The Maintenance of Cultural and Personal Identities of Enslaved Africans and British Soldiers at the Brimstone Hill Fortress, St. Kitts, West Indies

ABSTRACT

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 workforce of enslaved Africans constructed and maintained the fort. Among artifacts recovered from two buildings occupied by slaves are 155 European-made ceramic and glass sherds, mostly from flatware, plates, and soup plates. They are notched or scratched with a variety of lines and geometric patterns as well as with English letters and X’s. Our studies indicate that these marks were one mechanism that British soldiers and enslaved Africans used to maintain their personal and cultural identities.

Introduction

Archaeological evidence has been recorded for the religious beliefs, social institutions, and subsistence patterns that African people maintained after their forced migration to the New World as slaves. This is seen, for example, in the production of Colonoware or Afro-Caribbean ware ceramics (Heath 1988, 1991; Ferguson 1992), the recovery of cowry shell money (Handler 1997:115), the occurrence of religious symbols scratched on Colonoware ceramics (Ferguson 1992:109–116), and the observation of mortuary patterning where both the form of interment and associated artifacts are clearly African in origin (Handler 1996, 1997; Armstrong 1998:387–391). Further evidence for the persistence of African traditions is seen in new, alternative, or complementary interpretations of non-African objects or contexts. Distinctive examples of this include blue glass beads (Stine et al. 1996; Russell 1997:68–70), faceted pieces of glass from chandeliers and stemmed glassware (Young 1996), gaming pieces (Klingelhofer 1987; Russell 1997:75–76), perforated coins (Russell 1997:68), and European-made objects, such as spoons and coins, exhibiting personal identifications or religious marks (Klingelhofer 1987:114; Young 1996:143). The archaeological expression of African traditions in the New World often is regarded as evidence for cultural patterns used to resist the dominance and oppression of Europeans.

It is well known that numerous cultural and linguistic groups comprised enslaved African populations in North America and the Caribbean (Halcrow 1982). While slave owners showed preferences for individuals from particular ethnic groups because of beliefs about their social temperament, most slave communities, whether part of a plantation or military garrison, undoubtedly included many persons of different cultures and languages (Halcrow 1982). In fact, Elizabeth Halcrow (1982:4) argues that plantation owners, for the sake of their own security, avoided purchasing slaves from only one or two ethnic groups. Despite the communal situation in which they were forced to live and their cooperative efforts to survive as a group, enslaved Africans resorted to mechanisms of their native cultures to retain some, if only a minimal, expression of their ethnicity and to distinguish themselves as individuals within slave society and in contrast to their European owners. These efforts surely would have been heightened in the regimentation associated with the military organization of the 18th century, where even British soldiers found few opportunities to express their individuality.

Archaeological and anthropological studies of enslaved Africans in the United States and Caribbean have focused on the creation (creolization) and maintenance of an African American and African-Caribbean cultural identity within a plantation context (Singleton and Bogard 1995; Perry and Paynter 1999; Singleton 1999). These studies have typically examined material correlates of African culture, artifact patterning of ethnicity, and socio-economic differences and studied how these factors contribute to a pan ethnic African American or African-Caribbean cultural identity. Seldom discussed are the complexities of the social situations that led to an African American or African-Caribbean cultural identity or how individuals negotiated their
own identity in an enslaved context. Understanding how persons identify and maintain their individuality within a single ethnic or multiethnic community is essential to understanding the group's overall cultural identity. The slave community at Brimstone Hill, a British colonial military fortress on the island of St. Kitts in the eastern Caribbean, was a truly multiethnic community because it was composed of individuals from different West African groups who were forcibly brought together and who may never have had a chance to formulate extensive social bonds through association or kinship.

The slaves and soldiers at Brimstone Hill represented distinctly different ethnic and corporate groups. As such, the members of each group typically would rally around a common activity, symbol, or situation that distinguished them from one another. Within a military context, regiments would have rallied around their individual fighting unit to form a common bond. In contrast to British soldiers, African slave laborers would have formed a group that reflected their own working and living conditions. Representing different ethnic or linguistic groups and possibly coming from several different plantations, enslaved Africans working at Brimstone Hill may not have been able to form social bonds as close or as strong as those that developed among British soldiers.

