

THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF PLANTATION SOCIETY: REPLACING STATUS AND CASTE WITH ECONOMICS AND POWER

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In recent investigations of plantation society, Otto and Moore use a model that incorporates status and caste. I argue that these concepts are too vague for plantation studies and must be replaced with a more relevant formulation that includes economics and power. A reconsideration of the data presented by Moore indicates that these last concepts have greater strength in the archaeological analysis of plantation society.

The identification of artifacts and artifact groups that indicate class, status, and ethnic divisions in past societies has been, and rightly will continue to be, an important line of investigation for archaeologists. Studies of this kind are important in all archaeology, but this kind of research might be initiated best in historical archaeology because of the added social information provided in historical documents.

Within historical archaeology, the plantation has been one kind of site where the investigation of the material associations of past social groups has been especially pertinent, and where such study is particularly illustrative of the problems encountered by archaeologists. Prominence may be given to plantation research if for no other reason than to demonstrate that distinctly different social groups are known to have lived and interacted on plantations. Of course, the most diverse social groups on plantations were planters and slaves.

The obvious social differences between slaves and their masters have led some archaeologists to search for these distinctions in the archaeological deposits left by both groups. As the number of archaeologists interested in plantation research grows, and as this line of inquiry becomes more common, the findings made at plantations will assume a more prominent place in general archaeological theory.

The purpose of this paper is to address the difficulties archaeologists have had analyzing the relations between plantation social groups by focusing on the recent research of Otto (1975, 1977, 1980, 1984) and Moore (1981, 1985). An alternative perspective on the plantation is offered, and a different method of analysis is illustrated. The subject of this paper is the antebellum plantation in the American South, but the ideas presented perhaps are applicable to all plantations in the New World.

SOCIOLOGICAL PLANTATION STUDIES

Even though the archaeological study of plantations is not entirely new (Fairbanks 1983, 1984; Orser 1984), sociologically oriented plantation studies generally have been conducted in cultural anthropology, sociology, and history. In sociology the study of plantation social relations usually is associated with Thompson (1939, 1941, 1959, 1975), Raper (1936), Raper and Reid (1941), and Rawick (1972), and in anthropology plantation research typically is associated with the work of Steward and others (1956), Rubin (1951), Mintz (1959, 1974a, 1974b, 1978), and to some extent Wolf (1959, 1982:278–284, 323–346). Historians who have examined plantations are far too numerous to mention, but notable studies have been prepared by Blassingame (1979), Genovese (1971, 1974), and Stamp (1956). These studies cumulatively demonstrate the complexity of plantation life and illustrate the difficult analytical problem the plantation presents to modern scholars.

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The problems inherent in studying the complexities of past plantation life are multiplied when a major source of information is derived from archaeological research, because these data must be given a meaning that may not be universally apparent or agreed upon. Few archaeologists have been willing to tackle the difficult questions inherent in the archaeological analysis of plantation society and its material correlates. Thus, most archaeologists have ignored this important aspect of plantation research or simply have used the terms and concepts employed by others without critical evaluation. The researches of Otto and Moore, though flawed, are notable and refreshing exceptions.

The Plantation Society of Otto and Moore

Both Otto and Moore are explicit in their description of southern society. Otto's exposition, currently the most explicit available in archaeology, has gained wide acceptance. His formulation incorporates the classic "color caste" or "quasi-caste" model.

According to Otto (1975:10), southern society consisted of "an implied ethnic caste and social class system," with the white caste being dominant over the black caste. This caste organization was based solely on skin color, and light-skinned blacks could become members of the dominant caste by denying their heritage. The castes contained "achieved occupational status positions" which differentiated between caste members. Even though poor whites lacked property, security, and often even dignity, they still were "nominal members of the more prestigious ethnic caste" (Otto 1975: 14). Nonetheless, access to power, prestige, and material goods was associated imperfectly with "status," and "many black slaves may have had better housing, possessions, and foods than some of the poorer whites" (Otto 1980:4).

This model of society has been popular for many years in American thought (see, for example, Ball 1837:287). The adoption and refinement of this model by scholars, however, did not occur until the twentieth century.

Using ideas presented earlier (Park 1928), some sociologists explained the social order of the modern South in terms of fully endogamous white and black castes separated by a "caste line" (Davis et al. 1941; Dollard 1957; Myrdal 1944; Warner 1936, 1941). Each caste contained a separate class structure that allowed mobility within the caste. The small black upper class was on the same relative level as the white lower middle class. The white upper class had no counterpart in the black caste. Although at least one sociologist originally had viewed class and caste as "antithetical to each other" (Warner 1936:234), he concludes that they occurred simultaneously in the American South.

Warner's model later was refined specifically for the antebellum South (Moore and Williams 1942). In this model, the classes within the dominant white caste consist of the following from highest to lowest: learned professional planters; small planters, merchants, and lesser professionals; yeomen and artisans; and laborers and servants. The classes in the black caste contained yeomen and artisans, laborers and servants, and slaves. A "legal line" separated slaves from the other black classes, because some blacks were not slaves. At the same time, however, these free blacks still were not members of the dominant white caste.

Otto's model deviates from this more traditional "color caste" model because of his inclusion of a third caste composed of free urban blacks. By this addition, his model of society represents a "three-caste slave society" once common in the Caribbean and in some southern cities (Foner 1970; Genovese 1974:328, 409).

