

The Archaeology of Slavery and Plantation Life

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The Ethnohistorical Approach to Slavery

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INTRODUCTION

The concept of plantation slavery as used in this chapter is limited to the form of social control and economic exploitation of non-European workers characteristic of the British Caribbean and American South during the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries. The development and longevity of plantation slavery differed in the British Caribbean and the American South, but the common origins of the slave populations, patterns of development, and communality of material culture are sufficient to allow comparative analyses. The ideas expressed here draw heavily from our research in Barbados (Handler and Lange 1978), as well as other studies of plantation contexts in the British Caribbean and North America (e.g., Armstrong 1982; Drucker 1979; Fairbanks 1974; Lees 1980; Mathewson 1973; Otto 1975; Pulsipher and Goodwin 1982; Singleton 1980).

Prior to 1970, historical documents generated most of our data regarding slavery and in our previous reports on the Barbados research (Handler 1972; Handler and Lange 1978, 1979; Lange 1972), we concluded that slavery cannot be identified through archaeological efforts alone. We reiterate this premise about the "archaeology of slavery" at the outset. Within the ethnohistoric approach we review how research during the past decade has demonstrated the potential for the study of

slavery and how the archaeology of known slave sites has begun to produce patterns that may also be applied to sites with less or no documentation. Fairbanks (1984) and Orser (1984) have presented similar summaries focusing on southeastern North American data.

Following the ethnohistoric approach advocated by Baerreis (1961), the Barbados research combined documentary and archaeological data and demonstrated that relative social/economic status or rank can be defined archaeologically, but that at the present time legal or imposed status cannot. This position has been corroborated by reports of a lack of clearly defined separation between slave and overseer remains (cf. Otto 1977). Lewis and Haskell stated (1980:2, our emphasis) "despite cultural differences which *should* be evident in the archaeological record, the living standards of white overseers were not much above those of their African charges," and this view has been echoed by Fairbanks (1984:11). Status can change quickly and definitively, as with emancipation in 1834–1838 (in the British Empire), with no directly correlated changes in archaeological patterns or remains.

The combination of archaeological and documentary data continues to provide the most fruitful approach to the study of slavery. On Barbados, the documentary resources usually yield locational, descriptive, and economic data about the institution of slavery from the viewpoint of Europeans and their New World descendants, but little about the actual daily lives of the slaves. While continuing to rely on documentary sources for locational data, the archaeological approach provides a chance to examine cultural remains left by the slaves themselves, and sometimes their skeletal remains. Archaeology also provides some level of verification or amplification of the white-produced documentary sources. The most important step is to introduce a feedback or interplay relationship between the archaeology and the documentation, but in the final analysis only documentation can irrefutably establish the presence of slavery.

Archaeology provides details on slave life in particular locations: settlement pattern, material culture, and subsistence and nutritional data have been most frequently recovered. Excavated data form patterns which, in sufficient repetition, can suggest a high probability of slave status in nondocumented situations (cf. Drucker 1979). The accumulation of data upon which such patterns can be established, and the increasingly numerous situations in which archaeological and documentary data can be compared mark the principal progress in the archaeology of plantation slavery in the past decade. Otto (1977:91–92) has remarked on the method usually employed: to short-cut the pattern development process by excavating at the site of documented slave activity. The clear implication is that archaeological patterns resulting from slave behavior are not sufficiently well defined to be used independently. Excavations in such settings have also indicated a confusion of patterns in which there is an overlap between planter, white overseer, black slave overseer, free white, free black, and Amerindian archaeological patterns. Further refinement of these patterns is clearly dependent upon increased interplay between documentary and archaeological resources.

Cross-Evaluating Documentary and Archaeological Data

In historic sites archaeology we utilize three categories of data: (1) material culture objects described in documents, but not found archaeologically; (2) material culture (and patterns) found archaeologically, but not mentioned in documents; and (3) material culture and patterns found archaeologically and mentioned in documents. For interpretive purposes, we consider category 3 to be of the most utility, category 2 to be of somewhat less utility, and category 1 to be of questionable utility. This hierarchy of data utility is applied to some of the examples incorporated in this chapter.