The slaves and soldiers at Brimstone Hill were forced together within a highly structured society where they formed separate corporate bonds and identities. At the same time, the British military also attempted to remove or suppress any forms or expressions of individuality or personal identity among their African slaves. Expressions of individuality among the rank and file of the military also could have undermined the discipline and unity of the fighting group. Undoubtedly, many enslaved Africans and British soldiers tried to maintain their own personal identity despite the military's attempts to repress these expressions. One mechanism slaves and soldiers could use to express their personal identity or individuality was to apply familiar symbols such as their names or simple decorations to personal objects. They had to do this in a way that the officers and officials who controlled them did not find threatening.

Archaeological studies of enslaved Africans have seldom considered that the objects reflecting African traditions might represent the symbols or expressions of distinctive African culture groups or differences among the individuals within the same group. This paper attempts to fill this void by considering a distinctive group of 155 ceramic and glass sherds marked with scratched lines or notches recovered from African slave-related contexts at Brimstone Hill. Among the important goals of the Brimstone Hill archaeological project are to (1) discover and document the role enslaved Africans played in the fort’s construction and maintenance; (2) provide accurate information about the architecture of individual structures used or occupied by slaves so that they can be properly restored for visitation by the public; (3) understand the lifeways of enslaved Africans in the context of the British colonial military; and (4) place these findings in the broader comparative context of colonial Caribbean culture. By focusing on enslaved Africans in the context of the British colonial military, the Brimstone Hill project differs significantly from studies emphasizing the investigation of colonial-era plantation culture. No other archaeological studies in the Caribbean have done this (Schroedl 1999b).

Brimstone Hill is a massive volcanic extrusion on the northwest coast of St. Kitts that abruptly rises to an elevation of nearly 780 ft. (240 m) above sea level. The British first placed cannon on Brimstone Hill in 1690 to repel a French invasion force that had captured Charles Fort, situated at the base of the hill, and that had taken control of the harbor at Sandy Point Town (Smith 1994, 1995). Thereafter, the English utilized the hill’s strategic position for defending the surrounding countryside. They also recognized the hill’s potential as a place of refuge for plantation owners and their slaves during times of foreign threat, and, as a result, the number and size of the buildings, defensive works, and armaments were increased throughout the 18th century. Following occupation by French forces in 1782–1783, the British undertook major renovations and expansion of the fortress in the 1790s, and most of the fort as seen today dates from this period. By the time the British abandoned the fortress in the 1850s,
it covered nearly 40 acres and consisted of more than 50 distinctive stone and masonry buildings and defensive structures.

From the mid-18th century until emancipation in 1834, the fort’s construction and maintenance were carried out by a workforce of enslaved Africans, including both men and women, who resided at the site. Some of the enslaved Africans were owned by the military (Buckley 1979, 1998), while others were contracted from local sugar plantations on the island (Goveia 1965; Cox 1984). Enslaved Africans were essential to the success of the British military in the Caribbean, and the military categorized and organized them appropriate to the tasks and duties they were expected to fulfill (Buckley 1998:128–130). Military-owned skilled craftsmen, collectively referred to as the “king’s Negroses,” consisted of artificers and pioneers. The primary duties of pioneers were to maintain and repair roads, buildings, and fortifications. Artificers, on the other hand, were skilled craftsman represented, for example, by masons, carpenters, coopers, and blacksmiths. A second category of enslaved Africans, generally referred to as “fort Negroses” and largely hired from plantation owners, were employed to haul water, move supplies, gather wood, work in kitchens, remove trash, and clean latrines. How many slaves lived at Brimstone Hill at any particular time is unknown, but it is estimated that 200 or more were present during the major building episode of the 1790s. As no historical records or archaeological evidence exists for slave villages or compounds within the fortress, such as those found at plantations, it seems likely that some slaves were housed in military barracks. In some instances, these may have been temporary facilities or, in other cases, more substantial structures such as those used to garrison the all-African members of the Fourth British West India Regiment at the fort in the 1790s (Buckley 1979). Unfortunately, it is unknown from either historical documents or archaeological studies which specific barracks were occupied by enslaved Africans at the Brimstone Hill fortress. Importantly, however, a 1791 military engineer’s map of the fortress identifies at least 12 buildings occupied or used by slaves.