This model of southern society is used by Otto in his study of Cannon's Point Plantation, an antebellum long-staple cotton plantation on St. Simons Island, Georgia. Relying on historical records to "establish the true identity and status of the plantation inhabitants," analogies drawn from archaeological research at other plantations, and arguments of authority by historians, Otto (1975: 18-28, 1977:9, 1980:7) correlates three activity areas at the plantation with members of three plantation "statuses" known to have lived there: upper-caste, upper-class white planters; upper-caste, middle-class white overseers; and lower-caste, lower-class black slaves.

Otto (1980:8, 1984:15-16) identifies three status principles that worked to differentiate among these three groups of people. A "racial/legal status" distinguished between members of the dominant free, white caste (planters and overseers) and members of the subordinate unfree, black caste (slaves);

a “social or occupational status” distinguished among managers (planters), supervisors (overseers), and laborers (slaves); and an “elite/subordinate status” differentiated between elites (planters) and subordinates (overseers and slaves).

For Otto, when the artifact samples from the planter and overseer sites show qualitative or quantitative similarities, but where each is different from that found in the slave site, the “racial/legal status” is indicated and the “white dominance pattern” appears. When no similarities can be distinguished among the planter, overseer, and slave samples, the “social/occupational status” is indicated and the “hierarchical pattern” appears. When the planter sample is different from both the overseer and the slave samples, which in turn are similar, the “elite/subordinate status” is revealed and the “wealth–poverty pattern” appears (Otto 1984:15–16). Otto uses many different kinds of artifacts to test his ideas, but a major focus of both his (Otto 1977) and Moore’s (1985: 148–153) analyses has been ceramics.

The Analyses by Otto and Moore

Otto correctly asserts that a major aspect of the distribution of ceramics at Cannon’s Point Plantation was determined by how slaves obtained ceramics. To explore these possibilities, Otto (1977:94–101) presents three hypotheses: (1) that slaves obtained ceramics from the planter, who purchased them specifically for them; (2) that slaves obtained ceramics from the planter, who gave them the vessels his family no longer wanted; and (3) that slaves obtained ceramics by purchasing them with money they had earned. After an analysis of ceramic type (surface decoration), shape (vessel configuration), and form (type and shape combined), Otto concludes that the planter probably bought ceramics for the slaves, that the slaves probably did not use ceramics discarded by the planter family, and that slaves may have purchased their own ceramics.

For Otto (1977:105–107), then, ceramic type, shape, and form indicate “social status” in various ways. Ceramic shape and form reflect the “status differences” among “the planter family, the overseers, and the slave laborers”; or in other words, “social/occupational status,” while ceramic type reflects the “elite/subordinate status” (Otto 1980, 1984). Thus, ceramic type was not a sensitive indicator “of racial or social status,” but rather, “the distribution of ceramic types at the slave and overseer sites demonstrates only the subordinate status of the slaves and overseers in relation to the elite planter family” (Otto 1977:106).

Moore accepts the caste model and takes Otto’s ideas a step further by using plantation size as a surrogate measure of planter wealth. For her, the “artifact patterns or configurations on a plantation site, regardless of whether it is [sic] within a planter, overseer, or slave context, will vary with the size of the plantation”; thus, the patterned variation that will appear is “believed to be a function of the planter’s economic status” (Moore 1985:144). As such, the greater a planter’s “economic status,” the larger is the plantation and the more luxurious is his or her material culture.

To explore the relation between plantation size and plantation “status,” Moore (1981:305–340, 1985) uses archaeological samples from slave and planter contexts from a number of coastal plantations in Georgia and Florida: Cannon’s Point (planter and slave contexts), Sinclair (planter and slave), Pike’s Bluff (planter), Hampton (a slave settlement called Jones), Kingsley (slave), and Butler Island (slave). She ranks these plantations from large to small based on the number of slaves the planter owned: Butler Island (up to 500 slaves) and Hampton/Jones (over 300 slaves) are “large,” Cannon’s Point (between 100 and 200 slaves) is “large to medium,” Kingsley (100 slaves) is “medium,” and Sinclair (between 10 and 50 slaves) and Pike’s Bluff (less than 20 slaves) are “small” (Moore 1985:145–148).

Moore uses the artifact samples collected at each of these plantations to test three hypotheses: (1) that artifact patterns will vary depending upon the size of the plantation, (2) that the artifacts associated with slaves and planters will show less variation on small plantations than on large ones, and (3) that the artifacts associated with domestic slaves and field slaves will be different. Moore’s (1985:154–157) analysis suggests that the first hypothesis is supported (the artifact samples from the large plantations are different than those from small plantations), and that the other two hypotheses are not supported (the slave and the planter artifact samples are not more alike on small plantations, and the domestic and field slave samples from the sites studied are not different).

These analyses by Otto and Moore have been tremendously useful in plantation archaeology. If nothing else, they have forced archaeologists to think about the societies of the plantations they have excavated. Unfortunately, both of these studies contain weaknesses that must be corrected before the archaeological analysis of plantation society can become more rigorous. These weaknesses derive from Otto's and Moore's acceptance of the caste model of society and from their focus within that caste system.

The Problems with Caste and Status

The caste model continues to be used occasionally to describe the social order of the American South (Flynn 1983; Genovese 1971:106–107, 1974; Powdermaker 1968), but it has not been used without strong criticism (Cox 1942, 1945, 1948; Johnson 1941; Simpson and Yinger 1953). A major argument against using the caste concept centers around the differences between the American South and traditional India, the model caste society. Those disagreeing with the application of the caste model to the American South most frequently point to the religious foundation of the Indian caste system as its primary distinguishing characteristic (Kahl 1957:244; Simpson and Yinger 1953:328). Indianists also have disagreed with the application of the caste concept to the American South on the grounds that its usage must be kept explicit to the historical and social peculiarities of the Indian situation (Dumont 1967; Leach 1967).

