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The Plantation Archaeology of the Southeastern Coast

ABSTRACT

The archaeology of slave settlements is a recent development within historical archaeology but has gained substantial headway during the last few years. Most of the excavations have been in coastal areas of the Southeastern United States, principally in Georgia and South Carolina. Substantive questions about housing, diet, and lifestyle have been examined. Some comparison between planters, overseers, and slaves has been attempted. Until now little of urban Black settlements or piedmont slave settlements have been investigated.

The archaeology of slave sites presents complementary problems and opportunities for the historian dealing with written documents and for the archaeologist dealing with the documents of excavated data. Each must be aware of the biases pertaining to their particular forms of information. The archaeologist cannot recover any large amounts of organic materials. Thus plant food remains, clothing, wood, and basketry, among other objects are in short supply. He cannot directly observe behavior and social organization but must attempt to reconstruct those aspects from the more imperishable objects and associations that he uncovers. The temptation always exists to try to reconstruct also the superstructure that existed in the past.

The historian dealing with slave sites must also bear in mind that he is dealing with the past of a people who were mostly prevented from leaving written records of their own. The descriptions the historian uses are the products of people who either did not directly experience slave life or chose to record only certain aspects of it. Much of what slaves did and felt was not considered worthy of record. Much of it was documented because it was unusual, because it was abberrant or non-standard behavior and thus worthy of comment. Much of the writing about slavery, as of any submerged group, was designed to reinforce the established system.

If both sorts of students keep these biases in mind, a profitable result can be obtained. The archaeologist may be able to define the infrastructure, how the slaves made their living. Matters of food remains, living space, tools, housing, in short material culture can be recovered by excavation of slave sites. The archaeologist must then turn to the historian for the non-material data that make up the rest of the picture. Only full cooperation will yield significant results. We must guard against the idea that either discipline has the magic key to complete understanding of this significant segment of our historic heritage.

Slave Archaeology

During the past dozen years archaeological explorations of sites related to slave occupation have begun to make a definite impact on historical archaeology and Black studies. This has occurred while more conventional historians have also engaged in new studies of the Black experience in America. The work of Genovese (1972), Fogel and Engerman (1974), Gutman (1976), and others have brought new viewpoints to the field as well as more modern techniques of analysis. The impact, however, of slave archaeology is just beginning to be felt in the allied discipline of history and ethnic studies.

Some sporadic studies of sites occupied by Blacks had taken place shortly after World War II. The Bullens excavated Black Lucy's Garden near Andover, Massachusetts, and Ivor Noël Hume examined what he believed was a slave trash dump in Virginia (Bullen and Bullen 1945; Noël Hume 1966). Neither of these, however, was planned as a specific test of questions carefully phrased to investigate problems. In the same fashion, test excavations at the Negro Fort on the Appalachicola River in Florida were simply to identify structures for purposes of park planning (Poe 1963). In 1967, I became concerned that, while a number of Colonial and Plantation period sites had been studied, no purely slave sites had been dug. This was a

clear and present need for archaeology. Hopefully, historians would also show an interest if archaeologists produced usable results.

Modest funds were secured for tests at Kingsley Plantation on Fort George Island at the mouth of the St. Johns where the Florida State Park Service needed information for rebuilding a slave cabin. While their objective was purely to gather architectural information, I felt that we could begin to investigate some aspects of slave lifestyle and of their cultural processes. Kingsley had been a slave importer, with perhaps an unusually permissive attitude toward his charges. I had done what appeared to be an adequate amount of research to establish a number of things that I hoped to demonstrate. Among these were the search for Africanisms among the material artifacts of those newly arrived slaves, evidence of adaptation in housing, dress, behavior to the new situation, and data on lifestyle. At Kingsley we studied much of two slave houses, both probably of slave drivers or foremen, identified a well, and found that most of our assumptions were false.

No evidence of Africanisms was found, even though we were digging in the structures of an unusually permissive slave owner, dealing with newly imported Africans. Belatedly realizing that the slaves came naked and in chains, I still could not understand why they did not recreate some African artifacts. I was aware that today there is a well structured Afro-American material and nonmaterial tradition. Since Kingsley my objective has been to attempt to devise strategies that would show when and how this tradition has arisen.

Other surprises were in store. Perhaps most important was the evidence that slaves were preparing a variety of foods in their houses, regardless of whether or not they were being fed out of a common kitchen as plantation accounts had described. We were later able to confirm this pattern in other settlements, with important implications. A major surprise was the discovery of musket flints, evidence of bullet manufacture, and in short, solid evidence of the possession and use of firearms by slaves. This contradicted both the Spanish and British slave codes which attached strong penalties to slaves having guns. This evidence has been questioned as perhaps due to the first excavations being of a slave hunter for the master's table. However, in the majority of slave houses excavated, some evidence of guns has been found. That the ban was so frequently evaded says something about the conditions existing between the races and classes. While we found no clear evidence at Kingsley for the adaptation of Africans to the new condition, we did begin to see that more archaeology was needed. It was always possible that this first excavation was such a special case, that our conclusions would be refuted when a better sample became available (Fairbanks 1972).

