1996

Schroedl, Gerald F. 1996. The Archaeology of Slavery at Brimstone Hill Fortress, St. Kitts, West Indies. Poster presented at Center for Field Research Principal Investigator's Conference, October 24-27, Boston, Massachusetts.

No Abstract

1998


The Material Remains of British Military Personnel and African Slaves from The Brimstone Hill Fortress National Park, St. Kitts, West Indies. The Brimstone Hill Fortress National Park on the Caribbean island of St. Kitts is a monument to British expansion and military power in the West Indies. It also represents the labors of African Slaves who participated in the majority of fort construction from 1690 to 1853. The hundreds of British soldiers and African Slaves that occupied the fort during this period discarded thousands of artifacts. The various artifacts recovered, primarily Afro-Caribbean ware and English ceramics that have been etched on the back, are examined to understand the social interactions between the British military and the African Slaves in residence at the fort.


Faunal remains from the late 18th. century British Brimstone Hill Fortress on St Kitts in the West Indies consist primarily of domestic cattle and swine, along with some sheep and goats. Indigenous taxa include a very few fish, reptiles, and birds. At Brimstone Hill, ribs and scapulae of cattle and ribs of turtles were extensively used in the manufacture of bone discs that commonly served as molds for fabric-covered buttons during the late 18th century. Numerous cut and chopped cattle bones suggest that their ribs and scapulae were probably a byproduct of butchery at the fortress. Turtle remains from the site, on the other hand, were restricted to ribs (ie. costal bones) indicating a more purposeful mode of acquisition. Analyses of the manufacturing debris for over 1300 discs have shown that they were produced with a hand brace and center bite, and that cattle scapulae and turtle ribs were used to produce discs of different dimensions.


Faunal remains from the late eighteenth century British Brimstone Hill Fortress on St. Kitts in the West Indies consist primarily of domestic cattle and swine, along with some sheep and goats. Variations in skeletal part frequencies of domestic stock suggest that cattle and pigs were transported to the Fortress as carcass portions, perhaps as a consequence of eighteenth century sugar monoculture on St. Kitts. Sheep and goat offal, among the caprine remains, indicate they were brought to the site as live animals or complete carcasses. Indigenous taxa include a few (less than ten percent) fish, reptiles, and birds (e.g. Cheloniidae, Squamata, Belonidae, Scaridae, and Anatidae).
Ribs and scapulae of domestic cattle and costal bones of sea turtles were extensively used in the manufacture of bone discs that commonly served as molds for fabric-covered buttons during the late eighteenth century. Numerous cut and chopped cattle bones suggest that their ribs and scapulae were probably byproducts of butchery at the Fortress. Turtle remains from the site, on the other hand, were restricted to carapace fragments indicating a more purposeful mode of acquisition. Analyses of the manufacturing debris for over 2,000 discs have shown that they were produced with a hand brace and center bite, and that turtle costal bones were used to produce discs of a restricted size.

Schroedl, Gerald F. 1998. The Brimstone Hill Archaeological Project, St. Kitts, West Indies. Paper presented at the 31st annual meeting of the Society for Historical Archaeology, January 6-10, Atlanta, Georgia.

Brimstone Hill Fortress is a British colonial military fort on the eastern Caribbean island of St. Kitts. The fort was built and occupied between 1690 and 1853. Archaeological studies at the site are focused on documenting the role African slaves had in constructing and maintaining the fort. Excavations in the vicinity of a lime kiln included recording a well, investigating a lime storage structure, and recording two other buildings of undetermined use. No evidence of slave huts were encountered, although a 1791 maps indicate their presence in the area. Test excavations in a second area, where the same map shows four buildings utilized by slaves, produced numerous artifacts and architectural evidence for one and perhaps two other structures. Afro Caribbean ceramics, creamware sherds with probable cosmograms, and abundant evidence for the manufacture of bone buttons strongly suggests the prolonged presence of slaves in this area of the site.


Occupied between 1690 and 1853, the Brimstone Hill Fortress on the West Indies island of St. Kitts is an impressive monument to British Colonial rule throughout the Caribbean. Practically silent in the interpretation of the fort until recently has been the many African slaves who constructed and maintained the fortress. Recent archaeological research has recovered material related to the British soldier and African slave presence at the fort. Preliminary interpretations suggest a unique social environment between the slaves and soldiers stationed at the fort not seen on plantations in the Caribbean and the Southeastern United States

1999


No abstract

Also distributed as Brimstone Hill Fortress Archaeological Project Report No. 14


The Brimstone Hill Fortress, one of the largest colonial military complexes in the Caribbean, was occupied by the British from 1690 to 1854. Until the 1830s, a work force of African slaves constructed and maintained the fort. Among artifacts recovered from two buildings occupied by slaves are 58 European made ceramic sherds mostly form soup plates which are scratched on the bottom with initials, “X’s”, or other geometric patterns. Our studies indicate that these marks were one mechanism that British soldiers and African slaves used to maintain their personal and cultural identities.

