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Sheik, Taariq Ali

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Ending Archaeolgy

Taariq Ali Sheik
Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam
t.a.sheik@vu.nl

Abstract

Catastrophes, from the COVID pandemic to the climate crisis, have come to suffuse the global consciousness. For colonised people, however, catastrophe is nothing new. This paper aims to trace the role of archaeology in the ongoing colonial catastrophe and to outline the challenges faced by decolonising archaeology, by using three examples from distinct locales: 1) the implication of archaeology in settler colonial displacement and neoliberal profiteering in Palestine; 2) its complicity in disaster capitalism and the reproduction of colonial subjectification in Sint Eustatius; 3) its role in the (re)capture of epistemic power by the Global North through the Anthropocene's collapse narratives. The question we are left with is how do we move on from this realisation towards archaeologies which refute disaster and reaffirm life? Acknowledging abolition, I conclude that it is only through ending archaeology as we know it that we can pursue futures in communication with the histories that coloniality and capital have attempted to erase.

Introduction

There is a long tradition of research pointing to archaeology's complicity in western colonialism, imperialism, and capitalism (Atalay 2006; Franklin 2001; Glock 1995; Hamilakis 2007; Trigger 1984). These critiques have exposed the reproduction of racialised, gendered, classed, and nationalised biases in archaeology, offering methodological and theoretical challenges to traditionally colonial praxis. Schneider and Hayes (2020) however, through a particular attention to how the western valuation of knowledge production as a universalised and neutral 'good' transforms cultures and lands into commodified sites of knowing, expose archaeology's complicity in colonial epistemicide, the eradication of indigenous ways of being and knowing. Spaces of knowledge production in which

this value-system is practised (i.e., the state, the university, and the museum) therefore operate as functional barriers to decolonisation, presenting a paradox to decolonising these institutions. Hlabangane (2018) expands that this formulaic basis of western knowledge production, as non-situated, universal, and neutral produces an inherent objectification of situated knowledge, making it impossible to communicate equitably, and in solidarity with the epistemologies of Indigenous peoples and the dispossessed. As such, while critique has in some ways shifted praxis, these shifts have occurred at the edges of academic disciplines, leaving the main body of knowledge production, and its function as a source of value to capitalist modernity, unchanged.

Given this paradox, this paper explores the persistent imbrication of archaeology within capitalist modernity. To do so, I pursue a route of decolonial thought grounded in the Global South and Fourth World,[1] which circumvents the distinction between the colonial and the modern, instead considering the European colonisation of Abya Yala and Turtle Island, and the genocide and enslavement of its native inhabitants and of Afrikan[2] peoples as a distinguishing moment in establishing northern, European, masculine, and white, supremacy in the 'modern' world (Lugones 2007, 2008; Quijano 2000, 2007a). Importantly, this path, termed modernity/coloniality, postulates that this supremacy is born, not only from the material control of resources, but also in the epistemic formulations which inform political, economic, and pedagogical institutions (Mignolo 2002; Santos 2016).

In recent years the threat of catastrophe, from the Anthropocene's climate crises, to the COVID pandemic, and financial collapse, has come to suffuse the global social consciousness. For colonised people however, faced with histories and contemporaries of ecocide, genocide, femicide, and displacement, catastrophe is nothing new, and has intimately shaped our subjectivities (Bonilla 2020;

1 Global South in this context does not refer to a distinct geography, but to a relation of dispossession and exploitation to capitalist modernity in both the 'First' and 'Third' worlds. The Fourth World refers to a relation of oppression and non-recognition of Indigenous peoples under settler colonisation. See Manuel and Posluns (1974).

2 The Pan-Afrikan spelling, referencing the continent and diaspora. See acknowledgements.

Maldonado-Torres 2016). With this in mind, Rich Hutchings and Marina La Salle's (2015) identification of (commercial) archaeology, at least in its operation in Canada (British Columbia) as a function of 'disaster capitalism' is of particular interest. This term was coined by Naomi Klein (2007) to describe the rising trend of state legislated deregulation, elimination, and privatisation of public services in response to disaster, purposed towards the (re)production of capital. While Klein (2007) traces a recent trend, emphasising the 'shock' of disaster, Yarimar Bonilla and Marisol LeBrón (2019: 5, 2020) present a different temporality, highlighting how the impacts of Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico were the product of centuries of colonisation and racialisation to highlight how "disasters are not singular events but ongoing processes". Jasbir Puar (2017) expands that this racialisation defines gradations of disposability along which care is selectively allocated. Disaster as such, provides value to and is constitutive of capitalism through its ability to maim/disable, producing "objects of imminent disposability" exposed to exploitative use and paternalistic, neoliberal saviourism (Puar 2017: 79).

