

**Perspectives from *Historical Archaeology*:
African Diaspora Archaeology**

Compiled by:
Christopher Fennell

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CHRISTOPHER C. FENNEL

African Diaspora Archaeology in Multiscalar and Multivariate Perspectives

ABSTRACT:

This introduction addresses historical trends in African diaspora archaeology over the past several decades, assesses ongoing debates in theories, research questions, and interpretative frameworks, and provides an overview of the selected readings included in this volume.

Archaeological research of African diasporas has expanded dramatically in scope and the diversity of research questions over the past few decades. In this regard I use the term “diaspora” generally to encompass the dispersion of people to new locations as a result of adverse and hostile circumstances in the areas from which they were abducted or departed. A 2007 forum convened at the annual meeting of the Society for Historical Archaeology (SHA) in Williamsburg, Virginia, focused on the theme of “Research Designs for Atlantic Africa and African Diaspora Archaeologies.” On that occasion, Merrick Posnansky spoke with great enthusiasm about how much progress has been made in the past 30 years through the work of historical archaeologists focusing on regions of Africa and the African diaspora. He believes we can all look forward with great excitement as to what the next 30 years will likely yield (Posnansky pers. comm. 2007). The SHA has helped promote this tremendous

growth through the publication of numerous articles in its *Historical Archaeology* journal over those decades. This book presents a sampling of the many studies disseminated to thousands of readers through that peer-reviewed journal.

In addition to exchanging information, theories, and data through published articles and books, archaeologists working on African diaspora subjects have also collaborated through research networks. The “African-American Archaeology Network” was organized by Theresa Singleton and others by 1990 and published a newsletter of research projects, conferences, and commentary on ongoing interpretative debates. A regular forum meeting of this group has convened each year since then at SHA’s annual conferences. The *African-American Archaeology Newsletter* was later edited and published by Thomas Wheaton and then John McCarthy up through 2000. Starting in 2005, this group was renamed as the “African Diaspora Archaeology Network” (ADAN), to emphasize a global geographic scope of interest, and a new *African Diaspora Archaeology Newsletter* was launched as an online publication. The increasing levels of activity in African diaspora archaeology subjects are evident in the fact that in the period of 2005 through 2007 the ADAN Newsletter published 66 articles or essays, 99 news items and announcements, 67 conference announcements and calls for papers, and 34 book or film reviews (ADAN 2005-2007). The ADAN also maintains extensive online bibliographies and resource information for readers interested in African heritage worldwide (e.g., ADAN 2008).

Other highly valuable online resources for researchers include the *Digital Archaeological Archive of Comparative Slavery* (or DAACS), funded and maintained by the Thomas Jefferson Foundation (2008). In addition, a monumental, multi-year research program has resulted in publication of the digital resource entitled *The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade: a Database on CD-ROM* (Eltis et al. 2000). This database provides detailed information on over 27,000 trans-Atlantic slave ship voyages in the period of 1595 through 1866, encompassing over two-thirds of all trans-Atlantic slave ship voyages undertaken after 1600 (Eltis et al. 2000). Turning to visual depictions of the operations of the trans-Atlantic slave trade and its impact on past events and lives, Jerome Handler, Michael Tuite, Jr. (2008) and their colleagues have compiled a substantial online database of such historical images, entitled the *Atlantic Slave Trade and Slave Life in the Americas: a Visual Record*.

Researchers and commentators have pursued a multiplicity of perspectives in this period of growth for African-American archaeology and African diaspora archaeology. Their work has also traversed spatial scales across the local, regional, inter-regional, and global. Some scholars call for a focus on the contours of racial ideologies and capitalist economies on a global scale (e.g., Mullins 2008; Orser 1994). Other studies recommend rich, contextual analysis at the local and regional scales (e.g., Armstrong 2008; Brandon 2008; Mullins 2006). A breathtaking diversity of research questions has been pursued by researchers over the past decades, often employing

investigative strategies informed by the interests of local and descendant communities (e.g., McDavid 1997), in addition to an engagement with ongoing theoretical debates concerning such themes as racism, power, agency, ethnicity, social group identity, class structures, and self-determination.

This diversity of studies includes a focus on racism and racial ideologies underlying economic structures (e.g., Babson 1990; Joseph 1993; Orser 2003, 2007) and African Americans in industrial settings (e.g., Gradwohl and Osborn 1984; Shackel and Larsen 2000). Extensive analyses of consumer choices and dietary and culinary practices (e.g., Mullins 1999; Reitz 1994; Wilkie 2000a) provide data on multiple spatial scales and time periods. Continuing developments of cultural beliefs and practices related to particular African cultures (e.g., Brown and Cooper 1990; Deetz 1996; Ferguson 1992; Samford 2007) and material expressions of African-American spirituality (e.g., Fennell 2003; Leone and Fry 1999; Ruppel et al. 2003; Russell 1997) have been explored in-depth. The contours of social networks and ethnic group identities (e.g., Ogundiran and Falola 2007; Wilkie 2000b) and processes of creolization, syncretism, and ethnogenesis (e.g., Armstrong 2003; Fennell 2007) have been the subject of extensive analysis. Other researchers have studied instances of self-determination, “maroon” communities, and resistance against oppression (e.g., Agorsah 2006; Weik 1997), as well as the operations of escape networks combating slavery in North America (e.g., Delle 2008; Delle and Shellenhamer 2008; LaRoche 2004).

