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Settlement Patterns and the Origins of African Jamaican Society: Seville Plantation, St. Ann's Bay, Jamaica

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Abstract. Archaeological and historical research at Seville Plantation, Jamaica, are used to explain changes in settlement patterns within the estate's African Jamaican community between 1670 and the late nineteenth century. Sugar plantations, such as Seville, are marked by well-defined spatial order based upon economic and power relations that was imposed upon enslaved communities by planters and managers. Archaeological evidence is used to explore how enslaved Africans modified this imposed order and redefined boundaries in ways that correspond with the development of a distinct African Jamaican society. The rigidly defined linear housing arrangements initially established by the planter, and their relations to the Great House, sugar works, and fields, were reinterpreted by the enslaved residents of the village to create a degree of autonomy and freedom from constant surveillance that was at odds with the motives of the planter class. These changes occurred within the spatial parameters established by the planter, yet they reflect dynamic and creative social processes that resulted in the emergence of an African Jamaican community.

This article employs an analytical model of cultural transformation to explore the origin and development of creole societies in the Caribbean that are the unique product of specific African, Native American, and European influences (see Armstrong 1998: 378–83). The transformation model was developed to explain the complex context within which the origin of new forms of social organization occurs more clearly than the traditionally employed models of acculturation and assimilation. The application of the transformation model to archaeological data from Seville Plantation in St. Ann's Bay, Jamaica, shows that the African community, although enslaved, actively transformed their living spaces and created for themselves a degree of autonomy that was not intended for them in the planter's

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design. Using the transformation model to explain culture change demonstrates that archaeology is a useful tool in understanding the dynamic origin of new forms of social organization in the Caribbean. Neither written accounts nor standard artifact typologies can provide direct and unambiguous meanings without the support of contextual interpretation and explanation (Orser 1989; Howson 1990; Armstrong 1990: 4–16). Since material residue at African Jamaican settlements results from the activities, events, and behavioral processes of the people who deposited them, it follows that examination of the spatial context of material use, as well as of the changes in material use and deposition patterns over time, can yield fruitful anthropological interpretation of these past actions and activities. This article demonstrates the importance of the emerging internal social organization of the community as an active agent of change.

Archaeological inquiry is well suited to interpreting and explaining meaningful patterns of material use and spatial organization within plantation societies. Our goal here is to try to understand the actions of enslaved people through their use of space and notions of proxemics, using a methodological framework that explores the establishment of, and resistance to, the power relations inherent within the plantation system. At the same time we draw on the strengths of archaeological inquiry to develop a diachronic perspective in which to examine the causes of cultural transformation.

Seville Plantation, a large sugar estate on the north coast of Jamaica, is located approximately two kilometers west of the town center of St. Ann's Bay (Figure 1). It was founded circa 1670 by Richard Heming, on approximately 2,500 acres of land that had been the location of Sevilla la Nueva, Jamaica's first Spanish capital. Between its founding in the 1670s and slave emancipation in 1838, the Seville Plantation was home to an average of 275 enslaved Africans in any given year who were engaged primarily in sugar production from 300–400 acres of sugarcane. After emancipation many former plantation residents moved to a new settlement just to the west and off of estate lands called the Priory, yet the African Jamaican village continued to be inhabited by a reduced population. By the end of the nineteenth century, however, the last residents of the former slave village had died, and the village area reverted entirely to bushlands.

African Jamaican Culture Change and Transformation

The transformation model provides interpretations of culture change that break from traditional acculturation and assimilation models based on the "whole-culture" concept and assumptions of cultural replacement (Armstrong 1998: 378–81). Kathleen Deagan (1998: 26) notes that archaeologi-

Figure 1. Map of Jamaica showing major towns and plantations discussed in this article.

cal studies have tended to assume that acculturation resulted in unidirectional change imposed on a "subordinate" culture by a "dominant" culture. Furthermore, James Cusick's (1998: 126–27) overview of the application of the term *acculturation* shows that it has tended to emphasize the impact of "Western on non-Western groups." In contrast to change linked to these limited and limiting perspectives, this article explores cultural transformation as the basic model for the process of change. This approach represents a clearly defined departure from a normative, whole-culture assimilation model (Kroeber 1940: 316; Linton 1940; Redfield et al. 1936; South 1977; and Orser 1989).

Studies of transformative change examine the relationship between emic and etic responses to culture interaction, whether due to direct or indirect contact or to confrontation between different cultures. When applied to the study of enslaved peoples, the transformation model allows us to explore oppressive conditions and to examine how people trapped in the conditions of slavery provided their own creative solutions to the problems of daily life, and thus developed their own cultural identities. The emergent social systems were transformed by the incorporation of elements of cultural continuity within systems of culture change (Armstrong 1990: 6–7; 1998). In contrast to a static whole-culture concept, cultural transformation looks for active and internally defined participation, rather than externally defined restrictive parameters for culture and society.

The transformation model recognizes a complex set of interactions, engaging both cultural continuity and change (Armstrong 1998). It also

accounts for the creation of new societies, social organizations, and cultural identities without assuming cultural loss or replacement. Processes of transformation are continual and nondirectional; however, the expression of cultural transformation is most apparent in situations involving sharp contrasts in living situations and cultural condition. Situations of culture contact between two or more groups of people are subject to discernable transformation process as the engaging parties respond to the interaction with variable but often rapid shifts in cultural expression. The people who lived and worked at Seville Plantation, including those of African, European, and East Indian heritages, were subject to social and historical conditions that resulted in clearly definable cultural transformations.