Today, most scholars agree that a true caste system cannot be said to have existed in the American South. Even when "caste" is defined broadly, and when the concept is viewed as a continuum with the Indian system representing the purest form of caste organization (Mousnier 1973), the transfer of the concept to the South is difficult to make cleanly. This difficulty occurs because the caste concept skirts the issue of social identification and merely suggests social standing along one dimension, skin color. Race relations are not caste relations, and the caste concept only serves to "obfuscate the most significant aspects of race relations" and to bring into service the "mysticism of caste" (Cox 1945:368). Thus, the caste concept only confuses the issue of American race relations (Cox 1948).

The use of the caste concept has had the same effect on the archaeological study of southern plantations as it has had on the study of southern society in general: It masks the true nature of plantation social relations by taking the focus away from the plantation and placing it on southern society. Although not specifically a problem concerning race relations, the use of the caste principle makes the archaeological analysis of plantation phenomena unnecessarily ambiguous.

Additional confusion is introduced into the analyses by Otto and Moore by their use of the term "status" to refer to the relative social positions of plantation inhabitants. "Status," commonly understood as a collection of rights and duties that gain expression through individuals and that represent a person's position in a particular social situation (Linton 1936:113), generally is an inappropriate concept to use in the archaeological analysis of plantation contexts. As a dynamic set of interpersonal relationships that change according to the situation of the moment, status has been difficult to understand in living societies (Goodenough 1965).

As an extremely dynamic personal characteristic, status cannot be applied to whole groups of people such as "slaves," "overseers," and "planters." One plantation slave, for example, easily could have held the following statuses depending upon with whom he was interacting: male, Alice's son, husband, father, carpenter's helper, runaway, and Baptist. Depending upon the setting, one or another of these statuses might take precedence.

The three "statuses" presented by Otto demonstrate that he understands the complexities of the status concept, and his formulation is somewhat easier to use if his "slave" is viewed as a sort of "social persona" (Goodenough 1965:7), or collection of the statuses that are united to define a particular social relationship in a given situation. For Otto (1980:8), a slave's social persona presumably would consist of a combination of a black "racial/legal status," a "social [or occupational] status" of laborer, and a subordinate "elite/subordinate status."

This use of the status concept by Otto and Moore unnecessarily confuses their analyses. Unfortunately, the additional use of the caste concept makes the analytical hurdles difficult for them to

overcome. To circumvent this seemingly insurmountable difficulty, southern plantation society must be reformulated specifically for archaeological analysis.

REFORMULATING PLANTATION SOCIETY FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

Although the caste model links two important aspects of plantation life—race and class—explanatory primacy is given to race. A person is assigned to a caste because of his or her physical appearance. A person who looks white is accorded a position in the upper caste, a person who does not look white is placed in the lower caste. This overriding emphasis on race constitutes the major problem with the analyses by Otto and Moore because they pay less attention to questions of class and plantation class relations. Class relations are given secondary importance to questions of race in their view of plantation society.

Race and class are two distinctly different aspects of society. Race, an ideological construct created in historical settings, is free to vary as ideology changes. A person once considered “black” can become “white” when the ideology changes. Class, on the other hand, is rooted in historically created material conditions and distinguishes among people based on their relation to the dominant mode of production and to their access to power within that system of production.

The problems associated with the concept of race are well known in anthropology; where one person might perceive 10 races another might see only one. Thus, race is not a physical fact but only an ideological notion (Altschuler 1982; Fields 1982). The use of racial terms depends on the context of their usage, and this usage can vary in time and space. However, in any historical setting, social interaction can be determined, or at least conditioned, by how various races are defined. A black man who looks white will be expected to act white (Cox 1948:425). Nonetheless, the ideological nature of race, although altered, continues to be expressed. This nature is summarized most succinctly, perhaps, by boxing champion Larry Holmes when he says, “It’s hard being black. You ever been black? I was black once—when I was poor” (Oates 1987:62).

Race (defined here simply as skin color) was an important aspect of southern society and, in many ways, questions of race continue to haunt American society. No analysis of the South can be complete without considering it (Fields 1982:143–144, 1983:21). On a plantation, race obviously was an important criterion of classification. Those who were perceived as white were in leadership positions, while those who were perceived as black generally were not. Thus, the “racial plan” of a plantation owner was “to match the economic division of labor with a corresponding racial division: the whites would attend to the tasks requiring thought, responsibility, and management, while the blacks would perform the manual labor” (Higgs 1978:89). This neat framework could be violated by black plantation owners and slaveholders (Johnson and Roark 1984), but it could not be violated in the other direction: No whites were slaves. To arrive at a plantation as a “slave” meant that an individual was black; that is, perceived as belonging to a black race. The black slaveholder could be mistaken for a slave, but the white farmer never could be.

On one basic level, then, Otto and Moore are correct. The remains found at slave sites will have been associated with people who were perceived as black. Unfortunately, however, this sort of analytical distinction can be used to distinguish between the two castes only at sites that did not have lower-caste members in positions of leadership. Although their analyses are sophisticated in intent, Otto and Moore only look for distinctions between members of two different castes. This usage of the caste model, thus, presents two significant problems for archaeologists: (1) it masks the main reason plantations existed, and (2) it obscures the internal power relations enacted at plantations.

