

# The Role of Memory and Tradition in the Construction of Identity in the Nineteenth-Century Bahamas

Paul Farnsworth

Temple University, Philadelphia, USA

Tradition has been defined as practices brought forward from the past into the present. In the context of enslavement and the cultural dislocation that accompanied it, memory became critical in the recreation of tradition. Individual memory contributed to the practices that created new traditions to be carried forward by subsequent generations. Archaeological evidence from Clifton Plantation, Bahamas, illustrates how memory and tradition shaped the identities of both enslaver and enslaved, and influenced the construction of an African Bahamian identity in the early nineteenth-century. In their consumer selections, the enslaved people of Clifton were constructing artifact assemblages that reflected their memories of their traditional cultural background. In the process they were creating an Afro-Bahamian aesthetic that would become a tradition for future generations of Bahamians. While the goods were not of their own manufacture, the choices were theirs from the selection available to them. At the same time, those of British heritage were signaling their British identity through their consumer choices. However, Clifton was unusual in being owned by a reformer who sought to ameliorate the conditions of slavery. The paper also briefly discusses whether these concepts are useful in understanding the material culture of enslaved Africans at other sites.

*Keywords:* African Diaspora, African-Bahamian identity, memory and tradition, historical archaeology, consumer choices

## Introduction

When Africanist archaeologist Merrick Posnansky first visited Haiti in 1980, he said he “saw dispersed compounds in the hinterland. No simple detail of the construction was really West African, yet somehow the overall effect was uncannily so” (Posnansky, 1999, p. 32). When I first visited Jamaica a year later, I had a similar feeling, though not of West Africa, but of the England I grew up in. Many things were similar enough to bring back memories of home and my British background. Pauketat, in *The Archaeology of Traditions*, defines tradition as “some practice brought forward from the past into the present” (Pauketat, 2001, p. 4). In the context of enslavement and the cultural dislocation that accompanied it, memory of traditions became critical in the (re-)creation of tradition in the new geographic and social setting. Individual memory contributed to the practices that created new traditions to be carried forward by subsequent generations.

Historians, art historians, sociologists, anthropologists, and historical archaeologists are among the scholars who have looked at the large-scale impacts of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Archaeology has established itself as

an important avenue for exploring ethnogenesis, cultural change, and the construction of New World identities (e.g. Deagan, 1983; Farnsworth, 2001; Lightfoot, 1995; Lightfoot et al., 1997; Pauketat, 2001). Increasingly, archaeologists have turned to explorations of African-American material life (Deetz, 1993; Singleton, 1985, 1999; Wilkie, 2000, 2003; Yentsch, 1994). Much of the initial archaeological study of the development of Creole cultures in the Caribbean has focused upon the search for Africanisms, or the survival of different aspects of West African culture in the New World (e.g. Armstrong, 1990; Edwards-Ingram, 2001; Handler, 1996; Handler & Lange, 1978; Havisser, 1999a, 1999b; Pulsipher, 1993). This research has been critical in establishing that enslaved Africans reconstructed aspects of their traditional lifestyles and beliefs despite the restraints of enslavement. Central to the study of Caribbean societies has been the nature of the African contribution to these cultures, and the ways that "race" becomes constructed (e.g. Gilroy, 1993; Gomez, 1998; Herskovits, 1971, 1990; Mama, 1995; Mintz, 1974; Mintz & Price, 1976; S. Price & R. Price, 1980, 1999; Thompson, 1974, 1983, 1993).

While it was once assumed that not enough persons from any particular ethnic group were transported together on any given slave ship, thus making the reproduction of any particular society impossible, scholars have now demonstrated that enslavers in different regions had specific preferences for individuals from particular ethnic groups, and acted intentionally to acquire those individuals (Creel, 1988; Gomez, 1998; Higman, 1998; Walsh, 1997). Certainly, it is possible to see in the material culture of the Caribbean, objects, words and practices that are identical to those seen in particular West African societies (e.g. Agorsah, 1994, 1999; Armstrong, 1990; Goucher, 1999; Handler, 1996; Handler & Lange, 1978; Thompson, 1983; Vlach, 1986).

Scholars such as Sidney Mintz, Richard and Sally Price, and Douglas Armstrong (Armstrong, 1998, 2003; Mintz, 1974; Mintz and Price, 1976; S. Price & R. Price, 1980, 1999) have argued that while certainly African-influenced, the cultures of the Caribbean are the result of transformative processes and particular histories that have led to the development of unique, dynamic, and constantly changing cultures. The search for Africanisms, they argue, merely serves to underemphasize the creativity and dynamism of the modern cultures by rendering them historically static. In their now classic 1976 study, Mintz and Price proposed that the process of creating new African-American cultures began at the point of capture in Africa, when enslaved people shared the trauma of the journey across the Atlantic. The process continued as individuals forged new communities as a way to survive the conditions of life in enslavement. Diaspora cultures, therefore, while African influenced, are not merely African-derived.