THE IDENTIFICATION OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL PATTERNS INDICATING SLAVERY

Settlement Patterns

Sites of plantation slavery have particular spatial distributions and patterns of organization, as do other archaeological sites. However, they represent a forced pattern in which the slaves had only very limited options, if any. Thus, some of the ecological/locational interaction seen in other settlement pattern studies (such as location near the most reliable water sources or intersections of transportation routes) is not necessarily present in slave sites. We also find that plantation settlement patterns changed rapidly in postemancipation times. Price (1982) has recently confirmed the importance of settlement research in cultural-economic interpretations. The three-tiered hierarchy of regional, local, and microsite study outlined by Trigger (1967) and Parsons (1972) for prehistoric sites also seems appropriate for studies of plantation slavery.

Regional Patterns

Broad patterns of plantation slavery existed on regional, island, or statewide bases relative to political, geographical, and environmental limitations. Plantations generally occupied extensive areas of relatively level ground although, as Pulsipher and Goodwin (1982) described for the Galways Plantation location on Montserrat, they also can be found on rough, uneven terrain. However, the location of Galways appears to have reflected conflicts between the local Irish and English populations, rather than free choice of settlement. In the American South there seems to have been little difference in general patterns regardless of whether the plantations were dedicated to rice, sugar, or cotton.

No archaeological attempts at an intensive regional approach similar to that advocated by Struever (1971) in prehistoric archaeology have been applied to problems of plantation slavery, although much of the documentary research on slavery has been at this level. Some regional archaeological syntheses based on accumulated data

have been attempted (Gibbs *et al.* 1980; Singleton 1980). Fairbanks [1984:6-7] has contrasted the nature of wet rice and cotton cultivation; the two systems of cultivation required utilization of different niches in the coastal environment. Such differences in the plantation system were not present on Barbados. In this sense there is an imperfect fit between the available literature on plantation slavery and the archaeology.

Local Site Patterns

On the individual plantation level, studies have begun to deal with the spatial organization of plantations and the variables imposed by considerations of size and location. Most studies have dealt with the location of slave work and living areas relative to the main house and the industrial areas of the plantation. Approaches have varied from the analysis of the entire plantation to investigating only those parts to be impacted by some construction project. In most of these cases, documentary investigations of the plantation as a whole have been more thorough than the limited archaeological investigations.

The Plantation Pattern. Based on both British Caribbean (Handler and Lange 1978:46; Pulsipher and Goodwin 1982:38) and North American data (K. Lewis 1979:64), a general pattern seems to have emerged that places the main house in a central location to the industrial complex and the slave village in a peripheral but proxemic position to the main complex. A major variable in local settlement pattern seems to have been whether the slaves built their own housing from materials either provided by the plantation or scavenged from the natural settings, or lived in houses built and maintained by the plantation. The former seems to have been more common in the British Caribbean, especially in the earlier periods of slavery, and the latter in North America, and this may affect quality and permanency of construction and hence the archaeologist's ability to locate domestic remains (Handler and Lange 1978:51-54).

In Barbados a significant shift in settlement pattern occurred after emancipation when the former slaves were moved to villages on the peripheries of plantation lands at some distance from the central complex. L. Lewis (1978:36) described a similar shift for ante- and postbellum settlement patterns on Hampton Plantation in South Carolina. Fairbanks (1984:11) has pointed out the need for additional research on immediately postbellum sites and patterns.

Micropatterns

On individual plantations detailed investigations of living or activity areas provide in depth information on patterns of living and adaptation. Colonoware (Ferguson 1980), which is only very superficially described in the documents, is the artifact most often utilized as a means of distinguishing between planter and slave remains.

However, as Lees (1980:136) pointed out, much better distributional data are required before this assumption about colonoware can be generally applied.

Planter Remains. Studies at the Drayton Hall (L. Lewis 1978:62–65, 178), Cannon's Point (Otto 1977), and Limerick plantations (Lees 1980:135) have shown that in addition to ceramic wares associated only with the planter class, the planter class contexts (main houses, kitchens, and refuse) also show the presence of colonoware and other data generally thought to have been associated with the lower classes.