The Economic Function of a Plantation

A plantation was an economic institution whose primary function was to increase the planter’s wealth. Most southerners in 1860 were not slaveowners and so had no real connection with plantation slavery (Owsley and Owsley 1940; Stampp 1956:29–30). As a result, a large gap existed in the seemingly consolidated “white caste” between large slaveholders and nonslaveholders, many of

whom were called "poor white trash" (Hundley 1860:258). This gap was filled with many yeoman small farmers (Owsley 1949).

Planters were accorded some measure of prestige in antebellum southern society based on the number of slaves and the amount of land they owned (Stampp 1956:385–386). A "great planter" owned thousands of acres and hundreds of slaves, a "middle-class planter" owned up to a thousand acres and from 20 to 40 slaves, a "small planter" owned less than 500 acres and from 10 to 15 slaves, a "larger farmer" owned less than 500 acres and less than 10 slaves, a "middle-sized farmer" owned less than 300 acres and less than 5 slaves, and a "small farmer" owned less than 200 acres and 1 or 2 slaves (Owsley and Owsley 1942:161). Many farmers were nonslaveowners who either hired slaves or did not use them at all.

Although the precise differences between the different planters and farmers are not important here, the ranking of the South's planters according to their ownership of slaves and land is a generally accepted practice among today's plantation scholars. Regardless of the exact divisions between planters and farmers, one thing is clear. Slaveholders did not buy slaves simply for the social prestige their ownership entailed, or in the hope that they would add a certain cultural ambiance to a planter's estate. Slaves were bought to work. The cultural interaction that occurred between slaves and nonslaves was merely a byproduct of the spatial proximity of these two groups (Blassingame 1979; Thompson 1939:188).

The slaves on a plantation served the planter in two important ways: (1) internally, to provide labor, and (2) externally, to indicate the planter's purchasing power (i.e., wealth) (Padgug 1976:17–18). These two functions of slavery, which engendered two specific sets of social relations, obviously were related; by performing the first function, the slaves created and maintained the second. On a plantation, the external function was more or less insignificant to the daily operation of the estate and the internal function took precedence.

The reason for this distinction between internal and external functions, which must figure prominently in any archaeological analysis of plantation society, relates to the relations of power enacted on southern plantations. Even though Otto (1980:8, 1984:13–15) almost made this realization, he did not give the proper emphasis to this important aspect of plantation social relations.

In line with a plantation's economic function, the most important differentiating criterion on the plantation was occupation. Slaves had specific occupational roles as field hands, house servants, cooks, craftsmen, drivers, and so forth. Nonslaves had complementary occupational roles as planters, overseers, hired hands, and tenant farmers. Blacks generally were accorded the lower labor positions on plantations; whites received the higher positions. This racial ranking certainly cannot be ignored.

The occupational ranking of plantation slaves was well known during antebellum times. Perhaps the best contemporary white account of this ranking system is presented in Daniel R. Hundley's (1860:351–352) *Social Relations in our Southern States*. Hundley states that a dual ranking system existed among slaves that minimally differentiated between house slaves and field slaves. Field slaves were considered to have less prestige than house slaves. According to Hundley, the "chief ambition" of the house slave was "to become master's waiting-man, or *valet*; or, in the case of a female, lady's maid." The slaves would "next prefer to act as housekeeper, chambermaid, steward, dining room servant, or groom, or better still, carriage-driver." The position of carriage driver was considered to be "a post of great honor," and to be a "waggoner, to drive the plantation mules and oxen" was often "a fruitful source of rivalries and ill-feeling." Hundley (1860:351–352) said that the "chief ambition" of the field hand is "to become a headman."

This ranking system represents the literate white perception of how slaves were ranked occupationally. However, in a careful and important study Blassingame (1976) demonstrates that slaves maintained a completely different ranking system. In fact, those slaves who were ranked highest in the owner's hierarchy were ranked lowest on the slave's hierarchy. For slaves, those people who could heal the sick, preach, teach, entertain, and fool the master—in short, who could tend to the needs of the slave community—were accorded the highest social positions in slave society. Those people who saw to the needs of the planter and his family—house servants, uncaring drivers, and willing concubines—occupied the lowest social positions. Materially creative slaves—artisans, physically exceptional field hands, and compassionate drivers—occupied intermediate positions.

As Blassingame (1976:151) points out, this slave ranking system indicates that plantation occupation only partially is responsible for structuring plantation society. But within the plantation hierarchy, occupation can be looked upon by archaeologists as the most important social characteristic. The reason for this importance derives from the plantation's power structure.

The Plantation Power Structure

Plantation power can be understood best by adopting a Marxian model of society that is composed of two basic classes: owners (planters) and direct producers (slaves). These two sets of people can be considered fundamental classes because one group performs surplus labor—labor used to produce more than what is necessary to survive—while the other extracts it (Resnick and Wolff 1982:2).

Although class analysis is an important and complex area of study in itself, this simple dichotomy is sufficient because of Marx's lack of knowledge about the American South and its slave system (Fox-Genovese and Genovese 1983:19–20; Mintz 1978:84). Within this framework, the antebellum planter (owner) exerted control over his slaves (direct producers) both in terms of economics and politics. The owners, who not only owned the animals, tools, and land, but also the workers themselves, used their slaves' labor to purchase luxury items necessary for symbolizing their own wealth and power, in what has been termed a "quest for luxury" (Nowak 1983:75). In this manner, the slaves had their labor stolen from them (Marx 1970:203).

Clearly, as is true of all classes, the relations between the plantation classes were relations of power (Poulantzas 1973:99). "Power" is a complex concept for which scholars have not provided a universally accepted meaning (Adams 1975; Blau 1964; Lasswell and Kaplan 1950; Lenski 1966; Lukes 1974; Russell 1938; Wesolowski 1979; Wrong 1980). Thus, "power" is used here simply to refer to the ability of owners to control direct producers. This control includes restricting the access of direct producers to material objects and property (Wolff and Resnick 1986:98n). This power over property even extends to the use of space (Lefebvre 1979; Orser 1988).