Gomez, in his 1998 study of Africans in the American South, has referred to this process as a shift from an ethnic identity to a racialized identity. Unlike Mintz and Price (1976), however, Gomez (1998) suggests that ethnic identities (and accompanying stereotypes that Europeans and other African groups held regarding one another) continued to shape relationships between enslaved people long after their arrival in the New World. In the Bahamas, as recently as the early 20th century, groups of African-descended Bahamians self-identified as members of competing African ethnic groups, practiced endogamous marriages, and spoke disdainfully of outsiders (Eneas, 1976).

Mintz and Price (1976) proposed that African cultures were not transplanted wholesale from the continent to the different parts of the Diaspora, and that evidence of specific continuities should not be necessarily seen as evidence of the associated social meaning and value transplanted cultural acts and materials may have had in their original cultural context. However, one can also envision African-American culture as being constructed from the social actor up. Persons brought with them, in memory, the things they valued: traditions, practices, ways of being and interacting with the world, senses of self, personhood, community and the cosmos. The construction of

African-American society was a compromise between competing traditions; a compromise that was negotiated by social actors in dialog and in practice (Wilkie & Farnsworth, 2005, p. 6). While it was not possible for an individual, or a small group of individuals, to replicate an entire social order, it was in their power to ensure that food is prepared in the proper way according to their traditions, that lived spaces were properly inhabited and maintained, that ancestors were remembered, and that family life maintained some sense of traditionally prescribed order. It was the collective traditions and behaviors of the smallest social units, the household, which became the basis for the construction of communal traditions (Wilkie & Farnsworth, 2005, pp. 36-37).

Caribbean cultures, like that of the Bahamas, are the unique product of their place and time, and are fluid, dynamic, and subject to the ongoing creativity and innovation of the persons constructing those cultures. Ultimately, the shared experience of race-based enslavement served as a culturally defining and unifying experience for individuals from diverse cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds. At the same time, there is evidence that individuals also continued to self-identify, in some cases, over multiple generations, by ethnic descent groups (Eneas, 1976).

To date, archaeologists have not adequately considered how the demographics of the slave trade shaped the specific populations that they are studying. Many scholars of the African slave trade have attempted to document its demographics (e.g. Behrendt, 1997; Curtin, 1972, 1976; Inikori, 1976; Manning, 1992). Intrinsic to this search are seemingly simple questions: who was taken from where, when, and by whom? Answering is not so easy, but an arena of intense study by Africanists and scholars of the Diaspora (e.g. Curtin, 1967, 1972, 1976; Eltis et al., 1999; Eltis & Halbert, 2009; Higman, 1984; Inikori, 1976; Manning, 1992; Richardson, 1989). Scholars have used shipping and customs records, newspaper advertisements, colonial office records, and a variety of statistical models to attempt to construct the nature of the populations that moved between Africa and the New World. Records are not necessarily complete, nor complementary. What has been possible is to construct, in broad strokes, the contours and trends of the slave trade.

### **African-Bahamian Origins**

Laurie Wilkie, my collaborator in the research at Clifton Plantation in the Bahamas, and I reconstructed the demographics of the slave trade to the Bahamas and recognized that distinct ethnic groups of Africans were brought in separate chronological waves (Wilkie & Farnsworth, 2005, pp. 41-61). Africans came to the Bahamas during the Loyalist period, 1784-1835, in three primary ways: they were brought as enslaved people from the Carolinas and Georgia by the British Loyalists; they were brought directly from Africa to supply Loyalist plantations; or, they were seized from the Spanish as contraband by the British navy after the abolition of the trade in 1807 and then apprenticed on the islands.

The enslaved people brought by the Loyalists to the Bahamas from the Southeast were likely drawn from Senegambia, Sierra Leone, and Central Africa (Wilkie & Farnsworth, 2005, pp. 44-46). Accompanying the African-born component of this enslaved population would have been their Creole children and grandchildren. While these younger generations had known no world other than the Americas, they came to the Bahamas with a communal memory of their African heritage and traditions. Archaeologists and ethnographers have demonstrated the rich influences of the Congo and Sierra Leone in the Carolinas and Georgia Sea Islands (e.g. Creel, 1988; Ferguson, 1992; Gomez, 1998; Joyner, 1984; Littlefield, 1981; Wilkie & Farnsworth, 2005, p. 45).

For the slave trade to the Bahamas during the Loyalist period, Eltis, Behrendt, Richardson and Klein's 1999 database of the transatlantic slave trade was used, supplemented with material drawn from period

Bahamian newspapers and Colonial Office Records. Our analysis identified 43 ships whose primary port of disembarkation was the Bahamas (Wilkie & Farnsworth, 2005, pp. 41-48). These ships brought nine-and-a-half thousand enslaved people between 1786 and 1806 (Table 1), and of these it was possible to ascribe geographic origins to just over six thousand people. The majority was from Sierra Leone at 20%, with more generically the Windward Coast an additional 3% (Table 2). After Sierra Leone and the Windward Coast, Central Africa was the next largest proportion of the population, at 18%, followed by peoples from the Bight of Biafra, at 15%. Senegambia accounted for 5% of the trade (Wilkie & Farnsworth, 2005, p. 55).

