

## **An African-Type Healer/Diviner and His Grave Goods: A Burial from a Plantation Slave Cemetery in Barbados, West Indies**

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*An adult male buried in the late 1600s or early 1700s and excavated from a plantation slave cemetery in Barbados had the cemetery's richest assortment of grave goods: an iron knife, several types of metal jewelry, an earthenware pipe, and a necklace of money cowries, fish vertebrae, dog canine teeth, European glass beads, and a large carnelian bead probably from India. Most of these artifacts are unique to New World African descendant sites. The individual was probably an African-type diviner/healer whose high status in the slave community is reflected in his relatively elaborate artifact inventory.*

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**KEY WORDS:** cemetery/mortuary practices; slavery; Caribbean; Africa.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The 166-mi<sup>2</sup> island of Barbados in the southeastern Caribbean (Fig. 1) was England's first American colony to depend on sugar plantations and African slave labor. By the 1670s, Barbados's population of African birth or descent was almost double the combined total in England's five other Caribbean colonies and close to six times the total in all of England's mainland colonies. From the last half of the 1600s through the early 1700s, Barbados was the wealthiest and most populous colony in English America and played a major role in the South Atlantic system that linked Africa, Europe, and the Americas (e.g., Dunn, 1969; Eltis, 1995a, p. 646). Although

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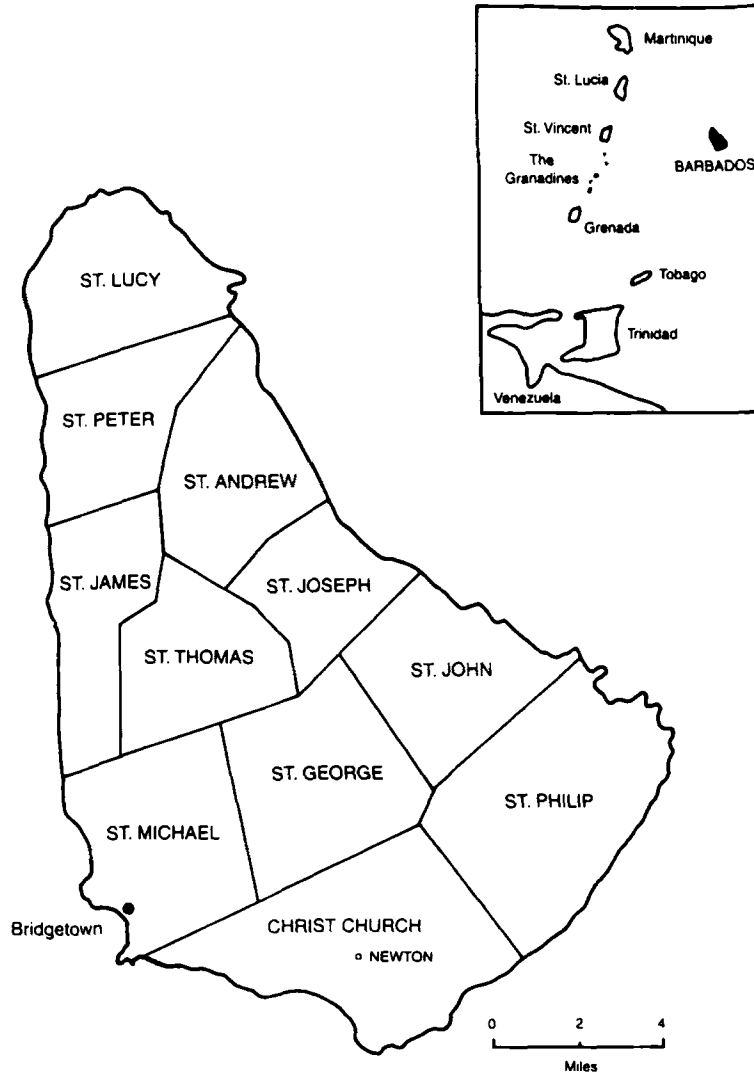


Fig. 1. Barbados parishes and location of Newton Plantation.

the island's importance in the British sugar empire decreased, Africans and their descendants, mainly slaves, continued to outnumber Europeans. During the late 1600s, the slave population averaged about 40,000, constituting at least 65% of Barbados's population. By the late 1700s, the island's ap-

proximately 70,000 slaves constituted about 80% of the population and by emancipation in the mid-1830s, the 83,000 slaves still comprised about 80% (Rickford and Handler, 1994, pp. 225, 230, 238; Handler and Pohlmann, 1984, p. 391; Handler, 1974, pp. 18-19).

From the 1630s until Emancipation, many thousands of people, slave and free, black and white, died in Barbados. Free people were usually interred in church cemeteries (planters and their families were sometimes buried in plantation crypts or vaults), but the vast majority of the several hundred thousand slaves who perished during the period of slavery were not baptized (a common pattern in all of England's New World colonies) and thus were not buried in church cemeteries. The historical data strongly suggest that the great majority of slaves were buried in unmarked plantation cemeteries scattered throughout the island. Although slave masters probably dictated the general location of these cemeteries, it is important to stress that Barbados slaves, as well as those elsewhere in the Americas, were relatively free to bury their dead according to their own customs (Handler and Lange, 1978, pp. 171-215; Handler *et al.*, 1989, pp. 13-15; cf. Jamieson, 1995, pp. 41, 46-47).

### ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECT

During the early 1970s, archaeological research at 14 Barbados sugar plantations was designed to shed light on the sociocultural life of slaves and the transmission and modification of African cultures in the New World. It was hoped that archaeology would offer a perspective and yield data that could not be obtained through conventional documentary research alone (Handler and Lange, 1978, pp. 1-8). The archaeological research ultimately focused on a slave cemetery at Newton, a plantation with roots deep in the 17th century whose history is well documented relative to most other Barbadian plantations (Handler, 1971, pp. 158, 1976, 1991, p. 60).

Despite a number of archaeological, historical, and ethnographic research efforts throughout the 1970s, 1980s, and early 1990s, the Newton cemetery is still the only plantation cemetery discovered in Barbados; it is also the earliest and largest undisturbed plantation slave cemetery yet reported in the Americas (Handler *et al.*, 1989; cf. Jamieson, 1995, pp. 39, 42, 54; Watters, 1994). Only a small portion of Newton was excavated. Handler and Lange (1978, p. 112) initially reported the recovery of 94 skeletons, but subsequent laboratory research increased that number to 101 (Corruccini *et al.*, 1982, p. 444) and then to 104 (Corruccini *et al.*, 1985, pp. 700-701). These 104 individuals were interred from about 1660 to 1820.

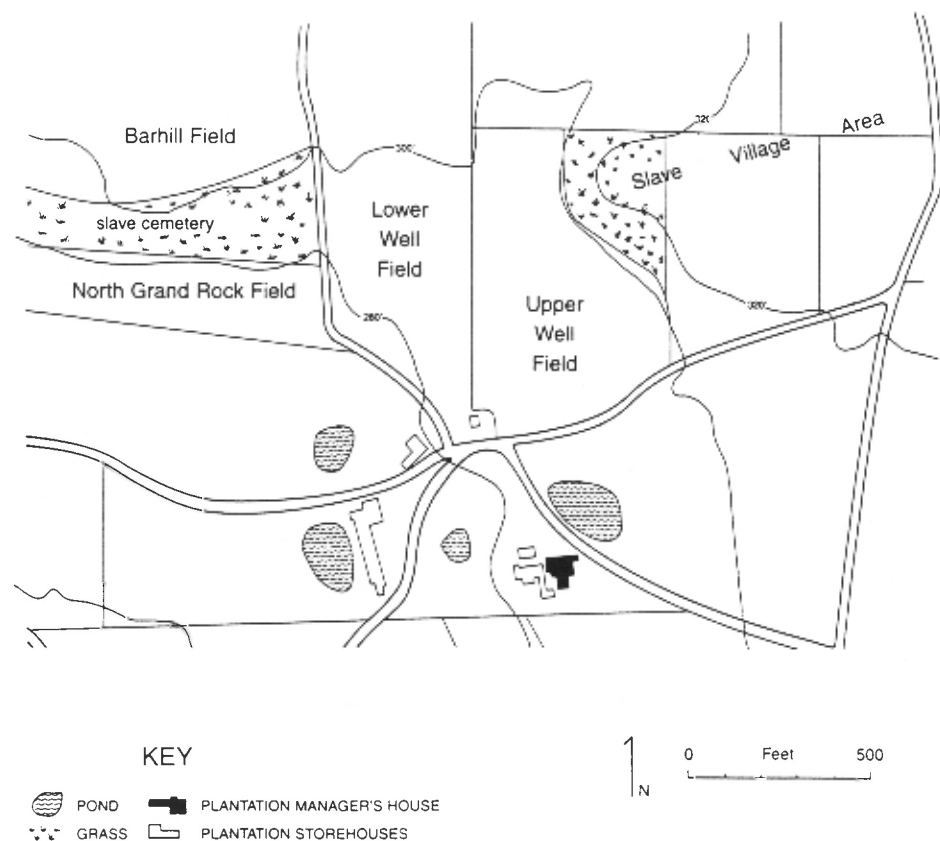
Although most of the burials may date from the later years of the cemetery's use (Corruccini *et al.*, 1989, p. 609) and the skeletal group represents only a small percentage of the estimated total burial population (Handler and Lange, 1978, pp. 282-288), the excavated group is the largest and earliest group of African and African-descended slaves recovered from any New World *plantation* site.<sup>2</sup>

Some Newton burials were highly distinctive relative to others in the cemetery. Elsewhere (Handler, 1996b) I have discussed one of these burials and presented the evidence suggesting that it was a possible African-type witch or other negatively viewed or socially ostracized person with supernatural powers. Here I focus on a burial I suspect was a positively viewed, perhaps even honored, member of the slave community, and whose associated grave goods in quantity and type distinguish it from all others in the cemetery.

#### NEWTON CEMETERY: PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

Newton plantation is located in Christ Church parish in southern Barbados, in what has historically been one of the island's most fertile sugar-growing areas (see Fig. 1). The slave cemetery is close to the site of the former slave village in an uncultivated field of approximately 4500 m<sup>2</sup> (Fig. 2). Surrounded by fields of sugar cane, the cemetery field is covered with a thick blanket of sour grass—a common pasture grass in Barbados—and has changed very little since the early 1970s. No major disturbances have occurred since the cemetery was excavated. The only major difference between then and February 1997, when I last visited the site, is that the tall casuarina trees that once dotted the surface burned down in the late 1970s or early 1980s. The cemetery field had never been cultivated or plowed because of its shallow soil cover and frequent outcroppings of coral limestone. The field includes an approximately 8-m rise in slope, the bottom of which is relatively level. This level area of approximately 3000 m<sup>2</sup> contained most of the burials, including the one discussed in this article (Figs. 3 and 4).

