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A Confluence Of Cultures: Complicating The Interpretation Of 17Th Century Plantation Archaeology Using Data From Rich Neck Plantation

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A Confluence of Cultures: Complicating the interpretation of 17th century
plantation archaeology using data from Rich Neck Plantation

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A Thesis presented to the Graduate Faculty
of the College of William and Mary in Candidacy for the Degree of
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Master of Arts



Thomas J. Cuthbertson

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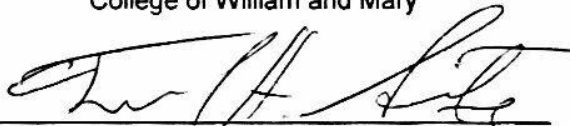


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ABSTRACT

Though there is no shortage of 17th century plantation sites in the Chesapeake archaeology enslaved African populations is incipient, but not yet flourishing. This may be a reflection of the result of those communities' underrepresentation in the archaeological and documentary records from that time period. Detailed analysis of archaeological sites where Africans were present can reveal the material residues of their lives, even when this material culture is inundated by European materials.

This thesis marshals archaeological, historiographic, and ethnohistorical data to use the excavations at the Rich Neck Plantation as a window into the diversity of the 17th century Atlantic world. An interpretation that highlights the composite nature of captive African communities is produced and juxtaposed against interpretations of the same archaeological artifacts and features through the landscape features and material culture of the English land owners. Tandem analysis of the archaeological record through the perspectives of these groups provides insight into the ways their perceptions of their surroundings overlapped and diverged.

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Introduction

Rich Neck plantation is an archaeological site occupied between the 17th and 19th centuries located in Williamsburg, Virginia. Though the 17th century components of the site are data poor, they provide an opportunity to explore a formative period of the culture of the lower Chesapeake; the result of a confluence of diverse cultural groups.

While there is no shortage of 17th century sites, there are few that offer large amounts of archaeological data directly connected to enslaved African populations. This may be the result of a scarcity of evidence regarding those communities. However, interpretations which provide information regarding the way the lives of enslaved Africans intersected with European colonists and American Indians can still be formed, even if there are only small amounts of evidence. To form these interpretations special attention must be paid the historical context from which the evidence originates. Contexts in the 17th century Mid-Atlantic were complicated intersections of multiple cultures. This complexity was present both within enslaved communities, as well as in colonial society at large.

Though some argue that the plantation system may have deterred enslaved African Americans from associating themselves with their African predecessors (Berlin 1996:288), finding similarities between identifiable West African cultural practices and the archaeological record (Ferguson 1992, Fennell 2011, Samford 2007) demonstrate continuity between enslaved Africans and their free West African ancestors. Additionally this type of research allows stakeholders interested in tracing their own ancestry to make concrete connections to the past.

Though focusing on a single group provides a simple way to address the archaeological data, the historical record shows that it would be unlikely for an enslaved African communities on plantations to consist of only a single ethnicity. Recognizing the heterogeneity of a population complicates the interpretation of their material residue. This approach provides a way to embrace the contributions of a range African ethnicities rather than only the most dominant and apparent in the archaeological record.

This discussion will present a method of addressing plantation archaeology which highlights the heterogeneity of early enslaved African communities, and provides interpretations based on the material culture and ethnographic information available from those populations. These explanations will then be juxtaposed against an evaluation of the data through the perspective of the plantation owners to address the major influence of colonial English culture on plantation landscapes. Comparing these varying interpretations will showcase the differences and similarities in the perceptions of plantation owners and enslaved communities regarding their environments and the materials therein. This method of analysis will provide a way to explore the ways in which the lives of bound Africans and English plantation owners overlapped. Data from Rich Neck Plantation will be used as a test case for the application of this method.

Historiography

Rich interpretations of the past require mindfulness of the social and economic environment during the period being studied. A nuanced understanding of the broader Atlantic world is a necessity for addressing transatlantic cultural exchange, both for groups of enslaved Africans, as well as European traders and colonists. Understanding

which European groups and various West African cultures interacted with each other, the nature of those interactions, and the time period in which they took place, provides quantitative and qualitative information regarding the material culture they shared and the ways in which those groups may have perceived their environments. While archaeologists and historians who study European culture have the benefit of vast amounts of documentary records, those who explore archeological contexts associated with early African-Americans communities must often rely on references found in documents authored by Europeans for contemporary descriptions of individuals and their actions.

An important detail to remember for the interpretation of archaeological data regarding enslaved Africans, is that the individuals transported to the Americas were not from isolated homogenous groups. Both in Africa in and the western hemisphere, cultural groups such as Yoruba and Igbo speaking peoples, were not isolated from each other, nor were they separated from the English, Dutch, or Portuguese (Thornton 1998:43-71,83,99-100).

The interaction between Europeans and West Africans was not novel when enslaved Africans were introduced to the Virginia colony in 1619. Catholicism was introduced to West Africa by 1450s, "... Portuguese monarchs... placed converting local people among their priorities..." (Thornton 1988:262). At a minimum, there were over 160 years for the active spread of western European cultural practices and religion among West African cultures before the introduction of enslaved Africans to Virginia.

In addition to the presence of Europeans in West Africa, the Portuguese and Spanish had been importing enslaved Africans to the Americas for over a century by the time any of this captive population had been brought to Jamestown in 1619. Until England established trade with West African ports in 1641, its primary source of enslaved labor was the privateering of ships carrying enslaved individuals between Africa, the West Indies and Europe (Heywood and Thornton 2007:20-22). The individuals captured as cargo would have been living in culturally heterogeneous environments, and would have set the foundation for the social climate in enslaved communities in North America.

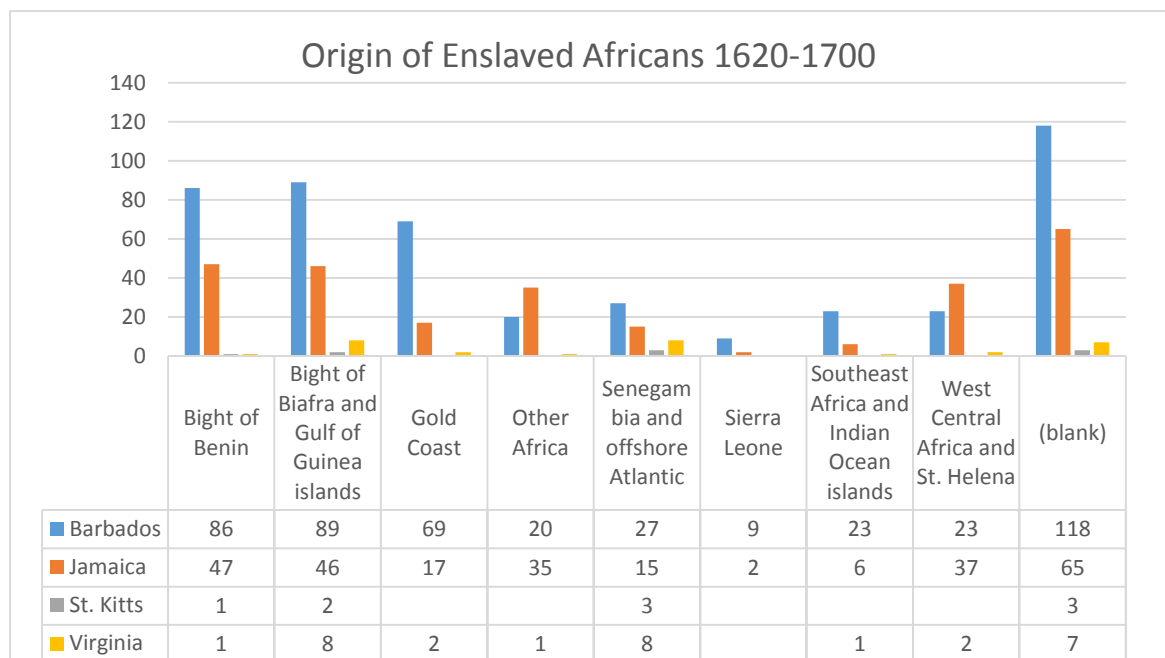


Figure 1 Comparison of enslaved African region of origin to region of destination. Data from Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database (Emory University 2015)