The next project, a brief excavation at Ryefield on Cumberland Island continued our interest in slave sites. This project occurred before the National Park Service established the National Seashore there and private funds were limited. Excavation of part of one slave house at a detached settlement confirmed many of the things we had seen at Kingsley. Food remains were highly varied and included wild species. Ceramics, while of predominantly British forms, were somewhat out of date for the period of occupation. The plantation was abandoned during the Civil War so that there seemed to be no freed man materials. Once again, evidence of firearms was present (Ascher and Fairbanks 1971). While Ryefield was quite remote from the Stafford main house to which it belonged and major slave settlement, we failed to find any direct material evidence of African artifacts. I began to postulate that planter opposition caused the lack of such traits. As Ryefield seemingly had no resident overseer, supervision must have been supplied by slave foremen or drivers. I had expected to see a more permissive lifestyle under these conditions. The origins of an Afro-American tradition in America remained obscure. At Ryefield, we were dealing with single pen frame houses, much less definite architecturally than the substantial tabby structures at Kingsley. Most details of slave lifestyle, however, seemed highly similar.

Our next project was our most extensive. We were asked by the Sea Island Company to conduct a survey and testing program at the Cannon's Point and Lawrence lands they had recently acquired. This involved both prehistoric and plantation pe-

riod sites of considerable extent. Both plantations had been established at the end of the 18th century for cultivating long-staple cotton. At least the Coupers, owners of Cannon's Point, also owned a mainland delta rice plantation. Both plantations were highly profitable within the framework of a varying international market. Five plantation period sites were tested with highly specific field objectives. One tabby ruin on Lawrence Plantation provided little information as it had been converted to alternate uses in the post-Civil War period. Two slave settlements at Cannon's Point produced a plethora of information. At the main house, we excavated midden samples from behind the detached kitchen to obtain a comparative sample of food and cultural remains. While the ruins of the main house were carefully recorded, no substantial excavations of purely architectural nature were attempted. In addition, thorough testing of the cotton gin-warehouse was informative as to the processing of the cotton crop. At the overseer's house, we were able to secure samples from the midden area and a well. This again, allowed us to make comparisons between the daily discards of planter, overseer, and slave. We were acquiring data that had not been recorded in written documents but that was quite fully conformable from what had been recorded in those accounts. That is, once we had recovered the information, the documents made more sense than they had previously (McFarlane 1975; Otto 1975; Fairbanks 1976).

At the Couper house, behind what had been the most elaborate kitchen on the Georgia coasts, we recovered ceramics, glass, and food bones that represented the daily discards of an elite household that entertained widely and richly. These materials were abundantly informative about the lifestyle of the Coupers and their guests. Beef, pork, and venison were eaten in the form of roasts served from platters onto transfer-printed pearlware plates in matching sets. Soups were frequently served from large matching tureens. Fish taken from the deep sounds, as well as the adjacent Hampton River, were frequently eaten. Game and fish were evidently procured by slaves specifically assigned to those tasks. French wines were regularly served and shellfish were a common feature of the diet.

At the opposite end of the scale, the food and artifact evidence from slave trash piles presented sharp contrasts. Beef and pork were still common but they were usually represented by head and foot bones. No steaks or roasts for these people! There were a few obviously discarded dishes from the same patterns as those at the main house. The most common ceramic form, however, was the modest-sized open bowl, often in banded pearlware, a style almost totally absent from the big house trash pile. This change in table ceramics indicated not only different patterns of possession but a radically different cuisine. "Spoon-meat," Pilau, or pilaf based on rice midlings or corn meal, with whatever meat might be available was the common slave meal. While game and shellfish were abundantly present, they were largely different species than those from the big house trash piles. At the slave sites mullet and topgaffsail catfish were found instead of the speckled trout and school bass of the master's discards. Opossum and raccoon were the most frequent wild animal bones identified. These differences in food bone clearly reflect different catching methods. The fish bones represent species commonly caught in the smaller creeks along the coast, and probably with set nets or traps. The opossum and raccoon bones belong to nocturnal animals that were probably caught by traps or snares. As slaves were not permitted out of their houses at night, they would have little opportunity to chase or shoot these small animals.

Today coastal Blacks, many of whom are descendants of slaves on the coastal plantations, still frequently collect raccoons. This is usually done at the spring tide of the fall, the "Marsh Hen Tide," when high water completely inundates the spartina marsh. At those times hunters can go over the marsh in flat-bottomed boats and collect dozens or scores of raccoons with no more than a club. The animals are boiled until the meat frees from the bones. Canned in glass jars, this meat forms an ingredient of "spoon meat" throughout much of the year. Certainly, the canning aspect does not date back to plantation times as the glass jar was only developed in the last half of the nineteenth century. It may be, however, that recent practice does represent an inheritance from an older pat-

tern. Certainly, meat/rice pilafs are today characteristic of much of southern rural cooking. It has often been observed that food patterns learned in childhood are deeply embedded in culture and, however dietetically unsatisfactory, may persist for long periods. Surely the addition of meat to the heavily carbohydrate diets, supplied to the slaves from plantation stores, would have added significant elements to their diets.