Furthermore, colonial modernity allocates proximities to disposability through a restrictive and exclusive definition of humanity as the enactment of self-consciousness, rationality and political autonomy through participation in modern institutions, the state, citizenship, property, and gender (Lugones 2007; Mbembe 2003; Quijano 2007a). Simultaneously, nature is deployed as a convenient counterpoint to humanity, as an absence of political autonomy, to naturalise exploitative labour relations, through 'natural resources', race, and sex (Lugones 2007; Mignolo and Walsh 2018; Quijano 2007b). As such, colonial modernity itself can be considered a disaster through its construction of colonised peoples as unfulfilled or disabled from humanity (Maldonado-Torres 2016). Indeed, it is pertinent to consider how the possibilities of Klein, Hutchings, La Salle, and others in the Canadian settler colony are predicated upon the ongoing and persistent organised disposal (genocide) of Indigenous peoples (Tuck and Yang 2012). This reinvokes Schneider and Hayes' (2020) positioning of archaeology as epistemicide, emphasising the reliance of archaeology upon the disposal of Indigenous peoples, their ways of knowing, doing, and relating, and asks us to challenge archaeology's (both commercial and academic) ongoing role in the catastrophe of colonial modernity.

As such, liberatory epistemologies of the dispossessed, produced at the fringes of and in opposition to coloniality/modernity, offer refutations to colonial disaster, emphasising emancipation, sovereignty, and the affirmation of life as the ultimate resistance to coloniality's death project. These refutations from Indigenous, Black radical, and feminist movements, emphasising the power of refusing to live and be seen/heard under colonising and capitalist terms, sketch pathways towards the production of knowledge in 'active solidarity' (Nascimento 1976; Shange 2019). Following these pathways, this paper will present three case studies from distinct locales; Palestine, Sint Eustatius, and academia, to elaborate on the coloniality of archaeological knowledge production. In Palestine, the role of archaeological excavations in occupied al-Quds demonstrates how the objectification of artefacts as neutral historical markers facilitates the displacement and dispossession of Palestinians. In Sint Eustatius, the work of the St. Eustatius Afrikan Burial Ground Alliance in reclaiming and honouring the remains of enslaved Afrikan peoples exposes the neo-colonial practices of the Dutch state. Finally, in academia, the perpetuation of collapse narratives exhibits how the emerging popularity of Anthropocene narratives configures a neoliberal saviour complex. These case studies show the persistence and malleability of western knowledge production in the reproduction of neoliberal racial capitalism as a means to emphasise the power of affirmative refusal to affectively disrupt archaeology's function within colonial modernity.

Al-Nakba/The Catastrophe

In 2005, the municipality of occupied al-Quds/Jerusalem issued demolition orders for 88 homes comprising the al-Bustan neighbourhood of Silwan, threatening 1500 residents with displacement (Frère 2020). Following the illegal military occupation and annexation of the West Bank in 1967, the occupation redrew the municipal boundaries of al-Quds over the Old City and surrounding Palestinian villages, imposing Israeli sovereignty over the city. The area around the Old City was designated as 'national park', targeted at preserving the aesthetics of the city walls (B'Tselem 2019). The population of the area however, continued to expand due to the influx of Palestinian refugees displaced during the Israeli annexations in 1948 and 1967. Consequently, residents were left with little option but to defy the restrictive planning regulations of the park, with houses expanding over the formerly agricultural slopes of Wadi Hilweh, the slopes south of the

Haram al-Sharif (Frère 2020). As such, these building regulations, recognised as illegal under international law (United Nations General Assembly 2022) can be viewed as a process of active illegalisation to facilitate Israeli settler colonialism (de Genova and Roy 2020; Yiftachel 2009).

The issuance of demolition orders for al-Bustan coincided with the handing over of administration of the 'Jerusalem Walls National Park', encompassing a number of archaeological sites south of the Old City, to El'Ad (Ir David), a private Israeli settler organisation committed to the "Judaisation of Silwan" (Frère 2020: 22). Since then, El'Ad has overseen excavations in Silwan, renamed Ir David, the 'City/Citadel of David', and promoted touristic development of the area. In 2009, in a process instigated by El'Ad, the occupation municipality rezoned Silwan, designating al-Bustan as 'open areas' to facilitate the expansion of excavations of the 'City of David' and develop a park to link tourist sites in the area (fig. 1). The Israeli Antiquities Authority (IAA) meanwhile, under financial pressure due to declining public funding, was initially called on to curb proposed development by El'Ad over archaeological excavations, but has, according to Raphael Greenberg (2009a: 42), been reduced to a "sub-contractor for El'Ad, carrying out large-scale excavations as part of the development of the National Park".