The process of cultural transformation embraces transculturation and ethnogenesis concepts that have been a part of anthropological studies of the circum-Caribbean since the 1940s (Deagan 1998: 30). Deagan's studies of Spanish colonial sites have been profoundly influenced by Cuban cultural anthropologist Fernando Ortiz (1940; 1995). Ortiz was concerned with the confluence of cultural contact in tobacco- and sugar-producing settings. He used the term *transculturation* to explain "the highly varied phenomena that have come about in Cuba as a result of the extremely complex transmutations of culture that have taken place here . . . of disadjustment and readjustment, of deculturation and acculturation—in a word transculturation" (Ortiz 1995: 98; Deagan 1998: 27).

The term *ethnogenesis* has been used to describe the emergence of new ethnic or cultural identities through transformative processes (Deagan 1998: 29–30; Hill 1998: 146–71). It has been applied to specific creole groups, as in the genesis of postcontact Seminoles of Florida (Sturdevant 1971: 92). Models of interpretation that use transformation, transculturation, and ethnogenesis share a common denominator in recognizing that people—whether free and enslaved, the "dominant" and the "dominated," or labor and management—are active agents of change rather than merely receptacles for imposed conditions and restraints. While the terms *cultural transformation*, *transculturation*, and *ethnogenesis* may be viewed as synonyms, we use *cultural transformation* as it more clearly reflects the process of change and includes specific historical circumstances involving the definition of distinct or separate cultural identities.

From the 1960s to the present, Sidney W. Mintz's (1974) cultural and ethnohistorical studies, including his book *Caribbean Transformations*, have emphasized the complexity of cultural interactions and the importance of understanding the diversity of the historical contexts in which people remade their world and "remade themselves" (ibid.; Mintz and Price 1976:

45). The approach used by Mintz was applied to archaeological studies of Drax Hall and Seville plantations (Armstrong 1990, 1998). These studies are grounded in the thesis that people, and the cultures of which they are a part, are active agents of change through transformation processes (Armstrong 1998, 1990: 5-7; Mintz and Price 1976; for North America see Yentsch 1994).

In the 1970s historical archaeology, led by the development and use of Stanley South's (1977) *artifact-pattern* concept, attempted to construct classification mechanisms aimed at explaining cultural change. The standardized use of South's pattern concept by Americanist historical archaeologists provided a uniform basis for comparative analysis; however, interpretation—and the classification system itself—remained locked in the traditional logic of a whole culture that could not address the dynamics of culture change. Charles E. Orser Jr. (1989: 28) points out that for plantation studies, South's pattern concept is flawed in two significant ways. First, it is ill suited to the complexities of plantation organization, and second, its construction is essentially synchronic, prohibiting an understanding of historical change. Orser (*ibid.*: 37) further suggests that archaeologists should develop analytical procedures that consider the nature and complexity of plantation organization and attempt to understand the position of enslaved Africans in regard to the plantation mode of production. The interpretation of complex relations both within and between the social groups encountered through archaeological contexts is hindered by basic assumptions that equate change with traditional definitions of acculturation and assimilation, and which imply replacement versus the dynamic shifts associated with transformation (Armstrong 1998: 378-81). The cultural mosaic of the Caribbean with its many islands, multiple ethnic and linguistic backgrounds, and microenvironments provides a setting that makes it impossible to maintain a uniform view of culture change based in acculturation and assimilation. Through the process of cultural transformation, the people of Jamaica underwent a metamorphosis that incorporated many dimensions of change, including the retention of culturally defined elements that served to perpetuate their African heritage.

In a critique of plantation archaeology Jean Howson (1990) has pointed out that interpretive research is undergoing a shift from studies aimed at recognizing status and identifying economic differentiation among groups, to research emphasizing social action and a more dynamic interpretation of the past. This can also be seen in the increased recognition of the complex relationship between artifacts and the specific contexts applied to them by their users (Hodder 1987). We share Howson's (1990: 90)

view that "material things are susceptible to various or contested meanings through contexts of action." Anthropological understanding of the lives of enslaved people clearly lies not merely in identifying the presence or absence of an inexpensive imported ceramic or a locally made earthenware (e.g., a Jamaican *yabba* or a southeastern colonoware), but rather in an interpretation that considers the perception and ordering of the world within the African Jamaican cultural setting (Armstrong 1990: 4; Ferguson 1992; for an African example, see Kelly 1997). Artifacts and the spatial pattern of activity areas held connotations for the African Jamaican community that reflect preferences, choices, and negotiated responses to social conditions that are only incidental to cost and status (Armstrong 1990: 4; c.f. Otto 1977; Moore 1985; Delle 1998). Our goal is thus to examine archaeological remains and spatial data in a manner that allows us to consider issues of power relations, social action, and patterns that had meaning within the context of an African Jamaican village.

This study of transformation lies within a framework of critical reflection grounded in objective analysis. The difficulty in adapting the transformation model to archaeological contexts has been in devising systems of analysis. Archaeology can provide evidence that confirms the processes of change and patterns of meaning. This evidence may, with the assistance of documentary sources and contextual analysis, shed some light on the lives of enslaved people. Rather than discard pattern recognition, we should try to find patterns that can be demonstrated reliably to assess and explain such social issues as power relationships and questions of cultural transformations, gender, age gradation, diet and health, and economic contexts. These must be appropriate for comparative analysis yet flexible enough to detect variations in material culture that reflect the conditions and choices of the people being studied.