We found that both food bones and ceramics at the overseer's house were more similar to those at slave trash piles than they were to comparable remains at the planter's house. Again, opossum, raccoon, mullet, and catfish made up significant parts of the identifiable remains. Once again, small open bowls, usually of banded pearlware, were characteristics of the overseers' discards. This rather clearly emphasizes that while such supervisors were of the elite white caste, they enjoyed few of the economic rewards of the superordinate group. Overseer housing was a large two-story frame building, much more like planters' mansions than it was like slave quarters. Evidently some visible status symbols were usually accorded these plantation employees. Many overseers were the younger sons of neighboring planters, in effect serving an apprenticeship. Some, however, were more permanent and formed a sort of professional class of plantation managers for absentee owners. As the Couper family was a resident owner, they usually employed short-term overseers. The material discards of such men and their families illustrate quite aptly the position of the short-term overseer as a man caught between two worlds. They had to produce enough to satisfy owners but would find that excessive harshness led to many varied and effective expressions of resentment among the slaves (Genovese 1972:11–22).

The excavations at Cannon's Point were our first examination of an adequate sample of three classes of artifactual remains from a barrier island plantation. The Couper family was unusual in some respects and we could not be sure that our data was representative of the culture as a whole. Most of the larger coastal plantations were dual operations with long staple cotton grown on barrier islands while rice or sugar cane was raised on mainland freshwater areas. We thus welcomed a request by the Sea Island Company to make another survey of their other lands on St. Simons Island. The major segment of these areas were the southern half of the Butler Point or Hampton Plantation, a part of the extensive Butler holdings. Major Pierce Butler employed the Roswell Kings, father and son, for many years as his overseers because he was a largely absentee owner. His nephew, Pierce (Meese) Butler, who inherited the plantation was also almost never present and seems to have taken little part in decision making. The survey also included limited testing at much smaller plantations of Pikes Bluff and Sinclaire. In all, the St. Simons survey gave us a badly needed comparative sample (Mullins 1979).

The Hampton Plantation consisted of a rapid survey of the area of the second main house with extensive ruins of what appears to have been a walled garden or entrance complex together with a set of tabby slave cabins, some sort of auxilliary building, and the ruin of the overseer's house about a mile from the major complex. This last house was being built during the visit of Fanny Kemble to the Georgia coast in the winter of 1839. At the slave settlement of Hampton, known as Jones from the nearby Creek, we excavated one double pen slave house, part of the plantation road, a deep well, and a specialized trash pile. In addition, we made a detailed study of a very interesting tabby cotton gin building. This cotton barn had been built with vertical wooden posts. In addition, the corners of the building contained horizontal iron bars interlocked at the corners. These were cast iron fire grate bars and would not have substantially strenghtened the building. They were all warped, evidently from being overheated in the large firebox to which they had originally belonged. Although we have found no reference to such an event or to the use of iron in the building, they evidently came from the steam mill on Butler Island. The tabby contained an occasional burned glass sherd or pearlware sherd.

Near the middle of the single row of slave houses was a pile of shell about two feet tall that we at first assumed to be a rubbish pile. Upon excavation it proved to contain largely clean oyster

shells with small amounts of ceramic and glass sherds. Evidently, the overseer obliged the slaves to segregate their shell discards for use in tabby construction. The Jones settlement was about two miles south of the aboriginal shell mound at the north end of the plantation. Evidently the Indian shell heaps at Butler Point were less extensive than the ones at Cannon's Point. The construction of at least the original main house (destroyed in a hurricane), six slave houses, and the extensive walled garden area, and a tabby walled barn area, evidently used up most of the available shell. The second main house, the foundations of which are still visible, was largely of tabby brick, not poured tabby. The Roswell Kings clearly understood the advantage to be gained from recycling of slave oyster shells. That their use of recycled iron grate bars added little or nothing to the stability of the cotton barn, does not detract from this early recycling effort. One wonders if the slaves received any benefit from this effort. No other systematic trash disposal was encountered.

We did excavate a deep, somewhat irregular pit that seems never to have reached water table. It is quite unlikely that it was ever a well. The only alternative explanation is that it was a latrine. If so this is the only case we have encountered of formal slave sanitary facilities.