<sup>2</sup>The approximately 400 burials excavated from a colonial-period cemetery, roughly contemporaneous with Newton, in New York City in 1991–1992 are an “urban” population; it is not certain that all were slaves or even persons of African birth or descent (e.g., Handler, 1993, 1994a; Harrington, 1993; Howson, 1992; Howson and Handler, 1993; LaRoche, 1994; Mack, 1994; Mack and Hill, 1995).



**Fig. 2.** Newton plantation. Central area of the plantation, showing neighboring fields and site of slave cemetery and former slave village.



**Fig. 3.** Newton cemetery, 1996. Facing east. Main burial area is along the slope bottom, center right. X's mark the approximate location of the Burial 72 excavation unit as well as the slave village area in the center background. In the foreground is the dirt road shown in Fig. 4. In the early 1970s, casuarina trees were planted throughout this area (see Handler, 1996b, Fig. 3).

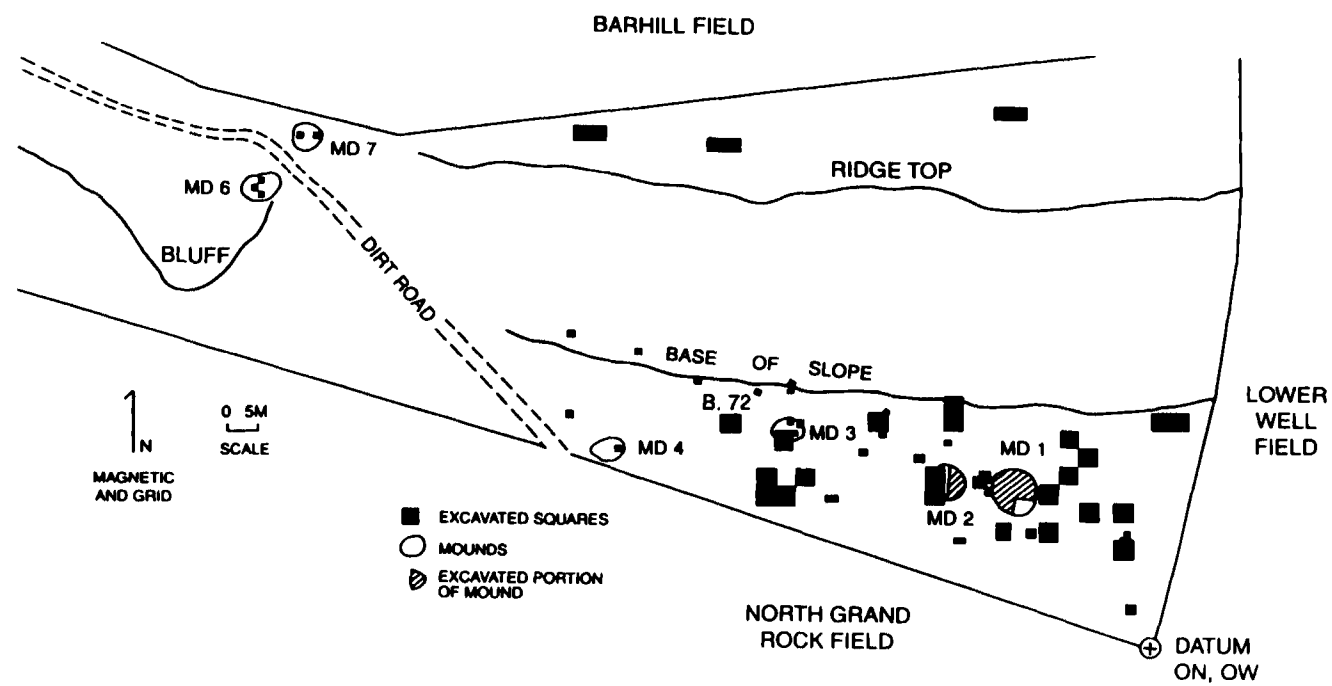


Fig. 4. Newton cemetery. Location of mounds and excavated squares, including square that contained Burial 72.

## BURIAL 72

Reflecting the anonymity of so many early slaves, the individual remains nameless. The burial, designated Burial 72 after the order in which it was discovered/excavated, was found fairly close to the surface, like many others in the cemetery. The top of its skull was only 8 cm below the surface, while the top of its feet was only 16 cm below. Burial 72 had partially displaced an earlier burial causing the scattering of some of the latter's bones and artifacts (Handler and Lange, 1978, p. 125), but Burial 72 had not been disturbed since interment; its bones were found in normal anatomical relationships, and its skeleton was in decent condition.

Burial 72 was around 50 years of age. He was buried without a coffin (coffins were absent from one-third or more of Newton's burials, usually the earlier ones), in a supine position<sup>3</sup> with his body fully extended and his arms resting along his sides (Figs. 5 and 6). His body was positioned on an east-west axis with his head facing east. The east-headed orientation, the absence of a coffin, and the fact that grave goods were generally associated with the cemetery's earlier burials suggest that he was probably interred sometime in the late 1600s or early 1700s (Handler and Lange, 1978, p. 132).

During the period of Burial 72's probable death, many Barbadian slaves were African-born or first-generation Creoles (Handler and Lange, 1978, p. 29), but the burial itself presents no clear signs of place of birth. In an earlier publication, Handler and Lange (1978, p. 132) concluded that Burial 72 was "probably of African birth, because of some of his associated artifacts and because Barbados contained more African-born individuals in the earlier periods than in the later ones." However, it is not certain where he was born. Burial 72 lacked intentionally modified teeth, such as filed or chipped incisors, a pattern evident in a handful of the Newton burials, which is a virtually certain marker of African birth (Handler *et al.*, 1986; Handler, 1994b). An analysis of the lead content of his bones suggests that he may have been born in the New World. Burial 72's skeletal lead content compared to that of other Newton burials shows that he had absorbed an average amount of lead during his lifetime. A trace mineral analysis method developed to measure skeletal lead content (e.g., Aufderheide *et al.*, 1985; Wittmers *et al.*, 1981) was applied to 52 skeletal tissue samples of the Newton population. This method yielded a mean bone lead content of close to 118 ppm (parts per million, or micrograms

<sup>3</sup>Aside from one unusual prone burial (Handler, 1996b) and two flexed burials, all others were in extended supine positions. Extended-supine apparently typified Christian and Northern European interments, but they existed in West Africa where flexed and lateral burials were also common (Handler and Lange, 1978, pp. 110-112, 198-199).



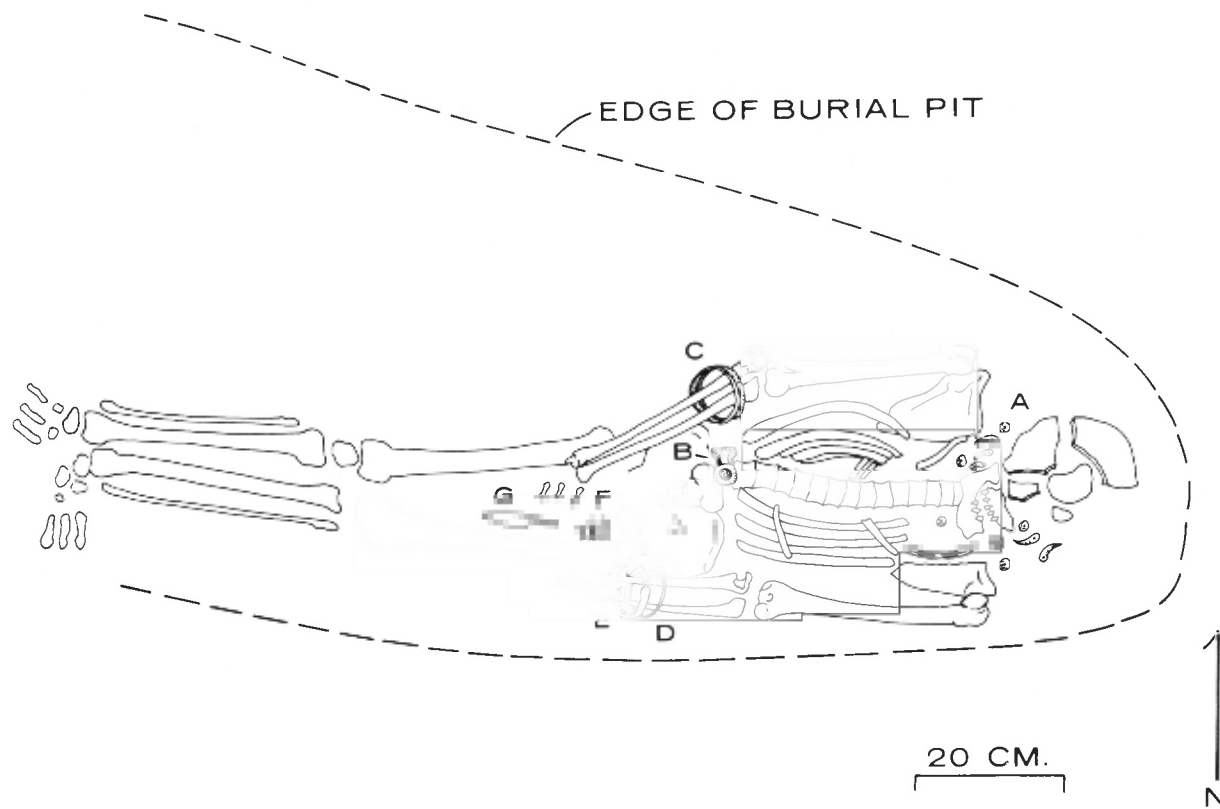
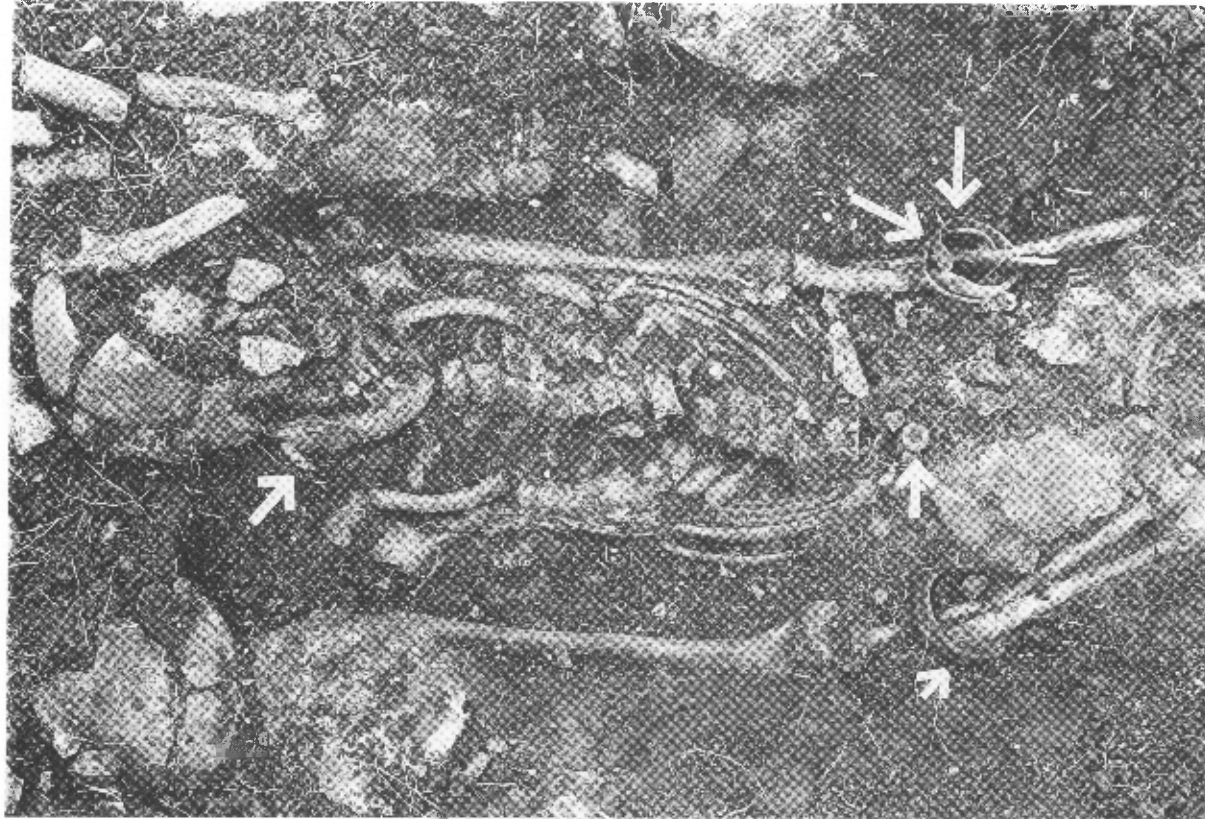