The relations of power enacted on plantations between planters and slaves were quite distinct from the economic standing of the planter in southern society. As such, the argument that socio-economic status determines the access to material objects on plantations is an oversimplification. In actuality, the acquisition of material goods on a plantation is related to two important elements: (1) an external element, the purchasing power of the planter, and (2) an internal element, the power the planter exercised over his slaves and the slaves' reaction to it. The acquisition of material goods by slaves also might be affected by an individual's ability to obtain items secretly by theft or barter. This kind of acquisition, however, must be viewed as sporadic and insignificant overall.

By any account, the plantation was the planter's "power domain." The planter's power included making decisions about plantation operations, empowering the overseers and drivers to act in their behalf, buying and selling humans and using their labor, and controlling the introduction, maintenance, and use of material objects on the plantation. Assigning work to a plantation slave was a manifestation of the planter's power. He or she decided who would work, where they would work, and how long they would work. The overseers or drivers were responsible for the actual completion of the work on large plantations, but the overall plan came from the planter. The quality and even the quantity of the work, however, was decided by the slaves.

The power exercised by planters was not always readily accepted by slaves, and in their reaction to the planters' power the slaves exercised their own power. The slaves' real strength resided in the planters' reliance on their labor. The planter could not pursue his or her quest for luxury without it. Slaves could express their power by malingering, feigning ignorance, sabotaging machinery or tools, running away, or outright rebellion (Aptheker 1964, 1968; Cheek 1970; Genovese 1974:587–660, 1979). Nonetheless, even though these actions could be quite disruptive to the plantation's economic production and are significant, their effect on the material culture of a plantation was felt either in a negative way, as planters withheld material goods and rewards from slaves who did not act in the prescribed "proper" manner, or in a positive way if the slaves acquired material items during their rebellion.

In any case, material goods and power are linked inexorably. As Marx (1971:66–67) wrote, "each

individual possesses social power in the form of a material object." Planters, as the plantation ruling class, controlled the majority of the flow of material items to slaves.

Thus, rather than constituting a dominant caste in society, plantation owners might be conceptualized as a plantation-based "power elite" (Mills 1956). The composition of this elite could crosscut racial lines and contain black plantation owners. The black slave owner, like the white slave owner, "held his slaves to exploit them, to profit from them, just as white slaveholders did" (Johnson and Roark 1984:141). Planters, whether white or black, clearly held power over the plantation and its inhabitants, even though black planters may have been discriminated against in wider society.

Slaves were in a difficult position because they knew that the fruits of their labor would be appropriated by others. They also knew, however, that they could be punished if they did not work as hard or as well as the planter wanted. Slaves who worked hard were rewarded, sometimes with "money, gifts, dinners, and dances" (Blassingame 1979:292) as well as with clothing, extra food, and trips to town for the purpose of spending their money (Breedon 1980:257–265). Those who were perceived as not working hard enough could be punished, "demoted" in the owner's work hierarchy, or even sold away from their home, family, and friends (Fox-Genovese and Genovese 1983:124).

Therefore, an exceedingly complex correlation among behavior, power, and material goods existed on plantations. This correlation could run counter to currently held beliefs about slavery. For example, slaves in some parts of the South worked in a task system and acquired material wealth that sometimes included property (Morgan 1982, 1983). Nonetheless, the overall rewards and punishments of slavery and the ability of planters to repossess their slaves' material items demonstrate the great coercive power planters had. For archaeological analysis, this correlation between power and material items is exceedingly important.

The Material Manifestations of Plantation Relations

Given the external relations of planters with southern society and the internal relations enacted on plantations by the different labor groups, it reasonably can be expected that the material manifestations of these relations will be identifiable in archaeological deposits. Otto and Moore realized this, but made the mistake of overemphasizing the planter's external relations to society at large. For them, caste relations were a dominant characteristic of plantation relations. Neither Otto nor Moore fully appreciate the importance of plantation power relations. An understanding of the errors this emphasis on caste has caused can be illustrated by considering the ceramic analyses presented by Otto (1977) and by Moore (1985:148–153), as they pertain to the planter–slave relationship.

While Otto explores the distribution of ceramics in terms of "social status differences," closer examination reveals that his hypotheses are oriented toward the external economic position of the planter in society in his first hypothesis and toward the internal power relations between planters and slaves in his second and third hypotheses. A planter's decision to purchase ceramics for his slaves—regardless of type, shape, or form—was a measure of his purchasing power only *after* he had bought his own family's ceramics. Thus, the purchase of ceramics for slaves occurs after the luxury items have been purchased.

The purchase of these wares, and the conscious decisions about whether the slaves are to be given discarded ceramics or whether they are to be permitted to go to town to purchase their own ceramics all are functions of the planter's power and his exercise of it: his willingness to buy ceramics for the slaves, to give them old ceramics, or to let them go to town to buy their own. So, when speaking of "statuses," Otto actually is interested in two different phenomena, the planter's economic position in society (in regard to the purchase of ceramics) and the power relations between planter and slave (in regard to the slaves' procurement of ceramics).

Moore, like Otto, comes close to realizing the dominant role that power played in the internal relations of plantation life, but she does not explicitly mention it or focus her analysis on it. Speaking of the correlation between plantation size and material objects, Moore (1985:144) notes that the artifacts used by planters and by slaves should be more homogeneous on small plantations than on

Table 1. Percentages of Artifacts in Planter and Slave Contexts by Functional Categories.