One double pen house was excavated and another tested. All the houses but one were post construction with dirt floors and had a double fireplace in the center. Opposite ends of the one structure indicated differing patterns of use. The south end showed an intensively burned fire hearth but little occupational debris on the floor. While the northern apartment showed an apparent lighter use of the hearth, considerable amounts of discarded artifacts were packed into the dirt of the floor. Here again we found evidence of the possession of firearms, along with beads, a thimble, and fragments of personal ornaments. Evidently, the northern unit was occupied by a complete family as indicated by both male and female-related objects, although no objects could be associated specifically with children. The lack of discard material in the southern unit suggests that it was not occupied by a family unit. If occupied by a woman, she was certainly a much neater housewife than her northern neighbor. The cabin closest to the cotton barn had been built with a raised floor and may have been that of a slave driver or foreman.

In the center of the line of cabins was the foundation of a small structure built of tabby brick. It had been extensively mined by treasure hunters but seems to have been an equipment shed with a work area to the north, perhaps with a shed roof above it.

The slave housing of the Jones settlement were less elaborate than those at Kingsley but about on a par with some at Cannon's Point. The tabby slave housing nearer the main Hampton Plantation house were of considerably better quality than the detached settlement houses. Certainly some of these differences were due to shortages of shell at Jones. How much may have been due to the presence or absence of resident or absentee planters, or to individual planter attitudes, we cannot at present tell.

The work at Hampton Plantation and especially the excavations at the Jones settlement expanded our information on the relationships between slaves and the daily management of the plantation. We are thus able to see individual differences, within a common pattern, in the way in which different planters provided housing, food, and other necessities for their slaves. As Cannon's Point was largely a resident planter operation while Hampton was an absentee owner situation, we are perhaps beginning to define the effect of these patterns on slave life. I think we are also getting some information on the advantages of long-term overseer continuity. The recycling efforts on the Roswell Kings, father and son, suggest strongly that fairly permanent overseers may have instituted programs aimed at conserving plantation resources and of promoting greater efficiency. These probably had effects on the daily conditions of slaves on the plantations. The Roswell Kings may represent a good example of a class of professional overseer. They also seem to have been successful managers of their personal business undertakings in Darien and elsewhere.

While the Cannon's Point and Hampton Plantation research was being carried out, Theresa Singleton (1980) worked on Butler Island in the

rice growing part of the Pierce Butler plantation. Here she located the sites of plantation settlements as well as aboriginal features and carried out test excavations at one slave settlement. Butler Island was probably the largest of the Georgia tidal flow rice plantations. Extensive acreage was cleared and provided with canal irrigation from the delta branches of the Altahaha River in a highly successful and continuing operation. Major Pierce Butler had learned the operation of rice gorwing in the South Carolina tidewater area before coming to Georgia late in the 18th century in search of available lands. His rice growing efforts were continued by his heirs until, and even after, the Civil War.

When planters discovered that the freshwater raised by tidal flow could be used to irrigate rice fields, new, larger areas of land opened to the cultivation of that crop. The clearing of the dense swamps of the southeastern deltas was a tremendous task as was also the construction of necessary canals, embankments, tide gates, and other complex capital investments. Dutch hydraulic engineers were imported by Butler to design the complex system. The circumstances under which tidal flow irrigated rice was raised along the South Carolina and Georgia coastal zones involved cultivation in relatively small fields. These "paddies" were probably necessary to manage the water control problems but were also derived from the Old World models of wet rice cultivation. The result was the development of a task system of allocating slave labor. Each slave was assigned a specific area of land to work at whatever agricultural duty was seasonally required: ditching, hoeing, planting, harvesting, etc. This task system meant that at least some slaves were able to complete their assigned duties by the middle of the afternoon. The task system seems to have allowed some slaves, better able to work heavy chores, moderate amounts of free time. This could be devoted to raising garden crops, fishing, trading, etc. The task system seems to have spread to the long-staple cotton parts of plantations on the barrier islands owned by planters who also raised rice. On the lower Piedmont of Georgia the gang system of using slave labor was substituted. In that practice slaves were not assigned individual plots or polders but instead were worked in gangs as long as the planter or overseer chose. We have not yet examined the effects on slave lifestyle of these two contrasting labor management systems. Sugar cultivation also probably required specific seasonal patterns of labor.

At Butler Island, Singleton (1980) was able to examine briefly the site of a water-powered rice mill with some associated features. The important activities in her excavations, from the standpoint of this discussion, were her location of the slave settlements on this rice plantation. She thoroughly tested one double pen cabin and defined the overall pattern of the entire settlement. The house was a frame structure with massive central fireplace base. The cabin was set within an irrigated rice field with the consequent necessity of raising the floor above the periodic water. There was evidence of subsidiary irrigation ditches within a few feet of the house walls. Household discards were not substantially different from those at Hampton Plantation and Cannon's Point Plantation on St. Simons Island. What this excavation did give us was comparative data on both the rice and long-staple cotton phases of coastal plantations. Housing, diet, and lifestyle in general seem to have been much the same in both locations. It is particularly interesting that the British actress Fanny Kemble wrote much of her anti-slavery journal on the Butler Plantation. In this case, archaeology has been able to serve its older role of expanding and revising documentary evidences.