Fig. 5. Burial 72 with grave goods: a, necklace (Fig. 10); b, pipe (Fig. 9); c, bracelet, type 1 (Fig. 8b); d, bracelet, type 3 (Fig. 8a); e, bracelet, type 2 (Fig. 8c); f, finger rings (Figs. 8d and e); g, iron knife blade (Fig. 7).



**Fig. 6.** Burial 72, upper portion of skeleton. Arrows indicate one of dog canine beads from the necklace (Fig. 10, top row), clay pipe (Fig. 9), and bracelets (Figs. 8a-c). Finger rings and iron knife blade are not visible.

of lead per gram of bone ash). Burial 72's lead content was 109 ppm, that is, it was not far from the mean for all age groups tested in the Newton population as well as for his own age group. The amount of lead in his bones indicates that he probably had few to no symptoms of lead poisoning, unlike some other burials in the cemetery, but also that he may have been born in the Americas, where slaves had access to more sources of lead than in West Africa at this time [(A. C. Aufderheide, 1995, personal communication; Handler, 1996b; Handler *et al.*, 1986); skeletal lead content and its implications for suggesting birth in the Old or New Worlds are discussed by Corruccini *et al.* (1987)].

Wherever he was born, Burial 72 was the richest in the cemetery in terms of his associated artifacts, all of which were obviously intentionally placed grave goods. He dramatically contrasts with the other burials, which either lacked grave goods entirely or had only a few, mainly such European manufactured items as coffin hardware (e.g., nails, tacks, metal handles), glass beads, and white clay (kaolin) pipes (Handler and Lange, 1978, pp. 132–158; Handler *et al.*, 1979).<sup>4</sup> A number of Burial 72's artifacts, however, do not appear to be European. Moreover, they are unique examples of their kind at Newton, and, with some possible exceptions (see below), similar finds have not been reported from other New World African descendant sites. The Burial 72 artifacts provide, in the words of a recent author, “the clearest New World archaeological example of African influence on grave goods” (Jamieson, 1995, p. 49; cf. Adams, 1987, p. 13; Armstrong, 1990, pp. 13–14; Orser, 1994, pp. 36–38; Posnansky, 1989, p. 9) and make Burial 72 distinctive among known interments from African-descendant sites in the Americas (cf. Jamieson, 1995, p. 42; Rankin-Hill, 1993; Watters, 1994, p. 68).

<sup>4</sup>Excavation and surface collection yielded many pipe fragments at the 14 plantation sites. While many pipestem and bowl fragments were discovered in the fill surrounding 36 burials at Newton, a total of 21 whole pipes (defined as a significant portion of the bowl and a section of attached stem), dating from the late 17th century to early 19th, were directly associated with 17 different burials. This is a large number of whole pipes for a New World site; it may be the largest and earliest collection known in the Americas. These pipes played a crucial role in dating the cemetery (Blakeman and Riordan, 1978; Handler and Lange, 1978, pp. 133–135). Burial 72 showed signs of dental pipewear (on both sides of the lateral upper incisors and the upper canines), a feature evident in over 40% of the burials (Handler and Corruccini, 1983, pp. 84–86), whether or not pipes were interred with them. Pipewear resulted from the abrasive action of the habitual clenching of kaolin pipes, indicating that Burial 72 had smoked such pipes with some regularity during his lifetime, even though he was not buried with a kaolin pipe—thus independently confirming his older age [for pipesmoking among slaves and the chronology of pipewear. (see Handler, 1983; Handler and Corruccini, 1983, pp. 84–86)].

### THE STATUS OF BURIAL 72 IN THE SLAVE COMMUNITY

Historical sources on Barbados do not mention if slaves were buried with grave goods, but the archaeological evidence from Newton clearly establishes this practice (cf. Watters, 1994, p. 69). Burial 72's elaborate and unique set of artifacts reflects his exceptional or nonordinary status within the slave community, but the relatively abundant documentary sources on Newton lack specific information to interpret his status. For suggestive ideas one must turn to more general data on Barbadian slave culture as well as the early ethnographic/ethnohistorical literature on West and West Central Africa, the large and culturally diverse region that was the homeland of most early slaves in Barbados (Handler and Lange, 1978, pp. 20–28).

Approximately 150 published ethnographic/ethnohistorical works dealing with West African cultures were searched for information on mortuary and related practices. This literature reveals that despite the many distinctive cultures in West Africa, grave goods were common throughout the region. Goods could include food and drink, pottery, containers, cloth, mats, tobacco, gold dust, beads, cowry shells, jewelry (such as copper rings and bracelets), and other personal articles or possessions such as knives and pipes. The types, quality, and quantity of these goods varied according to culture and the wealth and status of the deceased. Depending on the culture, West Africans explained grave goods in a variety of ways: as gifts to the ancestors the deceased were about to meet, as necessities to assist them on their journey and residence in the spirit world, to ensure that they would not be ashamed at having insufficient possessions in their new home; or to help them maintain the same position in the afterlife that they enjoyed before death [e.g., Beecham, 1841, pp. 228, 229; Cruickshank, 1966 (1853), Vol. 2, pp. 135–136, 218; Danquah, 1928, p. 234; Field, 1937, p. 200; Herskovits, 1938, Vol. 1, pp. 368, 374–375, 378–379; Rattray, 1927, pp. 149, 150, 156; Schwab, 1947, pp. 241–263; Talbot, 1967a (1932), p. 235; Thomas, 1916, p. 122; cf. Agorsah, 1993, pp. 181, 183; Jamieson, 1995, pp. 48–49; Opper and Opper, 1989, pp. 5, 10]. However West Africans explained their motivations for placing grave goods, all evidence indicates that such goods were interred only with persons who were positively regarded by their communities or who were considered ordinary people; people who were despised, feared, or socially ostracized, such as witches, received no grave goods (cf. Handler, 1996b).

Since African cultural influences were pronounced in Barbadian slave sociocultural life, especially during the period in which Burial 72 died, it is quite likely that African customs and beliefs influenced his interment

(for discussions of African influences on slave life, see Handler, 1995a, b, 1996a, b; Handler and Corruccini, 1986; Handler and Frisbie, 1972; Handler and Jacoby, 1993, 1996; Handler and Lange, 1978, pp. 171–215; Rickford and Handler, 1994). Keeping in mind that a general “underlying assumption of most mortuary studies [is] that material objects buried with the dead were also associated with the deceased while alive” (Orser, 1994, p. 36), and that African artifacts can best be understood as “material expressions of ethnicity, status, religious affiliation, and wealth” (Childs and Killick, 1993, p. 331), the question to be asked with respect to Burial 72 is, What might his grave goods suggest about his status in the slave community? The relatively elaborate assortment of goods suggests that he was positively viewed by his community and held a special place within it. But what specific position did he hold?