An extensive literature exists on the development of African Caribbean or creole societies (summarized in Armstrong 1990: 4-16).¹ Building on these studies, the current project uses Jamaican data, working toward an understanding of the processes of change and cultural transformation in the creation of creole societies (Mintz 1974; Mintz and Price 1976). The Seville study provides several data sets that assist us in diachronic interpretation and explanation of culture change, transformation, and continuity. These include analysis of patterns of artifact use by African Jamaicans, spatial patterning, dietary patterns and subsistence, and specialized analyses such as the examination of burials and the treatment of the dead. This article focuses on the interpretations of spatial patterns expressed at Seville through architecture.

Spatial Organization on a Jamaican Plantation

The research at Seville Plantation focused on the site of the African Jamaican villages, home to the enslaved (and later free) laborers who were crucial to the operation of the sugar estate from 1670 to the late 1800s (Figure 2).² We use archaeologically recovered data, supported by historical information, to document shifts through time in the spatial arrangement of the African Jamaican villages to identify the emergence of an internal social organization within the African Jamaican village, and the processes of transformation involved in the creation of a distinctive African Jamaican community. Analysis of plantation spatial arrangement at Seville can be divided into two interdependent parts. The first involves the overall layout of the principal working components of the plantation. This configuration was determined by the externally defined economic motives of the planter (see Orser 1989; Vlach 1993; Delle 1998). The second explores internal shifts in household and village arrangement that reflect the dynamic processes of social development and reveal insights into a variety of social and economic matters that affected the development of African Jamaican society.

To understand the significance of changes internal to the village, we must first examine the plantation's broader spatial arrangement, as defined by the plantation management and subject to their economic motivation. The organization of plantation layout in Jamaica was indicative of the economic forces and power relationships operating between planter and enslaved Africans (Higman 1987, 1988; Delle 1998 and elsewhere; see Orser 1988; Vlach 1993). The economic profit motive was clearly demonstrated by the planter's control over enslaved labor and the physical location of the plantation's various components, including fields, sugar works and mills, the planter's house, workers' housing, and provision grounds.

The role of the plantation was to maximize the production of a cash crop and to generate a profit for its owners.³ At Seville Plantation, as at most of the plantations on Jamaica's north coast, the cash crop was sugar. African villages were located in hilly, rocky, or other areas on the margins of fields unsuitable for cane cultivation, in close proximity both to cane fields and processing works. Planter or managerial housing was positioned between the key economic variables: labor, fields, and works. Barry W. Higman (1987: 22) points out that by 1700, standard models for plantation layout had been generated, and planters interested in establishing a new estate could consult manuals or inspect existing models. Such manuals as *The Jamaica Planter's Guide* argue for the "great utility of central situa-

Figure 2. Map of Seville Estate, St. Ann's Bay, Jamaica, showing locations of early and later African Jamaican villages, managerial residences, sugar works, and cane fields.

tion to place the manufacturing houses" (Roughly 1823: 182-83). The ideal of a centrally located production center is clearly indicated on a plan of Lucky Valley Estate, owned by planter-historian Edward Long, and located in upper Clarendon Parish, near the center of the island. A map of the estate by James Blair, dated 1769, depicts a series of concentric circles at

quarter-mile intervals radiating from the plantation's works (Higman 1987: 23; 1988: 84–91, fig. 4.3). Higman (1987: 23) argues convincingly that the circles indicate an ideal model of plantation efficiency, but he notes that the estate's actual layout is asymmetrical, with modifications conforming to geographic features such as narrow alluvial valleys and steep hillsides. He also notes that in 1769 the Lucky Valley works were moved to a location in the center of the cane fields from a location initially established in 1708 (Higman 1988: 85). This centralization relates to an increase in the estate's output and efficiency during the 1770s. Likewise, the central location of Seville Plantation's industrial production complex is defined by its proximity to the estate's cane fields, labor, and management—all of which are located within 400 acres adjacent to the coast. This area represents less than one-sixth of the estate. The remainder of the estate—while essential to the production of provisions consumed by labor and management, pasture for livestock used for food and power, and the source of resources such as timber and stone—was of secondary economic importance to the production of the primary cash crop.⁴

The sugar works at Seville were located centrally to maximize efficient production. The position of owner and managerial residences between the African Jamaican village and the works allowed surveillance of the enslaved population as they passed to and from the works and village, controlling production of the profitable cash crop. The Seville Plantation thus provides a clear example of the spatial relationships between the primary economic variables of the sugar estate (see also the discussion of the spatial arrangement at Drax Hall, Jamaica, in Armstrong 1983, 1990, 1991).⁵

The earliest detailed map of Seville Plantation dates from 1721 and depicts the layout of the plantation as well as that of several neighboring plantations in the St. Ann's Bay region with considerable accuracy. At that time the estate property consisted of more than 2,500 acres, with all the areas of primary economic importance, including fields, works, and planter and manager's residences, as well as the African village, covering about 400 acres of plantation land. The positions of the village and the planter's residence were dependent on the location of the fields and works. Cane fields were given priority for economic reasons and were located on the narrow, flat, coastal strip of fertile soil. The works were built at the base of the hill on which the Great House and African village were situated, in a central location in respect to the fields and labor, so that sugar could be processed quickly before it spoiled. Unlike Lucky Valley Estate, noted earlier (Higman 1987, 1988), in the interior of the island, or at Drax Hall Estate (located along the coast 2 kilometers to the east of St. Ann's Bay), where the sugar works were moved to a more efficient central location

within the fields (Armstrong 1990), at Seville the industrial works remained in the same location throughout the estate's history, despite changes in processing technology from animal to water power. The reasons are three-fold. First, the sugar fields of Seville Plantation were located on either side of the Church River, with the works located at a central crossing. Second, although Seville consisted of more than 2,500 acres, sugar production was only economically feasible on the coastal strip; to avoid compromising valuable cane land, the works were thus placed at the inland margin of the fields, directly below the overseer's and planter's houses. Third, throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries there was persistent fear of Spanish invasion. In 1688 the naturalist Hans Sloane (1707–25) described the construction of a “rifling lawn . . . with a battery of eighteen small guns *en barbette*” in front of the Great House. The location of the works at Seville estate was a compromise that maximized efficiency of production, minimized impacts on productive land, and placed the works in a more defensible location on the inland side of the fields.⁶