Excavations at Brimstone Hill from 1996 through 1999 were directed at one area where four such buildings, identified as a kitchen, a workshop, and two hospital buildings, are shown on the 1791 map exterior to the defensive wall connecting the Magazine and Orillon bastions on the west side of the fortress (Schroedl 1997, 1998, 1999a, 2000). These buildings and the area between the two bastions are designated as site BSH 2. The buildings were constructed no earlier than about 1780 and were abandoned in the first two decades of the 19th century. One hospital building (Structure 1) and most of the workshop building (Structure 2) were investigated. The buildings are less than 4 m from the defensive wall and less than 2 m apart. Both structures have low stone-rubble and mortar foundations with a mortar sill, indicating that the buildings were probably post-and-beam or timber-frame construction, as suggested by a contemporary watercolor of the site. The hospital (Structure 1) measures 6.5 x 5 m (21 x 16 ft.) with a hard-packed mortar floor. The workshop (Structure 2) is 6.5 x 10.2 m (21 x 33 ft.) with a floor consisting of packed, small, angular pebbles and fragments of mortar.

The excavations produced nearly 90,000 artifacts, including 25,257 ceramic sherds (Schroedl 2000). Although many items were thrown or dumped over the fortress wall by British soldiers or enslaved Africans after the two buildings were abandoned, artifacts recovered within and around the foundations are contemporary with the structures and attest to their occupation by enslaved Africans. Numerous single-hole bone discs or buttons and the debris from their production indicate that their manufacture was an important activity associated with the workshop building (Klippel and Schroedl 1999). Artifacts attributable to enslaved Africans from the two buildings include Afro-Caribbean ware sherds, gaming pieces manufactured from European ceramic sherds, retouched glass bottle sherds, a scratched brass disc or token, a money cowry shell, and a blue glass bead. The most distinctive group of artifacts associated with African slaves recovered at the site is European ceramics showing a variety of scratched lines (Ahlman 1997).

At African slave sites in the southeastern United States, individual X’s and X’s enclosed by a rectangle formed by single scratched lines and other geometric designs on Colonoware (Ferguson 1992, 1999), pewter spoons (Klingelhofer 1987:114; Young 1996:144), coins (Young
1996:144), and marbles (Young 1996:144; Russell 1997:71) are thought to represent West African cosmograms important in ritual and healing practices. Scratched X's on two European-made ceramic sherds come from slave contexts in Belize (Finamore 1995), and recently an unspecified number of similar sherds was found with a slave occupation on St. Eustatius (Nasca 1998). At Brimstone Hill, 141 sherds were recovered with scratched designs. The marks include X's, English letters, and design elements of several different but indeterminate geometric patterns. Another 14 sherds are modified with notches rather than scratched lines.

Historical archaeologists have been quick to point out how enslaved Africans and Europeans used the same objects but attributed different meanings to them because of differences in their ethnic backgrounds (Perry and Paynter 1999). The multivalent characteristics of various objects are often used as a way to demonstrate the agency that slaves used in the formation and maintenance of an African American or African-Caribbean culture. It is contended here, however, that rather than being a multivalent characteristic, the scratching of symbols on the back of plates and bowls by British soldiers and enslaved Africans at Brimstone Hill represents use of the same medium to express similar meaning: individuality in a communal lifestyle.