Rochelle Marrinan and Jennifer Hamilton conducted preliminary excavations at the LeConte Plantation of Woodmanston near Riceboro, Georgia, during 1979 Spring term (Hamilton 1980). The area of this gravity flow rice plantation main house has been acquired by the Garden Clubs of Georgia who hope to restore the famous LeConte garden. Thus the major excavation effort was to attempt to define the garden area near where some camellia bushes still survive. A badly-robbed brick wall footing and a separate chimney base were also found. So far no evidence of the location of the slave settlement has been found, but the Garden Clubs hope to eventually conduct a thorough excavation and interpretation of this important

plantation site. As gravity flow rice irrigation preceded the development of tidal flow irrigation techniques, we may hope to have some time depth of rice culture on the Georgia coasts (Hamilton 1980).

In other Georgia coastal areas some results have been obtained from locational studies of slave sites on St. Simons Island at Retreat Plantation, Hamilton Plantation, at Mulberry Grove on the Savannah River, and on Sapelo Island at the French established plantation of "le Chatalet," locally known as "Chocolate." If future work can be carried out at these sites we should achieve a major understanding of the local and individual variation in plantation existence.

In South Carolina, some significant excavations have been carried out. Leslie Drucker excavated a single pen post-built small house which is almost completely lacking in documentation. She believes, however, that is represents a slave cabin, probably built before 1800. She was able to discuss artifact and food bone remains in considerable detail. In general, Spiers Landing seems to fall into the slightly earlier and somewhat more modest dimensions of the coastal plantation pattern (Drucker 1979). At Limerick Plantation near the Cooper River, Wilham Lees and Katherine Kimberly-Lees (1979) were able to discuss the function of Colono-Indian ceramics as well as some evidence from the main house and detached kitchen.

Leland Ferguson has recently embarked on a major study of what had previously been called Colono-Indian pottery (Noël Hume 1966). On the basis of various lines of evidence, Ferguson proposes that this class of simple earthenware ceramics be considered, at least in large part, the work of Black slaves. It certainly is found primarily in sites where slaves lived or worked. From Tidewater Virginia southward to South Carolina, it often makes up the majority of such artifact collections. It is largely absent in Georgia plantation sites, perhaps because they were somewhat later than the more northern plantations. Singleton did find a few sherds at Butler Island. In some respects it resembles simple pottery made by Catawba Indians in the Colonial and following Federal periods. We know that these Indians sold this ware in Charleston and probably other rice-coast cities. Perhaps this pottery will be proved to represent part of the missing Afro-American tradition.

At Kingsmill Plantation excavations of both slave and upper status ceramic collections and some discussion of contrast in status seem to simply confirm what has been said above on this subject (Outlaw et al. 1977; Kelso 1976). Samuel Smith in Tennessee has excavated slave cabins at Andrew Jackson's First Hermitage. This represents an upland settlement and probably is the best evidence we have for this phase at the present time (Smith 1976, 1977). He also tested the sites of two slave sites at Castalian Springs, a 19th century Tennessee farm and resort (Smith 1975).

From the previous discussion, it is clear that a fair amount of archaeology of slave sites has been made. So far we have been able to more accurately define house styles and family life details as these are revealed architecturally and by trash deposits. We have rather surprisingly found a consistent presence of firearms, little evidence of Afro-American material cultural traits, and considerable evidence that at least slaves in a task system were able to augment their plantation issue of rations with a variety of wild resources. Consistently different patterns of ceramics between the major social classes of planter, overseer, and slave have been clearly identified. To a large extent we have been able to supply some information on the daily material situation of Black Americans that had been largely ignored in available records. I think we are now ready to build some summaries about the cultural processes and trajectories of slave life in the antebellum period.

Recent work at King's Bay Naval Support Base, Camden County, Georgia, has indicated some additional aspects of plantation life but so far have added little to our knowledge of slave lifestyles there. For various reasons the slave settlement at the King Plantation in what is now King's Bay Naval Base has not been defined and excavated. What we have, however, are some extensive collections excavated from what appears to have been the detached combined kitchen and wash house for the King Plantation. Major Thomas King was a relatively small planter owning only 1,000 acres

and 30 slaves. We had hypothesized that small planters would show a simpler, less varied lifestyle than the relatively few really large planters. The excavation of the kitchen/wash house of Thomas King has revealed elaborate pearlware ceramics, French wine bottles, wheel-cut and gilded stem goblets, and a painted case clockface. All are taken as evidence of an extraordinarily high lifestyle on this quite small plantation.

