MATERIAL CULTURE & COMMUNITY STRUCTURE
The Slave And Tenant Community At Levi Jordan’s Plantation, 1848-1892

Kenneth L. Brown

The cultural evolution which occurred in rural areas of the South after slavery resulted in what may be effectively conceived of as a continuum of development in many respects of African-American culture. Slavery may have legally ended, but “Freedom” did not pay the rent or buy the food. Freedom meant that new behavioral adaptations were required for the survival of the former slaves. After emancipation, African Americans who remained within the plantation system faced a new set of adaptive forces. To some extent, they may have negotiated some successes in their labor relations with their masters during the long period of slavery, but with emancipation those rules, and the economic and social basis for them, were suddenly and irrevocably altered. Former slaves and masters had to begin the negotiation process from a radically different point. As before, this process had to involve both the conditions of each plantation community as well as the historical processes into which (and from which) the “players” were embedded.

Indeed, it has been suggested that in many respects the postbellum period may have been materially worse for African Americans than was slavery. If true, this would mean that freedmen had to adapt to new conditions of life that may have been more severe in some aspects than slavery. The depressed post war economic condition of the South was a major factor in formation of the environment that former slaves and slave owners were forced to confront during...
the new period of negotiation. Both of the primary plantation classes had to face reduced material conditions, as well as abrupt changes in the dependent relationship between the classes. The plantation owners continued to control the means of production, including both the land and a majority of the tools; and the former slaves continued to provide the primary source of labor. Wages and/or money earned through "shares" became the primary mechanisms for providing for the material needs of the labor force. The "legitimate" needs of each group had to be met through a process of negotiation with the other. Thus, these new conditions of life forced additional change and adaptation. However, as a result of the earlier period of adaptation and cultural development under the conditions of slavery, the cultural matrix for African Americans of 1865 was substantially different from the culture of the earlier, enslaved arrivals.

Within the past decade elements of this discussion in southern historiography have begun to filter into historical archaeology.² Traditional archaeological concerns with artifact classification, temporal distinctions, and the definition of ethnicity have begun to give way to other types of questions concerning the lifeways of the plantation's inhabitants.³ In part, this change has developed as a result of the realization that historical archaeology controls data that is at once the product of historically defined processes and individual/group beliefs and behaviors of the European Americans and the African Americans. Archaeologists have the potential to deal with the end products (the artifacts and artifact associations) of the actual lifeways and beliefs of African Americans.⁴ Instead of looking for the presence of "ethnic identifiers" and/or "African retentions," historical archaeologists have begun to investigate why these end products came about and were perpetuated through slavery and freedom.⁵ The focus is shifting toward the investigation of cause and meaning to those who produced, utilized, and deposited the recovered artifacts and artifact contexts.⁶

Material remains (both artifacts and their contexts) recovered from the slave and tenant quarters areas of the Levi Jordan Plantation, Brazoria County, Texas will be employed to investigate a number of issues related to the evolution of African-American culture from slavery into tenancy. As Randolph Campbell has stated: "Once defeat destroyed slavery and emancipated approximately 250,000 blacks, most white Texans for generation after generation regarded them and their descendants as more of a problem than an asset."⁷ This paper will emphasize the role(s) served by certain artifacts and/or artifact contexts identified in the slave and tenant cabins in the survival and community adaptation to ante- and postbellum conditions that existed on the plantation and in the surrounding area. Of particular concern here will be interpretations of economic, political, and ritual life and adaptation within this community from 1848 to 1892. This should provide an example of the interpretive power of archaeological culture within t

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of archaeological research in the study of the evolution of African-American culture within the United States.

Levi Jordan and twelve slaves arrived in Texas in 1848 from Union County, Arkansas, determined to establish a new plantation. Jordan purchased 2,222 acres (at $4.00/acre) in Brazoria County, from Samuel M. Williams. The plantation is located approximately sixty miles south of the modern city of Houston, Texas, and fifteen miles inland from the Gulf of Mexico. Throughout the ante-bellum development of the plantation, the primary cash crops produced were sugar and cotton. Historical documentation suggests that Jordan raised as well as imported slaves for sale to other planters. Also adding to the profitability of the plantation, Jordan built the largest sugar mill in the county to process the cane raised by himself and several of the surrounding planters. After 1865 sugar was produced in decreasing quantities, while cotton production increased in importance. By 1870, cotton had become the dominant crop raised for external sale.