In this paper, it is suggested that a small number of the scratched ceramics recovered at Brimstone Hill were produced by British soldiers in the context of their communal living arrangements, primarily to record personal ownership of particular vessels. This type of modification, consisting of initials and other markings, has been recorded elsewhere for British (Varman n.d.), American (South 1974; Switzer 1987), and Spanish (Goggin 1968; Martin 1979; South et al. 1988; Thomas 1988) military and communal contexts. Archaeological investigations at the penal settlement on Norfolk Island in the Pacific, for example, found ceramic vessels from the privies of civil officers marked with either initials to denote personal ownership or the letters NI, apparently to denote corporate ownership by the penal settlement (Varman 1998). At the Revolutionary War privateer Defense, David Switzer (1987:46) found spoons scratched with “initials or enigmatic symbols” and kids and tankards that “bear graffitis such as carved initials and other markings, including a broad arrow.” Switzer interpreted small, carved wooden tags as corporate markers of an individual mess group’s piece of boiled meat. Stanley South (1974) reported a pewter spoon from the American occupation of Ft. Moultrie marked with an IP and suggested that these represent the initials of a soldier at the fort. South interpreted the marking of the spoon as an idiosyncratic action by an individual rather than a broad pattern of human behavior that required further exploration (South 1974:214).

Ceramics with scratched marks on the back have been found in various Spanish contexts throughout the New World. David Hurst Thomas (1988:118) notes “potsherds inscribed with crosses” found at the mission Santa Catalina in Spanish Florida “functioned as concrete reminders of religious truths or teachings.” Colin Martin (1968) suggests that the inscribed X’s on the base of 16th- and 17th-century Spanish plates found throughout the New World were meant to demonstrate maker’s marks or production tallies because they occurred so frequently. John Goggin (1968:119) also notes the occurrence of X’s incised into the back of Spanish plates in the New World and suggests the occurrence of letters and other marks that are “all crudely and casually done and probably represent property marks put on by the users, not the markers.” South et al. (1988) also found Spanish-made ceramics at the mission Santa Elena that included X’s or crosses and other marks, including parallel lines, geometric designs, and a backwards S. They, like Goggin, concluded that these marks represented ownership rather than maker’s marks.

The items from European contexts marked with initials, X’s, crosses, or geometric designs are generally recovered from communal occupations. None, however, have been reported from British military contexts in the New World. There are several possible reasons for this. One could be that the structure of British military life greatly restricted such actions. A second possibility is that the majority of the troops who lived in a British military context did not have widespread access to ceramic tablewares. Lynn Sussman (1978), for example, suggests that enlisted men in the military were not given finer ceramic wares or did not have the means to purchase them. Typically, enlisted men possessed
tin or wooden plates and utensils that would easily break down through time and cannot be identified in the archaeological record. Sussman (1978:94) notes, however, that after 1794, the British military provided eating and drinking utensils to enlisted men, but she does not specify whether this included finer ceramics or not. Apparently before this time, only officers possessed finer ceramics because they could afford them, and a regiment’s officers would join together to purchase a mess’s tableware complement (Sussman 1978:95). Thus, a regiment’s table setting would have been communal rather than individual in nature. This is not to say that an individual officer could not possess his own plates or bowls that he may have brought to the regiment’s mess. In this instance, it would prove beneficial for an individual to note the ownership of his possessions in some manner. The same could also be said for enlisted men who owned items that were valuable to them.

It is contended here that the enslaved Africans who lived and worked at Brimstone Hill marked most of the sherds found in our excavations and that many of these marks represent or are derived from the iconography of West African religious beliefs (Ferguson 1992, 1999; Patten 1992; Adams 1994; Young 1996; Emerson 1999). Leland Ferguson (1992, 1999) notes similar marks on Colonoware vessels recovered in South Carolina, including X’s, parallel and curved lines, and initials, and suggests that the marks represent neither the individual owner nor a maker’s mark because the marks occur only on bowls and not on jars or any other vessel forms. In addition, these marks have not been identified on European-manufactured ceramics. To Ferguson, the marks on the Colonoware vessels were analogous to West African cosmograms, and the vessels were used in traditional religious and healing rituals.

It is suggested that the scratches on European ceramics at Brimstone Hill by enslaved Africans are personal identifications of individual slaves that served two functions: (1) to mark property ownership within the slave community where the members were not necessarily related by ethnic group or kinship; (2) to express an individual’s ethnicity within a multiethnic community. Our point is that it was just as important for enslaved Africans to distinguish themselves as individuals and members of different ethnic groups as it was for them to distinguish themselves from their British masters.