Much recent research in African American culture has focused on interpretations of archaeological data through the lens of central African and BaKongo culture (Fennell 2007, 2011, Ferguson 1992, Leone and Fry 1999, Leone et al. 2001). This strategy fits well for research in 18th century South Carolina, where those demographics are well

represented (Morgan 1998). However, as Figure 2 illustrates, the majority of the ships in the Transatlantic Slave Trade during the 17th century brought groups of enslaved individuals from near the Gulf of Guinea and the surrounding areas to the north on the west coast of Africa (Emory University 2015). The other significant detail this chart illustrates is that the majority of enslaved Africans carried to the Americas in the 17th century were not brought directly to Virginia, but rather to Barbados and other English colonies outside Virginia.

Historical research suggests that once trade was established between Africa and English North America, the main source of enslaved labor for Virginia was trade between English colonies (Hatfield 2004). Unfortunately the *Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database* (Emory University 2015) does not include information regarding the trade of enslaved individuals along those routes. The layover period created by this forced immigration practice would have allowed for continued mixture among populations which included individuals from the Akan, Ewe, Ga, Yoruba, Edo, and Igbo ethnic groups (see Thornton 1998: Map 5). At the end of the 17th century enslaved Africans from the Bight of Biafra (often Igbos) and Senegambians were favored in Virginia, while those from Angola were in high demand in South Carolina, thus creating different social climates among enslaved populations in the different colonies (Morgan 1998).

It is important to note the limits of documentary sources in regards to the origins of the enslaved Africans being brought to the Americas. The documents available to study the demographics of populations of enslaved Africans consist primarily of ship manifests and inventories. These sources do not take into account intergroup conflict which often included taking of captives, and selling those individuals into slavery. Slave

raiding and trading would have moved people from various cultures throughout the areas along the west coast of Africa (Thornton 1998:111). Olaudah Equiano's autobiography (2004[1745]) describes these practices in his account of the start of his enslavement. He describes days of travel, after which he is sold and traded multiple times before reaching the coast and being brought to the Americas. Alvise Ca' da Mosto (an Italian trader employed by the Portuguese) describes slaves being taken from neighboring countries and from civil wars (Thornton 1998:99).

The place of origin recorded in shipping records is the port, or region, from which the enslaved individuals were purchased, rather than their place of origin or ethnic affiliation (Emory University 2015). Therefore, the probability of an enslaved population being ethnically homogenous is extremely slim. No individual in a population of enslaved Africans would have been exempt from exposure to a wide array of cultural practices such as art, music, religion, and foodways among other aspects of life influenced by one's community. The majority of the individuals in this group would have been brought to various plantations in North America, including those around Jamestown and Middle Plantation.

Middle Plantation, was founded in the 1630s between the second and third Anglo-Powhatan Wars. A palisade constructed in 1634 between College Creek and Queen Creek, passing just east of the modern intersection of Richmond Road and Jamestown Road (Levy 2004:251), marked the line between the English settlers and the land still controlled by the Powhatan Indians (McFaden et al. 1999). The construction of this barrier and the three Anglo-Powhatan wars which prompted its construction (Hatfield 2004; Levy 2004), illustrate the uneasy relationship between English colonists and the

Powhatan Indians when Rich Neck Plantation was founded in 1635 by George Menifie (McFaden et al. 1999).

This hostility would have significantly reduced the amount of contact between the two groups divided by the palisade. The antagonism between the English and the Powhatan would have had an impact on how English colonists shaped their landscape. This is particularly true for those plantations not fully protected by the palisade such as Rich Neck (McFaden et al. 1999; Muraca et al. 2003) or Flowerdew Hundred (Hodges 1993).

The plantation was founded on 1200 acres by George Menifie through the headright system. This program, as incentive to increase the population of the new English colony, provided 50 acres of land to an individual for every English immigrant or African for which they paid passage to Virginia (Franklin 2004:20). Rich Neck Plantation was only controlled by Menifie for one year, before he sold it Richard Kemp, a politician, the Secretary of State and subsequently a member of the Council of State in 1636 (Franklin 2004). Kemp was the first to bring enslaved Africans to the estate through the headright system. In 1638 he brought “Tonie & Greene, Negroes” (McFaden et al. 1999:6, quoting Nugent 1979:105), and paid passage for a total of 13 enslaved Africans by 1642 (Franklin 2004:21). Kemp died in 1650, at which time his estate transferred to his widow Elizabeth. She then remarried the same year to Thomas Lunsford who died in 1653. Elizabeth then sold the property in 1665 to Thomas Ludwell (Franklin 2004).

Of all of the owners of Rich Neck Plantation the Ludwell family controlled the property for the longest period from 1665-1814. Thomas Ludwell cousin to Governor Berkley, also held an enslaved labor force at Rich Neck. Upon Thomas’s death in 1678

Phillip Ludwell inherited his estate including Rich Neck plantation. All of the Ludwell men were involved in the political realm. Phillip succeeded Thomas as Secretary of State, and later served as the governor of the Carolinas (Franklin 2004).

The amount of land and the political positions held by the owners of Rich Neck denote it as a landscape of some considerable wealth. The presence of a labor force comprised of enslaved Africans would have only enforced this appearance, as well as enabled the plantation owners to manipulate the landscape in such a way that would have reflected their ability to amass resources and spend capital beyond what the average colonist could afford, further solidifying their social status.

The principal way in which the English plantation owners and enslaved Africans would have interacted is through the institution of slavery. Racially based slavery was not necessarily unique to the Americas, however the association of ancestry, specifically African ancestry, with chattel slavery was (Morgan 2005). In 1662 Virginia passed legislation stating that the free or enslaved status of a mother was passed on to her child (Henning 1812:138). By 1705 the legal classification of “slave” in Virginia was defined thusly;

... and it is hereby enacted, that all servants imported and brought into this country, by sea or land, who were not Christians in their native country, (except turks and moors [*sic*] in amity with her majesty, and others that can make due proof of their being free in England, or any other Christian country, before they were shipped, in order to transportation hither) shall be accounted and be slaves, and as such be here bought and sold notwithstanding a conversion to christianity [*sic*] afterwards. [Hening 1812:447-448]

Though this definition does not outright define slave as non-white, the use of “Christians” as a descriptor is thinly veiled innuendo. The passage of this law meant that an individual could be enslaved in Virginia based almost exclusively because of the color of their skin.

These laws placed people of color in a lower social class and effectually separated them from mainstream English society, further disassociating their perspectives from those of English colonists.

Though they would have encountered the same physical surroundings, the social environment the owners of Rich Neck plantation and the captive Africans and African-Americans who lived there experienced would have been disparate. The individuals in the enslaved community at the plantation would have been ethnically heterogeneous but unified in their lower social status. The colonial citizens would have seen the plantation as land under their domain.

Previous Investigations

Rich Neck plantation, while it still stood, was located just south and west of the modern campus of the College of William and Mary. The site now lies under the Holly Hills housing development. The mitigation of the plantation complex was completed in the 1990s, and was run by staff from the Colonial Williamsburg Department of Archaeological Research (McFaden et al. 1999).