After Jordan’s death in 1873, the plantation was divided among his heirs. The northern half, which includes the main house and the slave/tenant quarters, was inherited by William Archibald Campbell McNeill, one of Jordan’s grandsons, who was a minor at the time of Jordan’s death. As a result of a number of events, the operation of this portion of the plantation between 1873 and 1892 was primarily left to a series of managers hired by Jordan’s grandsons. The operation of the plantation during this time was organized by a system that included wage laborers along with tenants/sharecroppers. Plantation ledger books indicate the lease of land and equipment, the sale of seed, and the payment of wages to a number of individuals residing on the plantation. Non-plantation residents appear only in the wage payment portion of the ledgers, suggesting that at least some of this labor was secured from people not otherwise farming the plantation’s lands. Nearly all of the wages reportedly paid by these ledger books was paid during the months of November through February—the prime months for sugar production. Thus, while not directly stated within the ledgers, a majority of the wages paid was for work in the sugar mill. With the primary exception of the foreman, the wage laborers during any year, were not the most productive sharecroppers for that year, although members of the same nuclear family might fall into both categories. Individual families could, therefore, operate within both of these systems, although individuals might not. Finally, the data strongly suggests that a majority of the families sharecropping on the plantation did not raise cotton in every year. All of the families do appear to have produced food crops. However, only a few families each year attempted to produce cotton for the external market.

This system ended in 1892, when four of Jordan’s great-grandsons (the
Martins) took sole possession of the northern portion of the plantation, divided it among themselves, and evicted the tenant/sharecropper families from their quarters. This eviction appears to have been the result of a court case which involved the McNeills and the Martins. During this case, two of the tenant/sharecroppers (both of whom had been slaves on the plantation) testified against the Martins. Once the case was settled in favor of the Martins, they appear to have exacted a tremendous price for this testimony. The eviction took the form of removing all members of the tenant/sharecropper community without their being permitted to take any of their possessions with them.

One critical aspect of this research into the evolution of the African-American community has been to demonstrate a high level of continuity between the pre- and post-emancipation population on the plantation. Archaeological research demonstrates that the same residential buildings were being employed during both of these time periods. Any investigation of cultural evolution, however, depends upon the ability to demonstrate a high level of residential continuity (from slavery to tenancy) and community involvement among the settler generation and their descendants. Otherwise, the cultural change noted may have been the result of people moving into the community, rather than the adaptive change of individuals within the community.

At least twelve families and/or heads of households can be shown to have been tenants/sharecroppers, who were working for wages, and/or practicing some other economic activity, on the plantation through the 1870s and 1880s. Additionally, five male children listed in 1870 are identified as heads of households on the plantation in 1880. Further, two females listed as wives in 1870 are identified as heads of households/widows in 1880, still continuing to live on the plantation. Finally, it is possible that two females listed as children in the 1870 census each married two of the male children noted above, and were still living on the plantation in 1880. Thus, of the twenty-nine families that can be identified as living on the plantation in 1870, a minimum of fourteen of them continued to have members living on the plantation in 1880. This group actually comprises nineteen of the twenty-three families living on the plantation in 1880. As noted above, two of the adult males from these families testified in the 1889–92 court case and appear to have been residing on the plantation at the time of their testimony. They were related through marriage to at least five of the other tenant families.

Further, the demographic structure of the African-American population residing on the plantation, based upon the 1850–80 Federal Census records help to demonstrate this continuity in population as well. Continuity can be observed in terms of the structure of the adult male population. Over time, the ratio of the cohort of adult males within the age categories from 20 to 50 years old remains approx group of males is from outside of th actually sons and
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old remains approximately the same (Figure 1). This would suggest that this group of males is aging, rather than being replaced by a variety of individuals from outside of the original population. A number of the “replacements” are actually sons and grandsons of the original slave residents.

As noted above, the people residing in the plantation’s slave and tenant communities did so in the same cabins. These cabins have been identified through both archaeological and historical evidence. This evidence indicates that the main house, the original plantation hospital, the house slave/domestic servant quarters, and a few of the smaller outbuildings around the house were made of wood. However, the bulk of the buildings concerned with production on the plantation, including the slave/tenant quarters, were constructed of brick. The main set of slave and tenant quarters are located approximately 400 feet northwest of the main house (Figure 2). The quarters area was occupied from 1848 until the forced abandonment in 1892. The actual buildings that served as the bulk of the slave and tenant quarters consisted of eight long, almost barracks-like structures built in units of two. Each of the units of cabins shared a central “hallway” and may have had a single continuous roof. Arche-

![Figure 1. Demographic Profiles of the Plantation’s Slave or Tenant Populations Recorded in the 1850-1880 Federal Censuses. Percentages are Given for Each of the Age Groups, with Females Shown on the Left and Males on the Right.](image-url)
A total of six cabins were eight cabin blocks. The 1860 census shows three to four cabins in each block.

**Figure 2. Diagram showing the location of the main house and nearby outbuildings and the four blocks of slave and later tenant cabins.**

**Figure 3. Diagram showing the location of the main house and nearby outbuildings and the four blocks of slave and later tenant cabins.**
ological evidence further demonstrates that each of the long buildings consisted of three to four individual cabins. That is, in blocks I, III, and IV, there were a total of six cabins (three in each of the long buildings), while in block II there were eight cabins (Figure 3).