Slave Remains. Studies such as Ascher and Fairbanks (1971), Fairbanks (1974), McFarlane (1975), Kelso (1976), Otto (1975, 1977), and Singleton (1980) are examples of the microlevel of research and have focused on slave cabins or refuse deposit areas. Among the more interesting results of these researches have been the consistent finding of firearms and writing materials (both of which were generally considered to be against the law) and a richer amount of material culture than anticipated; surprisingly, however, no derivatives from African material culture have been found. Again, once documents established slave locations, numerous artifacts and patterns were revealed that complemented the historical data. In the Barbados research in particular, a Ghanaian (Gold Coast) pipe and metal bracelets suggest imported indications of the African heritage. However, this heritage does not seem to have been reflected in locally adapted patterns and traditions.

Subsistence Patterns

At both the regional and microlevels, subsistence patterns reflecting the means by which slaves were able to obtain, process, and distribute foodstuffs are also of importance. Documentary sources have described, and archaeological research is beginning to confirm, a wide variety of practices. Of general importance are questions of whether or not sufficient foodstuffs were grown by the plantation or whether imports were necessary, as well as questions concerning basic patterns of food storage, preparation, distribution, and consumption. Artifacts have yielded some subsistence information such as processing tools and storage vessels, while other data have been derived from faunal and floral remains and from analysis of slave skeletal remains.

Food production was a critical factor for most plantations. Any foods that were not grown locally had to be imported and represented significant economic outlays to the plantation management. In the American South, where transportation networks were more widespread, this presented less of a problem. In island settings such as Barbados, however, the increased cost of transportation and uncertainty as to arrival of supplies made provisions a much more critical issue. Natural factors were also significant on Barbados and in the Southeast; for example, hurricanes, droughts, and insects destroyed crops and either necessitated increased levels of food

imports or caused starvation. Fluctuations in plantation agricultural production also affected the slave diet.

In many areas a good deal of the slaves' diet was provided from rations distributed by the plantation. Where most food was supplied by the plantation the storage facilities would have been at the institutional rather than the consuming level. To the extent that storage and cooking facilities are two of the most commonly identified features on domestic sites, their presence or absence is critical to archaeological interpretation. Other foodstuffs that slaves grew or obtained for themselves through gardening, hunting, fishing, and collecting were most likely consumed almost immediately and not stored. Establishing plantation control over the distribution of basic foodstuffs would have been a very effective means of social control. To this extent, slave patterning would not always reflect more traditional or normal domestic patterns of kitchen, storage, and eating areas. Fairbank's summary (1984) of southeastern United States data suggests most cooking in this area was done by domestic units and not communally.

Within activity areas specific artifacts will also provide insights into subsistence activities. There are documentary references to milling stones having been utilized in Barbados, but none were found during fieldwork (Handler and Lange 1978:54, 73). This is an example of document-based material culture whose archaeological presence, and therefore interpretive validity, has yet to be demonstrated.

Vessel form is very closely related to function and the styles and the variety of vessels present also indicate subsistence activities. South (1972:79) advanced the idea that shapes rather than types might be "more sensitive indicator(s) of function and possible socioeconomic level." At Hampton, Lewis and Haskell (1980:77) observed that colono bowls outnumbered definite serving vessels and noted that Otto (1977:98) and Booth (1971:33) both consider that slaves principally ate from bowls. In another setting, Lees (1980:137) observed that the remains of colonoware were so fragmentary that vessel forms could not be reconstructed. In general, the absence or low frequency of storage jars in domestic areas would tend to reinforce interpretations of centralized distributions and consumptions, while their frequent occurrence would support interpretations of household activities.

Increasing attention is also being paid to faunal remains from plantation sites, not only because they can help reconstruct subsistence patterns, but also because they may indicate social status and food distribution patterns. Lewis and Haskell (1980:-78) pointed out that assumptions about culturally preferred types and cuts of meat are not at all as clear-cut as they had seemed previously. Planter-overseer-slave distinctions cannot be made purely on the basis of which animal or which bones are present.