Ethnohistorical sources are silent on how slaves determined social status and prestige in their communities. That Barbadian slaves followed some type of ranking system and allocated prestige in terms of their own cultural criteria (rather than those of the slave masters) is suggested by ethnohistorical data (e.g., Handler, 1982) and the grave goods with Burial 72. Moreover, historical evidence clearly shows that the slave community contained specialists who catered to the community’s needs. Prominent among these specialists were healers/diviners who played roles similar, if not identical, to those of certain traditional healers in West African societies. Divination is considered indispensable in African life and is crucial to the diagnosis of illness. The diviner may also use herbal medicines with “spiritual powers,” and diviners or other types of medicine men (and women) could help avenge wrongs and protect people from illness and other misfortunes. The diviner or other type of medicine man could counter the effects of sorcery/witchcraft—omnipresent features of Barbadian slave life—perhaps even immunize people against these practices, and cure the physical disorders and psychological states linked to beliefs in evil magic (for African divination and medicine, see, e.g., Green, 1980; Mair, 1969, pp. 241–242; Makinde, 1988; Parrinder, 1961, pp. 137–149; Peek, 1991). Ample historical evidence exists that such diviner/healers (both men and women) were common in the plantation communities of Barbados, as those elsewhere in the Americas, and no other position in the Barbadian slave community stands out so prominently (Handler and Lange, 1978, pp. 32–33, 81; Handler, 1996a; cf. Blassingame, 1979, pp. 40–41, 109–113; Brathwaite, 1971, pp. 219–220; Higman, 1984, pp. 271–272; Joyner, 1984, pp. 146–150; Kulikoff, 1986, p. 349; Owens, 1976, pp. 157–159; Savitt, 1978, pp. 174–179; Schick, 1986, pp. 108–109; Stein, 1974, pp. 189, 199–200).

In West Africa, diviner/healers generally enjoyed great respect, honor, and influence, and historical evidence suggests that such persons enjoyed



Fig. 7. Corroded iron knife blade.

a comparable position among Barbadian and other American slaves. In a world where serious illness and death were viewed as being caused by malevolent supernatural forces (Handler, 1996a), the person who could counteract those forces and protect against them as well as against other unfortunate events was indeed an important and influential, if not honored, person. In brief, Burial 72 can be interpreted as an African-type diviner/healer whose high status in the slave community is well reflected in the grave goods interred with him.<sup>5</sup>

#### ARTIFACTS ASSOCIATED WITH BURIAL 72: PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

Artifacts excavated with Burial 72 included an iron knife, three metal finger rings, three metal bracelets, a short-stemmed clay pipe, and a very distinctive necklace with several components.

*Iron Knife.* A badly corroded iron knife blade, approximately 15-cm long, was found between the skeleton's legs at the end of his left hand, perhaps having been placed in his hand at interment (Figs. 5g and 7). Al-

<sup>5</sup>Angele Aguigah and Alexis Adandé, West African archaeologists from Togo and Benin, respectively, were visiting the Program for African Studies at Northwestern University in 1992 when I gave a slide-illustrated talk that included a brief discussion of Burial 72. Both archaeologists agreed that the burial was probably an important person because of his relatively elaborate inventory of grave goods. They drew attention to his necklace which they felt was not an ordinary or commonplace African one because it contains elements such as animal teeth and fish bones. They also confirm data in the West African literature that it is customary to bury important persons with either their insignia or symbols of their office as well as their favorite personal items. A healer or diviner would be such a type of important person (but not the only one), and they both readily agreed that Burial 72 was probably a healer/diviner (a *guerisseur*).

though iron knives of one kind or another were associated with six burials in the cemetery, all were badly corroded, and in the early 1970s efforts to analyze them by X-ray examination were nonproductive (Handler and Lange, 1978, p. 152). With the benefit that hindsight often brings, it is quite possible that more recent and sophisticated laboratory procedures and methods would have yielded information on these knives; the remnants of these knives, however, are no longer available for analysis.

*Metal Finger Rings.* Limited and very general historical evidence indicates that slaves occasionally wore metal jewelry (Handler, 1995b), but the Newton archaeology provides the only specific data on some of the types. A total of 11 metal jewelry objects was discovered; 5 were distributed among three burials, while the other 6 were found with Burial 72.

Three simple undecorated band rings were worn on the middle finger of his left hand (see Fig. 5f). Two of the rings (found together at the distal part of the finger) were identical silver with a copper alloy (Fig. 8d). Approximately 20 mm on their inside diameters, they were probably made from a cast ingot from which a wire was beaten and then drawn through a "draw plate." This process produced an extremely regular form with a smooth flat interior and a slightly convex exterior approximately 1-mm thick; the ring itself was probably formed on some kind of tapering rod.

The third ring, found at the proximal part of the finger, is a copper alloy containing zinc, lead, and a small percentage of tin (Fig. 8e); it is either a zinc-bearing bronze or a tin-bearing brass. In either case, the object was not made from a "primitive alloy" but rather a "sophisticated" bronze or brass (Bert Van Zelst, 1978, personal communication). The ring was probably made from a wire pulled through a draw plate, although it could have been cast. The ring's approximately 20-mm interior diameter is perfectly circular with a flat surface, suggesting its formation on a tapering rod; the exterior is slightly rounded and the wire itself is approximately 2-mm thick. The top and bottom of the ring are somewhat irregularly flattened, probably as a result of natural abrasion such as contact with the other rings.

*Metal Bracelets.* Three metal bracelets (all with an interior diameter of approximately 60 mm) were found on the forearms, close to the wrists. One (Type 1) was on the lower right arm (see Figs. 5c and 8b). Made of nonalloyed "pure copper" (which contained minor amounts of lead and iron), the bracelet was approximately 5–6 mm thick and coiled; it may have been made out of a larger piece of metal that was either cast as an ingot or found already manufactured. Holes on the interior and at each tip indicate that it was beaten out cold (i.e., forged) from this larger piece of metal and that a great deal of hammering stretched various areas of the metal; cracks around the side of the coils also show evidence of forging.

Textile fragments were found on the exterior surface of this bracelet. Microscopic analysis showed that these fragments were from the same coarse plain weave (one under, one over) fabric, but the poor state of preservation and disintegration of the fibers precluded their identification. The weave and coarseness of the fibers, however, suggest the type of manufactured textile that was found in slave clothing (Handler, 1995b), or the fragments might have been the remnants of a shroud.

The other two bracelets were located on the lower left arm. The one closest to the wrist (Type 2) was brass, with copper zinc as its main alloy (see Figs. 5e and 8c). The bracelet is about 3–4 mm thick and has a rounded exterior, smoothly flattened interior, and a simple, albeit barely visible, design at its flanged ends; the ends are about 12–14 mm at their widest points. The bracelet was probably first rough-cast (in a mold that may have been used several times; it was not done by the lost wax method) in a straight form and then bent into its circular shape. It appears to have been hammered at the ends to produce the slight flanging, and the design (whose details could not be ascertained) at each end appears to have been hammered into the piece. There does not appear to have been a great deal of forging on the piece after it was cast.

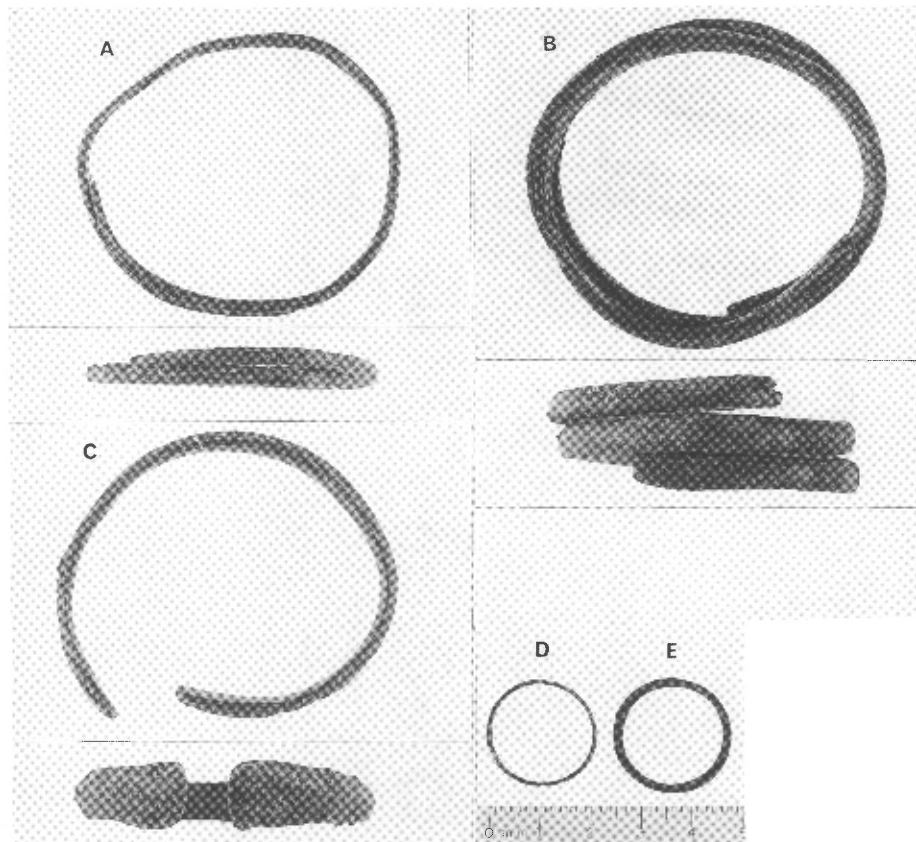
Above this bracelet on the left arm was the third bracelet (Type 3), a thin undecorated brass wire, about 3–4 mm thick, bent into a roughly circular shape; the interior is irregularly flat and the exterior slightly rounded (see Figs. 5d and 8a). It is uncertain how the wire was manufactured, but it could have been crudely cast in an “open mold” (e.g., simply scratching a stick line onto a clay mold and then pouring the metal into this mold), and then slightly beaten to produce the tapered ends; or the wire could have been entirely beaten. In either case, the wire was bent into shape after manufacture.<sup>6</sup>

*Clay Pipe.* Another artifact associated with Burial 72 was a distinctive short-stemmed earthenware pipe, found on the pelvic area and apparently undisturbed since interment (Fig. 9). Fired to a buff color with a brown polished slip, there is no evidence of a mold seam, as appears on white-clay European pipes. Although this absence does not eliminate the possibility that the pipe was made in a one-piece mold, the pipe and its various deco-