The 1860 Federal Census lists a total of twenty-nine slave cabins on the plantation. The archaeologically defined configuration of four blocks would

![Diagram of Blocks I and II with individual cabins defined.](image)

Cabin I-A-2: Political Leader
Cabin I-B-3: Shell/Bone Carver (tenant)
Cabin II-A-3: Shell/Bone Carver (slave)
Cabin II-B-1: Curer
Cabin II-B-2: Munitions Maker/Metal Worker
Cabin II-B-3: Seamstress
Cabin II-A-1: "Quilter"
Cabin II-A-4: "Hunter" (slave)

**FIGURE 3. DIAGRAM OF BLOCKS I AND II WITH INDIVIDUAL CABINS DEFINED WITHIN THEM. OCCUPATIONAL DESIGNATIONS HAVE BEEN BASED UPON ARTIFACTUAL DIFFERENCES NOTED IN THE COLLECTION OF ARTIFACTS FROM EACH OF THE CABINS. THE ARCHITECTURE OF BLOCKS III AND IV IS IDENTICAL TO THAT OF BLOCK I.**
only have accommodated twenty-six cabins. An undated photograph of the main house, a diary written by one of Jordan’s granddaughters, and excavation indicate that the remaining houses were wooden frame structures built near the main house. These buildings housed the domestic slaves/servants and provided space for other plantation functions (e.g., the hospital and weaving house).

An extremely large percentage of the artifacts and artifact contexts thus far recovered represent the preserved remains of possessions abandoned by the tenants as they were forced to leave in 1892. The result of this forced abandonment, the locking of the quarters for nearly twenty-five years prior to their systematic demolition, and flooding which resulted in the deposition of soil over the site has provided an important set of materials representing items hastily abandoned by their owners. Further, the materials have been recovered in a position relatively close to that in which they were left by their owners. (At least, that is, in terms of their general position relative to other materials within each of the cabins.) It is from these abandonment deposits that evidence of occupational specialization, political status, economic status, African behavioral and belief systems, and cultural evolution has been recovered. Given the large number of native Africans listed in the 1870 Federal Census for Brazoria County, Texas (123), this evolution was likely the result of several processes, including acculturation, the direct “importation” of African behaviors/beliefs, and changes brought about by emancipation.

To date, excavations have been conducted into fourteen individual slave/tenant cabins within the community. This figure includes excavation into all eight of the original cabins in block II, three cabins in block I, two cabins in block IV, and one cabin in block III. The data is being employed to demonstrate a variety of aspects concerning the lifeways of the members of these temporal communities. These aspects include evidence of the presence of a political hierarchy, ritual activities, and economic differences among the members of the communities. When this archaeological data is combined with the historical research, there is, again, the strong suggestion of continuity, although certain aspects (particularly ritual ones) may become more pronounced over time. The major behavioral changes noted within the archaeological record appear in occupation, diet, access to “store bought” items, location of ritual activities, settlement patterning of the community, and other aspects of behavior.

However, some of the apparent changes might be the result of differences between two of the archaeologically defined deposits in the cabins (e.g., the “abandonment deposit,” and the “sub-floor” deposit), rather than the reflection of actual changes in the behavior and/or beliefs of members of the communities. That is, the so-called abandonment deposit is larger and more complete, because it represents a deposit that is defined by its usable at the time the deposit was built up; it would represent only the deposits as a cracks in the floor boards distinguished from placed into holes dug in.

The problem with infrequently utilized lost within the cabin deposits. This would be connected with the earlier than the aban- likely the primary archaeological evidence in the S... the sub-floor deposits suggests that there activities during the 1949.

Finally, it should have revealed evidence that only nine of the occupied at the time served as residences not occupied when t of these cabins appear occupied with them. At prese occurred. However, known to have been 1892.

Two aspects of the tenant community economic activities ture of the role of the con in the rural South c issue of the “typical
because it represents the remains hastily left by the cabins' occupants. This deposit is defined by the observation that many of the items are complete (thus, usable at the time they became part of the archaeological deposit) and normally curated (removed when people leave one location for another). The sub-floor deposit was built up during the use of the cabins. Therefore, the sub-floor deposit would represent only those items which were lost, intentionally discarded, or merely deposited as a result of cleaning activities in the cabin—they fell through cracks in the floor boards. Items placed below the floor boards for safe keeping can be distinguished from either of the above deposits as a result of their having been placed into holes dug into the soil below the floor boards.

The problem with any direct comparison of these two deposits is that items infrequently utilized, heavily curated, or not likely to have been accidentally lost within the cabin, would not be well represented within the sub-floor deposits. This would make it difficult to interpret the exact types of behaviors connected with the use of such artifacts, or of their having occurred at anytime earlier than the abandonment of the cabin. Indeed, the abandonment event is likely the primary reason that these deposits have been the first to yield archaeological evidence of African ritual activities/beliefs within a tenant community in the South. There is limited evidence for ritual activities within the sub-floor deposit of the cabins. Despite this problem, however, the data suggests that there may have been an increase in the intensity of these types of activities during the period from slavery through tenancy.

