum (20 gal) on its voyage to Barbados in 1763, suggesting the possibility that the Bermudian ships would top off their rum supplies in the West Indies on their way from Bermuda to La Tortuga. Some New England vessels carried vast amounts of rum, most of which was probably sold back at their homeports, but some of which presumably would have been utilized at Punta Salinas. For example, in 1751 the *Charming Peggy* entered Piscataqua via Barbados and La Tortuga with 100 gallons of rum on board, in 1753 the *Mermaid* entered with an enormous load of 630 gallons, and in 1765 the *Somersworth* and the *Sally* respectively transported 350 and 300 gallons of rum to the same port; meanwhile, that same year, the *Sibella* of Boston only had a modest three casks of the spirit on board (NOSL C.O. 5: 850, 967–969).

The material evidence for rum at the site of Punta Salinas is more ambivalent as it would have most probably been transported in the wooden casks mentioned in the documentary evidence above, of which only fragments of rusted hoops have been found in the excavations. For smaller, more individualized quantities, it could have been transported in cylindrical green-glass bottles, of which a minimum number of 60 individual vessels have been identified (Fig. 7). No matter where in the Caribbean this rum had been bought, or where it had been brought aboard the ships that would then anchor at La Tortuga, what remains clear is that it was produced on sugar plantations by an enslaved labor force.

Sugar, the other ingredient mentioned by Dampier as fundamental to rum punch, is also documented to have been found aboard ships at La Tortuga. From the previously mentioned 1766 inventories of the three Bermudian ships, we glean that the *Porgey* carried 60 lb. of brown sugar and the *Roach* 45 lb. of regular sugar and 25 lb. of finer white sugar among its stores (MHMCB 1996 [1766]: 206–210). Here we see some of the various grades of sugar that were available on the market, from simple and unrefined dark muscovado to a highly refined and expensive white powdery sugar—all of which could be employed in a bowl of punch (Gollannek, 2008: 189). As regards sugar paraphernalia, the *Porgey* also had a sugar box on board,

most certainly used for making punch or sweetening tea (MHMCB 1996 [1766]: 209–210). Further documentary evidence from New England shows that sugar was carried aboard Anglo-American ships returning from La Tortuga and having previously hailed at other Caribbean sugar islands. In 1688 the *Two Brothers* carried what was probably 50 tuns (1 tun was 4 hogsheads) of sugar along with an unknown quantity of Saltertuda salt which was to be sold at captain John Gee's Boston store (NOSL C.O. 5: 848). In 1753 the Salem schooner *Endeavor* entered its home port with salt and "a quantity of sugar and rum", while, in 1761 the *3 Sisters,* the *Jolly Robin*, and the *Sally* all entered the same port, each carrying Saltertuda salt and numerous hogsheads of sugar, which had probably been loaded at the island of St. Christopher (NOSL C.O. 5: 848, 851). The following year the *King Prussia* returned to Piscataqua with 650 hogsheads of salt and 6 barrels of sugar. In 1765 the above-mentioned *Sibella* brought 6 barrels of sugar into Boston and the *Betty*, 21 barrels, both ships having hailed at Barbados before loading salt at La Tortuga (NOSL C.O. 5: 850). While all of this imported sugar was probably sold in New England, like the 1766 inventories of the three Bermudian ships referenced first, the captains of the New England ships must have also had their personal supplies of sugar to make punch. Returning from the sugar islands, it was extremely likely that they were well supplied with the sweetener in its various forms.

To now return to the punch bowls, these vessels and the practice of punch drinking entangled seafarers and things, exemplifying a micro-globality. The ceramic "sneakers" (small, individual punch bowls) utilized at Punta Salinas were eighteenth-century containers that, with their intoxicating content, collapsed the spatial scales of the early modern world. Fashionable British ceramics, Caribbean rum and sugar produced with the toil of the enslaved, Barbados limes that were abundant and easily accessed because of the sugar trade (Antczak, 2019: 265), fancy German Selters spa water, and East Indian spices all came together in this singular mixed drink on the desolate Spanish island of La Tortuga (Fig. 8). These conspicuous vessels filled with punch became the foci of sea captains' social gatherings and of the entire assemblage of alcohol drinking. Punch itself—the blend of alcohol, fruit, water, spices, and sugar—suggested the coming together of disparate people in the convivial act of drinking; yet, at La Tortuga the drink was not shared communally from one large bowl as in New England but drunk individually (Harvey, 2012: 191). Punch bowls became, as art historian Eric Gollannek (2008: 220) describes them, "supercharged space[s] for the sensory consumption of empire." More so, punch became a potent metaphor of the far-reaching tentacles of the growing British mercantile capitalist world order and the punch "sneaker," a peculiar artefact that both indexed and furthered a growing Georgian individualism among the middling class of sea captains (Tarlow, 2007: 24–25). It was through these fashionable bowls and their contents that middling captains could highlight their cosmopolitan identities and connections to far-flung places in the Atlantic world and beyond.