Table 1

*The African Slave Trade to the Bahamas 1788-1807 (Compiled From Eltis et al. 1999)*

Year	Number of ships	Number of people	Geographic source (not all ships' source could be identified)
1788	3	726	Windward Coast, Angola
1789	1	72	Windward Coast
1790	0	0	
1791	1	64	Windward Coast
1792	1	210	Sierra Leone
1793	1	216	Sierra Leone
1794	0	0	
1795	1	247	Sierra Leone
1796	0	0	
1797	1	233	Not given
1798	1	91	Senegambia
1799	3	476	Senegambia, Windward Coast, Gold Coast, Sierra Leone
1800	3	528	Sierra Leone
1801	4	1,066	Sierra Leone
1802	10	2,482	Bight of Biafra, Angola, Central Africa
1803	8	2,013	Bight of Biafra, Central Africa
1804	3	638	Sierra Leone, Angola, Central Africa
1805	1	341	Central Africa
1806	1	157	Senegambia
1807	0	0	
Total	43	9,560	

Table 2

*Origins of Africans Brought to the Bahamas 1788-1807 (Compiled From Eltis et al. 1999)*

Location in Africa	Number of people	Percentage of total
Senegambia	413	4.3
Sierra Leone	1,674	17.5
Windward Coast	258	2.7
Gold Coast	259	2.7
Bight of Biafra	2,283	23.9
Central Africa	1,390	14.5
Not specified	3,283	34.3

People from Sierra Leone and Senegambia had been favored by Carolina slaveholders due to their expertise in rice cultivation, but their skill in salt production would have made them desirable in the Bahamas. While Loyalists went to the Bahamas to grow cotton, it was salt-raking, particularly on the southern Out Islands, which was the most stable economic product. The prevalence of Central Africans, many of whom were Congo

based on their ports of embarkation, may also be the result of preferences formed by the Loyalists while living in the American South. Igbo, who were shunned in Georgia and the Carolinas, enter the Bahamas in large numbers only in 1802 and 1803, a time when enslaved people were purchased for their potential resale value in places like Havana, St. Augustine and New Orleans. An important consequence of the demographic pattern was that the transplanted Creole populations and the newly enslaved Africans brought to the Bahamas shared significant cultural traditions (Wilkie & Farnsworth, 2005, pp. 58-59, 62).

### William Wyly

William Wyly was born in Georgia in 1757 and in 1775 went to train in England to become a lawyer. He returned to America in 1780 to fight for the Crown in the Revolutionary War. In 1787, he was appointed Solicitor General of the Bahamas, and in 1799, he was appointed Attorney General of the Bahamas, staying until 1821 when he left for St. Vincent (Colonial Office Records [CO] 23/65:95; Craton & Saunders 1992, p. 224). Wyly purchased the three parcels that make up Clifton plantation by 1809, totaling 791 acres (Figure 1) and developed it as his main estate (Wilkie & Farnsworth, 2005, pp. 315-317). By 1821, he owned 67 enslaved people, most of them living on Clifton (Register of Slaves, 1821). Here, where Southern-born, enslaved people lived with African born, enslaved and apprenticed people, there were likely to have been people either directly or ancestrally from Sierra Leone, Senegambia, Benin, Congo and the Gold Coast. Wyly owned the plantation until his death in 1828, although most of the enslaved families were sold in the Bahamas in 1823 after he left for St. Vincent (Register of Slaves, 1825).