Plantation	Artifact Class							Total
	Kitchen	Architec- tural	Activities	Arms	Clothing	Personal	Tobacco	
Planter contexts								
Cannon's Point	67.24	31.19	.03	.03	.78	.03	.70	100.00
Pike's Bluff	45.86	49.43	.62	0	.98	.15	2.95	99.99
Sinclair	66.60	30.97	.28	.06	.40	.15	1.54	100.00
Slave contexts								
Butler Island	20.01	67.90	.39	.23	1.68	.08	9.70	99.99
Cannon's Point	25.85	71.02	.23	.07	1.04	.11	1.66	99.98
Jones	29.27	65.86	.52	.34	1.28	.18	2.54	99.99
Kingsley	25.66	73.23	.22	.18	.34	.09	.28	100.00
Sinclair	22.17	75.57	.32	.04	.64	.08	1.17	99.99

Note: Data from Moore (1985:Table 7.1).

large ones, because on small plantations the surplus will be directed toward production and not toward the purchase of luxury items.

Moore's understanding of "surplus" is incorrect and her idea is logical only if the major emphasis is on the planter's economic position in *society*. On the plantation, the acquisition and continued ownership of material goods by slaves still was a function of the planter's power. This exercise of power, and the interaction between a planter and his slaves, can be quite independent from the planter's economic standing in society. The "surplus" Moore sees on small plantations is not a surplus at all, but rather just capital turned back into production.

What Moore's analysis really reveals is that a planter's economic status in society can be identified in the archaeological deposits of the sites she investigated, while the other "statuses" cannot be. In other words, the two hypotheses that deal with internal relationships—between planters and slaves in her second hypothesis and between domestic slaves and field slaves in her third hypothesis—cannot be confirmed. Still, Moore, like Otto, heads in the right direction with her analysis, even to the point of realizing the effect of a planter's "control" over his slaves in terms of artifact distributions (Moore 1985:156). Unfortunately, she does not emphasize these internal power relations but rather only follows Otto's lead and uses the caste concept in her search for "status differences."

A simple reconsideration of the data presented by Moore (1981, 1985) demonstrates that both the external economic relations of the planter in society *and* the internal power relations at the plantation do have material correlates that can be identified in archaeological deposits. Such an analysis is absolutely necessary if archaeologists are ever to reach a proper understanding of the material correlates of plantation society.

REINTERPRETING MOORE'S DATA

Two sets of data presented by Moore are analyzed. The first data set is comprised of the percentages of occurrence of all artifacts arranged in the categories "Kitchen," "Architectural," "Activities," "Arms," "Clothing," "Personal," and "Tobacco" (Moore 1981:Table 47, 1985:Table 7.1). The second data set contains the percentages of occurrence of ceramics arranged in the "ceramic pricing levels" originally presented by Miller (1980) (Moore 1981:Table 49, 1985:Table 7.3). These data are used exactly as presented, with the exception that the errors of addition in the general artifact table are corrected and the percentages in the ceramic table are calculated to hundredths rather than to tenths.

In the following analysis, the percentages of occurrence of all artifacts and of refined earthenware ceramics from the planter and slave contexts from each plantation are compared. The percentage of artifacts within each category from one site are subtracted from those of another, yielding an absolute value designated V . The mean of these values is computed to indicate the overall difference

Table 2. *V* Values and Ranks of Site Comparisons for Artifacts in Planter and Slave Contexts.

	Plantation (Number of Slaves)	Artifact Class								Mean
		Kitchen	Architectural	Activities	Arms	Clothing	Personal	Tobacco		
Planter contexts										
	Cannon's Point (100-200): Pike's Bluff (<20)	21.38	18.24	.59	.03	.20	.12	2.25		6.12
	Sinclair (10-50): Pike's Bluff (<20)	20.74	18.46	.34	.06	.58	0	1.41		5.94
	Cannon's Point (100-200): Sinclair (10-50)	.64	.22	.25	.03	.38	.12	.84		.35
Slave contexts										
	Butler Island (500): Kingsley (100)	5.65	5.33	.17	.05	1.34	.01	9.42		3.14
	Sinclair (10-50): Butler Island (500)	2.16	7.67	.07	.19	1.04	0	8.53		2.81
	Jones (>300): Sinclair (10-50)	7.10	9.71	.20	.30	.64	.10	1.37		2.77
	Jones (>300): Butler Island (500)	9.26	2.04	.13	.11	.40	.10	7.16		2.74
	Cannon's Point (100-200): Butler Island (500)	5.84	3.12	.16	.16	.64	.03	8.04		2.57
	Jones (>300): Kingsley (100)	3.61	7.37	.30	.16	.94	.09	2.26		2.10
	Cannon's Point (100-200): Jones (>300)	3.42	5.16	.29	.27	.24	.07	.88		1.48
	Cannon's Point (100-200): Sinclair (10-50)	3.68	4.55	.09	.03	.40	.03	.49		1.32
	Sinclair (10-50): Kingsley (100)	3.49	2.34	.10	.14	.30	.01	.89		1.04
	Cannon's Point (100-200): Kingsley (100)	.19	2.21	.01	.11	.70	.02	1.38		.66

Table 3. Percentages of Ceramics in Planter and Slave Contexts by Price Levels.