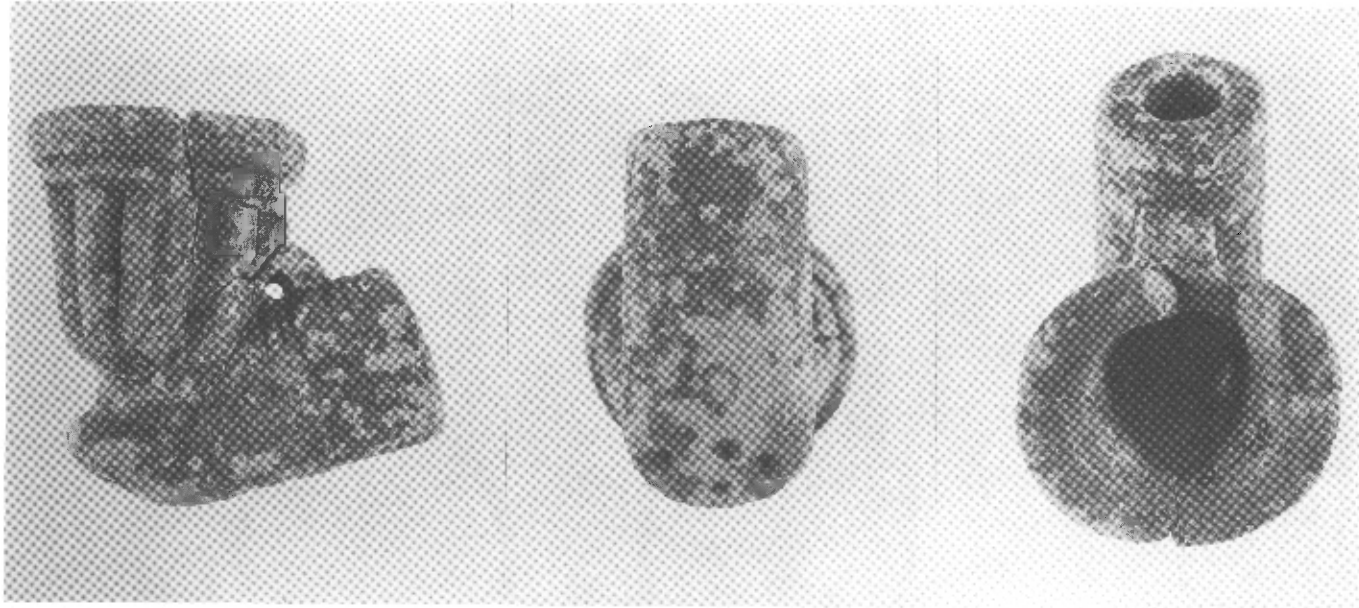
<sup>6</sup>Some bracelets that appear to be similar to Type 3 have been reported by Manuel Garcia Arevalo (1986, pp. 48–49, 59–60) for an early 18th-century maroon settlement in the Dominican Republic. Over 40 copper bracelets were discovered at this site. Judging from published descriptions and photographs, all appear to be single coil wires of varying thicknesses and diameters. Garcia Arevalo classifies these bracelets into three types; the type identified as the “medium fine type” (*tipo mediano fino*) appears to bear a strong resemblance to Type 3 discovered at Newton. Garcia Arevalo also remarks on these similarities based on published photos and descriptions of the Newton bracelets in Handler and Lange (1978, p. 127).



rative features, such as the nine flutes around its outer circumference, could have been modeled or carved from a solid piece of leather-hard clay. The short stem is approximately 3.8-cm long and 1.9-cm wide [see Handler (1983) for details on the pipe's dimensions, clay composition, decorative features, and possible method of manufacture]. This is the only pipe of its kind found in Barbados, and it may be unique among archaeological finds in the Americas. It dramatically contrasts with the more common European-manufactured white clay pipes from Newton and other sites in Barbados, as well as from many colonial-period sites in North America and



**Fig. 8.** Metal rings and bracelets: a, bracelet, type 3; b, bracelet, type 1; c, bracelet, type 2; d, silver ring; e, copper ring.



**Fig. 9.** Clay pipe. Left: Side view, showing bridge between bowl and stem with hole to secure detachable stem to rest of pipe. Center and right: Bottom and top views, respectively.

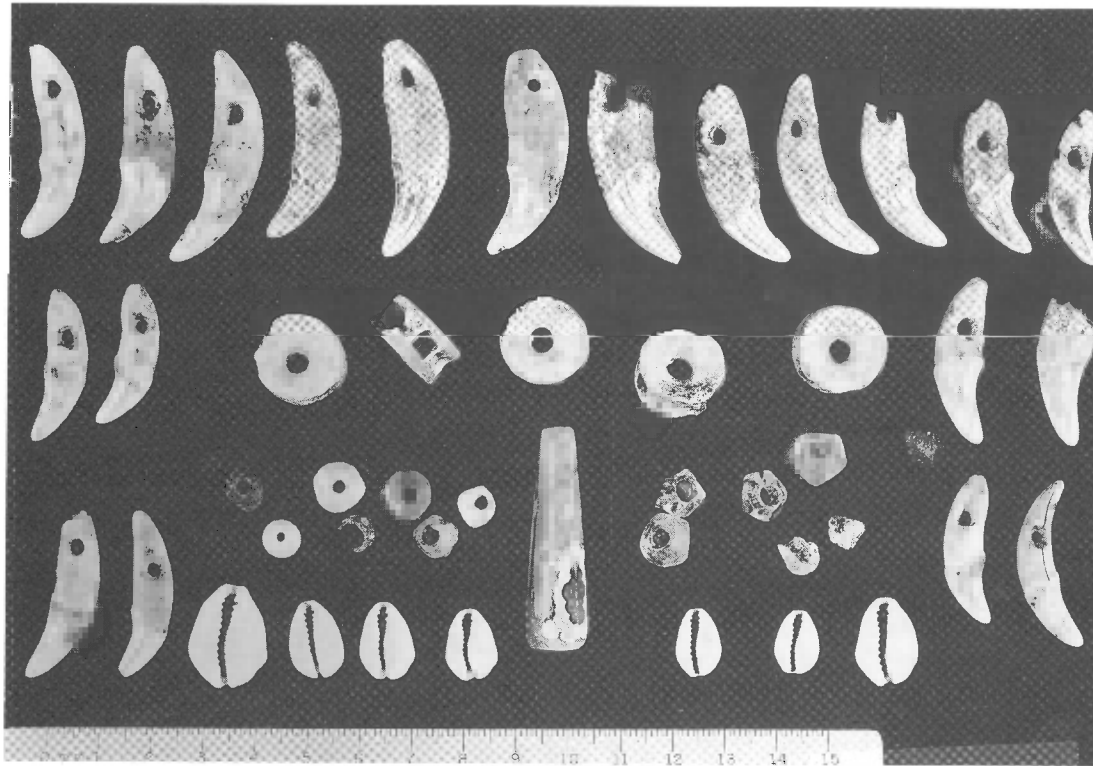
the Caribbean (Blakeman and Riordan, 1978, pp. 256–259, Figs. 30–34; cf. footnote 4).

*Necklace.* The most prominent artifact with Burial 72 is a strikingly elaborate necklace with obvious African characteristics; this necklace is unique among African-descendant sites in the New World. The necklace is composed of seven money cowrie shells (*Cypraea moneta*, one of the world's best-known cowries); five drilled vertebrae (approximately 1 cm in diameter each), from a large bony, albeit unidentified, fish [the "isospondylous vertebrae of a comparatively large teleost or true bony fish" (Kenneth Boss, 1976, personal communication)]; 21 drilled canine teeth from an unidentified dog; 14 European manufactured glass beads representing four or five types [(Handler *et al.*, 1979, p. 16; Handler and Lange, 1978, pp. 144–150); for comparative comments on these beads, see Karklins and Barka (1989, pp. 72–73) and LaRoche, 1994 (pp. 11–12)]; and a large reddish-orange carnelian bead with milky narrow, concentric bands (Fig. 10) [see Handler and Lange (1979, pp. 48) for a color photo of these components].

The carnelian bead (see Fig. 10) is cylindrical and tapered. It is 42.2-mm long and approximately 11.7 mm at its thickest. It has eight longitudinal facets and an approximately 2.0-mm-diameter perforation bored from both ends and through the bead's length (Handler *et al.*, 1979, p. 16). Although the necklace's stringing pattern could be only partially reconstructed and the carnelian bead's actual position could not be ascertained, it was probably the centerpiece of the necklace [(Handler and Lange, 1978, p. 129); among some Gold Coast peoples, the distinctive bead necklaces worn by priests occasionally contained one long red carnelian bead (Ellis, 1966a (1887), p. 131)]. The bead is one of two specimens found in the cemetery [the other was with a roughly contemporaneous burial (cf. Handler *et al.*, 1979)], which appear to be the only examples of their kind reported from New World sites. Karklins and Barka (1989, pp. 66, 74) report a round carnelian bead from St. Eustatius, quite unlike the Newton specimens, although "similar, if not identical, beads were recovered from pre-1873 contexts" at Elmina in coastal Ghana; some of these carnelian beads may be from "disturbed burial contexts" (Christopher DeCorse, 1996, personal communication).

#### **ARTIFACTS ASSOCIATED WITH BURIAL 72: PROVENIENCE AND CULTURAL INTERPRETATIONS**

It is possible that some of Burial 72's grave goods, such as some of the glass beads and the knife blade, were acquired in the New World. But



**Fig. 10.** Necklace components: top row, dog canines; second row, fish vertebrae; third row, glass beads and carnelian bead; bottom row, cowry shells.

it is likely that most of them, particularly the pipe, necklace, and metal jewelry, were transported across the Atlantic during the middle passage. Whether they were actually brought by the person who has been designated Burial 72 or transported by other individuals is, of course, a question that is impossible to answer.

*Iron Knife.* Nothing specific can be said about the iron knife because it was so badly corroded. In any case, although many accounts of grave goods in West Africa mention the use of various personal articles, knives are rarely specifically mentioned. This omission might mean little because detailed itemizations of personal articles are usually not given and knives could have been so commonplace as to not deserve any special mention. The few specific references to knives as grave goods indicate that they were part of the deceased's personal belongings and were considered of possible use in the afterlife. These accounts do not suggest that the knives had any special significance, although it is possible that knives interred with some prominent people were associated with their social roles [Ardener, 1956, p. 89; Nassau, 1904, p. 232; Talbot, 1967b (1923), p. 235, 1969 (1926), Vol. 3, p. 523]. In West Africa, special metal objects such as spears and knives could symbolize a variety of social roles, including political offices, special occupations, or ritual specialists; metal jewelry could also mark social status as well as functioning solely as personal adornment (e.g., Childs and Killick, 1993, p. 332).