The excavations of Rich Neck plantation revealed a small domestic complex consisting of a 17th century dwelling, a kitchen and servants' quarter, seven outbuildings, a bounding ditch and a clay quarry that later was flooded and used as a pond. Two of the buildings, contexts 68AL and 68AP, are later construction dating to the 18th century. Five other out buildings, all post-in-ground construction, date to the 17th century and surround the main house and kitchen, both of which are of brick construction. They are designated

structures C through G in site reports as shown in Figure 2 (McFaden et al 1999; Muraca et al. 2003).

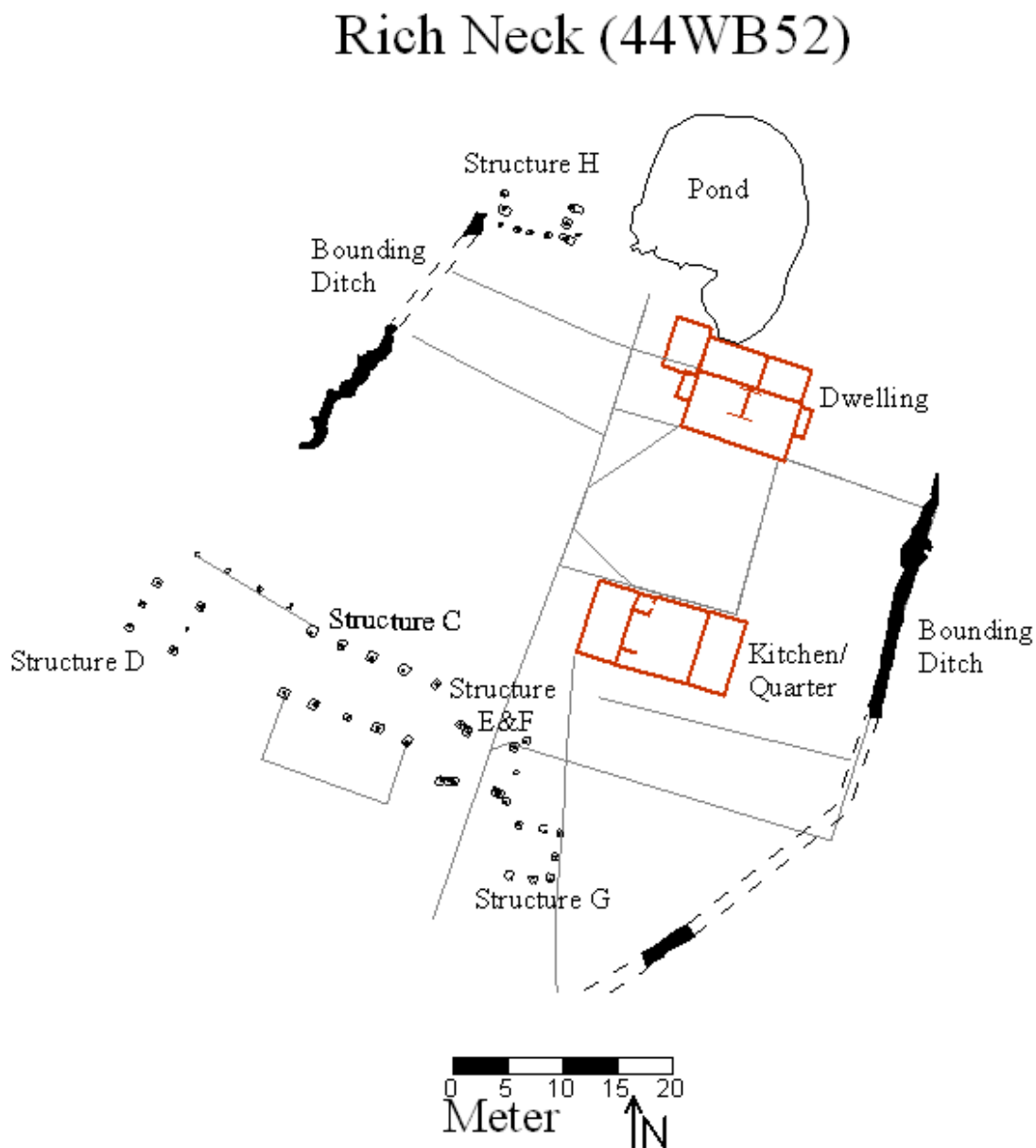


Figure 2 Rich Neck Site Map from Alston 2004

The footprints of Structures E and F completely overlap, and along with structure C have been interpreted as slave quarters. Structure G is described as an agricultural shed

or storage area. (McFaden et al. 1999; Muraca et al. 2003). Structure H appears to have been a domicile, through it is unclear who occupied the space. The structure was post in ground construction and had been repaired regularly. Artifacts recovered from archaeological features associated with it are not those generally associated with low socio-economic spaces, for example those occupied by the enslaved. Muraca et al. (2003) suggest that the structure may have been inhabited by an enslaved overseer, putting forth the post in ground construction of the dwelling as evidence of the individual's lower status in comparison to the plantation owners. The higher status items recovered from the excavation of this structure could be explained as gifts from the plantation owner to a favored enslaved individual. It is possible that an enslaved individual may have stolen or purchased these more desirable goods, however the volume at which they were recovered suggests otherwise. Muraca et al. (2003) note, however, that there is nothing in the documentary record suggesting that there was a favored enslaved worker that could explain the mixture of status markers between the construction style and the associated artifacts.

Another structure northwest of the area shown in Figure 2 has been interpreted as an 18th century slave quarter and has been thoroughly investigated by Maria Franklin (2004). The footprint of these quarters contained multiple subfloor pit contexts which contained objects that Franklin interpreted to be of ritual significance. Evidence included pewter utensil handles and spoons with incised decorations, and are included in Samford's (2007) discussion of subfloor pits. Franklin's (2004) study of the 18th century quarters was not focused specifically on the subfloor pits, or ritual objects, but rather on

the domestic life of 18th century enslaved African-Americans as a whole using the archaeological evidence recovered from Rich Neck.

Anna Agbe-Davies (1999) completed an investigation of a cellar feature in the space between the 17th century house and the 18th century slave quarters investigated by Franklin (2004). Agbe-Davies' concluded that the structure was used by enslaved individuals based on its similarity to other early 18th century structures found in association with slave quarters at other sites. She suggests that the structure was used as a domicile prior to the construction of the larger quarters investigated by Franklin (2004). Based on mean ceramic date, the cellar of a structure investigated by Agbe-Davies (1999) were utilized during the early to mid-18th century. Her investigation provides information regarding artifact assemblages, as well as dietary analysis on faunal remains, in structures used by enslaved individuals.

While the research cited above discusses the 18th century components of Rich Neck, the 17th century components associated with the same group have not been given as much attention. Though the earlier contexts may have held only sparse amounts of archaeological evidence, these earlier period components are equally important to the interpretation of a site. The evolution of a site reveals the ways in which the interactions between individuals shaped the use of objects and the landscape over time.

Literature Review

The complexity of understanding and describing social interaction in the Mid-Atlantic is magnified by the documentary challenges faced while doing historiographic or

genealogical research on the early trans-Atlantic slave trade. The documents available to research the middle passage are almost exclusively documents like inventories or shipping records which only record the site the groups of enslaved individuals were purchased (Emory University 2014). They do not note whether or not the individuals are from near the ports where they were purchased, or farther inland from different regions. In addition an enslaved person could have been moved between slave trading ports (Thornton 1998:111), further complicating efforts to locate any enslaved individual's place of origin. One possible vantage on the perspectives of Enslaved African Americans within the context of the 17th century Mid-Atlantic, is comparing archaeological, and ethnological evidence to historical documents.