The skeletal remains of the slaves themselves can also provide information regarding subsistence and nutrition. Studies focusing on the dentition of skeletons from Barbados's Newton cemetery (Corruccini *et al.* 1982, in press; Handler and Corruccini 1983) have shown, for example, very severe growth arrest lines (hypoplasia) indicative of extreme dietary deficiency or starvation; various types of malocclusion also reflect conditions of malnutrition.

The Newton skeletal sample, representing 104 individuals (Corruccini *et al.* in press), constitutes the largest group of African and African-descended slaves yet excavated from any archaeological context in a New World site; it is also the earliest such group, spanning an interment period from about 1660 to 1820. Thus, this skeletal collection is at present a unique population and cannot in and of itself be considered a "pattern." However, the remains suggest the types of data that can be expanded into patterns with broader sampling to reconstruct regional patterns of nutritional well-being.

The Barbados skeletal material showed little evidence of pathologies or traumas indicative of overt physical abuse. The dental data indicated that the abuse was much more subtle. Corruccini *et al.* (1982:456) concluded "that the Barbadian skeletal population would be among the most metabolically insulted on record" (cf. Dirks 1978). Based on a study of the Newton dentition, Handler and Corruccini (1983) noted that the Barbados slave skeletal remains indicate extreme nutritional conditions, with individuals literally being on the edge of starvation for substantial periods between much longer periods of more adequate caloric nutrition.

Gibbs *et al.* (1980), Fairbanks (1984), Dirks (1978), and Handler and Corruccini (1983) have all commented on the importance of nutritional considerations in the management and success of the plantation system. Fairbanks suggested that roughly 50% (3000/6000) of the required calories for the average field hand in the southeastern United States were provided by the plantation, and there seems to be general agreement that similar figures would apply as well to the British Caribbean. The remainder of the diet was either provided through hunting, fishing, and gardening, or resulted in dietary shortfall and nutritional stress. Dirks (1978:142-143) concluded for the British Caribbean that food allowances were clearly inadequate and protein rations marginal at best. Handler and Corruccini (1983) concur in extending these observations to the specific Barbados context. The data for Newton Plantation suggest numerous cases of stress rather than supplement. As Fairbanks suggests, dietary adequacy would be one factor in the success of a particular plantation or in the system as a whole.

Analyses of bone collagen being conducted on prehistoric skeletal remains (Bender 1968, 1971; Bender *et al.* 1981; Norr 1980) can also be useful in historic analyses, although apparently none have been done so far. Bone collagen study shows promise for describing the composition of the diet. While still in its early stages, this technique shows the ability to evaluate levels of maize and meat consumption and to indicate the presence or absence of other foodstuffs. Such a technique would permit the checking of documentary (and white Creole or European self-serving) statements about the quality and quantity of diet supplied to or consumed by the slaves. It would also provide some indication of the level of grain consumption, even in the absence of grinding stones or other artifact data. Analyses might be somewhat more complicated than those for prehistoric peoples because of a "shadow effect" of the native African diets in persons brought across the Atlantic. Slaves born in the New World would be expected to show much more consistent patterns.

Within the mound and nonmound burial groups excavated in Barbados, selective

burial practices were clearly demonstrated (Handler and Lange 1978) and possible extended family plots were suggested (Corruccini *et al.* 1982; Handler and Corruccini 1983). Bone collagen analysis also would permit an evaluation of dietary favoritism and/or deprivation relative to rank and status within the plantation social structure.

Early developments of subsistence systems were often based on pre-Columbian techniques. Arawaks were brought to Barbados in the first year of colonization in 1627 to help with subsistence techniques (Handler 1969, 1970), and Amerindian influences on African slave cultivation practices were also evident in the early development of Montserrat (Pulsipher and Goodwin 1982:99). The overlap between the Indians and the African slaves may in many cases have helped the slaves develop patterns that were locally adaptive and guaranteed their survival in the face of uncertain food supplies on the early plantations.

Material Culture

South (1977) has documented initial attempts to develop artifact patterns for colonial America. None of these patterns are directly derived from plantation slavery contexts and therefore there is no "plantation slave pattern"; however, the patterns are socioeconomically based and therefore can be used as a point of departure for defining and differentiating planter class and worker class patterns in the plantation context.