Studies of mortuary traditions (e.g., Armstrong and Fleischman 2003; Davidson 2004; McCarthy 2006) and health care practices (e.g., Cabak et al. 1995), and bioarchaeological investigations of past lifeways, health, and the impacts of enslavement (e.g., Blakey 2001; Handler 1994; Mack and Blakey 2004) have also greatly enriched our knowledge of African diaspora histories. Gender dynamics within African diaspora communities (e.g., Galle and Young 2004; Wilkie 2003) and analyses of spatial and landscape contours from household to community and region (e.g., Battle-Baptiste 2007; Chan 2007; Delle 1998; Heath and Bennett 2000; Upton 1985) provide rich contexts on which future studies can continue to build. In addition to this expanding body of work in the Americas, a rapidly increasing program of historical archaeology analyses in locations in Africa impacted by the trans-Atlantic slave trade (e.g., DeCorse 2001; Kelly 2004; Ogundiran and Falola 2007; Reid and Lane 2004; Stahl 2004a, 2004b) presents tremendous promise for comparative analyses in future diaspora studies.

Consider how far this field of research has evolved since early steps just decades ago. Among the earliest studies in African-American archaeology was Adelaide and Ripley Bullen's (1945) analysis of the late 19th-century Foster site in Andover, Massachusetts. Lucy Foster was a formerly enslaved laborer, and the remains of her household were studied by the Bullens, who described their excavations, the recovered material remains, and related historical data. The Bullens did not approach this study with a particular theoretical framework. As Anna Agbe-

Davies (2007:413) recently observed, at the time of the Bullens' work "there was little precedent for excavating post-contact North American sites, let alone those associated with ordinary people and everyday life." In a comprehensive overview of studies in the United States and Caribbean, Agbe-Davies (2007:414) provides a concise chronology of the subsequent increase of projects in the 1960s and 1970s:

In the United States, African-American archaeology emerged in earnest in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Excavations of free black communities like Weeksville (1968), Sandy Ground (1971), the African Meeting House in Boston (1975), and Parting Ways (1975), as well as the plantation quarters at Kingsley (1968), Cumberland Island (1969), Kingsmill (1972), and Cannon's Point (1973), were spurred by a heady mix of civil rights activism, new historic preservation laws, and the twin influences of the new social history and Black Power on the academy. Soon, even at sites previously concerned with the glorification of the elite and powerful, attention turned toward the previously ignored black presence, for example, at Monticello (1981), Colonial Williamsburg (1986), and Annapolis (1989). Important early research elsewhere in the Americas included the plantations at Newton (1971),

New Montpelier (1973), Drax Hall (1980), and Gallways (1980).

Within this increasing field of studies, a creative project undertaken by Robert Ascher and Charles Fairbanks (1971) focused on a plantation quarters for enslaved laborers in the sea islands region of Georgia. Their report on the archaeological record of this residential site on Cumberland Island was among the first such articles on African-American heritage published in SHA's *Historical Archaeology* journal. Like the Bullens' earlier study, Ascher and Fairbanks did not pursue a particular theoretical framework, nor directly address issues such as the contours of racism within the institution of slavery. Yet, they utilized an innovative approach to reporting their perspectives on this research by including "soundtracks" of excerpts from literary, political, and public record documents that provided a poignant backdrop of commentary on the impacts of slavery and racism in American history (Ascher and Fairbanks 1971; Orser 2007:16).

Projects conducted by archaeologists working in cultural resource management (CRM) settings have also contributed greatly to the development of African diaspora archaeology in the United States. For example, Thomas Wheaton, Amy Friedlander, and Patrick Garrow (1983) conducted excavations at Yaughan and Curiboo plantations in South Carolina, which uncovered the remains of dwellings constructed with building styles related to vernacular traditions in West Africa and evidence of African-American production

of "colonoware" earthenwares. In part, the extensive contributions of CRM researchers to African-American archaeology reflects the frequency with which sites of African diaspora heritage are often subjected to disturbance by new construction projects and resultant analysis through CRM procedures (Joseph 2004:18-20).

The following chapters of this book are divided into three collections, focusing in succession on articles from the *Historical Archaeology* journal that present studies in Africa (Part II), the Caribbean, Central and South America (Part III), and finally on research concerning sites in North America (Part IV). Contextual commentary on the significance and implications of these studies is also provided.

PERSPECTIVES FROM HISTORICAL ARCHAEOLOGY IN AFRICA

Part II assembles three chapters on historical archaeology in the regions of Africa impacted by trans-Atlantic diasporas. Chapter 2 presents an article published by Merrick Posnansky and Christopher DeCorse in 1986 on historical archaeology projects in sub-Saharan Africa. One approach to African diaspora archaeology could be to first undertake an exhaustive program of historical archaeology within the regions of Africa from which people were drawn into diasporas. Researchers could then use that collection of studies as a baseline for comparative analysis and predictive modeling of later developments throughout the diaspora (Ogundiran and Falola

2007:7-9). Posnansky and DeCorse describe progress in historical archaeology within Africa up through 1986, and four of the five primary regions of research they discuss related directly to trans-Atlantic African diasporas.

For example, research in the region of West Africa, including fortified towns such as Elmina on the Gold Coast, provided evidence of the significant cultural diversity of Africans captured and transported through these regional ports of the Atlantic slave trade (Posnansky and DeCorse 1986:5). The authors recommended that historical archaeology within Africa focus more on settlement sites and understanding particular African societies in full detail and historical context, rather than continue to focus on descriptions of the remains of fortified colonial facilities that had previously been undertaken (Posnansky and DeCorse 1986:10). Such a broad research focus on the characteristics of particular African societies later impacted by the trans-Atlantic slave trade would provide a highly valuable body of data and analysis for comparative studies and predictive modeling of later developments in African diasporas. Posnansky and DeCorse (1986:10-11) recommended that archaeologists working within Africa should undertake an ongoing and evolving dialogue with archaeologists working on diaspora sites in North America and the Caribbean to continually formulate and revise their mutual research questions to facilitate such comparative analysis over time.