Another dimension to slave studies has been opened up by the work of Jerome Handler and Frederick Lange (1978) in Barbados. Their investigations were largely concerned with the evidences from slave burials. As interesting and important as their evidences may be, they are not readily comparable with the work that has been done in the Southeastern United States. In the latter area, little or no excavation of slave cemeteries has been attempted. Certainly excavation of slave cemeteries in the Southern United States is badly needed and a definition of burial patterns as well as the physical anthropology of the burials would do much to place our studies in proper perspective. For various reasons, however, burial studies have not been scheduled. Thus Handler and Lange's work stands alone as a contribution of considerable significance.

One additional aspect of Black archaeology has been the first examination of what appears to have been a freedman settlement on Colonel's Island near Brunswick, Georgia. There Theresa Singleton and Martin F. Dickinson excavated at two rather poorly constructed house sites for West Georgia College. The bulk of the artifacts dated from the late 1860s and 1870s. We know that there was a major influx of freedmen to the coast following Sherman's march through Georgia and believe that this site represents such a settlement. House construction was definitely sub-standard as bricks of the fireplace were set in marsh mud rather than mortar. Most bricks were clearly salvaged from earlier structures. Artifacts and food bone remains also seem to share this suggestion of rather extreme poverty. Certainly more, broader excavations are needed as are better comparisons with sites belonging to white subsistence farmers in the same vicinities.

Problems for the Future

When we consider what has been done with Black archaeology so far, we are forced to consider the problems that are encountered, the limitations of the data, and questions of how efforts should be developed towards a better understanding of the Black experience in America. As James Deetz has pointed out (1977), archaeology offers the best approach to understand this imperfectly recorded segment of our national heritage. Archaeologists recognize the limitations of contemporary written documents. Slaves lived in enforced illiteracy and whites who wrote about them did not consider most aspects of their daily life worthy of comment. The usual happenings are seldom mentioned, whereas unusual events and nonstandard behavior get some mention. In many cases planters, overseers, or visitors to plantations did not know much about the life of the slaves themselves. It often seems to the archaeologist that there is about a 50% chance that the written record is either wrong or mistaken in one way or another. Oral histories of slaves such as those collected by the Works Progress Administration during the Great Depression suffer from similar deficiencies. These recollections of slave life and times were colored by the lapse of years and were interpreted by members of the local elite group, often themselves descendants of planters.

In the more or less natural enthusiasm for one's own discipline, the archaeologist may easily be led into the belief that only archaeology can reveal ultimate truth. This bias is probably equally unreliable as is the demonstrated bias of contemporary written records of the slavery period. What are the biases of the archaeological approach and how may we evaluate them? In the first place, archaeology recovers the harder parts of material culture: metals, usually corroded, ceramics, glass, brick or tabby parts of buildings, some bone from food remains, and partially decayed wooden parts of buildings. Plant remains: clothing, plant foods, superstructures of wooden houses, all the more readily perishable parts of the fabric in which slaves lived have largely disappeared. In addition, the archaeologist usually deals with the discards of

daily life: the trash disposed of in one way or another. If the historian reads other people's letters, the archaeologist sorts other people's garbage. Trash is informative and recent archaeological studies of contemporary garbage has shown us how valuable it may be. We, however, are still largely studying the discards of a culture, not the primary behavior patterns themselves. Our job is to deduce the behavior from what is available.

Some of the advantages and limitations of the archaeological approach are illustrated in our studies of slave diet. Fogel and Engerman (1974) in a highly controversial book applied the statistical, cliometrical technique to estimating slave dietary patterns. They took the total food production of plantations, rather accurately recorded in planter journals. From this they subtracted those crops marketed by the plantation. The remainder was divided by the total number of persons on the plantation. Their result, about 3,000 calories per person daily, ignored the fact that not all residents of the plantation had equal access to plantation resources. Our excavations emphasized this inequality of access in identifying different food remains between planter, overseer, and slave trash piles. We recognized early in the study that we could not adequately measure the contribution of plant foods as we excavated little or nothing of that component of the diet. We also were aware that salt pork, known to have been issued to slaves, did not contain bone that could be archaeologically recovered. I was greatly impressed, however, with the large amounts of wild animal resources represented in all the slave sites we dug. My first estimate was that at least half of meat protein in slave sites was derived from wild species. The preliminary estimate, admittedly very approximate, was that the caloric intake of full field hands was probably in the neighborhood of 4,500 calories. A group of faculty and students in the University of Florida medical anthropology program became interested in this problem and made an exhaustive study using plantation documents and archaeological data. From planter records they were able to define the work load assigned slaves. This was what the planters said the slaves worked. From UNESCO tables it was possible to establish caloric intake levels of about 5,000 daily. While these figures indicate that slaves in coastal task system plantations worked as hard as any laborers, it has other significant implications (Gibbs, Cargill, Lieberman and Reitz 1980).