In 1836 Attorney William Miller, in his report to Parliament evaluating the apprenticeship period before emancipation, stated that in Jamaica, “the negroe’s houses are generally built as near the centre of all plantations as possible, and at no great distance from the works” (British Parliamentary Papers 1836 560:339, cited in Higman 1987: 28 and 1988: 81). The location of the village at Seville conforms to this model of minimizing the time-cost to labor of movement between the works, fields, and housing. However, the position of the village close to the works and fields, yet close to the managerial presence of the overseer and planter, was not strictly guided by economic rationale. As William Beckford (1790: 2: 41), an eighteenth-century planter-historian, reported, houses for laborers were “in general some distance from the works, but not so far removed from the sight of the overseer.” As Seville Plantation was established as a residential estate, where the owner personally oversaw all plantation operations, there is no doubt that the owner was fully aware of the active role that the spatial arrangement of houses had in expressing the subservient role of the enslaved in the plantation system. The planter’s control over labor is indicated by the prominent position of the Great House (the planter’s residence), visible from the sea and overlooking the fields and works. The African Jamaican village was initially located behind the Great House, placing the plantation owner between his greatest capital investments (other than land): labor and industrial equipment. In addition to providing economic benefit and maintaining control over labor, this spatial pattern avoided compromising valuable agricultural land with habitation structures.⁷

The power relationship between the planter and the enslaved Africans at Seville Plantation is expressed in the estate's basic layout. These data, combined with data from other estates, such as Drax Hall (Armstrong 1990) and Lucky Valley (Higman 1987, 1988), provide a picture of rigid class structure and the planter's external control over the enslaved. The villages were deliberately arranged to maximize the plantation's efficiency and to maintain an economic mode of production. The planter assigned specific areas for occupation by Africans, and the areas designated as laborer villages fulfilled the planter's economic- and power-driven criteria for plantation management.

Shifts in Household and Village Arrangement at Seville

Although the initial boundaries of the village were more or less fixed by the planter, over time enslaved Africans actively reorganized their assigned village space. Archaeological and historical data from the Seville village allow a deeper look into the internal organization of the African Jamaican community, beyond the general relationship dictated by the mode of production and the institution of slavery. The enslaved came from many different African backgrounds, yet they created and maintained a spatial arena for their activities that in time developed into a unified African Jamaican identity (Armstrong 1990, 1991; Burton 1997; Kelly n.d.; Vlach 1987, 1993).

The creation and maintenance of internal social organization within pre-emancipation African Jamaican villages served both laborers and planters. The planter class encouraged Africans to maintain a degree of behavioral autonomy that highlighted perceived differences (white/black, planter/enslaved, and until the nineteenth century, Christian/"pagan") upon which the institution of slavery was based. Production of African Jamaican foods in house-yards and provision grounds, as well as the emergence of craft industries, provided enslaved Africans with food and commodities that the planter would otherwise have had to purchase for them. At the community level the creation of internal social systems within emerging African Jamaican villages allowed residents to incorporate elements of African expression within a new, locally defined, identity that could act independently of the planter class. On a broader, regional level the emergence of African Jamaican communities, with internally defined production of foods and goods, led to the emergence of islandwide markets held by enslaved Africans, and an internal marketing system through which goods and ideas were sold and exchanged—which also provided much of the island with local produce (see Mintz 1974). By examining the internal

organization of the African Jamaican community, we can see through the institution of slavery to the systems created by enslaved Africans, despite (even in response to) the conditions of slavery.

Boundaries and the Emergence of an African Jamaican Community

The archaeological study of Seville's African village began with two maps of the estate, dated 1721 and 1792.⁸ These documents suggest that while the location of most key components of the plantation system remained in the same location throughout the estate's life, the African village did not. Not only did the location of the village shift over time, but the arrangement and architecture of the houses within the village also changed dramatically. The early map depicts the village as two linear rows of tightly spaced houses along a road or lane (aligned to facilitate observation from the Great House) with three structures located behind each row of houses (Figure 3). This earlier village is designated *Locus 1*. The 1792 map (Figure 4) indicates a significant change, however. There is a clustered arrangement, designated *Locus 2*, at the same elevation and no longer upslope from the Great House, with each house oriented independently (probably conforming to topography and prevailing winds), and with considerably more yard space surrounding and between houses (for a discussion of Jamaican house-yards, see Armstrong 1991). Furthermore, the new village location provided greater autonomy for its residents, as many of the dwellings were shielded from the planter's view by dense bush and greater distance.