Approximately two decades after Posnansky and DeCorse made those recommendations, a rich body of studies of

historical archaeology within Africa was being published. For example, Andrew Reid and Paul Lane edited a volume of articles in 2004 entitled *African Historical Archaeologies* that included 14 studies ranging in locations from the Middle Nile, Kenya, Tanzania, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, and South Africa. Reiterating Posnansky and DeCorse's recommendations, Ken Kelly (2004) authored an article included in that volume entitled "The African Diaspora Starts Here: Historical Archaeology of Coastal West Africa." Other publications included DeCorse's (2001) study of historical archaeological sites in West Africa in locations spanning a region from Senegambia to the area of Cameroon. Peter Schmidt's (2006) long-term studies in East Africa provided another regional counterpoint. An edited volume focusing on historical studies (Philips 2000) provided 20 chapters with detailed consideration of research methodologies and findings concerning both written and oral histories in a variety of African societies impacted by the Atlantic slave trade and other diasporas. Among the 20 chapters of Akin Ogundiran and Toyin Falola's (2007) edited volume entitled *Archaeology of Atlantic Africa and the African Diaspora*, 7 historical archaeology studies focus on locations in Africa, including the Gold Coast, the Yoruba-Edo hinterland, the Bight of Benin, Senegal, northern Yorubaland, East Africa, and Ghana.

Chapter 3 presents a 1995 study by Anne Markell, Martin Hall, and Camile Schrire focusing on Vergelegen, an 18th-century farmstead on the Cape of Good Hope in South Africa. The research questions in this study included a comparison of the structure of enslavement

in this Dutch colony and the patterns of plantation organization seen in some examples in North America (Markell et al. 1995:12). The authors also applied research questions as to whether enslaved laborers at Vergelegen exercised daily acts of self-determination in a manner similar to examples in North America, such as hunting and fishing to supplement their diets (Markell et al. 1995:12). Many of the enslaved laborers at Vergelegen were captives from the region of Madagascar and East India (Markell et al. 1995:29).

Markell, Hall, and Schrire provide a rich presentation of data concerning the layout of the farmstead, dependencies, a mill, a wine cellar, and changing patterns of spatial use in the housing for enslaved laborers spanning the 18th and early 19th centuries. Analyses of material culture, landscapes, dietary remains, and health indications from skeletal remains are discussed in detail. Artifacts from the space of slave housing included a predominance of hollow wares, a variety of porcelain, stoneware, and earthenwares, Dutch manufactured tobacco pipes, iron tools, fishing equipment, and sewing implements (Markell et al. 1995:24-26). The researchers found no overt differences in the types of material culture remains uncovered in the houses of enslaved laborers and European house sites in the Cape (Markell et al. 1995:29).

A unique form of architectural style for laborers' housing was utilized at Vergelegen, influenced by building traditions from northern Europe (Markell et al. 1995:28). Yet, in some structures, a form of pit hearth consistent with vernacular practices in Madagascar was added to an otherwise Dutch-influenced

architectural style in what the authors interpret to indicate "some retentions and adaptations of traditional practices in the syncretic Vergelegen slave culture" (Markell et al. 1995:29). Little evidence was uncovered to indicate that the laborers at Vergelegen engaged in hunting and gathering to supplement their diets in a manner similar to that found in some North American plantations (Markell et al. 1995:30). Applying a comparative analysis of plantation management in examples in North America and South Africa, the authors hypothesize that the basic dietary provisions in Vergelegen made supplementation less necessary than in locations such as South Carolina plantations (Markell et al. 1995:30).

Chapter 4 continues this consideration of comparative data from locations and cultures within Africa and later cultural developments within African diasporas. Ross Jamieson's 1995 study focuses on mortuary practices on both sides of the Atlantic. He advocates that historical archaeologists working in the Americas need to undertake an interdisciplinary, ethnohistorical approach that examines comparative data from historical, archaeological, and ethnographic data concerning particular African cultures impacted by the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Jamieson (1995:41-46) provides rich analysis of evidence of mortuary practices in several cultures in West and West Central Africa during the period of the slave trade, as well as bioarchaeological evidence concerning those societies. He then provides a comprehensive survey of studies in North America and the Caribbean, including a variety of research questions and findings emerging from

Jerome Handler and Frederick Lange's (1978) detailed studies in Barbados and data results from the African Burial Ground in New York City (Jamieson 1995:46-54).

AFRICAN HERITAGE IN THE CARIBBEAN, CENTRAL AND SOUTH AMERICA

Part III of this book focuses on African diaspora sites in the Caribbean, Central America, and South America. Jane Landers' overview in Chapter 5 provides valuable historical contexts for studies and research questions concerning communities in the Spanish colonial sphere within this region. While her article does not discuss archaeological findings, it provides historical contexts of Africans in Spain and in the areas of Spanish colonial influence in the Americas. She provides an overview of historical dynamics in which Africans and African descendants were "agents of change who have gone little noticed, although their tenure in the Americas matches that of the Spaniards" (Landers 1997:84). In turn, Terrance Weik's (2004) study in Chapter 6 provides a number of case studies of archaeological findings within African diaspora sites in "Latin America," including Hispaniola (later Haiti and the Dominican Republic), Cuba, Brazil, Jamaica, and Florida. Weik (2004) also raises a number of interpretative and theory debates, including the value of conceptualizations of social processes such as creolization, ethnogenesis, mestizaje, and maroonage, and the dearth of studies that focus on the rich interactions of Native American

populations with Africans and African descendant groups.