Many historical archaeologists have developed their interpretive methods for African and African-American contexts in the Americas using Melville Herskovits' (1990[1941]) concept of Africanisms as a starting point. Herskovits introduced this concept in his monograph *The Myth of the Negro Past* (1990[1941]), written as a response to several claims made by contemporary anthropologists regarding the nature and history of African-American culture. Chief among these is that "... the apparent superiority of European custom as observed in the behavior of their masters would have caused and actually did cause [African-Americans] to give up such aboriginal traditions..." (Herskovits 1990[1941]:296). Herskovits's response uses ethnographic information to illustrate similarities between West African cultural practices and contemporary African-American culture. He referred to these similarities as Africanisms.

Employing the concept of Africanisms historical archaeologists like, Leland Ferguson (1992), Christopher Fennell (2007,2011), and Patricia Samford (2007), often

focus on portions of African American material culture or the landscape of enslaved African-Americans to establish connections between African and African-American culture. Ferguson (1992) and Fennel (2007, 2011) discuss ceramics, while Samford (2007) focuses on subfloor pits. The discrete elements investigated in their studies coupled with historical data, and the archaeological context from which they were recovered, help us better understand how enslaved Africans coped with their captivity and new surroundings.

As an initial example, Fennel (2011), discusses the use of the cruciform on ceramics, in conjunction with demographic research, as evidence of the presence of BaKongo culture. He discusses the interrelatedness of cross marks in Anglo-American and BaKongo culture through the same symbol found on Edgefield stoneware attributed to Dave the Potter. He notes that the cruciforms are not exclusively Christian or BaKongo in nature but could be meant to be a mixed symbol, as well as indicative of the adaptation of Christianity to fit the needs of enslaved African communities.

Ferguson's (1992) work on this topic is based on cruciform marks scratched or incised into the bottom of colonoware bowls thought to have been used in ritual practice (see Figure 3 for examples). Many of the mostly intact bowls were recovered from the bottoms of rivers. Based on historical ethnographic research, the submarine location of these artifacts may be the result of BaKongo religious rituals. While in this situation, a link to central African culture was good fit, representations of an intersection between the physical and spiritual worlds are common in other cultures as well.

The use of cross marks can also be found in Haitian Vodou, which has roots not only in Kongo practices, but also Yoruba, Dahomean and European traditions (Thompson

1983:163). It is inarguable that cruciforms would have held meaning to people of BaKongo descent, but the interpretation of cruciforms as being BaKongo in origin must be built on contextual evidence.

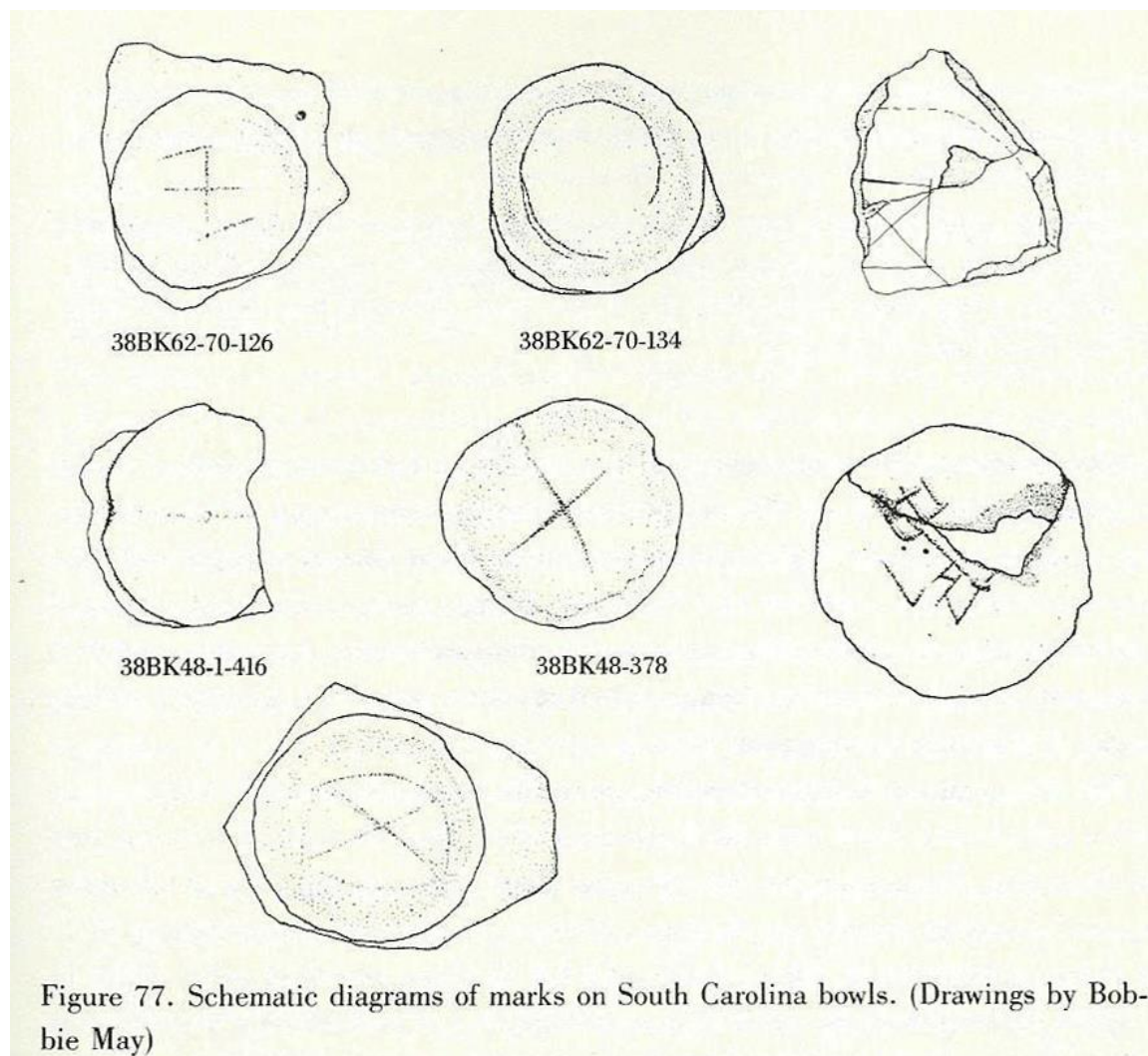


Figure 3 "Schematic diagrams of marks on South Carolina Bowls." Ferguson 1992, Fig. 77

Demographic and historical evidence supports the interpretation of the cruciform as BaKongo in origin in 18th century South Carolina (Fennell 2011; Morgan 1998). However, in 17th century Virginia, demographic information suggests that individuals from near the Gulf of Guinea made up more of the enslaved population (Morgan 1998; Emory University 2015). Many of the West African cultures from that area use cross

marks to indicate the intersection of the physical and spiritual planes (Gundaker 1998; Brown 1976; Brown 2003; Olmos and Paravisini-Gebert 2003; Garoutte and Wambaugh 2007; Lage 2012).

Samford (2007) explores subfloor pits found in slave quarter contexts through the concepts of resistance and memory. The aim of her discussion is to reveal the African cultural origins of subfloor pits in slave quarters. She explains that the West African traditions represented by subfloor pit features were modified to adapt to the material culture available in North America, as well as to create a private space for enslaved individuals and families. Her research suggests that many of the subfloor pits in Virginia are exceedingly similar to Igbo cultural practices. She is also able to find parallels in Yoruba and BaKongo traditions for some aspects of these features.

Though Samford (2007) was able to attribute all of the archaeological evidence found in some of the subfloor pits to a single culture, she acknowledges that some of the pits exhibit elements traceable to multiple West African cultures in the same feature. In one of the slave quarters excavated at Jordan plantation in Texas, archaeologists discovered a “conjurer’s kit” which exhibited components connected to both Yoruba and BaKongo cultures (Samford 2007:155). Norman (2009) refutes the association of subfloor pits with Igbo peoples, and instead suggests that they may be more closely tied to Vodun practices observed archaeologically in Benin. These opposing claims illustrate the need for nuanced interpretation of the archaeological evidence left behind by early colonial African and African American communities.