Archaeological data from the village is complemented by evidence of significant changes in the planter's residence after 1756, based on descriptive information in estate inventories (Jamaican Archives 1759: 17). Sometime after 1756, probably in the early 1780s, the second floor of the Great House was destroyed, possibly due to a storm or hurricane. If the solidly built Great House suffered extensive damage, it is likely that considerable damage was done to the less substantial village at the same time, leading to the abandonment of the older village at *Locus 1* and the construction of new houses in *Locus 2*.⁹

Dating of artifacts and materials recovered from extensive excavations indicate that a change from *Locus 1* to *Locus 2* took place in the early 1780s. We suggest that the shift in house area configuration, as expressed in the arrangement shown on the 1792 map, demonstrates internally defined social organization associated with the emergence of an African Jamaican community. Furthermore, it was expected that transformations leading to the dramatic shift in house-yard layout exhibited by the late eighteenth cen-

Figure 3. Detail of 1721 map of St. Ann's Bay showing Seville Plantation, identified by the name of its owner, Richard Heming, Esq. (Jamaica National Library). The sugar works, Great House, and the early African Jamaican village are all indicated on this map. Note that the orientation of the map is from the Caribbean toward the interior, and therefore the direction of north is toward the bottom of the page. All subsequent maps are oriented in this fashion to correspond to the practice of eighteenth-century cartography.

ture at Locus 2 would be evident within house structures from the older village at Locus 1. While documentary evidence from the 1721 map of Locus 1 strongly suggests that the initial construction of the early village was closely prescribed by the planter, given the closely packed arrangement of the houses—which severely limited the expression of African notions of architectural and spatial proxemics¹⁰ (Agorsah 1985; Prussin 1969)—it is expected that through the process of “Jamaicanization” or creolization, enslaved Africans transformed this earlier housing to better suit their needs (Armstrong 1990, 1991; Burton 1997; Kelly n.d.; Vlach 1987, 1993). Furthermore, in addition to reorganizing interior spaces, we expected the

Figure 4. Detail of 1792 map of Seville Plantation with the later African Jamaican village located adjacent to the letter "G." The Great House lies above the letter "F" (Jamaica National Library).

surrounding yard to be redefined and incorporated into a combined African Jamaican house-yard with increased use of the yard for household activities. The yard activities should include exterior kitchen and food preparation areas, gathering areas, animal pens, and gardens. With the exception of specific activity areas, such as hearths and planted garden beds, the yard area should be relatively artifact-free because of repeated yard sweeping, with increased artifact frequencies at the edge of the house and along the perimeter of the cleared yard (see Armstrong 1990, 1991; Mintz 1974).

Whereas the actual movement from Locus 1 to Locus 2 could not have been effected without the planter's tacit approval, the design and construction of houses in this latter village area exhibit distinctive spatial patterns reflecting the internal social organization within living areas as it emerged during the village's first century at Locus 1. The early village was built according to the planter's model of efficient order with similar, if not identical houses, tightly spaced and built to a uniform, linear plan. As a distinctive internal social organization emerged within the village, we expected to see that residents modified living and activity spaces within the basic layout established by the planter, while creating an environment more suited to African Jamaican social values and notions of proxemics. When the vil-

lage was rebuilt at Locus 2, the developing internal social organization of the African community thus continued uninterrupted and the village was rebuilt expressing an African Jamaican pattern, rather than merely modifying an externally imposed housing arrangement, as had been the case one hundred years earlier (Armstrong 1991, 1998; Mintz 1974). The African Jamaican spatial layout incorporated elements of African tradition, including proxemics, use of local resources, and efficient use of the local environment. This late-eighteenth-century housing was expected to exhibit the distinctive African Jamaican house-yard configuration described by Mintz (1974: 232) and demonstrated at the laborer village at Drax Hall (Armstrong 1983, 1990, 1991). The ideas and internal organization on which this shift in layout were based evolved in the early village but could not be fully expressed until the village was moved and the enslaved Africans were permitted a more significant creative role in the construction of their built environment.

Archaeology: Recovering Patterns of Meaning in Spatial Boundaries

The Early Village

Archaeological research at Seville confirmed at Locus 1 the location and configuration of the African village indicated by the 1721 map of the estate. Moreover, archaeological data, including ceramic and pipe-stem dating, indicate that the houses identified date from the inception of the British occupation of Jamaica and the establishment of the sugar estate by Richard Heming circa 1670.¹¹ The early laborer houses at Seville were constructed to a uniform pattern, in tight linear rows, located immediately behind and upslope from the planter's Great House. Built in the 1670s, these houses were occupied at least until the early 1780s, when they were apparently destroyed by a major hurricane. Rather than rebuilding on this site, the entire African community moved to a new site (see Figure 4), which was occupied through the period of slavery and until nearly the turn of the twentieth century. Over time the early village site was lost from the common memory of descendants, who referred to the relocated village site as the old village. When the Jamaican National Heritage Trust purchased the estate as a national historic park, the ruins of houses in the more recent village were included, but the early village with seventeenth- and eighteenth-century houses was not included in the National Trust land purchase; rather, it lies within an adjacent tract of land owned by the municipal water company.

Eight complete houses (structures and surrounding compounds) in the early village were completely excavated and an additional four houses were

Figure 5. Hypothetical reconstruction of a house from the early African Jamaican village based on archaeological findings at Locus 1, House Area 16 (HA1.16) (Armstrong 1998: 386).

sampled. These 3×4 to 4×6 meter houses were generally two-room structures oriented with their long axes parallel to a road or path (still in existence), which ran on a northeasterly axis, leading past the west side of the planter's residence (visible in Figure 3). The foundations of these houses incorporated materials including yellow brick fragments of a type associated with earlier Spanish-period occupation in Jamaica. The yellow bricks were presumably salvaged from the ruins of the early sixteenth-century Spanish settlement at Sevilla la Nueva by enslaved Africans clearing plantation fields for sugar production and who used them to build their own homes.