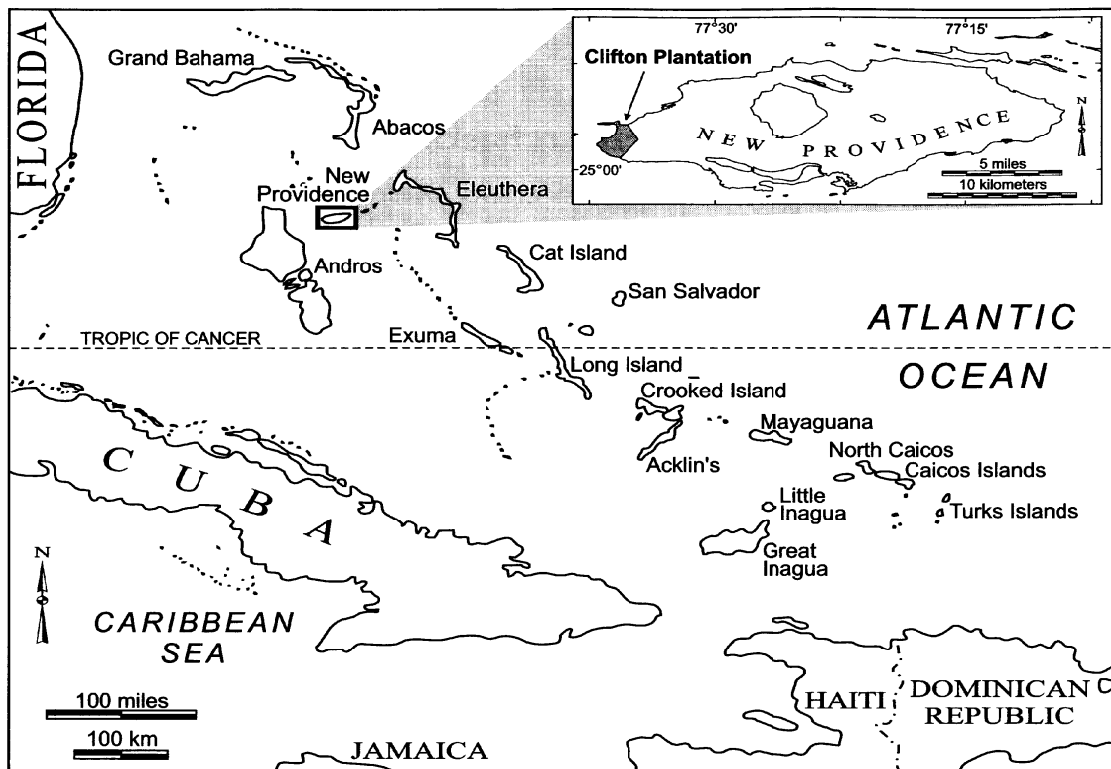


Figure 1. The location of William Wyly's Clifton Plantation.

Wyly was a fervent convert to Methodism, and developed Clifton as a social experiment, not as a wealth-producing enterprise. Wyly encouraged his enslaved people to be economically self-sufficient by

providing several days a week for farming, transportation to the Nassau market, and paying wages for the completion of extra tasks (Wylly, 1815). These circumstances gave enslaved people at Clifton a rare degree of consumer autonomy, evidenced in both the diversity of goods contained within their household assemblages, and the inclusion of more luxury goods than ordinarily seen in enslaved families' assemblages (Wilkie & Farnsworth, 2005, p. 75).

## Clifton Plantation

### African Memories and Traditions

From 1996 to 2000, Laurie Wilkie and I carried out archaeological excavations at 10 structures associated with the enslaved and apprenticed Africans who lived at Clifton (Figure 2), as well as at Wylly's main house and kitchen (Wilkie & Farnsworth, 2005). Because of its short occupation, we were mainly looking at the material life of two generations: parents and their children. For the African population of the plantation, it is in this generational dynamic that the ethnogenesis of African-Bahamian culture took place. In everyday life and practice, the people of Clifton created traditions that united them as a community. Within that community, persons were defined and perceived according to their relationships to one another. The middle passage robbed individuals of the "social self" they had been in Africa, but they built a new "social self" in this community. Yet, there was still the "internal self"—the self that a person believes him or herself to be, based on their memories, traditions, and experiences (Wilkie & Farnsworth, 2005, pp. 10-12).