Archaeological investigations undertaken at the Brimstone Hill Fortress National Park have focused on understanding the role African slaves played in the construction, maintenance and day-to-day activities of the fort. Recent archaeological investigations at the fort were undertaken in an area identified on a 1791 British Military Engineer's map as a place where African slaves worked and may have lived. Preliminary observations concerning slave lifeways from two identified structures and over 75,000 recovered artifacts are presented. It is proposed that even in a strict military environment, slaves maintained "Africanism" observed in plantation settings as well as those not widely recorded elsewhere.

2000


Sugar production was so pervasive in the British West Indies during the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries that provisions were regularly shipped to the islands from as far away as Europe and North America. Skeletal part frequencies of bovids from late 18th century enslaved African contexts at Brimstone Hill Fortress, St. Kitts, indicate that sheep and goats were probably raised locally, but that many of the cattle bones were transported to the site as barreled beef. Stable carbon isotopes in sheep, goat, and cattle bones confirm these interpretations. This, in spite of the fact that cattle remains from Brimstone Hill included numerous marrow bones that ostensibly were excluded from barreled beef. It is concluded that marrow bones, while reportedly excluded from barreled beef, may have been included in provisions destined for enslaved Africans in the West Indies.


Brimstone Hill Fortress is an historic military installation located on the West Indian island of St. Kitts. The fortress was constructed and maintained by African slaves under the control of the British military. In addition to a large domestic faunal assemblage, a large assemblage of marine shell was recovered during excavations from 1996 through 1998. Species were identified to the lowest taxonomic level possible and are compared to other historic sites in the Caribbean in terms of general abundance, diversity, and equitability. Assessment of their occurrence at the site will include whether these mollusks were used as food, their shells as tools, or if the shells are a natural occurrence due to hermit crab activity at the site.


No Abstract

Also distributed as Brimstone Hill Fortress Archaeological Project Report No. 19

2001

Charles Fort is located on the northwest coast of St. Kitts. The British constructed it in 1678 near the base of Brimstone Hill. The French captured Charles Fort and the Brimstone Hill fortress in 1782. When returned to the British in 1783, expansion and extensive renovations were made at Brimstone Hill, but not at Charles Fort. Both sites were abandoned in 1854. From 1890 to 1996 Charles Fort was a government leper asylum. The goals of archaeological and architectural studies at Charles Fort were (1) to completely map the site, (2) to record architectural details of the buildings and ruins, and (3) to locate and determine the integrity of archaeological features dating to the 18th and 19th century military occupation. Conversion of the site to a hospital did not severely compromise the site’s integrity. The hospital buildings represent a second and equally important resource in the cultural and social history of St. Kitts.

2002


Provisioning Enslaved Africans in the British West Indies: Animal Bones from Brimstone Hill Fortress, St. Kitts. Much of the British West Indies was engaged in sugar monoculture during the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries. Excavations in late 18th-century enslaved African contexts at Brimstone Hill have produced abundant animal bones indicating slaves were being provisioned from as far away as England, North America, and the North Atlantic. Species identifications, zoogeography, stable carbon isotopes, and vertebrate skeletal part frequencies are enlisted to assess the extent to which animal protein was imported to sustain the enslaved African labor force.

Also distributed as Brimstone Hill Fortress Archaeological Project Report No. 21.


The Brimstone Hill Fortress on St. Kitts served as a bastion of British colonial power in the Caribbean from 1790 to 1854. The fort was a multi-ethnic community where Africans, including enslaved men and women, freedmen, or members of the West Indian Regiments, and British soldiers interacted on a daily basis. Today the fort is a National Park that, until recently, has been interpreted for its role in British colonialism rather than for the people who lived and worked there. The objective of recent archaeological investigations at the fort has been to understand the role that enslaved Africans played in the fort’s maintenance and construction. Recovered artifacts suggest that the British soldiers and enslaved Africans employed similar strategies for coping with the daily drudgeries of fort life and in maintaining their personal and cultural identity in light of the oppressive British military regime.

Also distributed as Brimstone Hill Fortress Archaeological Project Report No. 22.

2003


Charles Fort, located on the northwest coast of St. Kitts, was constructed and occupied by the British from 1678 until 1854. From 1890 to 1996 Charles Fort was a colonial government leper asylum. Archaeological, architectural, and archival research document the fort’s spatial organization and demonstrate that its conversion from military use
to a hospital did not severely compromise the site's integrity. The fort's use as a leper hospital represents a second and equally important resource in the cultural and social history of St. Kitts. The arrangement of hospital buildings and other features reflect contrasting and sometimes contradictory relationships between the hospital residents, colonial social and health care policies, and the values and attitudes of the surrounding community.