The distribution of material culture within the slave plantation must be considered as part of the distribution of goods in society at large. The pyramid of white society, with the planter at the top and the white overseer at the bottom, was to some extent mirrored within the slave society, perhaps most specifically in the role of the black overseer. While the social position or privileges of a lower-class white and a higher-rank slave would never have been confused, slaves at the top of the slave pyramid had more privileges than did most of their lower-ranking fellows.

The sources of the material culture found with slave remains come from a multitude of nonexclusive sources. There are three principal categories: (1) brought from Africa, (2) commercial European, or (3) handmade in the New World. Within the first category, African goods may either have been brought by the person or persons ultimately responsible for their archaeological deposition, or they may be far removed from their original New World context. The general assumption that slaves brought very little in the way of personal goods on the transatlantic journey is probably correct in the vast majority of cases. However, the burial remains of carnelian beads from India, Indo-Pacific Ocean cowries, and a Ghanaian smoking pipe on Barbados (Handler 1983a; Handler and Lange 1978, 1979; Handler *et al.* 1979) demonstrate that such transfers did take place. The rarity of such items may reflect either random retention of African source items, or specialized retention by persons who held high rank within the slave community.

The second category (European goods) is perhaps the largest associated with slave remains to date and the most difficult to deal with archaeologically. These goods were often possessed by persons of both African and European heritage, to say nothing of the occasional Amerindian. As with the African-derived goods, some of the European goods represent direct acquisitions by persons responsible for their ultimate archaeological deposition, while others represent recycling or redistribution of these goods.

European-produced (principally British) ceramics were certainly one of the most important artifact classes in both North America and the British Caribbean. South (1977:173) suggested that the presence of colonoware largely represents eighteenth-century gaps in ceramic needs that were filled from local sources when imports were either unavailable or too expensive. Lees (1980:137) concurs and cites colonoware as another example of "local initiative for the successful subversion of colonial policy." When English industrial development flooded the market with cheap and easy to obtain earthenwares at all levels of society, Otto (1977:100) concluded that the Cannon's Point Plantation bought cheap imported earthenwares to distribute to the slaves (and overseers) and colonoware quickly lost its traditional consumers.

Lange and Carlson's analysis of European earthenwares from Barbados (Chapter 5, this volume) shows that in broad categories the ceramic assemblage and ceramic patterns from Barbados are very similar to that from the southeastern United States (Otto 1977:105–106) and Montserrat (Pulsipher and Goodwin 1982:86) indicating similar trade networks and levels of socioeconomic utilization of the earthenwares. Handler and Lange (1978:135–136) did not fully recognize the level of slave access to earthenware on Barbados (their assumptions having been based largely on documentary sources). Lewis and Haskell (1980:76), Carrillo (1980:57), and Otto (1977:100), in the southeastern United States, concluded that slave access to European earthenwares, through a variety of means, was not as restricted as is generally assumed. Otto (1977:97) explicitly rejected the notion that planters at Cannon's Point customarily or frequently passed along broken or discarded household dishes to either the slaves or the overseers. Implicit in Otto's view is also the conclusion that slaves and overseers did not obtain such discards on their own initiative, either through theft or rummaging in trash.

The third category of goods (hand-manufactured in the New World) could be most expected to demonstrate vestiges of the African heritage. Colonoware ceramics, the crude soft ceramic already mentioned as a consideration in settlement pattern research and early colonial ceramic assemblages, has often been cited as the most widespread indicator of slave presence. There is little documentary evidence regarding either its manufacture or distribution, although Fairbanks (1984:21) cited the presence of a similar ceramic in historic Venezuela. Colonoware has been found in slave/Amerindian contexts (Ferguson 1980:15–20) and is still manufactured in some varieties by modern-day Catawba Indian potters (Lewis and Haskell 1980:64). It has been found in distinctly slave contexts, but also in planter-class settings, with Lewis and Haskell (1980:73) noting that even wealthy whites utilized colonoware on the frontier. As with many other artifacts from the slave milieu, colonoware is not

an absolute indicator of slave status, but one component in an archaeological/documentary based pattern through which slave presence can be inferred.