The plantation contexts from the Chesapeake were the intersection of many cultural traditions from Africa, Europe, and the Caribbean (Hatfield 2004). Each of these

traditions had varying amounts of social pressure on the behavior and ideas of the communities of people living on those plantations. Regarding more culturally potent topics (e.g. burial practices, religious traditions) changes were additive, rather than transformative (Herskovits 1990[1941]; Smith 2004). Captive West Africans would have had to adapt the material culture of their ritual practices, as well as more mundane daily activities, to the materials and circumstances present within the confines of slavery, otherwise these practices would have become obsolete and faded away. Those adaptations would have included adjusting to the culturally mixed communities of the enslaved, as well as new and different materials available to enslaved population in the Chesapeake.

Smith (2004) points out that this flexibility was present not only in practices observable in the Americas, but also in West Africa. For example, in festivals held by both the Igbo and Akan, palm wine was traditionally used in ceremonial drinking. During the 17th century with the wide spread trade of rum and other spirits, rum came to substitute the palm wine in Igbo, Akan and Ga cultural festivals (Smith 2004:131). Alcohol for the Akan, Igbo, and Kongo cultures, among others, helped to facilitate interaction between the physical and spiritual worlds. This use of European goods in West African Cultural practices supports the claim that these culture systems were inclusive rather than exclusive (Fennel 2007; Gundaker 2000; Herskovits 1990[1941]; Smith 2004), and illustrates the adaptation of new materials into West African cultural traditions.

Another example of willingness to adapt in West African cultures is the practice of conquered groups adopting the gods of their subjugators. Herskovits (1990[1941])

explains that gods needed to prove their power occasionally. When one tribe conquered another, the defeated tribe would adopt the gods of the victorious tribe, who had proven themselves more potent. The captured culture would not abandon their traditional deities, but would continue to worship the new gods along with the old. The adoption of Christianity by West African captives, may be a result of these groups seeing the Europeans as powerful (Herskovits 1990[1941]:72).

This willingness to be additive and adaptive further complicates interpretations of archaeological evidence through the African American perspective. Gundaker's approach to the topic of African American culture uses observation of modern cultural practices in African-American communities and relates these practices to those observed in the Caribbean as well in West Africa (Gundaker 1998). Gundaker's description of cultural interaction takes into account power systems and realities of slavery in the Americas.

Gundaker states:

When Africans from different regions and ethnic groups encountered each other and Europeans in Africa and later in the Americas, they often made the most of similarities and redundancies among cultural systems in order to communicate. At the same time, however, they also selectively loosened objects and activities from their moorings in these systems, treating them as resources to draw on as new situations warranted. [2000:125]

Let us then apply this to the associated material culture. By adapting traditional cultural practices to the materials available to them in the Americas and Caribbean enslaved Africans were able to maintain practices they were familiar with while adapting to their new surroundings.

The varied ethnic backgrounds of enslaved African communities present a complicated lens through which to interpret archaeological data from plantation

contexts. Practices originating in any given culture, would have been interpreted by individuals from other cultures to approach. By applying demographic information and previous archaeological research regarding the African origins of material culture observable in the archaeological record, scholars may be able to identify the groups who lived and worked at plantations excavated by archaeologists.

Evidence

As has been noted earlier, in order to gain the most information from archaeological evidence, it must be paired with historiographic research. Contextual information is especially important when only small amounts of data are available, or discrete elements of a site are being examined. Environments in the Chesapeake are often the intersection of various cultural groups from Europe, the Americas, and West Africa, and provide opportunities to study the way these disparate cultural groups interacted.

Exploring artifacts and features from archaeological excavations from multiple perspectives within a community will provide a way to explore the social interaction within that community. Below, this multivalent approach to interpretation will be applied to a bounding ditch feature, a locally made tobacco pipe, and a burial recovered during the excavations at Rich Neck Plantation.

Ditch

A bounding ditch along the northwest and southeast edges of the plantation domestic complex was created during the period of Richard Kemp's ownership of Rich Neck Plantation (1636-1650). The plantation was outside the palisade constructed to protect Middle plantation in 1634 after the second Anglo-Powhatan war (Hatfield 2004, Muraca et al. 2003). This feature has been interpreted in technical reports as not being constructed as a true physical defense, but rather "a psychological barrier that served to comfort inhabitants rather than actually protect them" (Muraca et al. 2003:33). It acts as a delineation of the domestic space regardless of its defensive effectiveness.

The excavated portions of the ditch suggest that it did not provide much physical protection from aggressors based on its dimensions (McFaden et al. 1999). It is, however, important to note the presence of a plow zone across the entirety of the site. Any feature evidence up to 1.5 feet may have been destroyed by agricultural activity (Muraca et al. 2003). Despite this Muraca et al. (2003) reports that the artifact concentrations in the plow zone are still reliable for the interpretation of the location and nature of now destroyed features. This means that, while the contexts within the ditch below the plow zone remain intact, the depth and width of the ditch that have been recorded are only a portion of the original size. Evidence of further fortifications may have been destroyed.

A similar, though smaller, ditch (3 ft. wide by 1 ft. deep into subsoil) was noted at an administrative complex at Martin's Hundred (Muraca et al. 2003). Flowerdew Hundred also exhibited a similar feature at the Yearly/Sharp Redoubt, though this was even shallower at .8 feet deep and 2 feet wide. A major difference between the ditch at

Rich Neck and the one at the Yearly-Sharp Redoubt is, the latter exhibited post molds at the bottom of the ditch from sharpened pales (Hodges 1993), while the former did not (Muraca et al. 2003). The ditch may be interpreted as representative of the European desire to control the environment, English dependency on enslaved labor to exert that control, and European and African notions of social divisions of space. This feature of the landscape would have been representative of the ever increasing presence of English land claims on Powhatan controlled territory (Levy 2004). In comparison with the Yearly/Sharp Redoubt the reduced effort to protect Rich Neck from outside aggressors with built fortifications indicates an ebbing concern for aggression from the Powhatan after the final Anglo-Powhatan War and Bacon's Rebellion.

Southian (2002[1977]) functional groups provide a systematic method of analysis to determine the ways in which the areas of a site were used. The arms group as described by South includes almost exclusively artifacts related to firearms (South 2002[1977]:94-96). For the purposes of this analysis a modified version of this functional group was used which, in addition to fire arms related artifacts, included armor, sword related items, projectile points and bifaces. This modified version of the arms functional group represents .71% of the artifacts for 68AC and even less for all excavation phases (.34%). Within the bounding ditch the arms group represents 1.28% of the artifacts, nearly double the proportion from 68AC and triple that of the site as whole. This increased amount of arms related artifacts suggest that the ditch was, at some point, intended as a rudimentary form of defense.

As an extension of a perceived need for defense, the ditch may be the manifestation of Richard Kemp's desire to control his environment and define the

domestic area near his dwelling (Leone et al. 2005). In addition to the ditch, a fence running east to west to the immediate north of the kitchen and dwelling buildings would have restricted the approach to the domestic space, allowing visitors to access the area from the east or west (Muraca et al. 2003). It also defined the space in which the enslaved were intended to stay and controlled entry into and out of the domestic space. This control included not only the movement of humans in and out of the space but would have also had an effect on the movement of livestock through the plantation.

The use of ditches to create divisions between spaces is a common practice in many cultures and was familiar to the enslaved Africans. A ditch system like this although not monumental in scale, would still require the land owner to organize labor for construction. In this case the labor would have been provided by indentured servants and enslaved Africans (McFaden et al. 1999; Muraca et al. 2003). The ability to procure this labor would have been a demonstration of the land owner's wealth. Plantation owners commonly sculpted their lands to express their physical mastery over the landscape, and created spaces which they could easily observe and control (Leone et al. 2005; Delle 1998). The bounding ditches here are two fold expression of the control over the environment; both the ability manipulate the environment, and control of movement through the landscape.