The enslaved Africans at Brimstone Hill acquired these British ceramics through several different avenues. The plantation slaves who worked at Brimstone Hill on a day-to-day or short-term basis may have brought the ceramics with them. When the vessels broke, their remains were discarded at the site. These slaves may have acquired the ceramics as typical rations or hand-me-downs from the planter or by theft from the planter or officers at the fort. Enslaved Africans owned by the military may have acquired the pieces as a ration from the government, through hand-me-downs from an officer, or through theft from a regimental mess.

The Artifacts

There are 139 ceramic sherds and two bottle-glass fragments from BSH 2 modified with scratched lines. Except for one sherd with a single scratch, the specimens are modified with multiple parallel scratches forming lines 2.0 to 11.0 mm wide. The scratches were executed with a sharp metal implement, such as the tip of a knife, the point of a nail, or the tine of a fork. Pressure was sufficient to penetrate the ceramic glaze but only in two instances was it hard enough to cut into the underlying paste. In addition to the scratched sherds, there are 14 sherds (with one exception) that were notched, using a file or, perhaps, a knife on the vessel foot ring.

Provenience and Refits

The sherds come from 105 proveniences, each representing a 10 cm excavation level that was 1 x 1 m. All the sherds were checked for refits from adjacent proveniences, but not one was detected. Multiple sherds from the same vessel and provenience were not considered refits. In some cases, distinctive sherds, surely representing the same vessel but from different proveniences, were noted even though they could not be cross-mended. Eight pieces are made up of two to four cross-mended sherds from the same provenience.
Sherd Size

Sherd size was recorded in 2 cm increments by placing individual specimens on a graduated template. The sherds range from 2 cm to more than 18 cm across (Table 1). The greatest dimension for 81 specimens is less than 4 cm across, and, as a result, it is difficult to identify complete design elements on these sherds.

Wares

There are 134 creamware and 19 pearlware sherds (Table 2). Although most sherds are undecorated, there are 4 mocha-decorated sherds, 4 creamware sherds with Royal Pattern rims, and 7 pearlware sherds with blue hand-painted decoration on the interior surface. There are two sherds from glass wine or liquor bottles.

Vessel Forms

Vessels represented in the sample include 16 bowls, 84 pieces of flatware, 2 mugs, 5 saucers, 24 plates, and 22 soup plates (Table 2). Nine sherds from bowls are creamware and 7 are pearlware; 79 flatware sherds are creamware and 5 are pearlware. The mugs are represented by creamware sherds. There are 2 creamware and 3 pearlware saucers, a single pearlware plate, and 23 creamware plates. Soup plates are represented by 19 creamware and 3 pearlware sherds. Among these vessels, notches occur on a single pearlware bowl, while creamware sherds represent 4 soup plates, 4 plates, 3 flatware pieces, a bowl, and a saucer.

Location of Modification

The scratched lines occur on the exterior base of 126 specimens, the interior base of four sherds, the exterior body of four sherds, and the interior body of three sherds. Four sherds are modified on both the exterior and interior surfaces. Except for one sherd modified on the interior body, notches occur on the foot rings of 13 sherds (Figure 1).

Patterns of Modification

Patterns formed by the scratched lines include two bowls and a plate with X’s (Figure 2) and two plates and a soup plate with the English letter W (Figure 3). Two flatware sherds have the letter M scratched on their exterior base. One of these also has a single line on the interior surface. The exterior base of a soup plate has the letter P scratched over the top of two lines intersecting at a right angle.

There are 52 sherds that exhibit geometric patterns or possibly fragments of letters. Two sherds have lines on both the interior and exterior surfaces. One of these has two parallel lines on the exterior surface and a curved line on the interior surface. The second sherd has a curved line on the interior surface and two nonparallel, nonintersecting lines on the exterior surface. There are 2 sherds with two parallel lines on the exterior surface; 12 sherds with two or more perpendicular lines (Figure 4a); and 6 specimens with both parallel and perpendicular overlapping lines (Figure 4b). There are eight sherds with lines that meet at an acute angle. One may represent an X; while another is a partial X and two additional separate lines. The lines on two other specimens form triangles (Figure 5a), and there is a possible star, asterisk, or letter A on a fifth sherd (Figure 5b). On three sherds, lines connect to form an obtuse angle. Ten sherds, including the two from glass bottles, have multiple overlapping lines as though the intent was to cover or fill in the entire surface with scratches.