Despite more than a century of excavation in Wadi Hilweh, the popularisation of the area as the 'City of David' is a relatively recent phenomenon. According to Greenberg (2009a), this began with the first Israeli-led excavations between 1978-1985, and gained further traction after management of the area was given over to El'Ad in 2005. Excavations conducted by the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in 2006-2007, on land appropriated by El'Ad (the 'City of David's' visitors centre in Figure 1), revealed evidence of a 'Large Stone Structure' (LSS), identified by the excavator, Eilat Mazar, as an important public building (Emek Shaveh 2020a; Mazar 2007). Mazar (2006, 2007) concluded, based on the abundance of high-status finds and sealed ceramic contexts, that the building together with the Stepped Stone Structure (SSS), excavated to the east by Kathleen Kenyon in the 1960s, formed a single complex, a palace, dating to ca. 1000 BC, shortly after David's biblical conquest of the city (Emek Shaveh 2020a). This claim has attracted significant criticism, most prominently by Israel Finkelstein et al. (2007) who suggest that some of the supposedly sealed contexts Mazar

used to date the complex were disturbed by later construction, pointing to the LSS and SSS as representing a palimpsest of several centuries of activity in the first millennium BC. This debate however is not reflected in the public outreach and advertisement of the site, which despite collaboration with the IAA, is entirely orchestrated by El'Ad (Greenberg 2009a).

According to Rannfrid Thelle (2015: 15), the excavations in Silwan, despite their material reliance on the colonial project in Palestine, retained a commitment to archaeological-scientific empiricism, and it is not until the neoliberalisation of heritage management that a "more ideologically driven" archaeology became dominant. Furthermore, Greenberg (2009b: 278), identifying construction motivated by "sectarian issues on all sides" as a threat to archaeological heritage in Silwan, concludes that archaeological 'best practice' including international scientific collaboration and "restraint" in excavation provides an opportunity to find political accommodation between "different groups, social strata, and religions". Mahmoud Hawari (2022), however, has criticised this position, arguing that neutrality obscures the root causes of the situation in Silwan; the illegal military occupation and annexation of East Jerusalem, and Zionist ethnic cleansing. Indeed, it has been argued that the pursuit of archaeology in Palestine has been ideological since its genesis (El-Haj 2001, 2002; Glock 1995; Ziadeh-Seely 2007). Article 21 of the British Mandate which founded the basis for the Antiquities Law, enclosed access to archaeological materials and excavations in occupied Palestine to citizens of the League of Nations "who show sufficient guarantees of archaeological experience" (The Avalon Project 2008a). The importance of Palestinian archaeology to colonising powers is expressed, and indeed prophesied in the 1946 Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry Report which states that:

> "The significance of Palestine since prehistoric times in the development of civilization cannot be overestimated. Nor should the interests of archaeology and history be forgotten. The maintenance of conditions under which such studies can be pursued is a genuine concern of civilization. Moreover, an increased pilgrim and tourist traffic would constitute an invisible export of substantial value to a country with so large an adverse balance of trade" (The Avalon Project 2008b).

For the local population however, the importance of antiquities lies in their utilitarian value, as building or agricultural materials and as supplemental income, but also in their discursive roles in the landscape (Greenberg and Hamilakis 2022). For instance, Ali Qleibo (2009: 9) records that in al-Saeer, a village near Hebron, villagers would offer tomatoes and squash and recite Surah al-Fatihah at an "ancient" rectangular inscribed pillar (likely a sacrificial altar) beneath a fossilised maple tree, a practice which stopped when the altar was removed by Israeli soldiers. Furthermore, Chiara de Cesari (2019) has evoked how Palestinian cultural heritage organisations have operated, through acts of heritage preservation, to sustain both a Palestinian demographic and cultural presence in the face of Israeli settler colonialism. For instance, the inclusion of the village of Battir, in the West Bank, into the UNESCO World Heritage List as a living agricultural landscape was important to successfully prevent the Israeli army from constructing the separation wall, recognised as illegal under international law, in the area (Forensic Architecture 2015).

Both these traditional and strategic heritage practices of Palestinians operated in opposition to colonisation and displacement through practices targeted at enlivening Palestinian culture, rather than abstracting these practices into narratives of historic precedent. This reflects a praxis grounded in what Glen Coulthard and Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (2022) call 'grounded normativity' an Indigenous place-based ethical framework rooted in reciprocity with the land. In this regard the question of indigeneity in Palestine, is not of biological or historic authenticity, but rather of situated discursive relation and opposition to colonisation. For colonial officials, archaeologists and the Israeli state, however, the importance of antiquities and archaeological sites is in their potential as repositories of (as yet untapped) historical knowledge, while Indigenous practices were disregarded as merely 'ignorant' or 'backward' (El Haj 2001; Greenberg and Hamilakis 2022). As such, the British Mandate and Antiquities Law transformed archaeological sites into "space(s) of scientific production" (El-Haj 2001: 72), and in doing so performed an act of epistemicide, delegitimising the contextual practices and epistemology of Palestinians, while actively enclosing commodified antiquities for exclusively scientific and economic use.