*Metal Jewelry.* Metal working and smelting have an ancient history in sub-Saharan Africa. Iron smelting existed long before the colonial period, as did the production of, on a much more limited scale, copper and its alloys of brass and bronze. Copper and its alloys were always considered luxury goods and were used, for example, as an exchange medium, in material symbols of rank, political authority, and wealth, in ritualistic paraphernalia, and as objects of personal adornment. They were important imports before the colonial period. After the 15th-century arrival of the Portuguese, bronze and brass increasingly came into West Africa and this large-scale importation continued during the transatlantic slave trade. The greater availability of these metals helped stimulate the "metal casting traditions . . . throughout the West African rain forest" (Childs and Killick, 1993, p. 324; cf. Cline, 1937; Herbert, 1984). Whatever the history of copper and its alloys in West Africa, metal jewelry, of a wide variety of types, was ubiquitous and is frequently mentioned as a grave good in the literature.

The copper ring and all three bracelets found with Burial 72 are of a general African style, but none are sufficiently distinctive to permit identification with a particular cultural group and no specific African provenience could be established (cf. Handler and Lange, 1978, pp. 156–157). All pieces involve techniques common in African metal working (e.g., Cline,

1937; Herbert, 1984, pp. 76–100) and could have been made there—which is most likely. But they also could have been made by slaves in Barbados from scrap materials available on the island. None of the bracelets or the ring required elaborate technology, and it is possible that some slaves transported to Barbados were versed in traditional African metalworking techniques that they applied within the plantation environment.

If Burial 72 were some type of healer/diviner or medicine man, the metal jewelry, particularly the copper ring and/or bracelets may have had a significance beyond mere ornamentation. They might have been in some way emblematic of his special status in the community, but they also may have functioned, as Orser (1994, p. 41) has recently suggested, to protect him and keep his spiritual powers intact. Although copper is sometimes used ritualistically by West African diviners, its protective quality, Herbert writes, “is widely recognized” and it is more commonly found in the “amulets and charms they prescribe”; copper and brass jewelry such as finger rings and bracelets are very frequently used as protective amulets or charms by people in all social groups and ranks. Among some Yoruba groups, most people wear a copper or brass ring on one of their fingers; after these rings have been “energized by appropriate medicines,” they protect their wearers “against the powers of their enemies” (Herbert, 1984, pp. 261–266). In Dahomey, as another example, “rings of iron or brass” were used as protective charms “against danger” (Herskovits, 1938, Vol. 2, p. 263).

The silver rings may have been made in Europe or Africa. Although silver was not traditionally worked or very widespread in precolonial Africa, it increasingly was used after European contact and apparently was not uncommon during the period of the slave trade (Childs and Killick, 1993; Herbert, 1973). For example, Wilhelm Muller, a German who resided in the southern Gold Coast (Ghana) during the 1660s, observed how people wore “golden and silver rings . . . on their arms, fingers and legs” (quoted in Jones, 1983, p. 206). Other writers later in the colonial period also reported on jewelry, including finger rings, made from silver wire that was sometimes manufactured from melted-down European coins [e.g., Carnes, 1969 (1852), pp. 374–375; Freeman, 1967 (1898), pp. 242, 405–406; Jones, 1984, p. 31; Partridge, 1905, pp. 166–167; Schwab, 1947, pp. 112–113].

*Clay Pipe.* Ample historical evidence supports the comment of a late-18th-century observer in Barbados that tobacco was important to slaves, and that “smoking is an universal custom among them,” and although tobacco was sometimes “rolled into a sagar,” the historical record suggests that pipes were the most frequent way tobacco was smoked (Pinckard, 1806, Vol. 2, p. 115; cf. Handler, 1983).

An English visitor to Jamaica in 1687 reported how slaves at their funerals “gently put the corpse” in the grave, and with him they place “cas-

sadar bread, roasted fowles, sugar, rum, tobacco, and pipes with fire to light his pipe" (Taylor, 1688, p. 544)—clearly they were following African practices. Barbados historical sources do not mention the goods placed in graves, but Barbadian and Jamaican slaves in this period derived from the same areas of West Africa, and interment ceremonies similar to those in Jamaica occurred in Barbados at this time (cf. Handler and Lange, 1978, pp. 199–200). Moreover, the Newton excavations clearly show that pipes were common grave goods. Tobacco is frequently reported as a grave good in the early West African literature. Although only a few specific references to pipes as grave goods were found among the ethnographic/ethnohistorical works on West Africa that were searched for information on burial practices, the use of pipes is probably frequently implied when tobacco is mentioned. In any case, specific references to pipes were primarily to the Asante and related southern Gold Coast peoples [Atkins, 1970 (1735), pp. 86, 105; Crow, 1970 (1830), p. 244; Cruickshank, 1966 (1853), Vol. 2, p. 136; Ffoulkes, 1909, pp. 158, 155–156; MacDonald, 1969 (1898), p. 228; cf. Agorsah, 1993, pp. 181, 183], although some peoples in east-central Nigeria–western Cameroons (Meek, 1931, p. 249), the coastal areas of Gabon or French Equatorial Africa [DuChaillu, 1969 (1872), pp. 131–132; Nassau, 1904, p. 232], and western Senegal (Opper and Opper, 1989, p. 10) are also reported to have deposited a favorite pipe of the decedent into the grave. In some cases, pipes were placed only with higher-status individuals; in other cases, no correlation with rank seems to have existed.

In terms of provenience, the earthenware clay pipe is among the least problematical of Burial 72's grave goods. Very similar pipes from late-17th-century archaeological sites in the Gold Coast have been described and illustrated by Paul Ozanne (1962; 1964). In these pipes, a reed or tube of wood was inserted into the bore hole of the pipe's short stem to lengthen or enlarge the stem. Wilhelm Muller briefly mentions how the Fetu [a coastal Fante-speaking kingdom (cf. Agorsah, 1993, pp. 178–179, 183–184)] in the 1660s had "tobacco pipes without stems, instead of which hollowed-out sticks are used," and implies that potters made these pipes [(quoted by Jones, 1983, p. 255); several plants were still being used for pipestems in Ghana in modern times (Irvine, 1961, pp. lxxix)]. The small hole on the bridge between the top of the back of the bowl and the top of the stem on the Burial 72 pipe (Fig. 9, left) was probably used to tie or otherwise secure the detachable stem to the rest of the pipe. This bridge or hook is very common in archaeologically recovered pipes from southern Ghana. In its form and shape, short stem, decorative features, flutes, and especially its bridge or hook, the Burial 72 pipe closely resembles a number of pipes from southern and coastal Ghana that date from the latter half of the 17th century.

Although the Barbados pipe does not appear to resemble modern or relatively modern West African pipes, it is almost certainly of African origin (Handler, 1983; cf. Christopher DeCorse, 1996, personal communication; Emerson, 1994, pp. 38–39). In addition, a Ghanaian provenience would be consistent with what is known about the British slave trade from the Gold Coast to Barbados during the late 17th and early 18th centuries; during this period many Barbadian slaves were brought from that area (e.g., Handler and Lange, 1978, pp. 21–28; also see below). It is also suggestive that undescribed clay pipes in “large number” were archaeologically recovered from the dungeons of Cape Coast Castle in Ghana which were the holding areas for slaves about to be shipped to the Americas (Simmonds, 1973, p. 267).<sup>7</sup> The pipe was probably not made in Barbados, as its clay differs from the Barbadian clay that provided the raw material for a local small-scale or cottage pottery industry and there is no other archaeological evidence for similar pipes. Nor do ethnohistorical sources mention or even suggest the existence of any pipe manufacturing on the island (Handler, 1963a, b; cf. Posnansky, 1989, p. 12).

*Necklace.* It is impossible to determine if the necklace with Burial 72 was brought intact to Barbados during the middle passage or if it was constructed on the island from its different components, which may have arrived through diverse routes and with different human agents. Even if the necklace had been transported intact from Africa, its components ultimately came from a variety of sources, most, if not all, located in the Old World.

Since the type of neither fish nor dog could be identified, nothing can be said about the origin of the vertebrae or canine beads.<sup>8</sup> Cowry shells

<sup>7</sup>Angele Aguigah and Alexis Adandé (1992, personal communication; see footnote 5) agreed that the Barbados pipe originated in West Africa. In fact, Aguigah pointed out, such pipes are also found in Togo sites, and they are called “Ghanaian pipes”— indicating not necessarily that they were made in Ghana, but that they had the same style as those from the Gold Coast. The Burial 72 pipe broadly resembles some, perhaps African-type, pipes found in nonarchaeological contexts in the vicinity of Palmares, the celebrated 17th-century maroon community in northeast Brazil (Orser, 1996, pp. 124, 126; Charles Orser, 1995, personal communication). The pipe may also possibly resemble several pipes found by Garcia Arevalo in the early 18th-century maroon site in the Dominican Republic and one reported from a maroon site in a cave in Cuba (see illustrations in Garcia Arevalo, 1986, pp. 50, 64–65). Neither the Palmares, the Dominican Republic, nor the Cuban pipes display the bridge of the Ghana pipe although all appear to be carved. However, as Posnansky has observed, “pipes in West Africa exhibited the greatest changes in fashion of any item of material culture with a bewildering variation of form and decoration” (1989, p. 13; cf. Emerson, 1994, pp. 38–39, Ozanne, 1962, 1964).

<sup>8</sup>A 1969–1970 excavation at a 19th-century plantation slave burial ground in Cuba yielded, among other artifacts, “some earrings made of perforated dog canines, of undoubted African tradition” (*algunos pendientes hechos con colmillos de perro perforados—de indudable tradicion africana* [Academia de Ciencias de Cuba, 1970]; *pendientes* is misleadingly translated as “pendant” in Handler and Lange, 1978, p. 130).



are so well-known and so often reported in the West African literature that little needs to be said about them here. It is sufficient to note that the money cowry, *Cypraea moneta*, does not inhabit Caribbean, European, or West African waters but has a broad habitat range in the Indian and Pacific oceans.<sup>9</sup> The ultimate provenience of the Burial 72 cowries could not be established, but during the transatlantic slave trade large quantities were brought from the Maldive Islands, located south of India in the northern Indian Ocean. Cowries were highly valued in West Africa and were widely used long before the colonial period as currency (they also became the shell money of the slave trade) and as markers of wealth and prestige. However, cowries were much more frequently used for ornamentation in jewelry, on masks and figurines (which in themselves cannot be divorced from African religions), and for other magicoritualistic purposes, such as in divination or in protective amulets or charms. Among the Asante, for example, as with other cultural groups, cowries could be “endowed with spiritual powers” (Rattray, 1927, pp. 12–24; cf. Barbot, 1992, Vol. 2, pp. 641–643; Johnson, 1970; Hogendorn and Johnson, 1986; Holas, 1968, p. 48; Phillips, 1746, pp. 243–244). Cowries were also frequently used as grave goods.