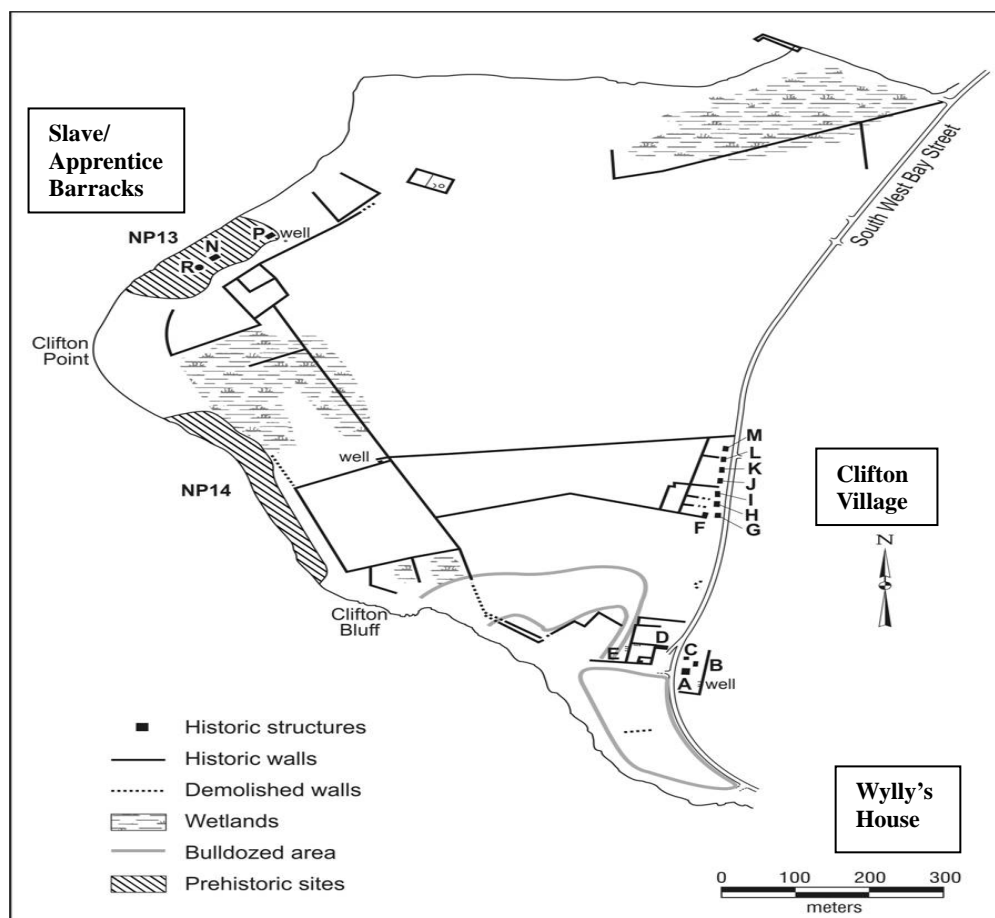


Figure 2. Clifton Plantation archaeological contexts.

One aspect of African material culture reiterated by many Africanists is the vibrant creativity and innovation that continuously marks African cultural practice, whether in the performance of rituals or the construction of material culture (Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, 1993; Posnansky, 1999; S. Price & R. Price, 1999). Attempts to ascribe any pattern or style to an origin in a particular time or place risks missing the dynamism of artistic trends, but the collective aesthetic traditions of the diverse people who lived at Clifton was the potential universe of inspiration and knowledge that informed the construction of the material assemblages (Wilkie & Farnsworth, 2005, p. 272).

I must emphasize at this point, that the ceramics found at Clifton were not made in Africa, nor by Africans, enslaved or apprenticed, in the Bahamas, but by British potters who shipped pottery to the Bahamas in response to orders placed by British merchants and planters. There was no tradition of ceramic manufacture by enslaved Africans in the Bahamas, no “colonowares” as they are often called (Ferguson, 1992). The ceramics from the African villages were either provided by the planters or obtained from merchants in Nassau through purchase or exchange, either directly, or more likely through intermediaries in the market at Nassau. Due to Wylly’s liberal policies, including paying wages for extra tasks and providing access to the market in Nassau, the ceramic assemblages of the Clifton households were primarily the product of individual household consumer decision-making, not provisioning by the planter (Wilkie & Farnsworth, 2005, pp. 254-256, 263-267).

In the market in Nassau, people of African birth and/or heritage were selecting from ceramics, and other products, made in England by British manufacturers. While the British potters were responsive to their customers in terms of providing more of what sold well, they were not designing or making pottery for African consumers, or with any knowledge or consideration of African culture. Africans were selecting from goods made for the British and Anglo North American markets. They had no control over the selection available. The British ceramics, and other artifacts for that matter, that they chose are indicative of the creation of a Bahamian aesthetic that was shaped, but not dictated, by memories of particular African aesthetic traditions.

In comparing the African village assemblages from Clifton, the importance of British-made factory-turned slipwares and hand-painted wares is noticeable (Table 3). Brown was the color most commonly found on these ceramic vessels in the village assemblages, often occurring on two-thirds or more of the vessels, with orange and green also occurring frequently (Table 4). Although blue was also common, it usually occurred on less than half of the vessels, and typically on about one-third of them. These particular kinds of British ceramics bear structural similarities in form, decoration, and color pallets, to pots, calabashes, and fabric designs popular among, and common to, the Congo, Windward Coast, Benin and Gold Coast peoples who are likely to have lived at Clifton (Wilkie & Farnsworth, 2005, pp. 264-266, 273-277). The popularity of these particular decorative types seems to be an expression of an emerging African-Bahamian aesthetic tradition.

Table 3

*Percentage of Decorative Types of British Refined Earthenware Ceramics by Context*

Decorative type	Wylly's house A	Clifton Village					Slave/apprentice barracks N	Slave/apprentice barracks P
		Slave house/kitchen F	Driver's house G	Slave house H	Slave house I	Slave house L		
Plain %	18.8	22.5	16.7	18.2	23.0	14.3	48.6	50.0
Shell-edged %	25.0	10.0	18.5	10.9	19.2	21.4	21.6	10.0
Factory-turned %	6.3	22.5	16.7	16.4	28.8	21.4	2.7	20.0
Hand-painted %	18.8	22.5	24.0	43.6	11.5	32.1	21.6	0
Transfer-print %	31.3	22.5	20.3	7.3	17.3	10.7	2.7	10.0
Other %	0	0	3.7	3.6	0	0	2.7	10.0
Number of vessels	16	40	54	55	52	21	37	10