On Barbados the unique burial mentioned previously that yielded cowry shells, a carnelian bead, and an African pipe also contained handmade copper and copper alloy bracelets/armlets and finger rings (Handler and Lange 1978:125–132, 1979). Such artifacts could have been made in Africa and brought to the New World, or have been produced in Barbados by African techniques. While written sources indicate that skilled craftsmen were among the slaves brought to the New World, they are silent on any particular cases involving these artifacts from Barbados.

Expectations that slave sites would contain a significant proportion of material goods reflecting the African heritage have been demonstrated in Jamaica. Mathewson (1972a, 1972b) defined a large ceramic complex derived from African traditions, but this has not been the usual experience in plantation settings. In his research elsewhere on Jamaica, Armstrong (1982) had substantial difficulty, as we had on Barbados (Handler and Lange 1978:224–225), and as did Fairbanks (1974) in Florida in identifying material remains with any overtones of African origin. The Ghanaian pipe and various jewelry found in Barbados were from mortuary contexts. Although there are few comparative data, this might suggest that such goods were restricted to special functions. As Fairbanks (1984:8) noted, the Barbados cemetery sample is unique and there are difficulties with gathering comparable data for North American slavery. However, the contrast between the absence of African materials in domestic contexts in the southeastern United States and their presence in mortuary contexts on Barbados (and then limited to one interment) merits emphasis.

Perhaps in the majority of cases we are still dealing with small samples and nonperishable remains. We may also be erring on the side of individual artifacts and “trait diffusion” evidence, rather than addressing patterns. Published examples of slave settings have depended less on the presence or absence of particular artifact types, and more on the documentation of the slave context. As Lees (1980:135) suggested, when material culture can blur the lines between planters, overseers, and slaves, plantationwide distribution patterns are required in order to have any chance of delineating socioeconomic or ethnic differences. Most often it has been the occurrence of particular artifact classes together with settlement-pattern and activity area data from written sources that has allowed us to relate material culture to slave behavior. So far, mortuary patterns (discussed later) seem to offer the strongest potential for indicating African heritage.

In addition to the diversity of geographical areas from which the slaves obtained material goods, they also obtained them by a diversity of means. On Barbados material items could be bought or stolen from a variety of sources, recycled through discard, or be acquired through the internal marketing system (Handler and Lange 1978:30–32)

Cultural Practices

Handler and Corruccini (1983; also Handler *et al.* 1982; Corruccini *et al.* 1982, in press) devote considerable detail to interpreting historical and archaeologically de-

rived physical anthropological data to delineate such cultural practices as dental mutilation, dentistry, pipe smoking, weaning, and the use of family burial plots. On the other hand, in Barbados cultural practices that were related to musical traditions and dance (fundamental dimensions of slave life in the New World) are represented exclusively by documentary data (Handler and Frisbee 1972).

Mortuary Patterns, Demographic Data, and Osteological Analyses

Mortuary patterns at Newton Plantation indicated the use of burial mounds and seem to offer strong connections to African burial customs (Handler and Lange 1978:208–215). At least two levels of mortuary behavior affected slaves on the plantation: the social structure as managed by the planters and the structure of the slave community itself. Status in either the slave community or the planters' scheme might determine burial within the slave cemetery and the conditions under which one was buried (with or without coffin, in a mound or not, and with or without African or European grave goods).

Few slave burial areas (formal or informal) have been studied to date (Angel 1977; Burnston 1980a, 1980b; Dailey 1974; Handler and Lange 1977, 1978; and Hudgins 1977). Pulsipher and Goodwin (1982:84) noted a well-preserved possible slave cemetery (also employing mounds) on Montserrat, but research has not yet been done there. Excavation in such burial grounds may be very difficult to arrange under most circumstances (cf. Fairbanks 1984:8). This is unfortunate since the Newton excavation results strongly suggest that through their physical remains will the former slaves speak most clearly to modern scholars. However, in the cumulative information from wide-ranging reports on slave skeletal remains, we are beginning to derive some suggestions of patterned behavior.