The location and orientation of these early houses conforms to the pattern indicated on the 1721 map of St. Ann's Bay. The houses are closely spaced with only 2 to 2.5 meters separating them. All of the house foundations are primarily constructed of locally available marl stone, with powdered marl providing a smooth floor surface. Marl stones were employed in the external foundation and in down-slope rooms, where their use was primarily to modify the slope and to provide a flat surface on which to construct a house. Post holes indicate post/frame structures supporting wattle and daub siding, and the relatively small quantities of nails recovered suggest thatched roofs rather than wooden shingles (Figure 5). Small post holes bisecting two of the houses, and changes in the flooring pattern in all of the dwellings, suggest the presence of internal partitions and differentiated

rooms. Only one doorway is indicated for each house. In all excavated cases the door faced east and would have opened onto the road that ran between the two rows of houses.¹² No breaks or wear patterns indicative of passageways were observed in the west or back wall of the houses. The construction of houses with their only doors opening on to the central street, and not on to the back and side "yard" areas, is indicative of the strong degree of planter control exercised over the initial construction of the housing and over the Africans. Furthermore, the lane or street on which the houses face is oriented such that the planter needed only to look upslope from the rear doors of the Great House to observe the comings and goings of the inhabitants from their houses. The uniform openings toward the road may have also reflected the planter's desire to create the image of an orderly European village. As initially designed, these houses fail to take advantage of prevailing sea breezes; however, use patterns and analyses of associated yard areas suggest that residents began to redefine and reorganize the use of these living areas, if not modifying the structures themselves.

Artifact analysis shows that exterior areas were used for various tasks and activities and that most of these activities took place out of the planter's view, behind the houses on the opposite side from the Great House. The doorways were in view, but the activity areas were actually buffered by the tight row of houses. It can be argued that this offered a view that projected a sense of order and control desired by the planter. In addition, and almost certainly as an unintended consequence of the planter's motives, this arrangement of activity areas may have been an intentional response to the explicit surveillance opportunities presented to the planter by the linear arrangement of houses. Even within this early village, residents were able to modify the imposed order. The recovery of a relatively high quantity of animal bone, along with cooking-related items such as ceramics, suggests that cooking areas were located immediately south of the houses. The area immediately behind or west of the houses was virtually free of artifacts, suggesting repeated sweepings of the yard area. In one case a yard area had a thin horizontal layer of marl similar to the flooring found in the south room in the house. These data suggest the importance of this area as an exterior gathering area behind the house, and its internally defined recognition as a part of the house compound. Within the yards enslaved Africans prepared food, tended their gardens and domestic stock, engaged in social activities, and had an unencumbered vantage point from which to monitor their own provision grounds in the adjacent hills to the south. All of these activities were performed out of the direct view of the planter and the management.

The state of preservation of these perishable house foundations is remarkable: floors are intact, and post holes are clearly demarcated as soil

discolorations. The only significant modification in house construction is the addition of a room to the structure at House Area 20 (Locus 1). This addition is marked by a jog in the linear alignment of the foundations. The room that was constructed protruded into the porch and road area, not into the yard area behind the house. This suggests that the residents assigned particular importance to the yard area and built in this way to retain the integrity of the area. A linear break in the limestone flooring provides the only clue to specific activity areas within the house. This feature, which runs parallel to the back wall of a room without an exterior door, may have been used to set boards upon in the construction of a bed or sleeping platform.

The estate planters and managers maintained a pattern of rigidity, order, and control in the layout of the tightly spaced houses of the early village. The archaeological data illustrate that this control was modified by internal changes reflected in the patterning of activities within house compounds. Still, throughout the plantation's first hundred or more years of operation, the enslaved laborers were faced with limited space and the planter's direct watchful eye (Figure 6). Not only was the early village (Locus 1) in direct line of sight from the planter's residence (recall that the resident planter in part obviated the need for a resident overseer), but the enslaved Africans had to pass directly by both the planter's and the manager's residences on their way to and from the factory works and sugarcane fields. The linear arrangement of the works, the planter's residence, and the village facilitated managerial control. But provision grounds, in which the laborers grew their own produce for consumption and sale at local markets, were located out of the line of managerial oversight and control. From their earliest days these fields could be reached directly from the "back" yards of the laborers' house compounds. Therefore, the interpretation of the village is necessarily complex: from the planter's viewpoint order was established, while laborers eventually attained a degree of autonomy.

The Later Village

Nearly a century after the founding of the Seville Plantation, the African Jamaican settlement was moved to a new location (as indicated on Figure 3). The context of this movement is significant in a number of ways. First, the move appears to have occurred as an event rather than as a gradual shift. The old village was probably damaged and a new settlement built to replace it. The new village represented a clean start, perhaps literally, given the quantities of refuse and artifacts recovered from the fringes of the earlier house-yard areas where sweepings were deposited. Second, after a century of living in provided housing, the community had an opportunity to define spatial boundaries within the village on their own terms. This

Figure 6. Seville Plantation 1670-ca. 1780. Patterns of movement between the African Jamaican village, the industrial works and fields, and the planter's residence clearly indicate the planter's control and supervision of African Jamaican life, except for access between village and provision grounds.

was a period of apparent turmoil for the planters on this estate: not only did buildings on the estate require considerable renovation (see note 9), but two generations of planters died in rapid succession and control of the estate was contested and fought over in the courts, requiring for the first time a resident overseer, housed adjacent to the works. The new village is

seen as an expression of the community that had evolved within the African Jamaican settlement. While the planters controlled decisions concerning the area occupied, there is no indication that they imposed a planned community such as that established in the previous century. Finally, these houses not only exhibit well-defined and expanded house-yard compounds, but they also show considerable variation in the specifics of house design, construction, and alignment. This variability may reflect the internal social organization operative within the community. For instance, differential access to building supplies and clustered groupings of houses may reflect social relations or social rank.