It is from this basis that we can begin to consider the operations of El'Ad, and the Israeli state in Silwan as part of what Nadia Abu El-Haj (2001: 79) refers to

as a “cartographic project” of “world-making”, where archaeology functions as “fetishised” historical markers of Israeli authenticity. Importantly, this fetishisation is only possible through the Zionist abstraction of indigenous Jews from the broader diverse religious and cultural milieu of Palestine (Hawari 2022). Yannis Hamilakis (Greenberg and Hamilakis 2022: 15) considers this fetishisation, or “monumentalisation” of the landscape as essential to the construction of colonial temporalities. For the colonisation of Palestine this involved the construction of the diverse Indigenous population as asynchronous, not part of the modern world and its worldview, and the simultaneous construction of Israeli modernity-contemporaneity through the commodification of archaeology. According to Walter Mignolo (2011) and Alejandro Vallega (2017), it is this coloniality-of-time, which projects a linear trajectory of progression, that articulates colonial difference,[3] enabling the reduction of certain bodies and certain ways of being as out of time and out of place, exposing Palestinians to conquest, erasure, and genocide (Greenberg and Hamilakis 2022). As such, the national consecration (Greenberg 2009a) of the ‘City of David’, enabled through neoliberal policies of the Israeli state, is inseparable from the Israeli settler-colonial project. While critical archaeologists (Greenberg 2009a,b; Thelle 2015) have attached the archaeological tensions in Silwan to neoliberal nationalism, the placing of contemporary archaeological practices within the temporalities of colonial modernity suggests deeper imbrications of neoliberalism and scientific neutrality with Zionist settler colonialism. From this position, the refusal of Palestinians to capitulate to occupation, through living and constructing in Silwan, connects their resistance to the broader Palestinian struggle against the persistent *nakba* of colonial occupation and displacement.

Archaeology, Neoliberalism, and Neo-Colonialism in Sint Eustatius.

The operation of archaeology in the Palestinian *nakba* introduces an important intervention, presenting neoliberalisation as a perpetuation of colonial-capitalist modernity. In the European Union, the growth of developer-led commercial archaeology has been facilitated by a neoliberal model of privatised funding and

3 The dynamic hierarchical and racialised coloniser/colonised or rational self/irrational other, dichotomy (Mignolo 2002).

implementation enshrined within the Valletta Treaty (Council of Europe 1992), effectively capturing archaeology as a bureaucratic procedure in capital production (Hamilakis 2015; van den Dries 2016). While traditionally thought of as separate, commercial and academic archaeology frequently interact in the provision of student labour and expertise through education programs, often instigated by shortfalls in public funding. In the Netherlands, concerns have been raised regarding quality control of archaeological excavation and reporting in such a profit-driven, market-led environment (Nijland and Dusseldorp 2018). Much less attention however has been given to how neoliberalisation perpetuates (neo)colonial relationships between European states and 'overseas territories'. For the Netherlands, questions regarding the relationships between neo-liberalism/colonialism, heritage, and archaeology are especially urgent given the state's recent apology for its role in the history of slavery, and the announcement of the establishment of a national slavery museum (Government of the Netherlands 2022). In this context, the excavation of burial grounds of enslaved Afrikans on Sint Eustatius provides a cutting insight into the coloniality of archaeological/heritage practice.

Sint Eustatius is a volcanic island in the eastern Caribbean which was colonised by the Dutch West India Company in the seventeenth century, establishing the island as a major port for the trade of enslaved Afrikans, sugar, cotton, and tobacco across the Atlantic. Following 'decolonisation' in 1954, Sint Eustatius became part of the Netherlands Antilles, a constituent country of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. In 2005, the island voted against dissolution of the Netherlands Antilles, but was unwillingly incorporated as a public body of the Netherlands in 2010. Regarding heritage, marolijn kok (2021) identifies that the Valletta Treaty applies to the island. Its implementation however is less clear, with SECAR (St. Eustatius Centre for Archaeological Research) as the only archaeological body on the island in the absence of any regulatory body.

The St. Eustatius Afrikan Burial Ground Alliance (henceforth Alliance) has highlighted a number of issues with archaeological practice on the island, and in 2021 was successful in halting excavations at Golden Rock and instigating the formation of a commission (Statia Heritage Research Commission, SHRC) to evaluate practices at the site. Archaeological investigations at Golden Rock first occurred in the 1980s, when an Indigenous settlement, along with several buri-

als, were excavated (Versteeg and Schinkel 1992). Recent excavations at the site were initiated due to construction projects connected to the redevelopment of the nearby airport, damaged during Hurricane Irma, with soil from the site scheduled to be used for roadworks. Following a desk study (Van Keulen et al. 2020), initial test pitting in 2020 revealed both Indigenous and colonial material, including evidence of a burial ground likely associated with the Golden Rock plantation, with further excavation in 2021 revealing 69 burials of enslaved Afrikans. However, apart from informing the local government, the archaeologists failed to contact or engage with descendent communities regarding the disinterment of their ancestors (Ubuntu Connected Front 2021). The Alliance (2021) further drew attention to Godet, another burial ground of enslaved Afrikans, threatened by coastal erosion. Excavations in 2012 and 2017 disinterred a number of skeletons, the location of which remain uncertain, while the site was left vulnerable to further erosion. As such, while acknowledging the need for some scientific study, the repatriation of ancestral remains (Indigenous and Afrikan), and the establishment of a monument to the enslaved Afrikans are key demands by the Alliance (Cuvalay 2022), and supported by the SHRC report (Haviser et al. 2022).