2004


The Afro-Caribbean ware sherds (N=409) from the archaeological investigations at the Brimstone Hill Fortress National Park, St. Kitts, West Indies, represent the one group of artifacts that were unquestionably used by the enslaved Africans who built and maintained the fortress. Similar wares have been found in plantations contexts throughout the Caribbean and have been the source of a numerous studies. Most studies have been macroscopic in nature and have focused on the ware’s shared attributes across the region. The goals of a macroscopic study of the Brimstone Hill Afro-Caribbean ware were to 1) compare it to similar pottery found on other Caribbean islands; 2) determine the ware’s source; and 3) understand its cultural meaning and role in the formation of a Kittian cultural identity.


Cores for cloth-covered buttons were frequently manufactured from mammal or reptile cortical bone at military installations throughout eastern North America and the Caribbean during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Manufacturing debris from this highly visible activity at the British Brimstone Hill Fortress, St. Kitts, indicates sea turtle costal bones and cattle ribs were the elements of choice. However, cattle jaws and scapulae, caprine jaws and horse skulls were also used. The origin of manufacturing debris is assessed from Delta 13C content. The spatial distribution of single-hole bone disc manufacture is considered for the Caribbean and eastern North America.

2005


The enslaved Africans who lived and worked at the Brimstone Hill Fortress were part of a multi-ethnic community within the dominant British military culture, which sought to oppress expressions of individuality and cultural identity. Enslaved Africans sought to maintain and create their own cultural identity within the context of slavery and often used things familiar to them to accomplish these goals. The manufacture and use of Afro-Caribbean ware for preparing and serving meals was one avenue that enslaved African at Brimstone Hill and across St. Kitts used to not only maintain their cultural identity but to create one that is distinctively Kittian. Using a set of quantitative and qualitative traits, the Afro-Caribbean ware from Brimstone Hill is placed into a comparative context with similar wares from nearby islands. The role that the pottery played in the creation of a Kittian cultural identity is also discussed.


Recent excavations conducted by the University of Tennessee at the Brimstone Hill Fortress National Park encountered 11 human burials and 13 isolated human skeletal elements. While excavations were not specifically
intended to investigate human skeletal remains, they were examined nevertheless to determine sex, age at death, and ancestry. All the remains are adult except for a single infant burial. The adult burials are all British soldiers who died during their deployment on St. Kitts. Numerous enslaved Africans also were present at Brimstone Hill but are not represented among the recovered remains. An African burial ground, if associated with the fortress, has not been located. British soldiers and their wives and children lived at the fortress, so the recovery of an infant burial is infrequent but not unusual.


Archaeological excavations conducted by the University of Tennessee at the Brimstone Hill Fortress National Park have to date uncovered 127,879 artifacts. Approximately 52 percent of the assemblage is comprised of curved glass sherds representing different vessel functions and modes of manufacture employed predominantly during the 18th and 19th centuries. Frequencies of curved glass sherds differ between the four areas of the fort where archaeological excavations have occurred. While historic maps have been invaluable for determining the location and function of buildings within each of these areas, curved glass remains can provide a wealth of information about the date of the areas occupied, the activities that occurred there, and if these activities are consistent with the types of buildings present at each locality. Because one of the buildings is a workshop occupied by enslaved Africans, the kinds and frequencies of curved glass can potentially provide insight into the tasks in which they engaged in and around the structure.


Animal bones recovered from enslaved African contexts at Brimstone Hill Fortress reflect both imported military provisions and locally available protein that consisted primarily of domestic pigs, cattle and caprines. Skeletal part frequencies suggest sheep and goats were raised locally while some pig and cattle remains represent imported, low grade, barreled pork and beef. Stable carbon isotopes (δ13C) in cattle bones clearly indicate both animals raised locally and those raised in a temperate climate and shipped to the Fortress as salt beef. Strontium isotopes (87Sr/86Sr) in pig teeth indicate that some pigs were raised locally while others were imported as salt pork. Fish remains include extralimital taxa from the North Atlantic (e.g. cod and herring) as well as locally available pelagic (e.g. houndfish), coastal (e.g. sea bass) and reef fishes (e.g. parrotfish). Both domestic and wild species seem to reflect military provisioning and locally acquired foodstuffs.


At the Brimstone Hill Fortress the British army conscripted enslaved Africans for construction and maintenance work. The number of laborers and the length of their service were secured as needed and as sanctioned by the colonial government. Known as the corps of pioneers, Africans also were attached proportionally to individual army units based on the number of officers and enlisted men. Furthermore, militia comprised solely of Africans from local plantations and members of the all African Third and Fourth West India regiments lived at Brimstone Hill in the 18th and 19th centuries. Archaeological investigations and historical research at Brimstone Hill is beginning to reveal how the British organized, housed, and provisioned enslaved Africans, how this varied with the circumstances of military preparedness and threat assessment, and how Africans situated themselves within these changing contexts.