Houses in the later village are loosely clustered in an area northwest of the early village and due west of the planter's Great House (Figures 3 and 7). Laborers could travel to and from the fields without directly passing the planter's residence, but the manager's and overseer's houses still retained a pivotal position of surveillance over the passing labor and particularly over the works and fields. The steeply rising slope on which the African village, planter's house, and overseer's house are located further emphasizes the removal of Africans from direct view. Even today the paths indicated on the eighteenth-century maps are in use and still pass out of sight of the Great House. This new village location was also closer to the fields and works than that occupied by the earlier village. First occupied in the 1780s, houses in Locus 2 were inhabited until the late 1880s and early 1890s. In contrast to the long-term occupation of houses in the earlier settlement, houses in Locus 2 were frequently abandoned and new ones built on new sites, which enabled us to date specific houses to relatively narrow periods of occupation based on surface and excavated ceramics.

A preliminary survey of Locus 2 identified thirty possible house areas. Extensive excavation was conducted at four of these houses, and another six were sampled. In contrast to the similarity in architecture found in Locus 1, each of the houses in Locus 2 is oriented on a different axis and represents a different set of building practices. In terms of boundaries, Locus 2 occupies an area at least eight times the size of the earlier village, a result of a longer period of occupation, increased residential mobility, and perhaps different ideas of proxemics. In addition, the distance between house sites averages 25 meters, or ten times the distance between houses found in the earlier village, and would have been greater if the houses were not contemporaneous. Actual house size is similar to those in the early village, though houses are a little larger on average, ranging from 4 × 6 meters to 5 × 7 meters.

Building construction ranges from forms that are virtually identical to the houses at Locus 1, with limestone and marl floors, wattle and daub

Figure 7. Seville Plantation ca. 1780–1838 and beyond. The shift from the linear arrangement of the earlier village to the dispersed cluster of the later village circumvents planter control through unsupervised access between fields, village, and provision grounds.

walls, and thatching (e.g., the house at House Area 49 [Locus 2], which has a mean date of circa 1810), to framed wattle and daub houses with wood floors and perhaps even shingled roofs (e.g., the house at House Area 35 [Locus 2], mean date of circa 1820, with the presence of transfer-printed commemorative “emancipation” pottery dated 1838). Other building forms

include combinations of stone foundations or footings and framing. Doorways tend to be oriented toward the prevailing wind and the ocean. The one exception to this pattern, however, was found among houses bordering an area that is still referred to by people in the area as "the commons," where instead of facing the prevailing breeze, they open onto this grassy area.

Yard areas exhibit all of the elements found in the earlier village, including hearths and cooking areas immediately outside of each house. In the early village, hearths were located on the opposite side of the house from the doorway, facing the main roadway through the village. Within the more recent settlement hearths and cooking areas were located at various places within the yard. With larger yards and less regularity in the location of the house within the yard, the hearth location could be more flexible and apparently depended on relationships and interactions with neighboring households. A significant distinction between the two villages is the size of the house-yard areas. The yards themselves are identifiable as areas, which with the exception of hearths were relatively artifact-free. These zones of low artifact density were probably the result of yard sweeping and extend over an area of 7 to 12 meters from the house rather than the average of 5 to 6 meters in the earlier village. Furthermore, most of the house yards do not run directly from one to another. Instead, there are marginal areas between houses, with refuse and presumably vegetation. The only houses with abutting yards are those found on the boundary of the commons, but even these have indications of marginal, debris-filled zones between them. Larger yards with space between them are both factors of the lower density occupation.

The houses at Locus 2 are at a greater distance from the planter's and manager's residences and appear to be loosely organized around a large, open common area, further demonstrating the active role played by the African Jamaican population in the choice of village location, as it was now closer to the nearest provision grounds located south of the village. It is perhaps significant that both commons and village cluster about a road or path, which leads to the provision grounds. This path is indicated on the 1792 map and remains the primary route traversed by Jamaicans traveling to and from current houses and farms located southwest of the archaeological ruins and the markets of St. Ann's Bay.

Conclusion

Spatial data on overall plantation layout demonstrate the primary economic motive of the plantation system. The African Jamaican village was located

to maximize production of the cash crop and at the same time to maintain control over the estate's labor force. The planter's and manager's houses were located between the village and the fields and the works. Although the technology used in sugar production changed from animal-powered mills to water wheels, the location of all the plantation's primary economic parts other than the village remained fixed at Seville. When the village moved in the second half of the eighteenth century, dramatic changes were apparent in the community's internal organization, while externally defined economic and power structures were maintained. These changes brought the village closer to the works and fields and facilitated a shorter route to provisioning grounds while at the same time maintaining the intermediate control position of both the planter and manager houses. This pattern was maintained through the end of slavery.

This shift in village location illuminates a **significant change in the estate's management-labor relations**. Enslaved laborers in the early village (Locus 1) had to pass directly by the planter's residence on their way to and from the works and fields (see Figure 6). The shift in village location after 1780 shows a more loosely organized clustering of houses and greater house-yard space. During that time of trauma and disruption for the estate, houses and works required reconstruction, and overseers hired by trustees for the Heming family estate governed the estate's management. Members of the planter's family continued to occupy the main house, but direct management of the estate shifted to the more centrally located overseer's house immediately adjacent to, and upslope from, the sugar mill. In the resulting reorganization of the estate, the overseer and the manager attained new importance. While the proximity of the works to the manager's and overseer's houses facilitated the retention of control over the factory, enslaved laborers could pass between field, village, and provision grounds without direct and immediate supervision (see Figure 7).