There are 77 additional sherds that are too small or the lines are too incomplete to interpret the overall pattern or design. Most of these examples are single straight lines, although two are curved and another exhibits portions of straight and curved lines that do not intersect. Two sherds, one of which comes from a vessel showing heavy interior use, are modified along their edges to form gaming pieces. Of the five indeterminate sherds that exhibit multiple lines, one appears to represent an oval or a D-shape, two exhibit three nonparallel and nonintersecting lines, and two others show multiple overlapping scratched lines.

Summary and Conclusion

The scratches on the sherds from Brimstone Hill were produced in a similar fashion by using a sharp implement to form lines consisting of multiple parallel scratches that rarely penetrated
through the vessel's glaze. The designs on the sherds, however, exhibit considerable variety. Individual English letters and X's are represented on the sherds, but the number of lines that are parallel, perpendicular, acute, or obtuse indicate the occurrence of triangles, rectangles, multisided figures, stars, and, perhaps, other geometric designs. Not detected were instances where one design such as a rectangle enclosed another design such as an X. Some sherds show that the field defined by lines was filled with scratches. Curved lines are infrequent as is scratching on a vessel's interior surface. Designs are most often centered at the vessel base, but there are as many or more instances where the design may have been intentionally placed close to or parallel with the vessel foot ring. None of the sherds with notched foot rings have scratched lines.

European-made ceramics that have been marked by scratches or notches, such as the ones from Brimstone Hill, have been reported from only two other African slave contexts in the Caribbean (Finamore 1995; Nasca 1998) and none in North America (Ferguson 1999). This type of marking has been noted in European contexts, primarily Spanish and American, in the New World but not from British military sites. Additional examples may have gone unreported because researchers tend to examine sherds for European maker's marks but not for other forms of modification. Scratch marks are not easily seen on creamware and pearlware sherds and oftentimes may have been noted as use-wear rather than distinctive marks of personal identification. Another possible reason for the infrequent observation of such marks on ceramics is that their distribution may be limited geographically or restricted to certain contexts. For example, an X or enclosed X is found on a variety of objects widely distributed in the southeastern United States, but their occurrence on Colonoware vessels is largely restricted to South Carolina. Although 439 Afro-Caribbean ware sherds come from the Brimstone Hill excavations, for example, not one of them is marked. One possible reason for this is the near absence of vessel bases in our sample. Nevertheless, no sherds scratched with X's or other symbols are reported in the Caribbean despite extensive research on Afro-Caribbean

![Figure 1. Notched ceramic sherds from Brimstone Hill: (a) upper left, creamware saucer; (b) upper right, creamware soup plate; (c) lower right, blue hand-painted pearlware bowl; (c) lower left, creamware flatware [graphite used to highlight marks].](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size (cm)</th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>No. of Specimens</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-6</td>
<td>3</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-10</td>
<td>5</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-12</td>
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<tr>
<td>12-14</td>
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<td>14-16</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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TABLE 2
CERAMIC WARES AND VESSEL FORMS REPRESENTED BY MODIFIED SHERDS

<table>
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<th>Vessel Form</th>
<th>Creamware</th>
<th>Pearlware</th>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flatware</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>84</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saucers</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plates</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soup Plates</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$X$'s found at other enslaved African sites have not been found at Brimstone Hill. Excepting European ceramics, the only other marked object recovered at the site is a brass disk or token that exhibits an $X$ formed by two single scratches.

At Brimstone Hill in the 18th and 19th centuries, living conditions were harsh for everyone, but they were much more difficult for the African labor force who built and maintained the fortress than for the British soldiers who manned it. Both groups lived a communal lifestyle where each formed a common bond around their particular circumstances. In this context, British soldiers expressed their corporate identity by marking public or communal spaces, such as various walls and entryways, around the fortress with graffiti that oftentimes included personal names as well as regimental affiliations (Shipe 1995). There are no apparent scratch marks on the ceramics, which might have been owned by a regimental mess or an individual, that indicate a specific regiment or suggest communal ownership. The scratched initials probably were made by British soldiers to denote their personal possessions separate from those within the regimental mess. Thus, these men expressed their personal identity by showing individual marks of ownership within the corporate ownership of a regiment's mess.