Plantation	Price Level				Total
	1	2	3	4	
Planter contexts					
Cannon's Point	11.73	3.40	4.19	80.68	100.00
Pike's Bluff	50.41	18.99	4.75	25.86	100.01
Sinclair	58.17	27.35	5.58	8.90	100.00
Slave contexts					
Butler Island	45.97	40.25	10.17	3.60	99.99
Cannon's Point North	20.27	43.94	6.63	29.17	100.01
Cannon's Point South	36.13	38.06	16.13	9.68	100.00
Jones	49.86	28.39	13.40	8.36	100.01
Sinclair	61.70	8.77	9.94	19.59	100.00

Note: Data from Moore (1985:Table 7.3).

in the percentages between sites. A mean of 50.00 would indicate that the two samples are completely different, while a mean of .00 would show that the occurrence of artifacts at each plantation is exactly the same. Pair-wise comparisons are made using these means. The artifact samples from two plantations with a high mean are deemed dissimilar while the samples from two plantations with a low mean are viewed as similar. These comparisons are not meant as statistical tests. Since I was not the excavator at any of the sites involved, I cannot vouch that the differential sampling strategies do not violate important assumptions necessary for proper statistical inference.

This procedure, conducted first with all artifacts from the planter and slave contexts (Table 1), suggests that some samples are more similar than others, but that overall, the differences between the samples are small and generally inconsequential. The highest mean generated for both planters and slaves was only 6.12 (the comparison of the Cannon's Point and the Pike's Bluff planter samples) while the lowest was .35 (the comparison of the Cannon's Point and the Sinclair planter samples) (Table 2). These numbers cannot be viewed as substantively significant, except to suggest that all of the samples generally are similar.

The similarity in the means signifies that no strong correlations will be evident when the plantations are arranged by size (i.e., planter wealth). The planter context from the largest plantation (Cannon's Point) is most similar to that from a small plantation (Sinclair). In the slave contexts, a large plantation's sample (Jones) has about the same mean when compared to a small plantation (Sinclair) as when compared to another large plantation (Butler Island). At any rate, these similarities and differences may be contrived, because no clear distinctions between the planter contexts and the slave contexts can be detected when all of the artifacts, as grouped in the categories used by Moore, are evaluated.

A different picture emerges, however, when the refined earthenware ceramics, arranged in the four price groups devised by Miller (1980), are considered (Table 3). Here, the planter samples do fall into an interpretable pattern (Table 4). The largest plantation (Cannon's Point) has a high mean when compared to a small plantation (Sinclair), and so the two samples are judged to be dissimilar, while the comparison of the two planter samples from the small plantations (Sinclair and Pike's Bluff) yields a low mean and so appear to be similar.

These similarities between the means make perfect sense because Miller's (1980) price index is an economic measure. The price groups were created using nineteenth-century ceramic price lists. Undecorated ceramics (level 1) were least expensive while transfer-printed ceramics (level 4) were most expensive. At Cannon's Point Plantation, the majority of the refined earthenwares (80.68 percent) were transfer printed, while the majority of sherds in the other two samples appeared in the undecorated, or least expensive, category (50.41 percent for Pike's Bluff; 58.17 percent for Sinclair). The owner of Cannon's Point Plantation, being a richer planter (based on the number of

Table 4. V Values and Ranks of Site Comparisons for Ceramics in Planter and Slave Contexts.

Plantation (Number of Slaves)	Price Level				Mean
	1	2	3	4	
Cannon's Point (100-200): Sinclair (10-50)	46.44	23.95	1.39	71.78	35.89
Cannon's Point (100-200): Pike's Bluff (<20)	38.68	15.59	.56	54.82	27.41
Sinclair (10-50): Pike's Bluff (<20)	7.76	8.36	.83	16.96	8.48
Domestic-slave contexts					
Cannon's Point North (100-200): Sinclair (10-50)	41.43	35.17	3.31	9.58	22.37
Domestic: Field-slave contexts					
Jones (>300): Cannon's Point North (100-200)	29.59	15.55	6.77	20.81	18.18
Cannon's Point South (100-200): Sinclair (10-50)	25.57	29.29	6.19	9.91	17.74
Butler Island (500): Sinclair (10-50)	15.73	31.48	.23	15.99	15.86
Butler Island (500): Cannon's Point North (100-200)	25.70	3.69	3.54	25.57	14.63
Cannon's Point North (100-200): Cannon's Point South	15.86	5.88	9.50	19.49	12.68
Jones (>300): Sinclair (10-50)	11.84	19.62	3.46	11.23	11.54
Field-slave contexts					
Jones (>300): Cannon's Point South (100-200)	13.73	9.67	2.73	1.32	6.86
Butler Island (500): Cannon's Point South (100-200)	9.84	2.19	5.96	6.08	6.02
Butler Island (500): Jones (>300)	3.89	11.86	3.23	4.76	5.94

slaves owned), could afford more expensive ceramics than could the planters of smaller plantations. This distribution clearly is a function of the planter's external relations with society at large (i.e., his buying power).

Equally interesting results occur when the same analysis is conducted for the ceramics found in the slave contexts (Table 4). These data are presented by Moore (1985) in terms of domestic slaves (at Cannon's Point North and Sinclair) and field slaves (at Butler Island, Cannon's Point South, and Jones). This manner of presentation makes it possible to inspect the ceramic occurrences in archaeological deposits associated with the two major slave-labor groups. This analysis, then, concerns relations of class formation, i.e., social relations that occur within a class (Wright 1985:10).

The comparison of the two domestic-slave samples yields the highest mean of the slave contexts, and so the two samples are judged to be different. Conversely, the comparison of the field-slave samples yields the smallest means. The comparisons of the domestic-slave contexts with the field-slave contexts produce intermediate means. The implication of these findings seems clear. Domestic slaves on large plantations may have had access to different ceramics than did domestic slaves on smaller plantations, but field slaves on large plantations (at least on those studied) had relatively equal access to ceramics.