Beads are also regularly mentioned as grave goods and were important items of West African material culture. They functioned in many areas of life, ranging from the purely ornamental to the ritualistic and socioeconomic, and could be worn as necklaces, bracelets, anklets, or earrings, around the waist, or in the hair. Beads were clothing ornaments and were interwoven into hairstyles; they were used as currency and played a role in initiation ceremonies or rites of passage; they were found on statues, masks, figurines, and headdresses; they could be markers of wealth and badges or insignias of political office, high social status, or religious practitioners such as priests and diviners/medicine men; they could identify members of a cult group or worshippers of certain deities, symbolize the deities themselves, and distinguish the priests/diviners who were devoted to these deities; they were also used in protective charms or talismans [e.g., Anderson and Kreamer, 1989, passim; Barbot, 1992, Vol. 2, p. 494; Bascom, 1969, p. 77–97; Bowdich, 1966 (1819), pp. 38, 267–270; Carey, 1991, passim; Dark, 1973, pp. 68–69; Ellis, 1966a (1887), pp. 148–149, 167; Fisher, 1987, passim; Forbes, 1966 (1851), Vol. 1, p. 28; Freeman, 1967 (1898), pp. 385, 396–405; Karklins and Barka, 1989, pp. 76–77; LaRoche, 1994, p. 14; Nadel,

<sup>9</sup>Cowry shells have also been reported from several early historic sites in Jamaica. Although of uncertain functions, they may have been parts “of an ornament” and “clearly” establish a connection with West Africa (Agorsah, 1994, pp. 182–183), as do the many cowries found in early North American sites “where slave presence is documented” (Samford, 1996, p. 101).

1942, pp. 282–285; Partridge, 1905, pp. 165–166; Roth, 1968 (1903), pp. 19–24).

Before the mass importation of glass beads from Europe, Africans made their own beads from materials such as bone, ivory, seeds, shell, stone, wood, and sometimes glass (Carey, 1991, p. 10; DeCorse, 1989, pp. 45, 47–49). With the transatlantic slave trade, glass beads of European manufacture “entered Africa in almost unbelievable quantity” and were important items in the trade for slaves (Carey, 1991, p. 9; cf. Barbot, 1992, Vol. 2, *passim*; Curtin, 1975, Vol. 1, p. 315). “It is inconceivable,” wrote a Frenchman in Senegambia during the 1760s, “for inexperienced Europeans to imagine how many beads are consumed along the coasts of Africa” (quoted by Opper and Opper, 1989, p. 9). Many European trade beads were worn by captive Africans who were transported to the New World. For example, beads “worn round the waist and of the type worn in necklaces and wristlets” were recovered from the dungeons of Cape Coast Castle (Simmonds, 1973, p. 267), and many beads from across the Atlantic arrived at Barbados throughout the period of slavery. A British naval chaplain observed a slave sale in Barbados in 1794 and reported that some of the Africans “were decorated with beads, given to them by their captors, and bracelets round their wrists and ancles” (Willyams, 1796, pp. 12–13). A few years later a British army general visited a recently arrived slaving vessel in Barbados and saw that the “females had all a number of different coloured glass beads hung around their necks” (Dyott, 1907, Vol. 1, pp. 93–94).

Barbadian slaves apparently used beads frequently. Griffith Hughes (1750, p. 16), a knowledgeable observer of slave life in the 1730s and 1740s, reported that regardless of differences in their African ethnic origins, Barbadian slaves “all agree in this one universal custom of adorning their bodies, by wearing strings of beads of various colours . . . . These beads are in great numbers twined round their arms, necks, and legs.” The beads used by slaves were mostly European glass beads and those made from local flora. Some information is available on locally manufactured seed beads [e.g., Hughes, 1750, pp. 111–112, 193, 212–213, 254; Handler, 1995b]; the idea of seed beads was carried across the Atlantic and applied to new flora in Barbados, offering a modest but excellent example of the “mental blueprints” (Posnansky, 1986, p. 2) Africans brought to the New World], but the historical sources provide no details on the specific types of glass beads available to the island’s slaves—only the Newton excavations yielded such data. The beads recovered from the cemetery had been part of necklaces, bracelets, and anklets. Although almost 900 beads (representing about 30 types) were recovered, they were distributed among only 12 burials (Handler *et al.*, 1979; Handler and Lange, 1978, pp. 144–150).

The carnelian bead with Burial 72 may have the most interesting history. This bead, as well as another similar one found at Newton with Burial 63 (Handler *et al.*, 1979), was almost certainly the hand-crafted product of an industry at Cambay (Khambhat), a city in southern India. The possibility that it originated in Cambay was first suggested to me by Robert Liu (1978, personal communication). This suggestion was recently confirmed by Jonathan Kenoyer whose examination of the bead led him to observe that, among other diagnostic characteristics, "the type of drill used is the double diamond drill that was unique to Cambay and western India" (1995, personal communication; cf. Kenoyer *et al.*, 1994).

Cambay had a well-known stone bead industry of considerable antiquity. Cambay beads were widely traded for about 2000 years. This trade network reached its greatest volume between around 1300 and 1800 and linked Cambay with the Red Sea area and the east coast of Africa. From the East African coast, Cambay carnelian beads and other items generally moved through the overland Sahara and Sahel trade to West Africa, where they were present by at least the first century AD (Arkell, 1936; Carey, 1991, pp. 8, 26; Kenoyer *et al.*, 1994; cf. DeCorse, 1989, p. 44). Carnelian beads from India were one of several bead types that were relatively expensive and considered especially valuable in many areas of West Africa (e.g., Carey, 1991, p. 26; Curtin, 1975, Vol. 1, pp. 314, 319; Jones, 1984, pp. 13, 31; Opper and Opper, 1989, pp. 7, 9, 14, 15).

How carnelian beads may have come to Barbados is purely speculative. They almost certainly came to the New World aboard slaving vessels, probably from West Africa although possibly they were brought directly from southeast Africa. The British traded for slaves in the southeast Africa-Madagascar area for short periods in the late 1600s and early 1700s; during these years some slaves were brought directly from this area to Barbados (Handler and Lange, 1978, p. 293, n13). By whatever route they came, the beads "clearly travelled over a vast area until they found their final resting place in the graves" at Newton (Handler *et al.*, 1979, p. 17).

Individual components aside, how, then, to interpret the necklace as a necklace? Since no ethnohistorical information on Barbados slave life offers an explanation for the function or meaning of this necklace, one must turn to the literature on West Africa for suggestive ideas. Throughout West Africa, strings of beads served as insignias of particular statuses; for example, the Yoruba priest/diviners of Ifa, the god of divination, were "distinguished by a string of alternating opaque tan and light green beads worn on the left wrist" (Bascom, 1969, p. 80). But it was not unusual to find that special bead necklaces of one kind or another were worn as marks of distinction or as indicators of status or rank by chiefs, kings, priests and priestesses, or other persons with supernatural powers. Such necklaces

might contain especially rare or prized beads (as well as gold or other precious materials) and are frequently mentioned in the sources. For example, in the 1880s a British anthropologist reported that, among various southern Gold Coast peoples, the “long necklaces of the priesthood [are] composed of black and white beads, with an occasional long bead of red cornelian [*sic*], or a small disc of gold” [Ellis, 1966a (1887), p. 131; cf. Cruickshank, 1966 (1853), Vol. 2, p. 185; Field, 1937, pp. 8–9]. Yoruba priests of the god Obatala “are distinguished by necklaces of white beads,” those of Shango, the god of thunder, “wear necklaces of black, red, and white beads” [Ellis, 1966c (1894), p. 96], and distinctive bead necklaces are worn as insignia of office by the priests/diviners and worshippers of Eshu, another major Yoruba deity (Bascom, 1969, p. 79). In 18th-century Benin, each of the 60 “big men” of the Oba’s (king’s) council “wore on his neck, ankles and wrists two rows of very large coral, which is the distinctive mark of the highest office of the state” [Talbot, 1969 (1926), Vol. 3, p. 589], while chiefs among the *Indei* of southeastern Nigeria wore “a flexible string of small brown, blue, and white beads” [Partridge, 1905, p. 165; for other examples, see Bosman, 1967 (1721), pp. 435–436; Bowditch, 1966 (1819), p. 38; Ellis, 1966b (1890), p. 167; Ellis, 1970 (1914), pp. 38–39; Herskovits, 1938, Vol. 1, p. 188; Idowu, 1963, p. 138; Norris, 1969 (1789), p. 125; Roth, 1968 (1903), p. 26; Talbot, 1969 (1926), Vol. 2, p. 401].

Although the West African literature often mentions or alludes to glass beads, there are very few references to animal teeth or fish vertebrae in necklaces, two key components of the Burial 72 necklace. Sometimes the presence of animal teeth is merely reported and no function is specified [e.g., Partridge, 1905, p. 166; Talbot, 1969 (1926), p. 395]. The literature gives the impression that animal teeth were uncommon and were worn by persons of high rank as a mark of that rank or were considered to have magical protective properties. The Mende of Sierra Leone wore leopard’s teeth “in the old days” as “a sign of royal rank” (Little, 1951, p. 190), and among various Liberian peoples “men and women of rank” wore necklaces containing “the canine teeth of leopards or chimpanzees” (Schwab, 1947, p. 113). In eastern Zaire, chiefs wore bead necklaces that included leopard or human teeth (Carey, 1991, p. 7; cf. Anderson and Kreamer, 1989, pp. 76, 96), and throughout the eastern Nigerian forest areas older men traditionally wore a single drilled leopard tooth around their necks. The leopard was “associated with power,” and among the Igbo in some areas of eastern Nigeria leopard tooth necklaces, rather than a single tooth, signified high status or political authority (Cole and Aniakor, 1984, pp. 36, 47; Jones, 1984, pp. 23, 31, 222; National Museum of African Art, 1996). Generalizing on sub-Saharan Africa, Anderson and Kreamer (1989, p. 75) note how

“leadership regalia” which are “often the special prerogatives of kings and titled men” include, among other items, “necklaces of animal teeth.”