Finally, it should be pointed out that not all of the cabins thus far tested have revealed evidence of the sudden, forced abandonment. It appears likely that only nine of the fourteen archaeologically tested and defined cabins were occupied at the time of this "eviction." The other five cabins appear to have served as residences during the post-emancipation period, but were apparently not occupied when the Martins forced an end to the community. The occupants of these cabins appear to have moved, taking many, if not all, of their possessions with them. At present it is not possible to determine when these earlier moves occurred. However, historical records do indicate that a number of the families known to have been residing on the plantation in 1880 moved out prior to 1892.

Two aspects of the archaeological and historic data relative to the slave and tenant community will be addressed in the remainder of this paper: the economic activities defined within these temporal communities and the structure of the communities. Both of these aspects aid in addressing the question of the role of the community in the survival and adaptation of slaves and tenants in the rural South during the latter half of the nineteenth century. While the issue of the "typicality" of the Jordan Plantation communities can be debated,
it is within the context of this larger question that the data and interpretations derived from this excavation may prove to be most important.

As with any community of people that is not completely self-sufficient and self-contained, the slave and tenant communities of the Jordan Plantation functioned, in an economic sense, at several levels. At their most general, these levels could be labeled as the "internal economy" and as the "external economy." The internal economy would consist of those relationships and behaviors whose primary functions were to maintain the plantation as a community. These would include the economic activities of individuals, as well as families, within the slave/tenant communities and the relationships among members of these communities and the European-American power structure on the plantation (owner, overseer, and manager). The external economy would consist of those activities and relationships whose primary functions were to connect the plantation communities to the outside world. While these are not mutually exclusive sets of relationships and behaviors, the economic viability of any individual or family requires success in both of the arenas. However, what is not necessarily obvious, is that within the levels, very different relationships and behaviors were emphasized.

The economic structures of the Jordan Plantation's slave and tenant communities are being investigated through the study of a number of artifacts and their distribution within the archaeological deposits. For example, diet (particularly the use of animal proteins), occupation, the distribution of "non-utilitarian" and/or "expensive" items (e.g., jewelry and other personal items, porcelain and less expensive ceramics, and silverware and other utensils) are currently being studied. The question here is: are there artifacts and/or artifact contexts that demonstrate the relative economic status of a cabin's inhabitants within the slave and/or tenant communities? If such artifacts and contexts exist, are there changes over time?

Clearly, there are some major problems with the interpretation of an economic hierarchy based solely on archaeological data. Materials employed as economic indicators may have entered the households in a number of ways (e.g., as purchases, gifts, or through theft). In an archaeological setting it is obviously not absolutely possible to determine the mechanism(s) by which the items entered the various households. Further, it is not possible to completely establish the number of individuals within these households who could have obtained the items. However, these and other problems notwithstanding, the economic structure may be investigated through questioning the type, amount, and continuity of artifacts within the archaeological context of the tested cabins. Historical records can be employed to demonstrate that certain types of artifact these item.

From this structure variability patterns can be seen in the hypothesis: communities of a type for these individuals. In the case of cotton processing Table 1 may show relevance.

The data from a cotton processing site in North Carolina is shown in Table 1. The price of cotton varied from $75.00 to $100.00. The range of this data is relevant to the archaeological context.

**Table 1.**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Tenant</th>
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<tr>
<td>John McN</td>
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<td>Promise</td>
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<td>Claborn</td>
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<td>Isaac Holt</td>
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<td>George H</td>
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<td>Daniel Bc</td>
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<td>Henry Slk</td>
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<td>John Greet</td>
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<td>Manuel K</td>
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<td>George G</td>
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<tr>
<td>Holland S</td>
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<td>Walter B</td>
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of artifacts were more expensive than others. Some households have more of these items, and they have a history of having more of them.

From the data, it is possible to define a number of aspects of the economic structure of the slave and tenant communities. There appears to be patterned variability in the artifacts/artifact types represented within this data. Both the patterns of variability and the large number of some of these items argue against the hypothesis that theft was a primary, or even, mechanism for obtaining the items. Archaeological evidence clearly demonstrates that some of the community's households invested a larger amount of capital in obtaining "expensive" personal items, while other households did not. A possible reason for these decisions was the difference in expendable income between households in the communities. Further, differences in consumer choice might help to explain why households vary in the items on which capital was expended.