The question that arises, of course, concerns the meaning of these findings. In other words, why do the domestic-slave samples appear to be different while the field-slave samples appear similar regardless of plantation size? Historical reasons can be cited to offer at least one plausible partial explanation for some of the findings, namely, that Butler Island and Jones both were owned by the same planter (Singleton 1980:51). Thus, at these two sites at least, the low mean is understandable.

Yet, the results are consistent enough to suggest that a certain regularity exists in how the ceramics were distributed across these plantations. In the case of planters, the distribution of ceramics undoubtedly can be linked to the planter's buying power, or economic standing in society (the external relations). Interpretation is not so straightforward in regard to slaves, however, because if the planter's wealth (i.e., economic "status") could be used to measure slave access to material items, then the samples from the large plantations (Butler Island and Jones) should be noticeably different from the smallest plantation's (Sinclair) sample.

In other words, the slaves on the largest plantations should have had a greater access to ceramics than slaves on small plantations if the planter's wealth played a role in the issuance of ceramics to slaves and if the kind of ceramics issued was overtly related to the planter's wealth. Slave samples

Table 5. *V* Values and Ranks of Site Comparisons for Ceramics in Planter and Slave Contexts from Same Plantation.

Plantation (Number of Slaves)	Price Level				Mean
	1	2	3	4	
Cannon's Point (100–200)					
Planter: South Slave (Field)	24.40	34.66	11.94	71.00	35.50
Planter: Slave (Field and Domestic)	12.14	39.21	9.59	55.94	27.97
Planter: North Slave (Domestic)	8.54	40.54	2.44	51.51	25.76
Sinclair (10–50)					
Planter: Slave	3.53	18.58	4.36	10.69	9.29

from large plantations should appear distinct from samples on smaller plantations because the planter's surplus would be greater on larger plantations.

The true complexity of correlating material remains with deceased plantation classes appears when Moore's second hypothesis—that the artifact samples associated with slaves and planters on small plantations will be more alike than on large plantations—is considered. When the fine earthenware ceramics associated with planter and slave contexts at the same plantation are compared (Table 5), an obvious pattern is evident. The greatest dissimilarity appears in the Cannon's Point planter-field slave comparison, and the greatest similarity appears in the comparison of the Sinclair planter and slave contexts. The comparison of the Cannon's Point planter and domestic-slave samples shows an intermediate value.

These findings again make sense if the distribution of artifacts on a plantation is related equally to a planter's external relations with society and to the internal power relations of the plantation, rather than merely to a planter's external relations. When the slave contexts at Cannon's Point Plantation are combined, the mean is more than double the mean generated from the Sinclair samples. Cannon's Point was a much larger plantation than Sinclair.

These findings seem to support the idea that greater homogeneity of at least ceramics existed on smaller plantations (or, at least on the one studied). The difference between the Cannon's Point field-slave and planter samples is greater than the difference between the domestic-slave and the planter samples. This finding is to be expected given the labor organization of a plantation; the material culture of the domestic slaves should have been more like that of the planters than that of the field slaves. This unequal distribution of material goods is to be expected since the domestic slaves on plantations, especially in the region studied by Otto and Moore, were shown special favors that encompassed material culture (Genovese 1974:329–330).

It may be quite possible that field slaves wanted to maintain the distinctions between them and domestic slaves and planters, given their different view of the plantation social hierarchy. Field slaves may have tried to maintain a material culture unlike that of the masters and their house servants. They may have symbolized their boundary maintenance in a number of ways: They may have used a different assemblage of artifacts (gourds rather than earthenware bowls), they may have used artifacts with dissimilar decorations (handpainted bowls rather than annular-decorated ones), or they may have used different vessel forms (bowls rather than plates).

Planter wealth may have played a role in ceramic usage among slaves, but the major process that affected and regulated the usage and acquisition of artifacts among slaves was the power relations between the planter and his or her slaves. Plantation size thus was important only insofar as it affected the relations of power on a plantation.

CONCLUSION

Archaeologists who have studied plantation society have been courageous in their attempts to analyze such a complex institution. That plantations were complicated organizations that incorporated diverse social relationships cannot be disputed. This complexity, however, means that the

interpretation of plantation phenomena using archaeological remains will be neither straightforward nor easy.

Even though plantation archaeology is only one area of focus within historical archaeology, which in turn is only part of the larger field of archaeology, the identification of the material culture associated with a plantation's social groups should interest all archaeologists. If historical archaeology is to become a leader in archaeological theory building (Binford 1977:13), then all archaeologists should have an interest in its research findings.

The archaeological study of plantations presents special problems, not the least of which involves the lack of an extensive data base from which to draw. As of this date, not enough plantations have been investigated in a manner conducive to sociological analysis, and not enough archaeologists have expressed an interest in the material study of plantation society. As a result, the data that can be used for such studies are extremely limited. Thus, all findings, including those presented here, must be reevaluated constantly as new data become available.

The archaeological studies by Otto and Moore, two archaeologists who attempted the difficult task of understanding plantation society, are pioneering and significant, but they suffer from an overriding concern over the external relations between the planter and southern society. Otto and Moore were cognizant of a plantation's internal relations but did not focus on them. However, external relations clearly were less important on the plantation than were the internal relations of power between masters and slaves. Ways of understanding these power relations must be devised if archaeologists are to attach meaning to the material remains of plantation societies.

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