Ditch complexes were used commonly in Benin to separate elite spaces from common spaces, as well as sacred spaces from the mundane. Norman and Kelly assert that the ditches in Hueda "served as a material and monumental, representation of the authority of the king of Hueda, and a reminder of the political prominence necessary to organize the labor involved" (2004:102). Most notably elite areas in Savi, a Huedan city,

were surrounded by ditch complexes. The ditches were in segments up to 20 meters across, up to 220 meters long, and up to 8 meters deep (Norman and Kelly 2004:101). Compare this to the 5 foot (~1.5 m) wide and 3 foot (.9 m) deep bounding ditch at Rich Neck (Muraca et al. 2003) and one gets sense of how much of an undertaking of labor the monumental ditches truly were. The Huedan ditches would have demonstrated real political power through the amount of organization required to accomplish such an immense project.

The power accompanying wealth wielded by Richard Kemp to construct the ditch around Rich Neck (Muraca et al. 2003) pales in comparison. The size of these ditches would have been reflective of the size of the world the enslaved Africans living at Rich Neck would have been able to move through without constraints. This landscape feature compounded with laws restricting the movement of the enslaved in the colonial landscape made the bounding ditch a physical inscription on the landscape of an incorporeal boundary that limited of the enslaved population's movement. It was illegal for an enslaved individual to leave the grounds of the plantation without written evidence of the owner's permission. The penalty for such a transgression was 20 lashes, to be delivered by a constable (Henning 1823). This control over the bodies of the enslaved illustrates the power given to the bounding ditch both by the enslaved Africans living at Rich Neck, as well as the owners of the plantation (Csordas 1990).

For the English plantation owners the ditch represented an exertion of control; over the environment, over their household, and over their safety. For the Powhatan it may have been a reminder of the tension between themselves and the English. For the enslaved Africans living at Rich Neck the ditch would have been a familiar feature in the

landscape with the added significance of more than figuratively binding them to that space and representing a loss of control counterbalancing the plantation owner's perspective.

Pipes

Archaeologists recovered a pipe from a portion of the southern ditch surrounding Rich Neck's domestic complex. The context from which it was excavated (68AC-01074) was interpreted only as a fill episode in the ditch, with a TPQ of 1690, containing soil described as "Dark ashy fill" (Adinolfi 1993) as well as brick rubble and charcoal. In Figure 3 the artifacts are broken into Southian functional groups (South 2002[1977]).

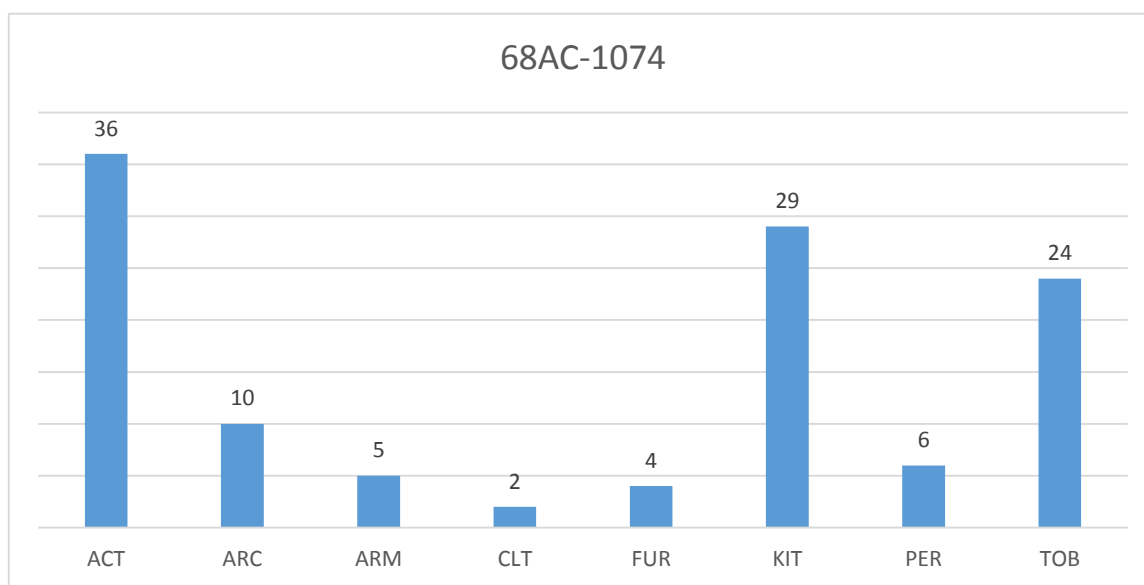


Figure 4 Artifact counts from 68AC-01074 by functional group

Ignoring the Activities group which functions as a catch all, the artifacts appear to represent domestic refuse with the addition of arms artifacts.

The pipe bowl and part of the stem are intact however the stem appears to be broken off about half way down its length, about 5cm. the pipe bowl is about 2.5 cm wide and 3 cm deep with 8 facets about .75 cm wide each. At the bottom of the bowl, near where it connects to the pipe stem, a spur has been attached. The spur is about 1 cm across and is octagonal, similar to the bowl. Impressed into the spur are two cruciform one oriented along the accesses of the pipe, and 1.5-2 mm deep. The second cruciform is rotated 45 degrees and is only .5-1 mm deep, creating a mark similar to an asterisk.

The shape of the pipe, and marks along the length of the stem, suggest that rather than being created in a mold, the clay was roughly shaped, then carved into its finished form. This method of fabrication is often associated with Native American pipe construction (Mouer et al. 1999). The addition of the spur suggests that this pipe may be of Native American construction but has been inspired by European ball clay pipes (see Noël Hume 1969, Fig. 97), and possibly meant for English consumption.

In the same context, 68AC-01074, archaeologists recovered two other terracotta pipes with hand formed faceted bowls (Adinolfi 1993). From the nearby Reverend Richard Buck site (44JC568) there were at least a dozen similar pipes, which exhibited the asterisk on the pipe's heel, recovered from well and ditch contexts dating to the period between 1630 and 1650. A common aspect of almost all of these faceted Chesapeake pipes is the incised symbol on the heel (Mallios and Fesler 1999). The owners of Rich Neck would have viewed the pipe as just another trade item and representative of dealings with a local pipe maker. Though the cultural affiliation of the manufacturer is unknown, the form of the pipes are closely related to known styles of American Indian made pipes (Mouer 1993; Mallios and Fesler 1999).