Table 4

*Percentage of Hand Painted and Factory-Turner Slipware Ceramic Vessels on Which Colors Appear by Context*

Color	Wylly's house A	Clifton Village					Slave/apprentice barracks N	Slave/apprentice barracks P
		Slave house/kitchen F	Driver's house G	Slave house H	Slave house I	Slave house L		
Blue %	60.0	33.3	38.1	42.3	29.4	46.6	53.8	0
Brown %	20.0	55.5	66.6	92.8	73.5	60.0	46.2	66.7
Green %	20.0	22.2	14.3	35.7	29.4	40.0	15.4	0
Orange %	0	22.2	14.3	17.8	8.8	20.0	15.4	0
Yellow %	40.0	16.7	47.6	60.7	41.2	46.6	15.4	33.3
Number of vessels	5	18	21	28	34	15	13	3

*Note.* Percentages do not add up to 100% as several colors may appear on the same vessel.

However, further consideration of these individual household assemblages also demonstrates great diversity in specific pattern choices. Ethnographic studies have shown the great variation and inventiveness that African women express through their selection of household goods—including pottery (Aniakor, 1996, p. 233). Others found that women and men alike take great pride in being innovative in their artistic pursuits, and value creativity in the work of others (S. Price & R. Price, 1999; Wilkie & Farnsworth, 2005, p. 282). When we look at the 10 African residences, we find that among the factory-turned slipwares and hand-painted ceramics alone, there are 20 patterns that are repeated between at least two houses, but 78 patterns that occur only in one household (Table 5). Among the four houses with the largest ceramic assemblages, no more than 53% of the sherds at any house have the same designs as at any of the other households. For most of the houses, half or more of the patterns used were unique to them. If we look at overlap between any two households, we find no more than one-third of their patterns in common. The households shared a general tendency to select British ceramics decorated in similar ways and colors, but within that generality, specific color preferences and pattern choices were individualized by household. The great variation and inventiveness that was valued in African traditions was expressed through the selection of household goods. Although not of their own manufacture, the British ceramics and other consumer goods found at Clifton were material expressions of the creativity and personal style of the occupants, communicated in a traditional African way (Wilkie & Farnsworth, 2005, p. 282).



Table 5

*Overlap in Hand-Painted and Factory-Turned Slipware Ceramic Patterns*

Locus	Unique patterns	Shared patterns	Number of vessels decorated with shared patterns	Percentage of ceramics that are shared patterns
Slave house/kitchen F	9	9	9	50
Driver's house G	15	6	9	40.9
Slave house H	21	12	13	38.2
Slave house I	10	10	11	52.3
Slave house J*	1	0	0	0
Slave house K*	2	3	3	60.0
Slave house L	10	5	5	33.3
Slave house M*	0	2	2	100.0
Slave/apprentice barracks N	8	1	2	22.2
Slave/apprentice barracks P*	2	2	2	66.6
Total	78	20	-	-

Note. \*assemblage had five or fewer vessels for this analysis.

Due to the large number of African-born individuals among the people of Clifton, the possibility that particular designs or symbols may have been consciously selected for their similarity to specific traditional African motifs or symbols cannot be ignored. The driver's house was occupied by Jack and Sue Eve. Both were African-born and lived with their two children (Wilkie & Farnsworth, 2005, pp. 85, 92-95). In their assemblage, there is some evidence of how specific ethnic heritage could be communicated through British goods. While their assemblage shared many traits with the others, we identified several elements of their assemblage that may suggest a Central African or Congo heritage.

Other archaeologists and art historians have recounted the importance of the image of the cross as a possible symbolic short-hand for the Bakongo cosmogram in the Diaspora (e.g. Fennell, 2003, 2007, 2011; Ferguson, 1992, 1999, 2011; Gundaker, 1998, 2011; Joseph, 2011; Leone & Fry, 1999; Thompson, 1981, 1983, 1993; Wilkie, 2001; cf. Steen, 2011). In its original form, the Bakongo cosmogram is a circle, quartered by an X with smaller circles on the end of each arm, which represent the four movements of the sun—the cycle of life and death, and the annual progression of the seasons. The driver's cabin contained an example of a British-made, hand-painted bowl featuring a design that evokes a Bakongo cosmogram on its interior base (Figure 3). On the sherd, the design is centered and may have been curated after the bowl broke (Wilkie & Farnsworth, 2005, pp. 280-281). A likeness of the cosmogram is also found along the border of three other hand-painted bowls featuring a peacock feather design. In Congo tradition, birds represent the souls of the living (MacGaffey, 1986, p. 131), and in this context, the peacock feather design on the bowls could also take on that meaning (Wilkie & Farnsworth, 2005, pp. 277-279). Did Jack or Sue Eve encounter the bowls with these designs in the market at Nassau and interpret the symbols to have a traditional Congo meaning that was certainly not in the mind of the British potters who created them?