In addition to these sites (fig. 2), several other excavations on the island display archaeology's complicity in disaster. In 2012, despite concerns raised about cultural and natural heritage destruction, SECAR and Leiden University conducted archaeological compliance investigations at The Farm/Cul de Sac in lieu of the proposed expansion of the NuStar oil terminal, now GTI Statia (owned by Prostar Capital) (Grant Gilmore III et al. 2011). Furthermore, compliance excavations were also conducted in connection to the construction of the luxury Golden Rock resort in the east of the island (van Keulen 2017, 2018). The construction of the resort was facilitated by the rezoning of the island, undertaken by the Dutch appointed Commissioner for St. Eustatius. The commissioner was appointed following advice from the 'Committee van Wijzen' (2018) (Committee of Wise Men), which cited among other things, ecological degradation, and disrepair to roads and infrastructure after hurricanes Irma and Maria. According to Teresa Leslie (2018), the commissioner represents a persistent paternalism towards Sint Eustatius, reflected since 2010 in the Dutch government's inability to acknowledge the island's right to self-determination.

kok (2022), in a paper written in solidarity with the Alliance, concludes that

in order to practise 'postcolonial' archaeologies grounded in social justice, a firm attention to epistemic and economic power relations, along with collaboration with descendent communities are essential. However, the archaeological fractures in Sint Eustatius run deeper, and should be placed within the continuation of Dutch paternalism and the denial of self-determination. Saidiya Hartman (2007: 6) refers to this "racial calculus" and "political arithmetic" as the afterlife of slavery, trapping Afrikan diasporic subjectification within a racially coded denial of life. Furthermore, the operationalisation of environmental disaster by the Dutch state to deny autonomy to Sint Eustatius and Sint Maarten exposes what Christina Sharpe (2016: 104) refers to as the "total climate" of antiblackness, describing the pervasiveness of antiblack racism as a principle around which exposure to (environmental) disaster will be organised (Ostiana 2023).

While Black feminist archaeologies, in particular, have shifted narratives on enslavement, drawing these histories towards the contemporaneities of Black resistance and liberation (Battle-Baptiste 2011; Franklin 2001; Odewale 2019), it is important to emphasise that much of this work is done by community grassroots organisations, such as the Alliance, who are often the driving forces behind more ethical and equitable archaeological praxis (see also A Story of Bones 2022). These organisations often emphasise what Francio Guadaloupe (2018) calls 'non-ordinary dimensions', the ancestral, spiritual, and religious relations, of both mourning and celebration, which connect history with the contemporary. However, these dimensions along with the community work behind them are often met with indifference, misrecognition, erasure, and appropriation in 'evidentiary absolutist' knowledge production and heritage management (Schneider and Hayes 2020). As such, even while community archaeological work presents opportunities to shift practice, colonial difference often enforces the negation of these non-ordinary dimensions, pulling enlivened ancestral relationships into the temporalities of colonial modernity (cf. Coulthard 2014).

It is important to recall that the theft of bodies is symptomatic of colonisation, from enslavement as a "form of death-in-life", to Patrice Lumumba, and the Palestinian bodies held as bargaining chips by the Israeli state (Daher-Nashif 2021; Mbembe 2003: 21). The denial of life therefore, and the denial of life after death, is formulaic to colonial modernity. It is key to question the temporalities of colonial-modern memorialisation. Christina Sharpe (2016) in navigating afterlives

of enslavement, questions the impossibilities of mourning and memorialising the ongoing denial of Black life. As such, the question for Sint Eustatius, and other territories in the after lives of Dutch colonialism, is to what extent memorialisation historicises, and therefore obscures, the contemporary denial of Black life/ liberation?

Collapse Narratives, the Anthropocene, and Neoliberal Saviourism.

The possibilities of liberation inevitably lead to questions of the future. If colonial modernity has effectively captured the past, what hold does it have on our future, or the possibilities of futuring? Neoliberalism has emerged as the latest incarnation of capitalism, offering technological and market driven pathways to the future (Abbinnett 2019). The role of neoliberalism in the growth of commercial archaeology is well established, and much attention has recently been given to the neoliberalisation of universities, especially with regards to the deleterious effects of budget cuts, labour exploitation, metrication of education and research, and production incentives on the quality of education, knowledge production, and labour standards. This is exemplified for archaeology through the recent closure of two departments in the United Kingdom post-Brexit (BBC 2021; Whelan 2021). While privatisation and austerity have therefore been identified as a threat to archaeological research (Resco 2016), a restricted view of neoliberalism as a "perversion" (Resco 2016: 4) of liberal capitalism obscures how the involuntary imposition of austerity upon the colonised world facilitates the continuation of colonial extraction, thereby limiting the political horizon of contesting neoliberalism to a return to 'normal' colonial modernity. As such, a firmer attention on how colonial modernity is imbued into (archaeological) knowledge production, and how this has facilitated the emergence of neoliberal saviourism is needed.