Figure 5 Courtesy of Colonial Williamsburg Foundation's Archaeological Collections, 44WB52 Artifact no. 68AC-01074-ED, side



Figure 6 Courtesy of Colonial Williamsburg Foundation's Archaeological Collections, 44WB52 Artifact no. 68AC-01074-ED, bottom

As shown in Figure 6 the majority of the pipes at Rich Neck were imported white ball clay, however more than a quarter were locally produced terracotta pipes. It has been

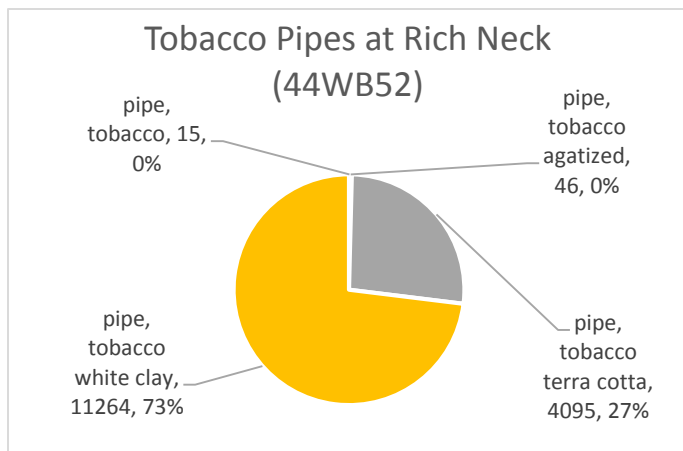


Figure 7 Tobacco pipes by type at Rich Neck plantation

suggested that these pipes are of Native American, African-American, and European-American manufacture (Emerson 1988; 1999; Mouer et al. 1999; Cox et al. 2006). Emerson (1994) suggested that the manufacture of pipes of these types could be a cottage industry and produced by enslaved African-Americans. However, Cox et al. (2006) assert that; in order to successfully make the pipes to the quality that have been discovered thus far the process would be too time consuming to be a chore done in one's spare time. Based on the latter finding, the number of pipes found at Rich Neck plantation it is more likely that the pipes were purchased from someone who specialized in making them.

The location of the asterisk on the heel of the pipe and its appearance of similarly made pipes at 44JC568, another nearby plantation, suggests that the symbol is a maker's mark. A pipe style like this intended for distribution would have left evidence of manufacture, like wasters or kiln furniture, as is found at the Swan Cove Kiln (18AN934) a pipe manufacture site (Cox et al. 2006). This does not exclude the pipe, or others like it, from African-American material culture. Whether or not the creation of the pipe is English, African, or American Indian in origin, it may have been used by enslaved Africans. For this analysis the individual using or viewing the item takes precedent over the individual creating the same item when interpreting archaeological data.

The ethnicity of locally made pipes in the Chesapeake has been a point of contention in the past (Emerson 1988, 1994, 1999, Mouer 1993, Mouer et al.1999, Cox et al. 2006). Controversies notwithstanding, the fact remains that the pipes were used cross culturally in the Americas, and had overlapping as well as disparate meaning to those individuals using them. The pipe being discussed in this section embodies the need for interpretation that considers how aspects of a given archaeological site are points of intersection between different cultural groups.

Silliman (2009) suggests that the use of material culture from outside cultures is a manifestation of groups adapting to changing technologies and environments. As these new items are adapted to the needs of a group they cease to be artifacts attributed solely to the cultural affiliation of the manufacturer but also of the consumer. In addition, anyone who viewed or interacted with the object in the past had their own perceptions of its significance whether that meaning is tied to the economy, to social relations, or to cultural tradition. The symbol carved into the heel of the pipe regardless of its intended connotation is simple and could be the representation of an intersection from a variety of cultures (Gundaker 1998, Thompson 1983). Symbols like this can hold whatever meaning someone viewing or using them ascribes.

The cruciform, or asterisk, on the bottom of the pipe resembles some symbols incised on other ceramic objects that have been described as BaKongo cosmograms, as many other cruciform impressed or incised into ceramic objects have been (Ferguson 1992; Fennel 2007). However symbols like this, with arms pointing in six or more directions, are also interpreted to describe power in all directions, and used in both sacred and secular capacities (Gundaker 1998). This star-burst icon in sacred contexts is

repeated in Caribbean forms of Yoruba practices (Olmos and Paravisini-Gebert 2003) and Palo Monte Mayombe (Lage 2012). In Nsibidi, a symbol system not exclusively sacred in nature, from the Cross River region of modern Nigeria, also includes similar symbols (Gundaker1998:42-44). Cruciforms and asterisks are common symbols in many traditions spanning many African and European cultures (Fennel 2007; Gundaker 1998; Gundaker 2014). Many of these cultures were present, in Virginia and may have been present at Rich Neck (Emory University 2015; Herskovits 1990[1941]; Morgan 1998; Samford 2007).

Another possible interpretation given to the asterisk is an eight-pointed star. Kathryn Sikes (2008) has explored the star motif through multiple interpretive frameworks. The stars and celestial bodies were important to both the English as well as to the enslaved Africans being brought to the Americas. Sikes explores the significance of stellar navigation to the European colonists, and suggests that the stars may have been a reminder of their home countries which may have had the same stars in the sky. Celestial bodies held religious significance to Christianity, Islam, as well as some African religious practices. Pipes exhibiting stars were not necessarily ritual artifacts, only that their observers may have had reverence for the symbols inscribed on them. This interpretation of asterisk like symbols being interpreted as stars common to multiple cultural groups exhibits a convergence of perspectives between nearly all cultures present in the Mid-Atlantic.

The pipe as a symbol of tobacco consumption, represents a lucrative commodity that the enslaved Africans and African-Americans were bought to produce. The role of tobacco as a staple commodity in Africa predates the importation of enslaved individuals

to North America (Shaw 1960). This magnet of a commodity serves as a point of confluence of African and European interests, and thus represents both the social and economic intersection of the two.

The pipe, both this specific pipe as well as pipes as an artifact type, represent a common point of reference between Atlantic cultures. Like the cruciform symbol explored above, the pipe represents the intersection between worlds and starting point from which one may explore that intersection. In this artifact we are presented with an item that exhibits physical characteristics that resonate with American Indian, European, and various African and African-American cultures. It is an illustration of the idea presented above that; especially within African-American culture, while it is possible to identify the contributions of specific and distinct ethnic groups, it is far more productive to discuss the intersection between those cultures than it is to describe what separates them, much in the same way that the elements of the pipe cannot be separated from each other without destroying the pipe.

House Burial

Archaeologists uncovered a burial (68AT-453) between structure C and the overlapping footprints of structures E and F on the west side of the plantation complex that have been interpreted as slave quarters. The burial is oriented east to west with the head of the individual to the west and the feet to the east. The grave shaft was exceptionally shallow and no evidence of a coffin or shroud was present in the grave. The

only grave good recovered from the burial was a single nail lying on the floor of the grave shaft (McFaden et al. 1999).

This lack of protection from the elements and soil conditions resulted in the poor preservation of the remains. The majority of the remains consisted of a gray body stain, with spongy bone fragments interspersed throughout, in the bottom strata of grave fill. The nail recovered in 3 fragments was not related to a coffin and was found just above subsoil, next to the left hip of the interred individual (McFaden et al. 1999).

The osteological analysis completed by Dr. Douglas Owsley and D. Hunt (McFaden et al. 1999:28) relied primarily on the dentition of the individual and the long bones recovered in plaster. Based on the raw data collected from the remains, Owsley concluded that the individual was a young female, between the ages of 10 and 12, of African descent. The age and ancestry of the individual from 68AT-453 were determined based on the size, shape and developmental stage of the molars, which were the most intact portion of the remains recovered. This information is corroborated by the location of the burial next to post in ground structures designated C, E and F, which have been interpreted to be housing for the enslaved (McFaden et al 1999). The burial is likely contemporaneous with these structures which were occupied between 1665 and 1690 (Muraca et al. 2003).

As mentioned above the remains were not interred in a coffin, and there was no evidence to suggest that the remains were wrapped in a shroud (Muraca et al. 2003). It is not an uncommon occurrence to find burials within domestic space, without a coffin. DeCorse (1992) investigated subfloor domestic burials excavated at Elmina in Ghana all of which were interred in shrouds. Four domestic burials excavated and analyzed by

Armstrong and Fleischman (2003) from the Seville plantation on the northern coast of Jamaica, were all coffin burials. Armstrong and Fleischman note that this is likely a reflection of the status of these individuals as many other burials in the Caribbean only had shrouds. Handler's (1997) description of burial 72 at Newton Plantation includes that there is no evidence of a coffin or shroud, though the individual is interpreted to have been a high status diviner or healer.