Two examples of embossed British tobacco pipe bowls found at Jack and Sue Eve's house could also convey the same traditional Congo meaning as the cosmogram. These pipes feature a beehive surrounded by flying bees and flowering vines, or at least that would have been the British pipe-maker's interpretation (Figure 4). The beehive however, is reminiscent of the shape of African termite mounds, which, in Congo belief are associated with the dead, while flying insects are associated with the souls of the living (MacGaffey, 1986, pp. 74, 263). Thus, the juxtaposition of life and death is again communicated through the design on the pipe bowls

(Wilkie & Farnsworth, 2005, pp. 290-295). Did Jack and Sue Eve again select British-made goods that in their eyes carried symbols that had a traditional Congo meaning? We shall never know for certain, but the possibility and coincidence of several examples in one household is at least suggestive of the possibility.



*Figure 3.* British-made, hand-painted bowl sherd featuring a design that evokes a Bakongo cosmogram.



*Figure 4.* Embossed British tobacco pipe bowl featuring a beehive surrounded by flying bees and flowering vines.

In their consumer selections, the people of Clifton were constructing artifact assemblages that resulted from their memories of their traditional cultural background. In the process, they were creating an Afro-Bahamian aesthetic that would become a tradition for future generations of Bahamians. While the goods were not of their own manufacture, the choices were theirs from the selection available. However, one might argue that there was a limited selection available, and that those of British heritage would have the same colors, designs and vessel forms in their household assemblages.

### **British Memories and Traditions**

Even though British Loyalists controlled, at least nominally, all elements of the enslaved peoples' lives, they were a small minority on most of the islands of the Bahamas. Many found themselves on very small

islands separated by hundreds of miles of water from Nassau, the only significant town of the colony. Even on New Providence, home to Nassau, the Anglo population was outnumbered. The island had a large African and African descended population, much of it enslaved, but also with a sizeable number of free people (Craton & Saunders, 1992, p. 180). Further, Nassau was not central to British colonial interests in the Caribbean, and certainly wasn't like London, or Liverpool, or the many towns in England of similar size.

How do you maintain British identity when you are outnumbered and far from major British communities? As did their enslaved people, the Loyalists relied on their traditions, as they remembered them from Britain, or the North American colonies, where most of them had come from. While their loyalty to the King and family backgrounds may have marked them as British, they were a creolized British population who, in most instances, had spent all or large parts of their lives in the American colonies and were attempting to assert their "Britishness" using their collective memories of British traditions.

Analysis of the ceramics from William Wylly's plantation house found that tablewares dominated the collection. Functional analysis of the ceramics (Table 6) demonstrates that the distribution of vessel forms is similar to that from North American plantation house excavations (e.g. Habicht, 1984, p. 106; Moore, 1985, p. 153; Otto, 1984, pp. 68-69, 166-167). An emphasis on plates (flatwares) over bowls (hollowwares), for example, and almost a third of the collection being tea and coffee wares, matches what is typically seen to be "Anglo" tradition and suggests that the British "Tea Ceremony" was being practiced (Otto, 1984, p. 166; Martin, 1994, p. 172; South, 1977, pp. 40-41, 230; Wilkie & Farnsworth, 2005, pp. 255-256). However, when one looks at the proportions of plates to bowls, at a 3.5:1 ratio, Wylly had a much higher proportion of plates than most Southern planters, which range from 3:2 to just above 1:1 (Farnsworth, 1999, p. 121), or the houses in the African village at Clifton, which average around 1:1 (Table 7). There may be functional reasons for this, but I think we are seeing the over-exaggeration of a traditional British pattern of behavior in a remote location, and a clear difference between the British and enslaved African assemblages from Clifton.

Table 6

*Distribution of Ceramics by Vessel Form and Context*

Vessel form	Wylly's house A	Clifton Village					Slave/ apprentice barracks N	Slave/ apprentice barracks P
		Slave house/ kitchen F	Driver's house G	Slave house H	Slave house I	Slave house L		
Plates %	30.4	18.3	28.6	26.6	26.6	27.7	43.2	30.8
Bowls %	8.7	28.6	23.8	23.4	25.0	25.0	16.2	15.4
Teawares %	30.4	38.8	31.7	37.5	31.1	19.4	18.9	30.8
Serving vessels %	17.4	2.0	4.8	1.6	0	5.6	13.5	7.5
Food storage %	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7.5
Beverage storage %	4.3	6.1	3.2	3.1	6.3	8.3	2.7	0
Food preparation %	0	2.0	4.8	3.1	10.9	8.3	2.7	7.5
Chamber pots %	8.7	0	0	1.6	0	2.8	2.7	0
Other %	0	4.0	3.2	3.2	0	2.8	0	0
Number of vessels	23	49	63	64	64	36	37	13