Paul Farnsworth turns our attention in Chapter 7 to the history of African diaspora communities in the plantations of the Bahamas in the 18th and 19th centuries. He provides a detailed consideration of market production and distribution networks that impacted the availability of goods in both Nassau and more remote locations of the North Caicos (Farnsworth 1996). His study demonstrates that large-scale economic models of commodity distribution must be refined with an analysis of local conditions and the final stages of product availability. For example, the remote location of Wade's Green plantation on the North Caicos section of the Bahamas resulted in enslaved African laborers possessing types and frequencies of material culture, such as ceramics, tobacco pipes, and personal adornments, which differed notably from plantation locations in Nassau or the southern United States (Farnsworth 1996).

Moving to Jamaica, James Delle's study in Chapter 8 addresses facets of creolization. He examines ethnohistorical evidence for the development of "Afro-creole" identities in Jamaica in the 19th century, which were distinct from "Euro-creole" social groups and from the social affiliations of recently arrived Africans. Delle (2000) analyzes both cognitive and material culture manifestations of multi-faceted creolization processes as modalities in which new social group identities were formed. Among the material culture expressions of Afro-creole social groups were distinctive modes of housing, yard, and garden landscapes. In contrast to the remote locations Farnsworth analyzed in

the Bahamas, plantations in Jamaica were occupied by African descendants who made their own forms of “Yabba” redware ceramic vessels for preparing and serving food (Delle 2000: 65-66). These were mostly hollowwares and were used in culinary traditions that focused on preparation and serving of stews containing a wide variety of ingredients. Yard spaces were important activity and production areas surrounding houses made typically of earthfast construction, wattle-and-daub, and thatched roofs (Delle 2000:62-63). Gardens or “provision grounds” for production of food for the laborers were also of great importance within these landscapes shaped by the Afro-Creole population.

Examining ethnohistorical evidence concerning the health of Afro-creoles, Delle (2000: 67-68) finds that the disease of yaws, which is a form of spirochete infection, likely traveled with captive Africans from West Africa to Jamaica. He observes that very little archaeological research on the health of African diaspora populations has yet been undertaken in regard to locations in the British West Indies. Delle (2000:69) recommends future work on, among other sources, plantation hospital sites, including flotation of soil samples from privies and wells to examine “floral evidence of the types of herbs used by Afro-creole healers in specific remedies.”

The bioarchaeological evidence of physical impacts of slavery upon captive Africans provides a focus of David Watters’ study in Chapter 9, which examines the remains of 17 individuals buried in an 18th-century cemetery in Montserrat in the northern Lesser Antilles.

Having conducted a salvage archaeology project under very constraining conditions when construction crews in Montserrat disturbed the remains of an early cemetery, Watters (1994) presents evidence and comparative analyses that yield valuable insights from a dire circumstance. He presents new data from that analysis and a survey of comparative studies from sites in Barbados, Jamaica, and Dutch Guiana (now Suriname in South America). A review of evidence of disease, injuries, malnutrition, pathologies, and trauma reflected in the remains of individuals at these 18th and 19th century sites provides a testament to the brutal character of slavery across the region (Watters 1994:58-60, 66). Comparative analysis of burial practices and potential grave goods included with the deceased provides indications of intriguing variations over time and space in directional orientation of interments and the ritual compositions included in mortuary rites (Watters 1994:60-70).

Barbados was the target of Britain’s earliest colonial ventures in the Caribbean, with enterprises investing in sugar plantations operated with enslaved African laborers starting in the early 1600s (Handler 1996:76). Jerome Handler, Frederick Lange, Robert Corruccini, and their colleagues undertook an intensive archaeological and historical research program focusing on the plantation cemetery at Newton, on the southern portion of the island, in the period of 1972-1973. The remains of 104 individuals, interred from approximately 1660 through 1820, were excavated and analyzed along with the material culture that accompanied the deceased and the mortuary practices

evident in the contexts of the burials. In addition to the archaeological investigations, a program of extensive historical, ethnohistorical, and comparative studies was undertaken (Handler 1996:76). Among many publications of their findings, Handler and Lange's (1978) study entitled *Plantation Slavery in Barbados: An Archaeological and Historical Investigation* remains a foundational work in the field of African diaspora archaeology.

Chapter 10 presents Handler's 1996 article focusing on one of those 104 burials at Newton plantation. He presents an array of evidence from skeletal analysis to ethnographic analogies and ethnohistorical data from particular West African cultures that he brings to bear on interpreting the likely meaning and significance of the mortuary practices utilized in that interment. An individual who suffered significant lead poisoning during life likely experienced dramatic behavioral symptoms that were interpreted by community members through particular cultural beliefs resulting in distinctive treatment of the deceased (Handler 1996).

Shifting our focus to the African diaspora communities of South America, Chapter 11 presents Charles Orser's study of Palmares, in the Pernambuco state of Brazil, which was "without doubt one of the most important maroon settlements in the history of the New World" (Orser 1994:7). Orser analyzes the archaeological and historical evidence of Palmares from a perspective of the modern world system of economic and social interactions operating across the Atlantic hemisphere, including Portuguese and Dutch colonial regimes, Native American populations, and captive

Africans from the area of Angola. Portuguese colonial interests developed sugar plantations in Brazil by 1570, and Dutch colonial interests established sugar processing facilities and shipping operations nearby. Captive Africans and Native Americans escaped from Portuguese plantations and created the Palmares settlements, located some 50-75 miles inland, by the early 1600s (Funari 2003:83-84; Orser 1994). By the mid-1640s there were 9 separate Palmares villages, and by the late 1600s, Palmares settlements likely contained 20,000 people – up to a third of the enslaved population had escaped to Palmares.