The data on sharecropping demonstrates that only a few of the plantation's residents cropped cotton for shares. Even among this group, the amount of cotton produced varied from person to person and year to year. For example, Table 1 shows that the range of production was from three to seven approximately 500 pound bales, or $150.00 to $350.00. This would amount to from $75.00 to $175.00 after the McNeills removed their one-half share. In 1875, the range was from one to five bales, or from $40.92 to $240.30. Again, this would have produced from $20.46 to $120.15 after the owner's share was removed. However, only six of the eleven individuals who sharecropped cotton

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of sharecropper/ Tenant</th>
<th>1874 cotton produced</th>
<th>1875 wages (Jan-July)</th>
<th>1875 cotton produced</th>
<th>1876 wages (Feb-May)</th>
<th>Total Recorded Income</th>
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<tr>
<td>John McNeill</td>
<td>$150.00</td>
<td>$103.25</td>
<td>$120.15</td>
<td>$100.50</td>
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<td>Promise McNeill</td>
<td>$150.00</td>
<td>$18.00</td>
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<td>Claiborn Holmes</td>
<td>$150.00</td>
<td>$10.00</td>
<td>$104.89</td>
<td>$4.75</td>
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<td>Issac Holmes</td>
<td>$100.00</td>
<td>$1.25</td>
<td>$16.00</td>
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<td>George Holmes</td>
<td>$125.00</td>
<td>$3.00</td>
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<td>Daniel Boxton</td>
<td>$100.00</td>
<td>$5.25</td>
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<td>Henry Sibley</td>
<td>$75.00</td>
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<td>Ely Lemmons</td>
<td>$4.00</td>
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<td>$175.00</td>
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<td>John Greenwood</td>
<td>$125.00</td>
<td>$9.25</td>
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<td>Manuel McPherson</td>
<td>$150.00</td>
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<td>George Green</td>
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<td>Holland Sherman</td>
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in 1874 did so in 1875. Table 1 also demonstrates that for these two years at
least, the amount of money paid as wages was extremely low, with the exception
of the “foreman,” John McNeill. The ledger books also indicate that individuals
who did not sharecrop cotton, did lease land and tools from the McNeill’s. As
they are credited with having paid their rents in cash, it is likely that they used
the land to raise basic food crops which were then sold.

This production of a cash crop for the international market likely brought
in much of the expendable income for the purchase of the items noted above,
along with the rent for land and draft animals. Access to the plantation’s fields
for production of this cash crop was controlled by the McNeills (Jordan’s
primary heirs) and/or the various farm managers. However, the individual
tenants also had some input into this production system, as they could choose
to sharecrop. Therefore, the members of the tenant community appear not to
have been a homogeneous group in terms of expendable capital. Further, the
archaeological evidence demonstrates that a similar pattern of purchase of
“wealth indicators” existed within a number of cabins during both the slave
and tenant periods of occupation. Thus, slaves did have income which could be
expended by them according to their own “desires.” These patterns of consump-
tion carried over into the tenancy period; similar items were purchased in many
cases.

The research has also developed evidence concerning occupational differences
among the residents of the community. These occupations relate to both the
internal and external economies of the plantation. Identified occupations that
can be related to the external economy include: carpenter (two slave, three
tenants), blacksmith (one slave, two tenants), and seamstress (three slave, two
tenants). Clearly, the emphasis on the external economy here is that these crafts
were necessary to keep the plantation functioning, they could be “hired out,”
or they required items that came from outside of the plantation. Not well
represented within the archaeological record are the agricultural workers (both
field hands and/or sugar mill workers), especially for the slave period commu-
nity. This is most likely the result of the nature of agricultural tools, the separate
location for tool storage, and the separate location for the use of such tools. For
the tenant period, these tools are better represented within the archaeological
record in the form of metal parts of bridles and harnesses (bits, buckles, rings,
and rivets) for mule teams; items that the tenants are known to have purchased
and for which no secure, individual storage facilities are known. While a
number of hoe blade fragments have been recovered from the cabin deposits,
there is no way to accurately date their deposition.

Limited documentary evidence suggests that the house slaves/servants occu-
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house. If this was indeed the case, then the economic hierarchy appears to be
based solely on the non-domestic service occupations. When this economic
scale is combined with the data related to occupation, and occupational
change, of a cabin's residents, the results are revealing. Some of the "wealthi-
est" members of the slave and tenant community do not appear to have had
specialized craft occupations within the external economy of the plantation.
That is, during the tenancy period the blacksmith and the seamstress cabins
rank lower than at least three cabins whose occupants have no obvious
specialties in the external economy. However, the specialized occupations
represented in these three cabins were extremely important within the
internal economy.

In this context, it is important to note a difference between the slavery and
tenancy periods with regard to this economic hierarchy. Historic and archae-
ological evidence indicates that the plantation's blacksmith and his family were
able to move off the plantation by 1872. While this family was not the first to
leave the plantation, it was the first to leave after purchasing land—360 acres
(later reduced to 120 acres through non-payment of the loan). The second
family to purchase land, though not move off the plantation was the carpenter
and his wife, a seamstress. The seamstress moved into the town of Brazoria and
opened a small shop, while the carpenter remained on the plantation, ultimately
becoming the farm foreman. He lived on the plantation until the 1892 forced
abandonment. His was one of the two African Americans to testify against the
Martins. The house slave/domestic servant family, and descendants, did not
move off the plantation, or purchase land, until the forced abandonment in
1892. Thus, prior to 1865, a specialized occupation that could be hired out
may have provided the initial capital necessary to purchase land—a significant
"wealth indicator"—within a few years of emancipation. Further, it is interesting
to note that the "most prestigious" of the slave occupations on the plantation
did not produce the wealth needed to purchase land after 1865.