In the year 2000 Paul Crutzen and Eugene Stoermer (2000: 18) popularised the term 'Anthropocene' to describe the emergent globality of human impacts on the environment, stressing both the catastrophic consequences of these impacts, and the need for "intensive research and wise application of the knowledge" to "develop a world-wide accepted strategy leading to sustainability of ecosystems against human induced stresses". This call has been met, prompting significant academic production, and the emergence of numerous nomenclatures tracing the imbrications of race, capital, and colonisation in the globalisation of the ecologi-

cal crisis (Negrocene, Ferdinand 2022; Plantationocene, Haraway 2015; Capitalocene, Moore 2017; Racial Capitalocene, Vergés 2017). Indeed, the Anthropocene has since been recognised as a chrono-stratigraphic unit by the International Commission on Stratigraphy, awaiting formal selection of a boundary unit or 'golden spike' (Subcommission on Quaternary Stratigraphy 2019).

This periodisation of Earth history, however, is far from neutral, with the selection of a time-specific 'golden spike' having significant consequences on the historical processes which are included within this new temporality. The Subcommission on Quaternary Stratigraphy Anthropocene Working Group favours a marker in the mid-twentieth century, accounting for recent histories of industrialisation, globalisation, population growth, radioactivity, and fossil fuel exploitation. Simon Lewis and Mark Maslin (2015) have argued that the European invasion of the Abya Yala, accompanied by the genocide of Indigenous peoples and subsequent reforestation, and the transfer of species across the Atlantic biogeographic boundary, marked by reduction of atmospheric carbon dioxide concentrations in Antarctic ice cores at 1610 CE, offers an effective marker of the Anthropocene. Of greater significance than date, however, according to Davis and Todd (2017), is the colonial temporality which the Anthropocene constructs, neutralising accountability for environmental destruction, and instead universalising the human (*anthropos*) as antagonist to nature. In particular, Davis and Todd (2017) cite Crutzen and Stoemer's (2000) articulation of the Anthropocene as the ascension of the world of human thought, agency, and technology, (the 'noosphere') to global dominance, reproducing a colonial-modern understanding of the human. As such, any periodisation of the Anthropocene offers a completion of the project of colonial modernity, universalising modernity as a globalised code governing relations between people, land, and living and non-living entities, while relegating Indigenous epistemologies, which never recognised the categorisations of modernity, to the "rubbish of history" (González-Ruibal 2013: 14; Mignolo and Walsh 2018).

Archaeologists were initially slow to engage in debates around the Anthropocene, but alongside the urgency to include long-term perspectives in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reports, the concept quickly gained traction, spurring a number of interdisciplinary, and empirical studies of human-environment relationships (Gaillard et al. 2018; Kearns 2017; Lane

2015). Nevertheless, while both the Anthropocene and archaeology's relationship with it is relatively new, archaeologists have been inadvertently extending the teleological dimensions of the Anthropocene through collapse and resurgence narratives which dominate archaeological periodisation.

A case in point is the Bronze Age-Iron Age transition in the Eastern Mediterranean. Susan Sherratt (2003, 2016) and Andrew Sherratt (1993) identified a Bronze Age 'world-system' operational in the later second millennium BC between polities in North Africa, Southwest Asia, Anatolia, and the Aegean, characterised by a system of formalised reciprocal exchange and redistribution of prestige goods and commodities. During the late thirteenth and twelfth centuries BC, however, the destruction or abandonment of a number of settlements, including but not limited to Ugarit, Troy, Hattusa, and Mycenaean palaces, is taken by some to represent a catastrophe or collapse of Bronze Age polities and their world-system (Cline 2014; Drews 1993). In the following centuries, declining archaeological visibility, along with discontinuity in the use of monumental architecture and literacy, and declining evidence for regional trade are taken as indications for population instability and less 'socially complex' societies, especially in the Aegean (Snodgrass 1971). Numerous hypotheses have been proposed to explain these developments, ranging from external invasion and migrations to internal political instability (Middleton 2010). More recently, climatic narratives of drought-influenced disruption of agricultural production and the redistributive systems it supported, have gained traction (Cline 2014; Finné et al. 2017; Kaniewski and Van Campo 2017; for critique see Middleton 2012). While palaeoclimatic archives do evidence regionally variable climatic instability (Katrantsiotis et al. 2019; Palmisano et al. 2021), alternative readings of these events foregrounding the diversity of responses and trajectories across the region (Meyer and Knapp 2021), emphasise how shifts in social and cultural value systems influence the disposal and therefore visibility of archaeological materials (Hruby 2020), as well as certain continuities in authority structures and commodity production (Crielaard 2011; Papadopoulos 2014), presenting not so much a collapse, but a "systems reboot" (Galaty et al. 2016: 69). Nevertheless, in Greece and elsewhere, the collapse narrative and the idea of less complex societies left in its wake plays an important role, providing a naturalised substrate for the emergence of the cultures, Classical Greece (Coldstream 2002; Snodgrass 1980) and the Israelites (Glock 1995) which continue to inform the conscious-