Animal teeth (or fish bones) in necklaces that functioned as protective amulets or charms are also occasionally reported. In the 1690s, an English slaving captain wrote that in Whidaw (Dahomey), people sometimes wore “fetishes” that included “tigers teeth, goats horns full of a reddish paste, bones of fishes, etc. all of which have their peculiar virtues to defend them from some imminent danger or other” (Phillips, 1746, p. 242). Many years later, in approximately the same region, Ewe-speakers were reported to believe that “an amulet made of the teeth or claws of animals, especially beasts of prey, protects from beasts of prey” [Ellis, 1996b (1890), p. 93]. An Anglican missionary who lived on the southern Gold Coast, primarily among the Fante, in the early 1750s reported: “As a great part of their superstition consists in the wearing of fetishes [*sic*], being pieces of gold, single beads, little shells, and the teeth of some animal, which are purchased on their conjurers . . . as good against poisons, withcraft, and other direful accidents” (Thompson, 1758, pp. 51–52). The Asante *asuman*, a class of physical objects “endowed with spiritual powers” that priests sometimes wore as necklaces could contain “parts of certain animals,” including leopard claws and teeth (Rattray, 1927, pp. 12–24). Writing about West Africa in general, Parrinder (1961, p. 160) reports how the teeth of animals such as lions, crocodiles, and snakes, “usually wrapped in leather, are often tied in pairs and worn around the neck or waist.” These are believed to “have the power of the animal in them” and would protect the bearer from harm. It should be noted, however, that when animal teeth in necklaces are mentioned they are most apt to be animals of prey, particularly leopards. I have found no direct references to dog teeth in necklaces.

Although there is no way of absolutely establishing the function or meaning of Burial 72’s necklace, there is a good chance that it was connected to his status in the slave community. If, indeed, Burial 72 was a diviner/healer or medicine man, the necklace would have been far from purely ornamental. It would have been imbued with the magical or spiritual qualities that protected him from evil or protected his supernatural powers to enhance his divinatory/curing abilities. Protective talismans or amulets of one kind or another for diviners/medicine men were ubiquitous in West Africa. [In fact in some areas, carnelian pendants from India are believed to “offer protection from the evil eye” (Fisher, 1987, p. 185).] Thus, although the necklace might have been an insignia or badge of his status as a diviner or medicine man, it is also more than likely that it was considered to have magical/spiritual properties (cf. Orser, 1994, pp. 36–37). If this was the case, it might have had a function similar to that of some of the *asuman* found among the Asante or other Akan (e.g., Dickson, 1968, p. x).

The *asuman* (*suman*, sing.) belonged to Asante medicine men/priests and priestesses and aided them in their work. As described by Rattray in his classic works, each *suman* is usually composed of several, often commonplace and everyday, household materials. Some *asuman* contain certain beads; in fact, “many kinds of beads are classed as *suman*.” The *asuman* function in a number of ways, but many protect their owners from harm or evil, in some cases even if a priest is “without any other protective charm.” *Asuman* usually hang on the walls of Asante temples, but they are worn by their owners when they are working. They can be tied onto the hair, worn as headbands, or worn on the ankles, wrists, arms, or, it can be stressed, as necklaces (Rattray, 1923, p. 182, 1927, pp. 12–24, 39–44; cf. Busia, 1954, p. 195). Protective amulets and charms were very characteristic of West African diviners/medicine men in general, and it is quite possible that the distinctive necklace accompanying Burial 72 in his grave was a type of “protective charm.”

During the late 17th and early 18th centuries, the period of Burial 72's probable interment, the Gold Coast and adjacent areas to the east were major points from which the British transported slaves to their Caribbean colonies. Barbados was a principal recipient of these Africans, often referred to as Coromantines (or some variant spelling, e.g., Cormantin, Kormantin, Kromantine) in the early slaving literature (Curtin, 1969; Eltis, 1996; Lovejoy, 1989, pp. 373–380; Richardson, 1989, pp. 13–14). In the 1670s, a prominent Barbadian planter, reflecting the views of others of his class, praised the labor capacity of the “Caramantines” and instructed his manager “to buy those . . . rather . . . than [Africans] of any other sorts” (Drax 1755; cf. Handler, 1991, pp. 56–57), and in the 1690s, a captain of a slaving vessel observed how “the Negroes most in demand at Barbadoes are the Gold Coast or, as they call them, Cormantines” (Phillips, 1746, p. 230; Hughes, 1750, p. 14). During the 1670s and 1690s, about 30% of the slaves arriving in Barbados came from the Gold Coast, but this percentage increased over subsequent years (Eltis, 1995b, p. 619). The English, reported one early 18th-century writer in a typical comment, “value the Gold Coast, or Coromantee [*sic*] slaves more than other nations do” (Gordon, 1714); at the time he wrote, about 70% of the slaves arriving in Barbados were of Gold Coast origin (Eltis, 1995b, p. 619). The term Coromantine [derived from the name of a Fante-speaking coastal settlement on the Gold Coast; during the late 17th century it had been a major English trading post (e.g., Barbot, 1992, Vol. 2, p. 417)], however, could refer to several larger ethnolinguistic groups, principally Akan speakers such as the Fante and the Asante. Early literary sources attest to the visibility of Akan peoples in early Barbadian slave life and the preponderance of Coromantines in the island's slave population (Handler and Lange, 1978, pp. 21–28). In

brief, as with the Burial 72 pipe, the necklace may also have originated in the area of the southern Gold Coast, among an Akan-speaking people, such as the Asante or Fante, or a culturally related group, e.g., Ewe-speakers, from that general region.

### CONCLUSION

The grave goods accompanying Burial 72 ultimately derived from a variety of sources. Although it cannot be established whether the individual was born in Africa or the Americas, he was apparently an important member of the slave community—in all likelihood some type of healer/diviner or medicine man, a respected social role in other slave communities whose presence is attested to, as well, in the North American archaeological record (Orser, 1994; Samford, 1996, p. 107). His interment reflects strong ties to African cultural traditions and affords another example of the influence of Africa on the early mortuary behavior of Barbadian slaves (cf. Handler and Lange, 1978, pp. 171–215). In contrast to a roughly contemporaneous burial who may have been a witch or, at any rate, someone feared, despised, or ostracized by her community (Handler, 1996b), Burial 72 was probably respected and esteemed by his peers at Newton. His status when he was alive can never be determined with certainty, but there is no doubt that his accompanying artifacts are distinctive relative to the excavated cemetery population. In fact, most of his grave goods are unique archaeological examples of their kind in the Americas. Although relatively few in number they still presently constitute the largest and most varied concentration of African-derived material goods from any known African descendant site in the New World. Moreover, to date, the Newton cemetery has also provided the earliest and strongest archaeological and ethnohistorical evidence for African influences on the mortuary practices of Africans in the Americas (cf. literature cited by Jamieson, 1995, pp. 46–54; Rankin-Hill, 1993; Samford, 1996).

In general, historical or plantation archaeology in the Caribbean and North America has found little evidence of “objects with obvious African affiliation” (Orser, 1994, p. 38) or “truly African artifacts” (Higman, 1988, p. 91; cf. Samford, 1996, p. 103). Although the enslaved brought with them their “individual skills inherited from countless generations of West Africans” and their mental norms and ideas for “ways of doing things,” it is arguably true, as Posnansky (1989, p. 9), among others, has observed, that “there was no significant transfer of tangible items.” The paucity of non-European artifacts or those of clear African origin thus far located in African-descendant sites in the Americas supports this observation. With the

possible exception of some bracelets and pipes recovered from maroon sites in the Dominican Republic and Cuba and, perhaps, Palmares in Brazil as well as some Newton materials (including those with Burial 72), most artifacts from early North American and Caribbean African descendant sites have been of European origin or manufacture. Some of these artifacts may have been modified by slaves and used by them in their own cultural contexts and following West African patterns that reflected secular behavior or their "African religious roots" (Orser, 1994, p. 38; cf. Samford, 1996, pp. 103–104). At Newton cemetery, for example, "white clay tobacco pipes and many beads came from European manufacturers, but using them as grave goods was characteristically African" (Handler and Lange, 1979, p. 52). Other classes of artifacts in the Americas, such as some types of so-called Colono ware and earthenware pipes from the Southeastern United States were made by Africans and their descendants who used African design motifs and decorations, techniques, and even symbols (Emerson, 1994; Ferguson, 1992, *passim*; Klingelhofer, 1987; La Roche, 1994; McCarthy, 1996; Orser, 1994; cf. Jamieson, 1995; Mouer *et al.*, 1997).

However, the fact that Newton cemetery contained such distinctive artifacts with strong African influences or certain African origins strengthens the case for the *early* colonial-period slave cemetery as a site for finding African-type artifacts and for exploring various dimensions of slave material culture, including the manner in which European materials were adapted for use in Creole contexts or as distinctly Creole innovations.

I have argued earlier that undisturbed Caribbean plantation cemeteries provide rich opportunities for exploring the cultural and biological history of Africans and their descendants in the Americas (Handler, 1992; Handler *et al.*, 1989, pp. 79–84, 87–89). Undisturbed early colonial-period plantation cemeteries have been extremely difficult to locate in Barbados and other New World areas (Handler *et al.*, 1989; cf. Jamieson, 1995; Watters, 1994), but the Newton investigations have shown that such cemeteries offer excellent, and possibly unique, opportunities for recovering information on material culture, mortuary practices, and various other dimensions of slave life that are inadequately treated or ignored in documentary sources. Moreover, cemetery investigations can shed light on African influences on slave culture as well as permit insights into culture change. There are undeniably ethical and political questions in dealing with cemetery sites (which are beyond the scope of this paper to consider), but the scientific value of such sites for studying the early African Diaspora in the New World is especially strong for the earlier periods of colonial and plantation slavery, when Creole cultures in the Americas were being forged and during which historical documentation on African life is frequently very sparse and highly ethnocentric.



Ethnohistorical evidence from Barbados in general indicates that a great deal of the slaves' material culture was organic and consequently did not survive the deteriorative effects of natural and human environmental alterations. However, the general absence of a variety of artifact types (except for ceramic materials) in former plantation slave village areas in Barbados (Handler and Lange, 1978, pp. 49-57; cf. Handler *et al.*, 1989), contrasted dramatically with the relatively diverse artifact inventory recovered from Newton cemetery. Burial 72 is simply the most dramatic expression of this diversity, but the artifacts associated with it and other Newton burials afford insights into the early material culture of enslaved Africans; they also provide rare and sometimes unique concrete illustrations of African material culture in the Americas and the "cultural continuum" (LaRoche, 1994, p. 16) between Africa and the New World.

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