The micro-globality of punch drinking on La Tortuga distills the local–regional–global nature of the itineraries of Saltertuda salt and the maritime mobilities of the seafarers carrying it aboard their ships. In fact, it is on La Tortuga that the commodity circuit of Saltertuda salt comes full circle—not when the enslaved laborers on

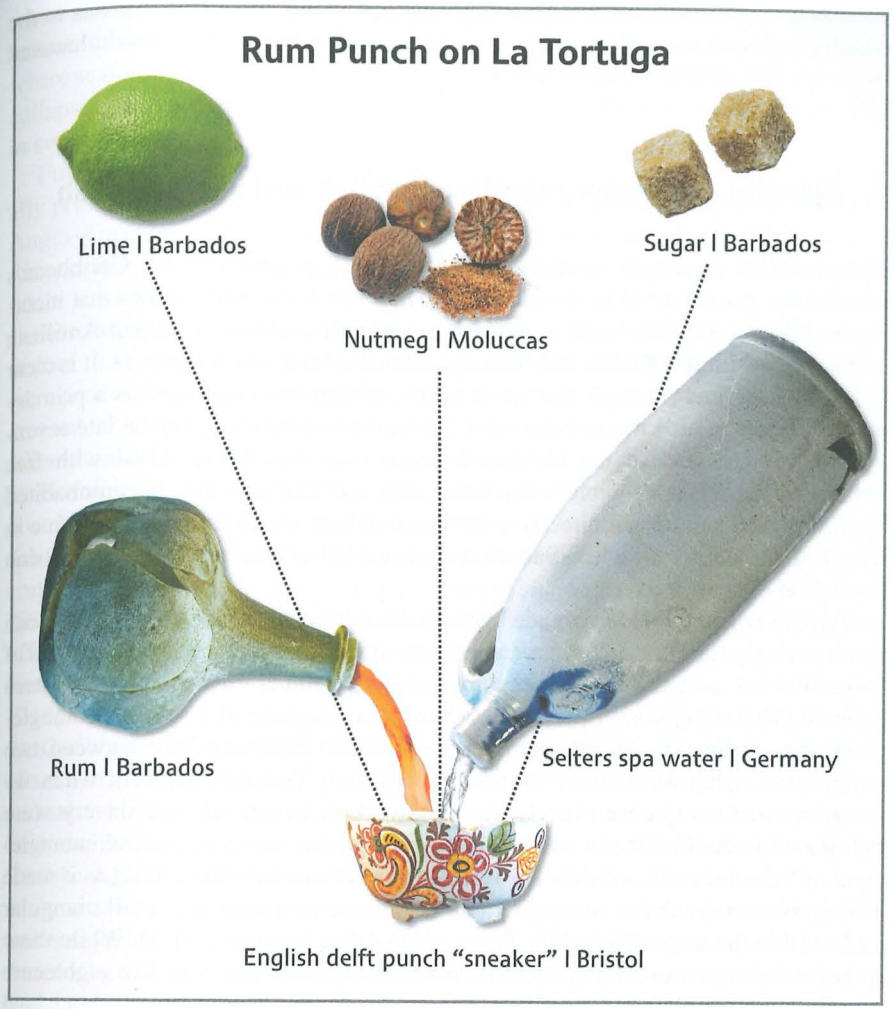


Fig. 8 Illustration of the various commodities that came together in a "sneaker" of rum punch on La Tortuga, creating a micro-globality

West Indian sugar plantations consumed the refuse cod, as would typically be considered the final act. Punch drinking as a practice employed at La Tortuga evidences a particularly potent micro-globality: seafarers were consuming plantation rum and sugar produced by the enslaved who were fed the bad quality fish preserved with the low-quality salt these very seafarers raked. Nearly every year during the eighteenth century, the unique tavern by the saltpan of Punta Salinas on uninhabited La Tortuga witnessed how Anglo-American sea captains both drove and consumed empire—they harvested vital sea salt and ingested tropical sugar and rum. Whilst the salt was primarily harvested by white seamen, the sugar and rum they consumed was

produced by enslaved laborers on Caribbean sugar plantations This leads us to the concluding discussion of how Saltertuda salt was therefore a haunted salt, haunted by its spectral entanglement to slavery.