African slaves largely built and maintained the British fortress at Brimstone Hill (1690-1854), St. Kitts, West Indies. Africans were assigned to a variety of buildings for housing and manufacturing tasks supporting the British army garrison. Complete excavations (1997-1999, 2004) of an artificers or craftsmen’s building revealed a record of
domestic activity and industrial use. Most work focused on the production of single-hole bone disks or buttons, and not surprisingly, was conducted in an area habitually shaded by the building and an adjacent defensive wall. Domestic debris is distinctive for artifacts commonly found in Afro-Caribbean contexts, but also shows considerable correspondence with remains characteristic of the British army.

2006


Archaeological investigations at the Brimstone Hill Fortress National Park on St. Kitts have recovered 665 Afro-Caribbean ware sherds dating 1790-1850. This pottery was most likely made on St. Kitts. Recent analysis of the sherds and clay sourcing studies are aimed at understanding the context of ceramic production and trade by enslaved Africans. Analysis shows that many sherds resemble pottery from nearby islands, but have characteristics making them distinctly Kittian. This indicates that enslaved Africans engaged in patterns of production and trade with nearby islands that has not been previously recognized.


Archaeological investigations at the Brimstone Hill Fortress National Park have focused primarily on recording the role enslaved Africans had in the fort's construction and maintenance. Brimstone Hill was a multiethnic community occupied by British officers, enlisted men, and enslaved Africans. Recent excavations of a complex set of buildings and features where British Royal Engineers lived and worked have broadened our knowledge of the site's occupants and reveal how the engineers used specific structures and their arrangement to demonstrate their social status within the Brimstone Hill community. Recovered ceramics further demonstrate differences among the site's inhabitants.


Animal bones recovered from enslaved African and British Royal Engineer contexts, dating 1790-1840, at Brimstone Hill Fortress on St. Kitts in the West Indies reflect both imported military provisions and locally available protein. Both skeletal part frequencies and stable isotopes suggest some domestic animals were raised locally while others represent imported preserved meat. Fish remains include those of extralimital taxa from the North Atlantic as well as locally available pelagic, coastal, and reef fishes. The contrast in animal remains from enslaved African and Royal Engineer contexts is striking in both taxa represented and evidence for fresh meat consumption.

2007


Archaeological investigations at the Brimstone Hill Fortress National Park on St. Kitts have recovered over 650 Afro-Caribbean ware sherds dating 1790-1850. Recent macroscopic analysis of the entire assemblage and chemical characterization by Instrumental Neutron Activation Analysis of 40 sherds and five clay sources has been aimed at understanding the context of ceramic production and trade among enslaved Africans. Analysis shows that many sherds resemble pottery from nearby islands, but that the majority of the analyzed sherds were made from local clays. The results are used to examine intra-island trade networks relating to the trade of pottery and clay among enslaved Africans as it relates to the ways that the pottery made its way to Brimstone Hill. In addition, social standing among slaves at Brimstone Hill is explored as it relates to access to goods and purchasing power.
Archaeological investigations at the Brimstone Hill Fortress National Park have focused primarily on recording the role enslaved Africans had in the fort's construction and maintenance. Brimstone Hill was a multiethnic community occupied by British officers, enlisted men, and enslaved Africans. Recent excavations of a complex set of buildings and features where British Royal Engineers lived and worked have broadened our knowledge of the site's occupants and reveal how the engineers used specific structures and their arrangement to demonstrate their social status within the Brimstone Hill community.

Also distributed as Brimstone Hill Fortress Archaeological Project Report No. 29.

2009


The Brimstone Hill fortress on the Caribbean island of St. Kitts was occupied by the British from 1690 to 1853. Enslaved Africans conscripted from plantations or owned by the British constructed and maintained the fort. Black militia and soldiers of the West India Regiments also occupied the fort. Plantation slaves likely occupied huts at the base of the hill. Those attached to the military were housed in areas with specific support functions. Black soldiers occupied barracks, previously or subsequently occupied by white soldiers. Archaeological data reflect sharp differences between British soldiers and enslaved Africans.

2010


Investigations at numerous sites on the Caribbean island of St. Kitts reveal a wide range of cultural landscapes dating from the early-17th through the 20th Century. Using data from military, institutional, and plantation sites, we examine how colonial authorities and plantation owners manipulated the environment and controlled how the landscape was utilized. Responses to these efforts varied with strategies whereby people created their own personal and cultural space before and after emancipation. Examples come from the Brimstone Hill Fortress, the leper asylum occupation of Charles Fort, and the island's southeast peninsula.