More significant, perhaps, is the conclusion that the coastal plantations could not have maintained production levels and consequent prosperity without the contribution of the slaves themselves to their diet. Plantation rations probably closely approximated Fogel and Engerman's estimate of 3,000 calories daily. The other "half" came from the slaves' foraging, fishing, and collecting efforts. What we need to look at now is to what extent planters recognized this contribution. Were planters who permitted greater food collecting activity any more successful than those who restricted it? Were slave supplements of diet recognized to any extent by planters, and especially overseers? Certainly, the slaves themselves must have known that without their own efforts life would have been less satisfying and probably shorter. Production would certainly have been reduced as would have been life expectancy. These questions suggest another look at plantation records specifically seeking observations on this point. Until the question is raised, no systematic documentary search could have been undertaken. Additional areas of research may involve investigation of to what extent slaves became self-sufficient in runaway situations, in post slavery life, or in greater self-reliance. This data would probably modify, in some degree, our picture of slave life and its relation to the plantation system.

In the matter of firearms archaeological data have raised a question that deserves further search of both archaeological sites and of contemporary documents. Southern Black Codes uniformly forbade the posession of guns by slaves except on specific hunting tasks. Yet, we have found such evidence repeatedly. Did planters and civil authorities believe that the considerable sanctions imposed guaranteed lack of guns by slaves? To what extent are there planter evidences of such possession whether punished or tacitly permitted? If permitted, this would not usually be a matter of record. Why were not these firearms discovered and

confiscated? Where and how were guns and ammunition obtained? Certainly, the pervasive planter fear of slave violence seems to have had a substantial basis in reality. The gun flints seem not to have been used as strike-a-lights.

An additional aspect of Colonial and plantation life that may be clarified by archaeological studies of plantation sites is the shift in diet preferences of pork to beef and back to pork. British post-medieval foodways emphasized a major dependence on pork. Yet in British Colonial sites beef bones make up the bulk of food remains. Honerkamp, on the basis of excavations at Ft. Frederica, has suggested that increased space for range was involved in this shift. We know from plantation documents that pork was regularly supplied by many planters to the slaves. So far, however, beef seems to predominate in slave food bone discards. It is difficult to evaluate the contribution of salt pork and bacon in slave diets as those forms contain no bone to show up in trash deposits. In post slavery times and even today pork is an important constituent of Southern diets. As pigs are much more efficient converters of food into edible meat, we would expect pig bones to dominate the deposits. Some combination of archaeological and documentary study may be able to explain when and why the shifts occurred (Honerkamp 1980).

The expected appearance of material culture traits and objects of African type in the archaeological deposits were confidently expected in early excavations. They have not been identified so far! We know that planters systematically repressed expressions of African heritage in an effort to force the slaves into behavior and submission acceptable to the system. However, there is a strong and vigorous Afro-American tradition in America today. Of major interest is the question of when and how this cultural heritage developed. Some African crafts such as basketry have persisted in isolated situations where the products had a specific contribution to plantation activities. Deetz suggests that Black freedmen houses at Parting Ways in Massachusetts conform to African construction modules (Deetz 1977). Certainly many slave plantation houses were of post construction like their earlier African homes, but varieties of cruck or post-built houses were common in the post-medieval British building tradition. Such houses with walls supported by upright wooden posts are not in themselves evidence of an African building tradition. To what extent does the ubiquity of "spoon meat" in slave sites suggest derivation from African traditions. As far as I know this relationship between African and New World foodways has not been investigated. Are there other aspects of "soul food" patterns that represent African elements or derivations? These are certainly fruitful subjects for investigation.

The presence, even dominance, of plain earthenwares in most slave sites in the Carolinas has suggested to Leland Ferguson that this Colono-Ware may be of Black manufacture. We do know that similar ceramics were made by Catawba Indian potters in South Carolina. These simple pots were purchased by Anglo-Americans, apparently mainly for use by slaves. Several questions have prompted futher investigation (Ferguson 1980). What similarities between Colono-Ware and West African ceramics can be recognized? How did remnant Indian groups such as the Catawba develop ceramic styles quite similar to what slaves may have been producing. A further complication is that the early Spanish pearl-fishing site of Nueva Cadiz off the Venezuelan coast also shows pottery generally similar to Colono-Ware and to Noël Hume's Colono-Indian ware. At Nueva Cadiz, this pottery was produced by de-tribalized Indian slaves captured along the northern South American coasts and held in slavery at the pearl fisheries. Willis (1976), in his study of the Nueva Cadiz site, has suggested that the ceramics represents a sort of least common denominator of slaves removed from participants in tribal culture. If this is a valid observation, it helps explain the character of Colono-Ware in Southeastern slave contexts. The disappearance of Colono-Ware from more modern Afro-American contexts would logically relate to the general participation of slaves in the world trade networks of the 19th century.