Of the four house burials at Seville, only one was female (SAJ-B3) (Armstrong and Fleischman 2003). This individual was not much older than the individual found at Rich Neck with a probable age range of 17-19 years (Armstrong and Fleischman 2003; McFaden et al. 1999). Interestingly the SAJ-B3 had the worst preservation of the four house burials, this may be in part due to the shallowness of the grave (Armstrong and Fleischman 2003), or comparatively more gracile bones of females compared to males on average. Both of these female burials were just over two feet in depth (SAJ-B3 at ~27.6 in., 68AC-453 burial at 29.6 in.), with the deepest at Seville being a 40+ year old male at ~47.24 in. (Armstrong and Fleischman 2003; McFaden et al. 1999). The skull of the individual in Newton Plantation burial 72 was only ~3.14 in. below surface.

There is not much in terms of grave goods to interpret the status or place in the community of the young woman buried at Rich Neck plantation. The only item in the grave fill in addition to her remains was a single iron nail next to her left hip at the very bottom of the grave fill, suggesting that it was not placed in the grave by chance. Her burial position, supine with her arms crossed in front of her hips (McFaden et al. 1999), does not differ from the rest of the house burials discussed above (Armstrong and Fleischer 2003) or from burial 72 from the slave cemetery at Newton plantation (Handler

1997). Much like the Rich Neck burial, the “healer” from Newton (burial 72) was interred without a coffin, however he was interred with an abundance of grave goods including jewelry and a knife blade. Whether or not that individual was a healer or diviner in life, the individual’s high social status was signified by the amount of items he was buried with as well as the pipe found near his waist (Handler 1997).

The presence of iron is a reoccurring theme throughout the burials. All of the burials from Seville contained grave goods made of iron. In the male graves each had a significant object placed in or on their coffin made of iron (knife, lock, carpenters compass). While SAJ-B3 did not have a significant iron object the other three burials, all of the coffins were constructed with iron nails. SAJ-B3 did, however, still contain an object of significance, a pecked, faceted, crystal bottle stopper (Armstrong and Fleischer 2003). The single iron nail recovered from the burial at Rich Neck (McFaden et al. 1999) may have been part of an item that consisted of the nail and another organic material that did not survive.

The similarities in grave goods do not necessarily suggest that the various cultures which these individuals came from had related burial practices. Instead, the similarities found in these burials should illustrate that there may have been common factors in the ritual beliefs of the communities that buried them. LaRoche (2014:300) notes that many of the burials at the African Burial Ground in New York exhibited similar goods including iron objects. Goucher (2014:109-117) explains that many West African ethnic groups (specifically Akan, Bassari, and Yoruba) as well as Caribbean religions (Condomble, Haitian Vodun, Santeria, Kumina, or Trinidadian Orisa) all attribute spiritual significance to iron and venerate a god associated with material and its

manipulation. The transparent and reflective nature of the material of the bottle stopper may be a visual pun with water, which is often associated with communication between the physical and spiritual realms (LaRoche 2014; Gundaker 1998). As noted earlier in the discussion the nature of West African spirituality exhibits an additive quality that would allow communities to find and utilize commonalities among their diverse populations.

In 1680, contemporary with the occupation of the surrounding buildings, a law was passed in Virginia in an attempt to prevent slave revolts. “WHEREAS the frequent meeting of considerable numbers of negroe slaves under pretence of feasts and burials [*sic*] is judged of dangerous consequence...” (Henning 1823:481), the act goes on to ban the possession of weapons by the enslaved, as well as any movement outside the property of the enslaved individual’s owner’s land without a permit, and makes it illegal for any enslaved individual to raise a hand to any “christian [*sic*]” (Henning 1823:482). This passage illustrates two points. First that the English colonists were very suspicious of large gatherings of the enslaved (“negroe” slaves are mentioned specifically) and, second, that the individuals restricted by this act are being legally separated from those individuals considered Christian as mentioned above.

This suspicion of funerary ceremonies held by the enslaved may be an explanation for the type of burial uncovered at Rich Neck. The relatively shallow grave, and paucity of grave goods may illustrate the oppression of individuals of African descent in English Colonial society. However, Newton Plantation burial 72 (Handler 1997) suggests that a shallow grave may not indicate a rushed burial, as the “healer” was interred in a burial ground in Barbados. Burial depth as well as, the amount and nature of items entombed with an individual may be influenced by ethnic affiliation.

Regardless of the ethnicities of the enslaved Africans at Rich neck Plantation the death of the young woman, and her subsequent burial, would have had an impact on the whole community. Based on the demographic data discussed in the Historiography section above the enslaved community probably included a range of African ethnicities. Each individual would have ascribed their own meaning to the rituals and symbols used in the burial. If they were old enough when they were taken from their homelands to have memories of burial practices, they may have included their own customs in the burial rights that took place. For archaeologist this may mean pursuing multiple frames of reference during the research and excavation of sites and features like this burial. While almost all African American culture from the 17th century represented an intersection of African cultures, few other activities hold as much cultural significance as the treatment of the dead. In the context of the colonial Mid-Atlantic there is the added junction with European cultures.

Discussion and Conclusion

The ability to decode archaeological data is dependent on historical and cultural context in addition to its physical contextual information. This is especially true when only small amounts of information are available for the interpretation of a site, feature type, or time period. Though the data available to investigate the 17th century at Rich Neck is limited, we can still use the examples presented above to start to understand the ways in which the different cultural groups present would have interacted with one another and with their environment. Individuals with different cultural backgrounds

would have ascribed varying meanings to their surrounding and the symbols found within.

Identifying the most demographically prominent West African ethnicities historically present in a region both allows archaeologists to identify what culture is most likely associated with the enslaved populations and the material culture they left behind, as well as providing stakeholders in archaeological sites with a way to connect to their past. However, considering all of the ethnic groups that could be present on plantations while forming interpretations of archaeological data allows for more textured analysis.

The bounding ditch would have held overlapping meanings for the enslaved and the enslaver. This landscape feature separated the space of the elite from the rest of the surrounding population; yet this practice would have been common ground between the two groups. Additionally, the plantation owners would have seen the boundary ditch as a social statement, or declaration of ownership of their land, and its enslaved inhabitants. The enslaved individuals would have seen the ditch as a familiar landscape feature, and a barrier between an area through which they could move freely, and one in which they would be considered fugitives by the surrounding community.

The pipe illustrates the importance of tobacco as a commodity throughout the Atlantic world. This plant held significance for the American Indians who introduced it to Europeans, the English colonists living in Middle Plantation, as well as to West African cultures who used tobacco as a hunger suppressor, and the associated pipes as symbols of status (Shaw 1960). The pipe provides a window through which to explore the adaptation of materials and objects cross culturally. Pipes like the one found at Rich Neck illustrate the intersection of ideas, practices, and material goods.

Where the ditch and pipe illustrate commonality between enslaved Africans and English colonists, the burial describes differences in experience. The climate in which English burials and enslaved African burials took place were extremely different. While Christian funerals were allowed to be community affairs, the colonial government, in fear of rebellion, banned gatherings such as funerals for enslaved Africans (Hening 1823). Funerary practices may represent the most direct link between enslaved African American communities and their African ancestors. The suppression of funerals for enslaved Africans and African Americans would have had a major impact on the ways those communities dealt with deaths.

By focusing on the ways individuals' perceptions intersected and diverged we can start to uncover the way relations between different cultural groups developed over time. These relations include both those between plantations owners and the enslaved Africans living on their plantations, as well as between individuals in that comprised the culturally diverse populations bound to the land. Acknowledging the heterogeneous composition of early colonial Virginia removes the option for a simple answer and complicates interpretations of the archaeological record. This approach embraces the complexity in English Colonial society, and forces archaeologists to think beyond simple classifications in their interpretation of the past.

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