ness of modernity. Aníbal Quijano (2000) and others (González-Ruibal 2016; Mignolo 2011) have critiqued how this structuring of history represents a highly Eurocentric developmentalist model, reproducing the same coloniality-of-time which leaves non-contemporary/non-modern materialities, behind.

According to Ross Abbinnett (2019), the impending sense of disaster which pervades the Anthropocene produces time-progressive futuring, the securing of 'modern' humanity's future, as a social and cultural imperative. While on the one hand opening up radical possibilities of (re)imagining our futures, this imperative has empowered corporations, who are envisioned through neoliberal policy, as saviours and architects of the future (Abbinnett 2019). Corporate 'solutions' to climatic and ecological crises have enhanced rates of land grabbing in the Global South for the production of biofuels, carbon compensation, and green energy, escalating existing problems of dispossession and displacement instigated by colonisation and imperialism, aggravating vulnerability to climatic extremes (Fairhead et al. 2012; Walia 2021). According to Françiose Vergès (2017: 73-74) these "apocalyptic and optimistic" approaches obscure the fact that the exploitation of "racialised chattel" and "nature in excess… were the capital which made capitalism", diverting attention away from retrospective calls for reparation and socio-environmental justice, and effectively re-embedding economic, political, and epistemic power in the Global North.

Discussion: Life Affirming Archaeologies

The three case studies outlined in this paper point to the firm imbrication of archaeology in the historic and contemporary reproduction of coloniality and its racial capitalist mechanisms. This recognition does not aim to demean or disregard the radical and revolutionary possibilities of some archaeological and academic work, but contends that these "kernels" (River and Fire Collective 2021: 94) of radical possibility are inhibited by neoliberal colonial modernity. Furthermore, the international contiguities of archaeology's complicity points to the need for cross-border solidarities which prioritise, and are accountable to the demands of the oppressed and which (re)produce ways of being which refute disaster-opportunist politics (Tabar and Desai 2017). The question we then have is how do we enable this liberation, and produce archaeologies which refute disaster and affirm life in all its potentials and multitudes?

Schnieder and Hayes (2020) argue for the 'undisciplining' of archaeology, that is the integration of archaeology with Indigenous, Black, and other 'Ethnic' Studies, while others favour the inclusion of more diverse epistemes and bodies into archaeology (Brunache et al. 2021). Cash Ahenakew (2016), acknowledging colonial power dynamics at play, points to some of the racialised tensions of inclusion, and uses the metaphor of a tree to liken institutional inclusion to grafting, the transplanting of parts of one organism to another. While grafting has the potential to produce generative hybrid epistemologies, given the colonial contexts across which this transplanting occurs, this process more so resembles assimilation. If we consider archaeology's complicity in the globalised reproduction of commodification, racialisation, and ecocide, then Ferdinand (2022) and other scholars' (Haraway 2015; Haraway and Tsing 2019) recognition of our contemporary as the Plantationocene, as a space in which these logics are enshrined, is especially prescient, allowing us to contextualise the ecosystem of this tree as a plantation rather than a forest.

As Audre Lorde (2017: 19) reminds us, "The master's tools shall never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change". The racialised and ecocidal order of the plantation can never offer a legitimate means of liberation, only a temporary release from a "sun made too hot for us" (Riz Ahmed *Where You From*), under the shade of the master's porch. As such, Ryan Cecil Jobson's (2020: 261) urging to "let anthropology burn" is especially important. Given archaeology's deep complicity in the production of value for colonial modernity, archaeology must also burn. Fire is an important element of many Indigenous land systems, valorised for its power of renewal (Fletcher et al. 2021; River and Fire Collective 2021). It is only through fire that the ordered fields of the plantation can be cleared, fertilising the ground for the germination of radical kernels of possibility, and the cultivation of an ecology of knowledge.