First, not all slaves were buried in formal cemeteries, such as on Newton Plantation where there certainly was selection by age and possibly by rank and status as well. Infants and young persons are consistently underrepresented in all skeletal series, not just slave series. There is some suggestion of at least some family groupings in the Newton cemetery (Corruccini *et al.* 1982:446; Handler and Corruccini 1983). Deetz (1977) has noted that changes from communal to individual burials in English and colonial North American society paralleled changes from communal to individual table service and eating patterns. Chronological control is not sufficient for the Newton cemetery to detect similar shifts there with any certainty. Even should such shifts be detected, it would be impossible on the basis of current data to conclude whether changes were due to shifts in English patterns or more localized plantation changes. On Barbados all slave burials have shown an increased use of coffins through time (no white cemeteries from the same time period have been excavated to compare the frequency of coffin use or to compare the types of coffins used). Documentary records from Barbados suggest (Handler and Lange 1978:80–81) that plantation managements prepared coffins only for selected slaves, probably as part of a reward-incentive system. The mismatched handles and other hardware found with the Barbados coffins suggest that they were made with whatever was

available at the time. Very few grave goods were encountered at Newton; these occurred with only 33% of the interments and principally consisted of glass beads and European clay pipes.

The greatest concentration of grave goods came from the interment of an old man who had been buried without a coffin and relatively early in the slave period (Handler and Lange 1978:125–132; 1979). He had been interred in a location where at least three earlier individuals of the same approximate age and the same sex had been buried. The grave goods found with him, with the exception of a metal knife, could be considered exotic to the extent they had either been brought from extra-island sources or had been made on the island according to traditional African practices. This concentration of non-European goods with a single individual is in stark contrast to the rest of the pattern at Newton and suggests that the deceased was someone who held a special status within the slave community.

While the documents from Barbados are very extensive (Handler 1971, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983b, 1985) and speak to general levels of material culture and behavior, the archaeological data provide more specific information. Patterns of pipe smoking and the symbolism of the reward-incentive system (via plantation pipe and tobacco allocations, the selective giving of coffins, and the extensive dietary and nutritional information) are significant examples. The skeletal data, in short, provide an independent data source and expansion or verification of narrative or literary sources.

The assessment of demographic data from the Newton cemetery (Corruccini *et al.* 1982) again emphasizes the utility of integrating historical and archaeological data. Documents have provided the most reliable population statistics and age profiles. The archaeological and historical data agree on a balanced sexual division in the population, while the documents illuminated an underrepresentation of infants in the archaeological sample and analysis.

Osteological and pathological conditions not addressed in the documents have been observed on skeletal material from Newton and elsewhere. The genetic marker data from skeletons at Newton have, as already indicated, suggested the possibility of family burial plots. Since interment in the cemetery was apparently selective and only a portion of the slaves known to have died on the plantation are thought to be present, we assume these related genetic traits mirror families who were important as families above and beyond whatever individual significance they held. Also, the dental evidence for pipewear correlated with the documentary mention of the slaves' fondness for smoking and the presence of pipes (many of them pristine and unused) in some graves. Interestingly, many of the individuals accompanied by pipes did not show definite signs of dental pipewear. This suggests the pipes may have had symbolic as well as functional value.

Corruccini *et al.* (1982:447, in press) interpreted a significant amount of data from the Newton cemetery dental material and in doing so supplemented a very nonspecific documentary data base. Most important were the findings of high percentages of hypercementosis (60%–80%) and enamel hypoplasia (55%–75%).

Hudgins (1977:65) noted syphilitic inflammation in one individual from College

Landing (Virginia), a general lack of arthritic conditions, and skeletal evidence of dedication to craft activities. Comparison with other data from the continental colonies indicated that the College Landing skeletal series (dating from the early nineteenth century) was slightly taller than the average group and was of normal longevity for the colonial period (36 years for adults). These individuals had all been buried in coffins, which matches well with the placement of coffin use later in the period of slavery on Barbados (Handler and Lange 1978:164).