Archaeological and historical research suggest that these changes reflect an **emerging and internally driven social organization** within the enslaved African community, where house placement and architecture were governed by the choices and actions of African Jamaican residents rather than by those of the plantation owner. Houses dating from the 1670s to the 1750s have been excavated in Locus 1, confirming the tightly spaced linear pattern indicated on the 1721 map. Analysis of artifacts and spatial patterns indicates considerable outside or yard activity including cooking areas and a cleared "gathering area" located out of the planter's direct view. The data from Locus 2 indicates the emergence of the distinctive form of house-yard living areas as postulated by Mintz (1974) and demonstrated at Drax Hall estate by Douglas V. Armstrong (1990). The houses

in this Locus are clearly further apart than their predecessors at Locus 1. The changes in the late eighteenth century brought the village closer to the works and fields. The positioning of the later village (Locus 2) shows not only a more loosely organized placement, featuring clustering of houses and greater house-yard space, but laborers in this later period could pass directly between key nodes of their activities without passing the planter's house, thereby reducing the degree of direct supervision to which they were subjected. This pattern is observed to have begun prior to emancipation and continued through the first few decades of freedom.

Notes

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- 1 Armstrong 1990 and Howson 1990 discuss the importance of an integrated anthropological-historical perspective. Current archaeological research draws on the historiographic scholarship of those who have examined the development of African Caribbean and African American societies (e.g., in the Caribbean, Brathwaite 1971; Bush 1990; Craton 1978; Dunn 1972; Handler and Lange 1978; Higman 1976; 1987; Mintz 1974; Mintz and Price 1976; Morrissey 1989; and for the Americas, Fox-Genovese 1988; Genovese 1974; and Joyner 1984; among others).
- 2 Enslaved Jamaicans were freed in 1838, after a four-year period of apprenticeship. The village at Seville continued to be occupied by tenants until the 1890s (Kelly 1989). Upon emancipation, however, many of the former laborers left plantations for free holdings off estates. At Seville, Protestant reformers purchased a section of the estate and established a free settlement called the Priory. The Priory was occupied by former laborers from Seville and other area estates.
- 3 For a discussion of plantations in North America, see Orser 1988, 1989.
- 4 While playing only a minor role in terms of direct production of the cash crops, because of the hilly and mountainous terrain of much of Jamaica, estate lands were important in contributing resources necessary for the estate's maintenance.

Forested areas contained hardwoods used in the construction of wooden structures and equipment. The estate's interior portion was also used as pasture for cattle and other stock that constituted a major source of fresh meat for the estate. Estates on such islands as Barbados exhibit a different pattern, with smaller estates and greater reliance on imported provisions, as most of the land there was suitable for sugar production.

- 5 The spatial arrangement of Drax Hall Plantation has been analyzed by Douglas V. Armstrong (1983, 1990, 1991). Barry W. Higman (1987) has compiled cartographic data for Jamaican estates for the period 1760–1950, and Jerome S. Handler (1989) discusses the layout of several Barbadian plantations (see also Handler and Lange 1978).
- 6 On occasion laborers were armed with weapons to defend the estate against outside attack. Hans Sloane (1707–25) visited the plantation in 1688 and reported the defensive works in front of Seville's Great House. The St. Ann's Parish Records describe the formation of an armed militia of slaves in 1795 to repel a Spanish invasion at Mammey Bay, 8 kilometers east of Seville Plantation (Letter, R. Perkins to F. Cundall, 19 February 1916).
- 7 The location of fields, works, planter, and overseer housing remained fixed, and only the laborer's housing shifted during the later period of slavery. This is in contrast to Drax Hall, where during slavery only the fields remained fixed and the other structures shifted to increase the estate's productive efficiency while maintaining the planter-manager's control (Armstrong 1990).
- 8 The Seville Afro-Jamaican Archaeology Project was initiated in 1987. It was co-sponsored by the Maxwell School, Syracuse University, and the Jamaica National Heritage Trust. The site was observed by Merrick Posnansky (1983) of UCLA in 1977 and was one of six African Jamaican villages that were partially surveyed in 1980 before Armstrong's (1983, 1990) excavations at Drax Hall estate.
- 9 Evidence of timber framing reuse in the rafters of the Seville Great House indicates destruction of the second floor by a cause other than fire. While no direct correlation can be made to a specific hurricane, the argument for destruction due to a storm is strengthened by evidence from Drax Hall (Armstrong 1990), which indicates destruction of the two-and-a-half story Great House at that estate during the same period (between 1763 and 1790). Extensive damage by storm would explain the complete movement of the Seville settlement from its initial location (Locus 1) to the area occupied beginning in the late eighteenth century (Locus 2).
- 10 Planters were very concerned with limiting the ability of Africans to express themselves in "African" ways (Goviea 1991: 351). Throughout the plantation regions, laws were on the books prohibiting the use of drums and the practice of dancing and other "African" expressions. Furthermore, a number of planter guidebooks were explicit in advising that planters obtain Africans from a variety of regions to minimize their ability to communicate in African languages (Geggus 1991: 403).
- 11 The estate was named after the ruins of the Spanish town of Sevilla la Nueva that occupied sections of the estate from 1509 to 1534.
- 12 The houses on the east side of the lane have been identified; however, they are poorly preserved. Indications are that they were mirror images of the houses excavated on the west side of the lane.

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