Black burial sites have been examined by Combes for the Southeast (1972), Crosby and Emerson (1979) for Parting Ways, and by Handler and Lange (1978) for the island of Barbados in the

Caribbean. The pattern is characterized by irregular grave orientation, presence of grave offerings of ceramics on the surface, and general lack of headstone markers. Some patterns of locally carved wooden headstones have been described. No Southeastern slave cemetery has been systematically excavated and there are probably sufficient reasons for avoiding such excavations due to ethical considerations. Except for the Barbados sites, it is far from clear whether Black burial patterns developed during slavery times or in the post-Civil War period. While more specific evidence and comparative studies are certainly needed, we clearly are dealing with a significant segment of the Afro-American tradition. Answers to the questions as to the origin, development, and persistence of Afro-American burial patterns could help greatly in understanding the fabric of Black American culture.

Other major problems dealing with slave or Black material culture remain to be investigated or have been only lightly treated until now. As I have indicated only a few sites that can be ascribed to freedmen have been dug. Certainly the excavations at Weeksville in Brooklyn and Sandy Ground on Staten Island have shown that significant insights can be gained from excavation of Northern, urban sites (Anonymous 1970, 1971, Gutman 1976, Salwen and Bridges 1974, Schuyler 1974). Excavations at Parting Ways and Black Lucy's Garden (Deetz 1977, Bullen and Bullen 1945, Vernon G. Baker 1977) refer to very early Black settlements and provide highly significant time differences. There is a need to have comparative material from southern freedmen both before and after the Civil War, in both urban and rural situations.

So far excavation in slave and freedman sites has not clearly revealed the differences in culture that have existed between highly skilled craftsmen, house servants, field hands, Black foremen, and other status groups with the Black populations. It seems that we cannot yet talk about the details of the whole Black communities, only general conclusions are available. The need is clearly for historical and archaeological studies that will attack those aspects not yet examined.

This brings us to the larger question of the comparative study of slavery and of African peoples transported to other world areas. Only Handler and Lange (1978) have made any study within the Caribbean and that dealt largely with graveyards, as they were unable to find much evidence of housing or of work areas. Spanish, French, Dutch, and British patterns of slave management differed. In addition, there were differing styles of crops, economic systems, and world market situations. Probably much of the differing complexion of slavery systems was basically due to the varied cultural backgrounds of the dominant classes. The changing situations of the mother countries during the Colonial period brought about changes in Colonial slavery systems. The cross-cultural investigation of New World slavery has been attempted by historians, but archaeologists are far behind in this field.

As I have indicated the actual daily lifestyle of white overseers on Southern plantations was closer in some respects to that of slaves than it was to that of planters. When it comes to the archaeology of small white slave holders and of white slave-less subsistence farmers, we are almost totally ignorant. These classes, like the Black slaves, were largely illiterate and details of their lives rarely appear in the written record. In many cases we do not even know the location of subsistence farmsteads. It is highly probable that many parallels to slave life will be found once we begin to excavate such sites.

The potential richness of our archaeological study of Black Americans and of their condition, whether as slaves or freedmen, will be fruitful and rewarding only when we begin a systematic study of the whole fabric of Black culture. This will require a higher level of cooperation between historians and archaeologists than currently exists. Historical studies are different than those customarily pursued by archaeologists. In addition, historians seem reluctant to make the specific kinds of documentary studies more useful for excavators, as these are not prestigeful in history departments. In turn, archaeologists often do not realize what information historians may desire from the ground. Only when historians and

archaeologists can mutually determine what aspects of Black studies need attention can worthwhile progress be achieved. Archaeologists and historians both can profit from mutual concern with common objectives. Each must recognize the biases inherent in their sources. Each must carefully define what data are most apt to result from their fields of research. Each must more fully share those results with the others and gradually build a supportive interaction. I believe that the future of Black material studies is bright and that we already have an excellent foundation. It is an exciting and rewarding field.

Finally, I would like to admit to a personal lapse in the results of my work in slave and plantation archaeology. While it is certainly important to let other archaeologists and historians know what we have done, we have a larger and more imperative duty. That is to inform the people we are studying of those results. Throughout the country there is a large body of Black persons who should know what we have found out about their past. That they have not shown a great deal of interest until now is surely our fault. We have simply not presented our work in ways that arouse their interest. Many of our reports are hidden in theses and dissertations which, at most, have been read by most of the candidate's review committee. Possibly, a few other students consult them for specific information. I have had requests from a few descendants of planters for copies, but I suspect that they make pretty dry reading. Especially in public required contract archaeology, the reports are mere descriptions of what was found. No or very little explanation of why the patterns existed is to be found in the average archaeological report. If tens of thousands read *Roots* and millions watched the TV version, why have not archaeologists been able to interest the general public? It is clear to me that we need to provide our insights in a form and with a content that can interest the non-specialist. This need not be watered-down or slanted. It simply needs to be presented in a readable, lively form that will reach different interest groups. People are interested in the past, their own and that of others. It is up to us, students of the past, to see that this interest is satisfied. James Deetz has said that "if archaeology is a vital contributor to our understanding of all of America's common folk, and what their life meant to them, it is doubly so in the case of our understanding of the Black experience in America" (1977:138). I can only echo this statement and hope for a chance to continue in this field of scholarship.

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