4 Spectral Entanglements: Haunted Salt and Spoilt Saltfish

Today, saltfish is deeply imbedded in the culinary practices of the Caribbean's inhabitants, as evidenced by a wide array of national West Indian dishes that incorporate this key ingredient, from Jamaican ackee and saltfish to French Antillean *accras de morue* and Kittian and Nevisian stewed saltfish and dumplings. It is clear from my historical research that when refuse saltfish was most used as a primary protein source to feed the enslaved on Caribbean plantations—from the late seventeenth through most of the eighteenth century—it was being salted with free Saltertuda salt. We can therefore say with a degree of certainty that this uninhabited Spanish island and its salt directly contributed to how ingrained saltfish became in island cuisines. Via refuse fish, Saltertuda salt enabled and maintained the Caribbean institution of chattel slavery.

Yet, this connection I have made between the salt from La Tortuga and Caribbean slavery is only illuminated once we undertake the task of retracing the itineraries of Saltertuda salt and then follow the commodity circuit it created in the western Atlantic. Therefore, what I propose we have here is a case of a spectral entanglement, that is, not an entanglement per se—a direct relational knot between two things—but rather an indirect relationship that only becomes apparent when we zoom out and comprehend the larger meshwork in which salt and slavery were imbricated in the Caribbean and Atlantic world. In this way, the spectral entanglement of Saltertuda salt with slavery haunted the salt's commodity circuit as it made its rounds for more than a century within what I have described as a small triangular trade within the larger Triangular Trade of the Atlantic world (Fig. 4). While these entanglements, both real and spectral, have disappeared since the late eighteenth century, their troubled history will continue to haunt the desolate Venezuelan island for those who know its past. If it had not been for the pressing need to feed the enslaved with a cheap and abundant protein source in the form of refuse fish, La Tortuga's saltpan would have never drawn the eye of Anglo-American merchants.

Conversely, if it were not for the toil of the enslaved on Caribbean sugarcane plantations, there would have been no rum punch for the seafarers to drink. Sitting in their "tavern" by the saltpan on La Tortuga at Punta Salinas, these men, captains especially, consumed the sweet and intoxicating fruits of empire—sugar and rum—within the peculiar punch "sneaker." On La Tortuga the salty met with the sweet, and the spectral entanglement of salt with sugar, by way of spoilt saltfish, became evident. In this scenario of nascent globalizing modernity, large-scale phenomena such as the transatlantic slave trade, the sugar revolution, and European colonialism in the Caribbean could all be suddenly present in a "sneaker" of rum punch at the saltpan of La Tortuga, in what I have described as a micro-globality—an instance

where the global and regional became nested in the local and every day. It was the unique mobility potential of the sea that made these micro-globalities possible, where seafarers, ships, and commodities circled in this mercantilist "feeding frenzy," collapsing scales and joining otherwise distant shores, melding and imbibing them in swigs of heady rum punch.

Furthermore, as has been shown, enslaved people were probably only occasionally present at the saltpan. In fact, Tortuga salt was in large part harvested by white Anglo-American seafarers and the low-grade fish it was then used to salt was, likewise, caught and salted by white New England fishermen on the Grand Banks. Yet, while the middling Anglo-American seafarers on La Tortuga drank rum punch sweetened with sugar and utilized it, and the punch "sneakers" in which it sloshed, in part to show their individuality, cosmopolitanism, and tastes for fashion, those who produced the sugar, the enslaved, subsisted in large measure on the badly dressed, salt burnt, spotty, and mistreated flesh of refuse saltfish—they had little other choice. These commodities were saturated with inequalities.

The memory of these inequalities has not dissolved to this day. British-Caribbean poet Malika Booker (2013) vividly describes her Grenadian mother preparing saltfish in England through the laborious process of desalting and transforming the crusty fish into an edible dish—turning "degraded flesh into culinary gold" (Thomas, 2020: 49). Issues of race are ever present in saltfish, and the lengthy cooking process offers the mother a way to vent, a coping mechanism, to likewise process and transform the biting racism she has faced at work that is "gutting her raw" (Booker, 2013). In the poem, the saltfish is inescapably "haunted by slave life," and far from the Caribbean in England, the mother is keenly aware of the spectral entanglements of saltfish with her enslaved Grenadian ancestors (Thomas, 2020: 49). Just like race and saltfish, slavery and saltfish are inextricably linked; saltfish as a commodity has been resiliently transformed from a miserable slave provender to dishes radiating Caribbean pride. Saltertuda salt has long disappeared, but saltfish lives on.

In conclusion, while the modern commodity chains of coltan, diamonds, or avocados reveal their often cruel and violent origins, Saltertuda salt was not harvested under a significantly harsh labor regime, as were other Caribbean salts, but nonetheless ended up fueling brutal Caribbean plantation slavery through spoilt saltfish. What results from a careful analysis of this commodity circuit is thus a peculiar story of not just any salt, but a haunted salt, harvested for more than a century in the long and cruel shadow of slavery.

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