In the 1670s, the defense of Palmares was supervised by one of their own members, called King Zumbi (Orser 1994:8-9). Portuguese and Dutch colonial forces began expeditions against the Palmares settlements as early as 1612. The settlements withstood and repelled those attacks until 1694, when the Portuguese destroyed them with the use of hired mercenary forces, and King Zumbi and the other leaders of Palmares were executed (Orser 1994:9-10). Archaeological investigations at the sites of Palmares villages revealed evidence of self-sufficient production of material culture and trade with coastal settlements in the late 1600s. Pottery forms in the villages showed a blending of African and indigenous Tupinamba pottery traditions and decorative techniques. Clay smoking pipes with forms and decorative motifs consistent with West African production methods were also recovered (Funari 2003:86-87; Orser 1994:11-13). In his related study of Palmares, Pedro Paulo Funari (2003:83) emphasized the ways in

which these historical and archaeological analyses demonstrated a remarkable complexity, heterogeneity, and fluidity of the populations and cultural networks within those settlements.

AFRICAN DESCENDANT COMMUNITIES IN NORTH AMERICA

Part IV focuses on African descendant communities in North America, and the 13 chapters in this collection provide just a sampling of the many studies published in *Historical Archaeology* that concentrated on research projects conducted in the United States. This part of the book starts with three chapters addressing issues concerning the politics of African-American archaeology and trends in overall interpretative biases and challenges for improvement. The following seven chapters then discuss studies presented along a geographic trajectory from locations in the northern United States to southern locations and plantation archaeology. Finally, the last three chapters in this collection focus on interpretations of the economic, social, and religious meanings and significance of particular categories of material culture uncovered at an array of African-American sites across the United States.

Maria Franklin's 1997 critique of African-American archaeology begins this overview of work in North America in Chapter 12. She lauds historical archaeology's goal of providing a voice to people of our past who are largely omitted from past documentary records and traditional historical accounts of America's heritage and accomplishments (Franklin

1997:36). However, Franklin demands that historical archaeologists critically consider why and how they work to provide such understandings of African-American histories. The stakes for such self-reflection by archaeologists are high, because many historical accounts in the United States have served to legitimize a present "social order permeated by racism, classism, and gender bias" (Franklin 1997:38).

Franklin (1997:38) insists that to be "critical, responsible, and accountable," historical archaeologists must actively engage with members of the African-American communities they purport to serve in their research. Archaeological research undertaken without community engagement and expressed in jargon-laden reports and biased exhibits fails to meet such goals. Moreover, if historical archaeologists "continue to ignore the needs and interests of descendant groups, we will foster antagonism, and our research will mean little to nothing to the segments of society whose ancestors we choose to study" (Franklin 1997:39). While the Society for American Archaeology had adopted a principle of accountability to groups impacted by archaeologists' research, the Society for Historical Archaeology (SHA) did not express a direct counter-part of that commitment at the time of Franklin's analysis (1997:46-47). The SHA "Statements of Ethics," adopted in 2003, now include provisions requiring archaeologists to "respect the dignity and human rights of others" and to "strive to engage citizens in the research process" (SHA 2003: principles 5, 7), but continuing improvements in our organization's commitments in this regard

remain vital. Full community engagement in archaeological practice should involve members of such groups in the full array of project elements, including “conception of research questions, excavation, data analysis, and interpretation” (Franklin 1997:40).

Franklin’s commentary does not issue naïve calls for improvement. She provides a nuanced consideration of the challenges facing both archaeological researchers and members of community groups in grappling with often painful histories of past subjugation and the institution of slavery in America. Archaeologists face challenges in that community and descendant groups are by no means monolithic in their views (Franklin 1997:41-44). Impassioned conflicts and debates will often arise within and across community groups as to the significance and contours of particular archaeological projects. Other challenges arise through the highly interdisciplinary character of studies concerning African-American history. A fully interdisciplinary approach to African-American archaeology requires researchers to be as conversant with the accomplishments of scholars in Black studies, such as Frederick Douglass, St. Claire Drake, W. E. B. Du Bois, Zora Neale Hurston, Arturo Schomburg, Booker T. Washington, George Williams, and Carter Woodson, as they are with the methods for conducting excavations and analyzing material culture (Franklin 1997:44-45; Mullins 2008:105-07).

J. W. Joseph addresses the tremendous contributions of archaeologists working in cultural resource management (CRM) projects to our understanding of African-American history and archaeology. CRM

archaeology projects have produced valuable research concerning African-American communities in plantation contexts, freedmen’s settlements, late 19th century tenant households, urban archaeology settings, and analysis of cemetery contexts (Joseph 2004:19). Joseph’s survey of these accomplishments, presented in Chapter 13, also outlines a series of interpretative biases that have emerged in many CRM studies. For example, important studies such as those at Yaughan and Curiboo Plantations in South Carolina (Wheaton et al. 1983) recovered evidence of continuing developments of particular African cultural practices, such as architectural and pottery styles, during the 18th century (Joseph 2004:19). However, many CRM archaeologists have also developed working assumptions that African Americans experienced assimilation and acculturation within European-American cultural traditions by the start of the 19th century, and that one can expect to see no continuing developments of African cultural influences on material culture found at residential sites after that time (Joseph 2004:18-19). Joseph outlines the reasons and evidence of why these latter assumptions are invalid and he advocates that CRM research designs and questions concerning 19th century sites must become more flexible in future projects.