To date, a number of crafts/occupations have been defined within the
archaeological record that fall under the heading of the internal economy. These
crafts/occupations include: quilter, munitions maker, hunter, bone and shell
carver, the seamstresses, political leader, and the magician/curer. While all of
these require some externally produced and, therefore, purchased items, the
consumption of the end product was within the slave/tenant community, or
for the control and survival of these communities. Indeed, it is possible that
consumption was limited solely to the immediate community, although their
use may have extended into several of the surrounding plantations' tenant
communities.

At least two of these internal occupations (and the political leader) clearly
functioned to maintain and reinforce community identity and social control through the use of African and African-American cultural beliefs and practices. The bone and shell carver produced a variety of items that form a majority of the “ethnic identifiers” discovered within the deposits of the slave/tenant cabins. That is, recovered within the deposits of this cabin (slave: II-A-3; tenant: I-B-3) are tools for the manufacture of carved shell and bone objects along with a number of unfinished carved objects. Included here is a flat sandstone cobble, shell “blanks” for carving (including both fresh and salt water species), several knives, files, a metal punch, two small drills, a small saw blade, and grinding and shaping tools made of bone. While a number of the shells appear to have been employed in the production of buttons, many are not of the type generally employed for this purpose. Culturally modified coquina, whelk, snail, clam, and cockle shells are found in fairly large quantities throughout the archaeological deposits, although they are not evenly distributed and their function is currently under investigation. Further, at least one of the “store bought” shell buttons recovered had a six-pointed star carved on one side at some time after it arrived on the plantation (Figure 4). Examination of the button demonstrates that the star was worn facing to the inside. That is, the pentacle was not visible while the button was being worn.

A total of twelve pieces of carved bone and one elaborately carved shell “cameo” have been recovered—all from the abandonment levels within their respective cabins. Four of these pieces are fairly simply carved and have been found in a context that suggests they may have served as “oracle bones.” Three are flat, carved pieces that may have functioned as hair pins. One is a pendant made from the spur of a fighting cock. The other four pieces are intricately carved and appear to have functioned as a single object—probably a fly whisk (Figure 5). The spur pendant necklace and the fly whisk were found within the so-called political leader’s cabin. The “oracle bones” were discovered within the magician/curer’s cabin. The hair pins were excavated from a seamstress’ cabin (2) and the munitions maker’s cabin (1). Finally, the cameo (Figure 6) was unfinished and found within the abandonment deposit of the shell carver’s cabin.

The community-wide function of one of the other “high-ranking cabin” occupants appears to have been that of a magician/curer. A majority of the artifacts that formed part of the ritual paraphernalia for the magician/curer date to the rapid abandonment episode, suggesting some time depth for this activity within the cabin. However, a number of identical artifacts were found within the sub-floor deposits of the cabin. This ritual kit was recovered from a small area of the floor of the cabin, near the southeast corner of the room. It consists of several cast iron kettle bases; cubes of white chalk; bird skulls; an animal’s...
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aw; two sealed tubes made of bullet casings; ocean shells; small dolls; an
 extraordinarily high (for this site) number of nails, spikes, knife blades, and
“fake” knife blades; small water rolled pebbles, two chipped stone scrapping
tools; several patent medicine bottles; and a thermometer. While all of these
artifacts could have, and likely did, function in other activities during their
use-lives, taken together in their depositional context, they suggest a functional
group only partly related to the dominant European-American culture. Ethno-
graphic analogies drawn from the West African, Afro-Caribbean, and Creole
uring rituals support this functional group as a magician/curer's or conjurer's kit. For example, Thompson records the following description of the beginning of a charm ritual: "On the island of Cuba, when Kongo ritual leaders wish to make important Zarabanda charm . . . , they begin by tracing, in white chalk, a cruciform pattern on the bottom of an iron kettle" (emphasis mine). Such a pattern was found on a brick placed into the wall of the political leader's cabin (Figure 7).

The cross, with its encircling line, is identical to what Thompson refers to as the "Kongo Cosmogram." Archaeologist Leland Ferguson has discovered several slave-made colonoware vessels/vessel fragments with this design on them. Each was found in or very near a body of water, and Ferguson believes these vessels were important in rituals connected with water and possibly with death. The placement of the cosmogram on a brick within the wall of a cabin suggests that the symbol, as employed with the Americas, has a broader meaning than Ferguson suggests, or that the meaning changed over time to a certain degree. Both ethnographic and archaeological evidence would suggest a broader meaning than that proposed by Ferguson.
The broader meaning of the symbol may be interpreted from excavated contexts within the curer/magician’s cabin. Figure 8 represents a schematic drawing of this cabin. Placed into the “subfloor” strata of the cabin were four deposits of artifacts which appear to have functioned within a single context—that of a large cosmogram, and the resulting definition of ritual space. The first of these deposits discovered was the curer/magician’s kit, found in the south-
eastern corner of the cabin. Immediately adjacent to this kit, but likely placed below the floorboards of the cabin, we discovered an extremely large quantity of nails, spikes, real and “fake” knife blades, and small porcelain dolls, which appear to be all that remains in the archaeological record of a wooden Nkisi. This Nkisi likely functioned along with the magician/curer’s kit, patent medicine bottles and the thermometer within the ritual activities conducted. They represent a major portion of the tools utilized in the manipulation of the supernatural world for the benefit and life of members of the community.