I recently came across an interesting kernel in the Ajube Museum of Resistance and Freedom in Lisbon, Portugal. Located in a former prison for political detainees during fascist rule, the museum importantly includes an exhibition on the decolonisation of Portugal's imperial territories, drawing an important parallel between antifascism and anticolonialism. This included an image of a mask of the Nalu goddess Nimba-Kamatchol upon a stand emblazoned with P.A.I.G.C,

the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde. The same image is found in *Sun of Our Freedom*, a booklet published in 1974 on the anniversary of the assassination of Bissau-Verdean revolutionary Amilcar Cabral to celebrate the declaration of independence of Guinea Bissau from Portuguese rule. The caption beneath the image in *Sun of Our Freedom* (fig. 3) reads: "This mask of the goddess NIMBA-KAMATCHOL is a symbol of the cultural heritage of the 'Nalus' in southern Guinea Bissau. Seized by the Portuguese authorities, it was recovered from the Colonial Museum in Bissau by PAIGC militants." This is archaeology that "is decolonial or it is nothing" (Londoño, 2021: 401).

Conclusion: Ending Archaeology

A decolonial archaeology is a praxis dedicated to Indigenous sovereignty, the liberation of the dispossessed, and the abolition of knowledge production which constructs the world as imminently disposable objects. Therefore, in order for such archaeology to exist, it needs to be reduced to nothingness. This can begin, according to Jobson (2020: 267), with refusing "convenient fixes to epistemological crises", including inter/transdisciplinarity, the minimisation and subcategorisation of decolonisation to academic fields, and diversifications which fail to problematise the material reproduction of race and class. Savannah Shange (2019: 16) offers that such an epistemic refusal "does not concede to the terms by which we seek to know", and instead, "challenges the dominance of the order of vision in the human sciences". This is an abstracted vision which "gazes down from above", tracking and disciplining the progress of capitalist modernity. Reordering this vision therefore requires a shift in perspective from this lofty gaze, towards a vision which departs "from the earth to the sky", rendered through a grounding within struggles for liberation (Hererra 2018: 114). It is only through such refutations of the colonising gaze that there can be the possibility for knowledge production in active solidarity with liberatory praxis.

As such, collective refusal offers a possibility for archaeologists, commercial and academic alike, to disrupt the epistemic and material reproduction of coloniality. This refusal of archaeology recalls Lola Olufemi's (2021: 72-73) reference of the strike as "a point of departure" , towards "work for love… for each other" , and "in service of pleasure". Refusing archaeology is therefore a necessary step towards its ending. An ending which is abolition in the sense of Fred

Moten and Stefano Harney (2004: 114), not "as the elimination of anything, but the founding of a new society". Archaeologies which are no longer archaeology, but the radical imaginings of futures in dialogue with histories and materialities which colonisation and capital have attempted to erase.

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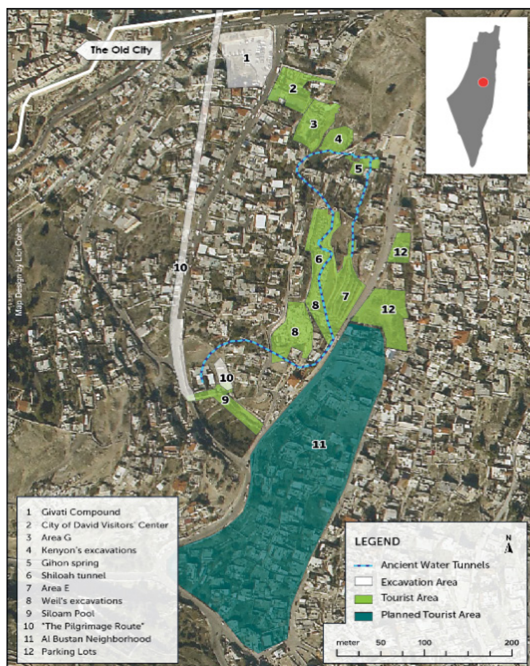

Fig. 1. Archaeological sites and proposed development in Silwan, Al-Quds (after Emek Shaveh (2020b) https://emekshaveh.org/en/archaeological-sites-in-silwan/).

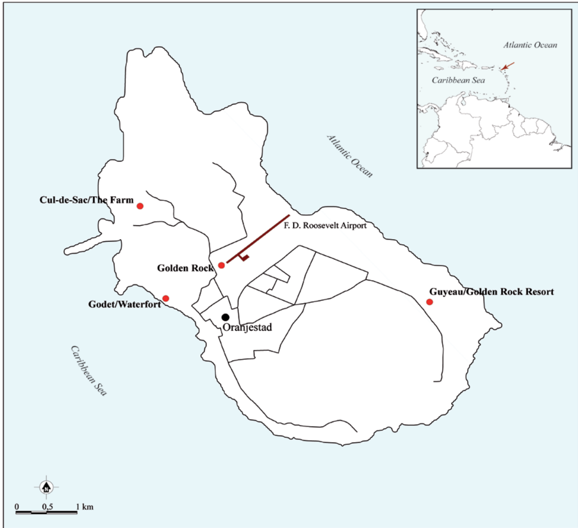

Fig. 2. Map of Sint Eustatius illustrating sites mentioned in text (reproduced with permission of Jaap Fokkema).

Fig. 3. Mask of the goddess NIMBA-KAMATCHOL from 'Sun of Our Freedom'.