The extensive studies undertaken on African-American work and residential sites by CRM researchers also presents evidence of the continuing impacts of racism in today’s society. Such CRM projects are typically undertaken when a large-scale development project will likely destroy the archaeological record

underlying existing real estate. As Charles Orser (2007:36) recently observed, the locations of home and work spaces of past and present African-American families are far more frequently targeted “for urban renewal, gentrification, or some other project involving land modification and federal funding” than are the spaces of past and present European-American residences. The apparent racial biases of large-scale development projects present CRM researchers with a constant challenge of working to mitigate the impacts of developers’ purposeful or unintended effects of erasing material facets of African-American heritage from the current landscape.

Kerri Barile (2004) published an insightful study that illuminated an additional trend of biases that work to the detriment of preserving African-American heritage. She outlines a number of points for improvements in the methods of CRM projects and the guidelines utilized by State Historic Preservation Officers (SHPOs) who are responsible for administering the regulations of cultural resource management efforts. Barile (2004) details a growing tendency of SHPOs in a number of states to view late-19th and early-20th century residential sites as insignificant due to the standardization of mass-produced consumer goods often uncovered at sites from those periods. She recommends that CRM researchers combat this tendency by focusing more intensively on aspects of intangible cultural heritage of each locality and region. Greater exploration of oral histories, regional and local contours of racialization, and more contextual data of aspects of heritage beyond archaeological remains will aid in

demonstrating the historical significance of such sites (Barile 2004).

Excavations at the African Burial Ground in lower Manhattan, New York, in 1991 and 1992 started as a CRM project related to construction of a new federal office building. Chapter 14 presents Cheryl LaRoche and Michael Blakey’s (1997:100) compelling account of how the African-American community in New York City succeeded in seizing “power and control” and not just an “afterthought of inclusion” in the guidance of this large-scale archaeology project. Excavations on a 6-acre portion of an early burial ground uncovered over 400 burials of Africans and African descendants interred in the period of approximately 1712 through 1794 (LaRoche and Blakely 1997:84-85). A powerful collaboration of “influential and determined African Americans” that included officials in the federal and municipal governments, journalists, local clergy and church congregation members, and an array of civic groups, developed during the excavations and shaped the procedures and research questions applied in the project (LaRoche and Blakey 1997:85-86).

Among the intellectual influences applied in the investigations of the New York African Burial Ground were the concerns of “vindicationist” efforts in which scholars of African-American studies from the 19th century to the present have emphasized the need to “correct the demeaning distortions of the culture, biology, and history of the Africana world” (LaRoche and Blakey 1997:90; Mullins 2008:108). As also emphasized by Franklin in Chapter 12, LaRoche and Blakey (1997:99) caution that while “there is

general unity surrounding the major issues, the African descendant community speaks with many voices” and researchers should not assume that such community concerns will be simplistic or monolithic in character. Similarly, one should not confuse vindicationist efforts with a simplistically celebratory perspective. For the African-American community in New York City, “the excavation of our ancestors” was both “a cathartic and wrenching experience” (LaRoche and Blakey 1997:100).

Four primary research questions were pursued in the New York African Burial Ground project: determining the likely cultural, population, and geographic origins of the individuals; examining evidence of the physical quality of their lives; analyzing the biological and cultural impacts of life in America for captive Africans; and examining any evidence of modes of resistance against structures of enslavement (LaRoche and Blakey 1997:86-87). Chapter 15 provides a summary of some of the results from this research, with findings detailed in a 2004 article by Mark Mack and Michael Blakey. The project employed an array of interdisciplinary methods, including insights from the fields of “[o]steological and dental radiology and chemistry, molecular genetics, history, archaeology, botany, and African art history,” among others (Mack and Blakey 2004:10). The collaborating researchers on the African Burial Ground project have continued to publish comprehensive and updated reports of the results of these interdisciplinary studies (e.g., General Services Administration 2007).

Continuing a focus on studies of African-American heritage in the northern United States, Chapter 16 presents Robert Fitts’ 1996 study of the “landscapes of bondage” in that region. Using a detailed case study of enslavement in Rhode Island as a focal point, Fitts (1996) provides evidence refuting stereotypical views that slavery in northern states was somehow “mild and paternalistic” in contrast to greater brutalities of the plantation South. Fitts applies concepts of landscape analysis in this study, examining the ways in which northern plantation owners attempted to control and manipulate domestic and work spaces to “instill their ideology of alienation” of African Americans to deprive them of capacities of self-determination (Fitts 1996:67). In response, captive African Americans pursued acts of resistance in a variety of settings within those northern landscapes of oppression. During decades of bondage, such moments of resistance played out in private dwellings, during the laboring hours in work spaces and running errands between plantations, and through subversive interactions at church, funeral, and festival gatherings (Fitts 1996:66-67).