Table 7

*Plate to Bowl Ratios by Context*

	Wylly's house A	Clifton Village					Slave/ apprentice barracks N	Slave/ apprentice barracks P
		Slave house/ kitchen F	Driver's house G	Slave house H	Slave house I	Slave house L		
Plates: bowls	3.5 : 1	0.6 : 1	1.2 : 1	1.1 : 1	1.1 : 1	1.1 : 1	2.7 : 1	2.0 : 1
Number of vessels	9	23	33	32	33	19	22	6

Turning to color selection, 60% of Wylly's hand-painted and factory-turned slipware vessels had blue on them (Table 3). In addition, Wylly had as many transfer-printed vessels and they were all blue on white. Further, he had the same number of shell-edge decorated vessels and 60% of those where blue on white, and so they further added to the blue on white decoration on Wylly's table (Wilkie & Farnsworth, 2005, pp. 265, 276). Taken together, approximately 61% of the ceramic vessels on William Wylly's table had blue decoration. In comparison, in the African village, brown was the most popular color (Wilkie & Farnsworth, 2005, p. 276). The tradition for blue and white decoration on ceramic tablewares in England began in the late 17th century and was well established in the eighteenth century, following the fashion for Chinese blue and white porcelains (Draper, 1984, pp. 26-32; Noël Hume, 1972, pp. 105-111, 2001, p. 84). William Wylly was signaling his British identity through the color of his ceramics.

### Discussion

As stated in the introduction, in the context of enslavement and the cultural dislocation that accompanied it, memory of traditions became critical in the (re-)creation of tradition in the new geographic and social setting. Individual memory contributed to the practices that created new traditions to be carried forward by subsequent generations. Caribbean cultures like that of the Bahamas, are the unique product of their place and time, and are fluid, dynamic, and subject to the ongoing creativity and innovation of the persons constructing those cultures. Ultimately, the shared experience of race-based enslavement served as a culturally defining and unifying experience for individuals from diverse cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds. In their consumer selections, the people of Clifton were constructing artifact assemblages that resulted from their memories of their traditional cultural background. Those of African heritage were creating an Afro-Bahamian aesthetic that would become a tradition for future generations of Bahamians. While the goods were not of their own manufacture, the choices were theirs from the selection available. At the same time, those of British heritage, like William Wylly, were signaling their British identity through their ceramic choices.

The concepts of memory and tradition are useful for understanding the creation of Bahamian identities, but the evidence from other Loyalist plantations in the Bahamas highlight a major issue, limited access to consumer goods. Clifton plantation was highly unusual in the Bahamas. Being located on New Providence, it was close to Nassau, the major center for imported goods in the colony, and the major market for the island chain. William Wylly was also a unique character, who despite his many flaws, did provide his enslaved people with both access to that market and the means to acquire goods there. My excavations of two slave cabins at Promised Land plantation on the southwest coast of New Providence only 2 miles from Clifton, illustrates the difference that the attitudes and policies of the plantation owner could have on the enslaved people's access to consumer goods. The excavations recovered a ceramic assemblage that was composed of almost 90% plain, undecorated

British earthenware ceramics, with the remainder being sherds from patterns also recovered at the planter's house (Farnsworth, 1999, p. 122). In this case, owner William Moss, who was also one of the major slave importers to the Bahamas and an avowed enemy of William Wylly, supplied the cheapest possible ceramics to the enslaved people. Apparently they had no direct access to the market in Nassau and no there is no record that Moss provided them with any means to acquire good if they did go there. In doing so, Moss denied the enslaved people the opportunity to express their traditions and heritage through their use of these material goods (Farnsworth, 1999, p. 124).

Wylly and Moss probably represent two ends of a continuum of planter attitudes to slavery and the treatment of the enslaved. On New Providence, the market in Nassau flourished throughout the Loyalist period and most enslaved Africans on the island probably had some degree of access to goods from it either directly or indirectly. Certainly free Blacks and the many enslaved Africans who worked in the town would have had access to consumer goods from it or directly from merchants. However, unlike many of the Caribbean islands, the isolated Bahamian islands had no tradition of internal markets where enslaved peoples could trade for goods of their own choosing. Instead, in most cases, they were dependent upon the limited range of goods brought to the island by the planters. For example, At Wade's Green plantation on North Caicos, a collection of ceramics was recovered from a slave house, but the composition of vessel forms matches Anglo-American usage and half of the vessels were plain, undecorated British earthenwares. The assemblage therefore reflects planter Wade Stubbs provisioning his enslaved people with ceramics, rather than their own consumer choices (Farnsworth, 1996, 1999, p. 122).

The concepts of memory and tradition can be useful in understanding the creation of identity from archaeological assemblages, but only in those settings where non-perishable material culture survives in the archaeological record for analysis. In the case of the Bahamas, very little of the non-perishable material culture that is found archaeologically was made by the enslaved Africans. The majority of the materials that survive were made in Britain and imported to the colony. It is through the enslaved Africans' selections from these imported goods that we can learn something of their efforts to recreate and express their African traditions based on their memories of the traditions they, or their parents, had practiced in Africa.

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