Just as in a plantation setting, the British military at Brimstone Hill attempted to repress the cultural expressions of the Africans they subjugated. The degree of repression, however, was probably more severe at Brimstone Hill because the military likely placed greater control on the movement and actions of slaves than was common at plantations. The enslaved Africans at Brimstone Hill, however, bonded together and attempted to maintain the heritage with which they were most familiar. One way this was done was through the use of Afro-Caribbean ware at the site, suggesting the maintenance

FIGURE 2. Ceramic sherds from Brimstone Hill marked with $X$'s: (a) left, creamware plate with $X$; (b) right, creamware soup plate with $X$ [graphite used to highlight marks].

FIGURE 3. Ceramic sherds from Brimstone Hill marked with the English letter $W$: (a) left, creamware plate with the letter $W$; (b) right, creamware plate, Royal pattern rim with the letter $W$ [graphite used to highlight marks].
of traditional African methods of food preparation (Heath 1988, 1999; Ferguson 1992). The use of these ceramics helped slaves distinguish themselves as African and separate from their enslavers. This is also reflected in the faunal remains from the site that indicate that slaves commonly had access to small “pot” fish, salt cod, mutton, cattle, and pig (Klippel 1997, 1998, 2001). These foods were important elements in the diet, which together with their preparation, show a blending of African and British foodways. The Afro-Caribbean ceramics and faunal remains thus indicate that enslaved Africans at Brimstone Hill were capable of maintaining their cultural heritage despite the repression of the British military. This was integral in the historical creation of a Kittitian cultural identity.

In the British military, expressions of individuality were largely forbidden or suppressed and found few tolerated outlets. Soldiers expressed their identity by marking their personal possessions with their initials, which is evident in the ceramics scratched with English letters such as M, W, and P. By doing this, they denoted ownership of their personal effects and, more importantly, they were able to express their cultural and personal identity in a manner that was ignored or not easily detected by the authorities who surely would object to displays of individuality.

Africans from many different areas of West Africa were forcibly brought together in the military context of Brimstone Hill where their lives were even more restricted than British soldiers and where many of them were neither related by kinship nor the heritage of a specific African language or culture group. In this context, enslaved Africans could not re-create the social systems with which they were familiar in Africa (DeCorse 1999; Singleton 1999). Under these circumstances, they bonded together, as best as possible, in an attempt to separate themselves from their captors. But because of differences in language and heritage, many slaves were reluctant or found it difficult to communicate with one another and to form close social attachments. In response to this situation, enslaved Africans, just like British soldiers, marked their personal possessions by scratching symbols on them to demonstrate their ownership and personal or ethnic identity. For this purpose, British soldiers used their initials and other familiar symbols, while enslaved Africans used the religious and social symbols with which they were most familiar. In the communal lifestyle at Brimstone Hill, British soldiers would not have recognized the marks produced by Africans as religious symbols. Most enslaved Africans might have recognized these symbols as religious marks, but not all of them necessarily would have known their specific religious meanings because of differences in ethnicity. Because enslaved Africans were no longer restricted by the cultural norms of the societies from which they came, they may have used African symbols in ways that they
would not have been permitted before leaving Africa. By using these symbols in new ways on European-made ceramics, African slaves created religious and ethnic patterns that had different cultural meanings than they had in Africa and, by doing so, created a cultural identity that is distinctly African American or more specifically African-Caribbean in nature.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We thank the University of Tennessee, the Brimstone Hill Fortress National Park Society, and The Center for Field Research for their support of the archaeological work. We especially appreciate the assistance provided by Larry Armony, site manager, Brimstone Hill Fortress, St. Kitts. The Honorable G. A. Dwyer Astaphan, Minister of Tourism, Information, Telecommunications, Commerce, and Consumer Affairs granted permission for the artifacts reported here to be studied in the United States.

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