Lu Ann De Cunzo’s archaeological study and narrative storytelling shift our consideration to the post-bellum decades of freedom in Delaware in Chapter 17. She provides a conjectural reconstruction of the events and lifeways in two, neighboring African-American households from the 1870s through the 1920s that produced the artifacts and features uncovered in archaeological excavations (De Cunzo 1998:42). The defeat of slavery won by the Civil War was succeeded in many regions by renewed forms of virulent racism. De

Cunzo provides interpretations of the material culture of these residences within the contexts of racism that presented these African-American families with the challenges of confronting enduring social and economic adversities. This chapter presents a persuasive view of archaeological evidence by envisioning the social events and lifeways in which the objects of their daily activities were embedded. Paul Mullins' (1999) study of African-American households in Annapolis during the same period offers similar insights. His research findings, presented in Chapter 18, provide a compelling interpretation of household remains that demonstrate the ways in which African Americans subverted racism through strategic choices within the realm of product consumption, local merchant interactions, and patronage of national brands (Mullins 1999:24-26). The relationship of labor opportunities, racial distortions of economic and social structures, and changing culinary preferences are similarly analyzed (Mullins 1999:26-34).

The remaining seven chapters in Part IV largely concern archaeological and historical research of African-American communities and plantations in the southern United States. Theresa Singleton's 1990 article in Chapter 19 provides an overview of the development of "plantation archaeology" in the United States and the strengths and weaknesses of the research designs developed within that field of specialization. Approaches to plantation archaeology projects varied from Charles Fairbank's (1974) studies of the "extent to which an African heritage was transplanted, modified, and replaced in

slave material culture" (Singleton 1990:71) to John Otto's (1984) research concerning differences in socioeconomic status and class evident in the material culture of plantation owners, overseers, and enslaved laborers. Other approaches include Charles Orser's (1988) critical analysis of southern plantations as a form of capitalist economic enterprise dependent upon the expropriation of enslaved labor and enforcement of social domination through manipulations of the built environment. Similarly, Terrance Epperson (1990) and David Babson (1990) analyzed the cultural landscapes of plantations as involving a class structure built upon evolving racist ideologies (Singleton 1990:73).

Fairbanks did not succeed in his own projects in identifying the influences of particular African cultural traditions in the material culture of enslaved laborers at plantations such as Kingsley in Florida (Singleton 1990:74). However, recent work at Kingsley by James Davidson and his colleagues (2006) uncovered the remains of a ritual composition dating to the early 1800s that was very likely part of spiritual observances that represented continuing developments of particular beliefs and practices related to cultures in the Bight of Biafra region of West Africa. Many of the Kingsley plantation laborers were abducted from that region (Davidson et al. 2006).

Archaeological studies of the production and use of "colonoware" pottery on plantations in Virginia and the Carolinas have similarly involved heated debates concerning the degree to which these materials provide evidence of continuing influences of African pottery traditions in the Americas (Singleton 1990:74-75; Singleton and Bograd 2000:5-

8). Investigations by Wheaton and his colleagues (1983) at Yaughan and Curiboo plantation, by Leland Ferguson (1992) at Middleburg plantation, and by James Deetz (1993) at Flowerdew Hundred, to name just a few, provide ample evidence that colonoware pottery was produced by African Americans in those regions in the period of the late 17th through the early 19th centuries (Singleton 1990: 74-75). Other analysts nonetheless maintain that colonoware was principally manufactured by Native American potters in North America who traded with such plantations (Mouer et al. 1999). While current interpretative models for colonoware in locations such as the Carolinas are growing more refined and multi-faceted (Espenshade 2007; Ferguson 2007; Joseph 2007), an expanding body of studies in the Caribbean and South America also provides comparative data of particular African-influenced pottery traditions evolving in those locations (e.g., DeCorse and Hauser 2003; Hauser 2007; Symanski 2006).

Singleton concludes Chapter 19 with proposals of areas for future expansion of research designs focused on plantation structures. Among other avenues of investigation, she proposed a greater focus on region by region variations in the economic and social organization of plantations and how these regional differences impacted the lives of African Americans living and working in those spaces (Singleton 1990: 76). Singleton's advocacy of far-reaching research designs no doubt laid the foundations for a current global-scale perspective that the "historical legacy and implications of the plantation system in terms of the modern realities of

racial ideologies, the world economy and globalization to name a few, are of great social significance" (Kraus-Friedberg and Fellows 2008).

Jean Howson's 1990 review and critique of trends within plantation archaeology, presented in Chapter 20, addresses ways for applying practice theory and the interdependence of structure and agency in analyzing developments and changes in particular cultures. Detailed, interdisciplinary, and contextual studies of particular locations, populations, and cultural elements should replace earlier tendencies to search for simplistic "Africanisms" in the 17th and 18th centuries and "acculturation" of African-American lifeways to Anglo-American material culture in the 19th century (Howson 1990:79-80). Similarly, earlier trends of searching for an "African American pattern" of material culture in a particular century and region should be superseded by contextual analysis of specific communities within more refined time periods (Howson 1990:79-80). Where Singleton's (1990) critique principally lauded a move away from studying variations in "status and class" within plantations to an analysis of the impacts of "economy and power" at broader geographic scales, Howson (1990) advocated a greater focus on the meanings of material culture within the context of particular cultural traditions and the ways those cultural elements changed over time.

Ten years later, Barbara Heath and Amber Bennett (2000) presented a study that provided one example of the type of detailed, interdisciplinary, and contextual analysis that Howson and Singleton had advocated. Ranging from broader-scale

questions of power relations within plantations to closer-scale spatial analysis, Heath and Bennett focused on analyzing the uses, meanings, and significance of the yard areas surrounding African-American dwellings in plantations. This finely delimited spatial analysis, presented in Chapter 21, is employed in exploring an array of topics, from community interactions, to a range of work and leisure activities, to landscape aesthetics and culture change over time. At a broader scale, the analysis is also comparative and interdisciplinary, presenting historical, ethnographic, and archaeological data from landscape studies in West Africa, locations of African diaspora communities in the Caribbean, and the plantations of the American south (Heath and Bennett 2000: 39-44).