The physical remains of the slaves themselves clearly demonstrate their African heritage and the mortuary patterns reflect African traditions. However, it has taken a concerted effort at integrating documentary and archaeological data to partially reconstruct some knowledge of mortuary patterns. It seems likely that the traditions were preserved in the behavior preceding and associated with the interment, while the location of burial grounds were influenced by plantation policies. These details are in fact gray areas, as existing documentation is silent on many dimensions of the mortuary customs of plantation slaves. In a detailed assessment of the documentary and archaeological data for slave mortuary practices on Barbados, Handler and Lange (1977:35–36) concluded that:

Despite the extensive data on Newton interments, the archaeological data could not deal, for example, with mortuary activities away from the burial sites, or a variety of behaviours and ideological patterns at the sites themselves; moreover, it is important to note the archaeological data *per se* did not establish that the persons interred were slaves.

CONCLUSIONS

This discussion argued in favor of a combined documentary/archaeological (ethnohistorical) approach to the study of plantation slavery. It is clear that any patterns ascertained as being indicative of slavery have been established in the documented sites studied. Almost every study of plantation slavery has made a gesture at giving equal attention to both archaeological and documentary data, but it requires constant and concerted effort to derive the most productive results from the method.

Documentary sources have identified loci of slave activity which in turn have been excavated to yield material culture patterns that can be sought in other places without adequate documentation. For example, artifact remains within the identified areas have shown what the domestic kits of plantation slaves consisted of, while the documentary record has indicated they either ate in nuclear units or communal settings. Remains of cooking and eating dishes, food-processing equipment, and faunal and floral remains have provided some hard data on what the slaves ate; in one case (Newton) the physical remains of the slaves themselves attest to severe dietary stress, a point that was ambiguous in the documentation.

Documentary sources have been generally vague on slave material culture, and the discovery of basically European assemblages has not been what many scholars anticipated. There is very little of the African heritage in the material remains, but much that is identical to what European overseers and planters were using.

Present conclusions about mortuary behavior are similar to those for material culture. However, so few slaves burials have been excavated, and only in one case in sizeable numbers, that it is premature to generalize.

The mortuary data also provide perhaps the best example of the value of interplay between the documentary and archaeological sources. Fairbanks followed this same procedure in reconstructing nutritional information in Georgia, stating that "These questions suggest another look [at] plantation records specifically seeking observations on this point. Until the question is raised, no systematic documentary search could have been undertaken" (1984:19).

Slave settlement locations were dictated by the planter on all plantations and are usually described in documents at least in general terms, although details of distribution and microspatial organization are usually ignored. Material culture is very unevenly reported in most documents, and mortuary behavior and detailed dietary data are referenced even less frequently. Research to date suggests the almost inevitable possibility of blurring between slave and overseer contexts and categories in material culture. However, so few overseer sites have been excavated, and specifically none in the British Caribbean, that one must be cautious not to overgeneralize. When comparing North American and British Caribbean data, patterns of material culture distribution, especially within the context of settlement pattern analyses, have reached a relatively reliable degree of comparability. In the archaeological sense, domestic, nutritional, and mortuary data and their related behavioral implications so far seem to have been the most productive in yielding data on slave life. Unfortunately, these data will probably be the most difficult to develop on a broad-scale comparative basis because of social and ethical constraints.

In much of the data gathered so far there is also a strong hint that the ethnohistorical approach needs to deemphasize strictly racial-ethnic divisions in plantation research. Much of the data suggests that the basic division was between the planters and their overseers and slaves, rather than a three-level separation of status and privilege. Thus, we need to revise our thinking of "the slaves" as an ethnic-racial unit and also focus on plantation slavery at the level of socioeconomic separation.

There is a much higher probability than there was 10 years ago that slavery can be defined from purely archaeological data. The relative presence and absence or percentage of occurrence of isolated traits will not provide the answers, however, and both British Caribbean and North American data acquired to date indicate comparative patterns are more likely to engender success. Historic sites archaeology—using an ethnohistoric methodology emphasizing an interplay between the documentary and archaeological data bases—offers the potential to develop quantifiable patterns for slave-period and postemancipation slave remains similar to those developed by Stanley South (1972, 1977) for other cultural patterns. The delineation of patterns with a high probability of indicating plantation slavery conditions will allow us to search for these patterns in undocumented historic sites or, by extension, to search for evidence of slavery in preliterate sites as well.

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