The second deposit discovered contained seven coins. This set of coins consisted of four quarters, two dimes, and a half-dime. Thus, all the coins were made of silver. The coins had been tightly wrapped together inside a coarsely woven cloth object. With the exception of a small amount of this cloth actually touching the coins, nearly all of it had decomposed prior to excavation, and therefore it is not possible to determine the size of the original cloth or the type of fiber used to make it. However, the coins had been arranged within the cloth before being placed in a small hole dug into the dirt below the floor. The coins were placed so that they were “standing” in a nearly vertical fashion on their sides. They faced to the perforated half-quarters (both dates 1858).

The third deposit...
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This set of coins was, all the coins were her inside a coarsely of this cloth actually to excavation, and nal cloth or the type ged within the cloth the floor. The coins cal fashion on their sides. They faced north-south. The coins were also carefully arranged such that the perforated half-dime was on the outside facing south, then came two of the quarters (both dated 1853) then an 1853 dime, and then the other two quarters (both dated 1858).

The third deposit discovered consisted of a wide variety of objects within

**Figure 8. Diagram of the Curer’s Cabin (II-B-1) with the locations of the four ritual features and the lines (dotted) for the cosmogram: 1 represents the location of the curer’s kit and Nkisi; 2 the set of coins; 3 the Nkisi below the entryway to the cabin; and 4 the ash, metal and shell feature placed into the hearth within the cabin. Curing/conjuring rituals likely took place at the intersection of the north-south and east-west lines defined by these features.**
and surrounding two complete cast iron kettles. The kettles had been placed below the floorboards immediately inside the cabin's door. The kettles had been positioned one inside the other with a few small metal, ocean shell, glass, and bone fragments placed inside the upper kettle. Approximately three inches of ash was also placed within the kettle. Soil was either placed on top of this ash, or filled the kettle in the years after it was deposited. Finally, a smaller cast iron kettle was broken up and placed over the top of these two. This broken kettle's base was not placed with the five fragments of its sides over this feature. However, one of the kettle bases from the curer's kit does match the size of this broken kettle. A number of objects were then placed around, or in two lines radiating out from these kettles. Toward the northeast were two small Confederate military buttons, several large bones, metal chain links, and a bayonet. Toward the southeast were several more lengths of metal chain, numerous large metal objects (including a hinge, spike, bolt, and a piece of a plow), several ocean shells, a quartz crystal, glass fragments, and two additional Confederate military buttons. This set of artifacts likely formed a Nkisi that aided in securing the protection of the cabin and its occupants from harm caused by powerful elements from the outside world.17

The fourth deposit discovered was found placed into a hearth of the cabin. Sometime after the construction of the hearth, the bricks at the back of the hearth, below the chimney, were removed and a hole was excavated into the fill and dirt below this portion of the hearth. A clay plaster surface was put over the bottom of the hole, which was then covered with ash, broken up and heavily burned ocean shell (especially oyster and whelk shell), and a few small nails. The hole was then refilled with soil and brick fragments to its original height. The floor of the hearth was then likely replaced, and the hearth continued to function for cooking and heating of the cabin.

Each of these four sets of artifacts within a single cabin support the interpretation of an African and African-American behavioral/belief system—one that serves to control the outside world through the manipulation of the supernatural world. The full set of artifacts suggest the many of the basic ideas/rituals are of African origins. The patent medicine bottles and the thermometer demonstrate some adaptation on non-African ideas. Specifically, all of these elements support the hypothesis that the curer had sanctified the floor space of the cabin for its use within the ritual performance of curing and/or conjuring. As Thompson notes, such rituals take place within space marked out with a cross oriented to the compass directions. Such a cross with compass orientation can be drawn employing the four deposits as the ends of the lines (Figure 9). The meanings noted by Thompson for each of the four end points of the cross within an "African" cosmogram,18 are perfectly represented by the types of artifacts these lines would accomplish.

Finally, the political element for social individual has been through the fly w cock spur, several number of amber l animal claw neck contained an addit archaeological data; however, is the rec items associated w sor of the farm la carpenter and wht this individual wa hired during this.

Thus, in terms wealthiest cabin of the internal econ the magician/cure specialized occupied limited. The foun hand, does appear seamstresses' cabi another and just b been excavated the internal economy activities were pi been the result of external economy accumulation bey cabin, however, a cabins.