If any archaeologists harbored a belief that African-influenced cultural beliefs and practices had disappeared in North America by the 19th century, Kenneth Brown and Doreen Cooper (1990) laid such misgivings to rest with their study of the Levi Jordan plantation in Brazoria, Texas, presented here in Chapter 22. Started in 1848, the Jordan plantation included 8 barracks-like buildings with quarters for some of the 140 enslaved African Americans who worked the sugar and cotton cash crops before the Civil War (Brown and Cooper 1990:9-10). After emancipation, over 100 African Americans and their families remained on the plantation land and farmed parcels as tenant sharecroppers, staying in the same dwellings (Brown 2004:85). Descendants of the plantation owner instigated summary evictions of those families in the early 1880s, causing tenants to leave much of the

material culture of their households behind when they departed (Brown and Cooper 1990:9-10). Applying rigorous excavation techniques at the Jordan plantation, archaeologists uncovered a remarkable collection of material culture compositions in these house sites, dating to the middle of the 19th century. Their findings provided highly persuasive interpretations of the ways those materials related to the evolving cultures of African Americans, Afro-Cubans, and descendants of the BaKongo and Yoruba cultures (Brown and Cooper 1990). These features, artifact assemblages, and related interpretations were approached through rigorous, interdisciplinary methods that included close attention to spatial and cultural contexts and employed careful uses of ethnographic and ethnohistorical analogies (Brown and Cooper 1990:18-19). The artifacts, when analyzed within these spatial and cultural contexts, included items that very likely functioned to express social group affiliations, the occupation and social status of individuals within the community, and compositions related to cosmological beliefs and religious practices derived from particular African cultures.

In a study published in 2004, Kenneth Brown revisited the contextual and interdisciplinary methods he and colleagues utilized in analyzing the African-American dwellings at the Jordan plantation site. Careful use of ethnographic and ethnohistorical analogies based on studies of Yoruba, BaKongo, and Afro-Cuban cultures richly informed his interpretations of the material culture uncovered in Texas. Turning to new African-American sites in the location of

the modern-day Gullah and Geechee culture of the Carolina Lowcountry, Brown's 2004 study recommends that historical archaeologists also utilize analogic reasoning based on the modern-day Gullah and Geechee cultural elements when seeking to interpret 19th century remains of African-American communities in those coastal locations (Brown 2004:87-88).

The challenges of interpreting the meaning and significance of personal items with African diaspora archaeology are taken up further in Chapter 23. Linda Stine, Melanie Cabak, and Mark Groover (1996) focus on a particular category of material culture – blue beads – uncovered in the archaeology of African-American work and dwelling spaces and for which there exists extensive and varied data. These items provide a test case with which to address issues concerning the multiple functions such material culture could have served, and the range of meanings that potentially entangled such an object. Combining data from oral histories, folklore studies, ethnographic investigations in particular African cultures, and historical documentary evidence, the authors demonstrate the range of social status, personal adornment, and religious functions and meaning such material culture could have served in different settings. How then does an archaeologist correctly interpret the past use and significance of a particular artifact? Stine, Cabak, and Groover (1996) join Brown and Cooper (1990) in a profound and vital refrain – context is everything.

Laurie Wilkie's 1997 review and critique of studies concerning the material

culture of spiritual beliefs and practices among African Americans, presented in Chapter 24, concludes this book's collection of articles. Wilkie provides a comprehensive overview of the ways in which such spiritual beliefs and practices were integrated with community relations, family roles, gender dynamics, medicine, childcare, and household efforts to combat adversities. Changes over time in the beliefs and practices related to particular African cultures included the interactions of multiple African religions within diasporic communities in the Americas, and the impacts of socially dominant religions including Christian and Muslim denominations. Wilkie (1997:96-103) outlines a diachronic model for analyzing these cultural changes over time in African America.

PROMISING PROSPECTS

This collection of articles from past issues of *Historical Archaeology* hopefully provides a representative sample of the remarkable array of insightful studies in the expanding field of African diaspora archaeology. It is impracticable to fully review all of the developments and published studies over the past several decades in the limited space available here. As Merrick Posnansky recently observed, the future for the field is extremely promising for even greater developments to come. We can look forward to undertaking synthetic and comparative studies based on an expanding field of analysis in the areas of the Caribbean, Central and South America, and the regions of Africa impacted by the trans-

Atlantic slave trade. As African diaspora questions reach global scales, the archaeology of communities in locations of Europe, Asia, and the Pacific rim also awaits future expansion. Rapid developments in bioarchaeology include isotope analysis and DNA studies that provide data on potential links between populations across time and space.

Expanding landscape and spatial analyses are aided by ever-improving capabilities of computer-generated databases, mapping programs, and spatial modeling techniques. New survey methods include remote sensing, such as low altitude aerial surveys with high resolution thermal imaging, which may detect more sites in a highly cost-effective manner. Such increasingly sophisticated survey methods will aid an expansion of studies in an increasing diversity of sites, from dense urban areas to remote “maroon” community locations and the short-term sites of African descendant soldiers in military services throughout history in the Americas. Throughout these trends, we can expect to see researchers continuing in their intensive engagement with local and descendant communities in the formulation of key questions and investigative strategies for each project. The current focus on undertaking rich, contextual investigations of each site and then relating those findings in comparative analysis with other studies will yield a period of maturity in the field of African diaspora archaeology.

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