In summary, th the Jordan Planta political structure can be employed ditue” by slaves;
types of artifacts found within each of the features. Thus, the intersection of these lines would have defined the center from which curing and conjuring was accomplished.

Finally, the political leader functioned within the community as both an element for social control and as a mediator with the outside world. This individual has been defined within the archaeological record of the community through the fly whisk, a necklace comprised of glass beads and the fighting cock spur, several ebony rings, an elaborately decorated metal ring, and a large number of amber beads. The necklace has a central element that resembles the animal claw necklaces worn by West African nobility. Sub-floor deposits contained an additional cock spur pendant. The most intriguing aspects of the archaeological data from this cabin aiding in the identification of the occupant, however, is the recovery of a number of carpenter's tools, along with numerous items associated with sewing. Historical records demonstrate that the supervisor of the farm laborers on the plantation was an ex-slave who had been a carpenter and whose wife was a seamstress. These same records indicate that this individual was never paid for doing carpentry work, although others were hired during this time.

Thus, in terms of the economic structure of the tenant community, the wealthiest cabin occupants are those who appear to have been important within the internal economy. The archaeological record of the political leader's cabin, the magician/curer, and the shell/bone carver, either failed to yield evidence of specialized occupations within the external economy, or the evidence was limited. The fourth ranked cabin, that of the munitions maker, on the other hand, does appear to have had a specialized occupation—the blacksmith. The seamstresses' cabin and that of the quilter rank approximately equal to one another and just below the munitions maker and blacksmith. No evidence has been excavated that demonstrates an economic activity other than that for the internal economy. All of these cabins yielded some evidence that agricultural activities were practiced by the occupants. Thus, the "wealth" may have been the result of their internal economic activities, rather than those of the external economy. Certainly, the blacksmith had the opportunity for wealth accumulation beyond that from the external economy. The occupants of this cabin, however, appear to rank below the occupants of at least three other cabins.

In summary, the data from the archaeological and historic investigation of the Jordan Plantation suggests the presence of change in the economic and political structure of the slave and tenant communities. The evidence generated can be employed to support the concept of "capital generation and expenditure" by slaves and tenants. This capital was generated through the practice
of wide variety of specialized occupations. During the period of slavery, those occupations which could be hired out appear to have provided the ability to accumulate more capital. After 1865 there was the opportunity for this capital to be converted into land as well as other types of so-called wealth indicators, and several members of the community did purchase portions of the Jordan Plantation. For this community, however, the purchase of land meant the movement of the individuals off the plantation and, therefore, out of the physical community. After 1865, capital generation and expenditure appears to have been greatest for those occupations that were most important within the internal plantation economy.

While agriculture formed the basis of the community’s economy throughout both of these periods; from 1865 until the forced abandonment, the highest ranking cabins were those occupied by the political leader, the magician/curer, and the shell and bone carver. With the exception of the political leader, all of these were specializations for the internal economy of the plantation. The political leader would obviously have had an important function in the relationship between the community and the outside world. In this case, the leader was a carpenter and his wife a seamstress. The magician/curer would, on the other hand, have led the members of the community in shaping their relationship to and manipulating their way through the outside worlds—both human produced and supernatural. The blacksmith/munitions maker represents the fourth ranked cabin, and it was occupied by an individual who operated in both levels of the economy, but whose status within the internal economy is below that of the others.

In conclusion, this data and its interpretation are important because of the insight they provide into the evolution of African-American culture after 1865. That is, the data appear to indicate that certain activities, many ultimately of African origin and directed toward the internal functioning of this community, played a critical and increasingly important role in the community’s survival. If this is correct, it would provide archaeological support for Fogel and Engerman’s observation on the post-1865 attack on the material conditions of life for African Americans in the rural South. This process appears to have fostered the intensive re-organization of the community toward mechanisms of internal control and self-sufficiency. Behaviors and beliefs that fostered a sense of belonging were increasingly integrated within this community. Such behaviors and beliefs were increasingly important for the survival of a potentially more stable community. The internal management of affairs, both political and supernatural, functioned to help keep the increasingly oppressive outside world from negatively impacting this community.

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Throughout the enslaved families' demographic life, "slave family and to the life cycle of adult was devoted purchase. The interplay of existing families which the stabilizing owner was the labor force that was the "development networks." Gutman's model perhaps family members. However, close relations requires both members...
WORKING TOWARD

~ FREEDOM ~

Slave Society and Domestic Economy
in the American South

Edited by
Larry E. Hudson Jr.

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Introduction
LARRY E. HU

“A Place in Ti Chesapeake Sl" 
LORENA S. W

“A Reckoning on Her Control on Her ROBERT OLW

“My Constant Co lum South JOHN CAMPI

“All That Cash”: LARRY E. HU

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Sale and Separati Plantations, 17 
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“Raig your child Practices amon WILMA KING