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African Diasporic Choices

- Locating the Lived Experiences of Afro-Crucians in the Archival and Archaeological Record

Abstract

The year 2017 marked the centennial transfer of the Virgin Islands from Denmark to the United States. In light of this commemoration, topics related to representations of the past, and the preservation of heritage in the present -- entangled with the residuum of Danish colonialism and the lasting impact of U.S. neo-imperial rule -- are at the forefront of public dialogue on both sides of the Atlantic. Archaeological and archival research adds historical depth to these conversations, providing new insights into the lived experiences of Afro-Crucians from enslavement through post-emancipation. However, these two sources of primary historical data (i.e., material culture and documentary evidence) are not without their limitations. This article draws on Black feminist and post-colonial theoretical frameworks to interrogate the historicity of archaeological and archival records. Preliminary archaeological and archival work ongoing at the Estate Little Princess, an 18th-century former Danish sugar plantation on the island of St. Croix, provides the backdrop through which the potentiality of archaeological and documentary data are explored. Research questions centered on exploring sartorial practices of self-making engaged by Afro-Crucians from slavery through freedom are used to illuminate spaces of tension as well as productive encounters between the archaeological and archival records.

Keywords: Danish West Indies, Historical Archaeology, Digital Humanities, African Diaspora, Sartorial Practices, Adornment

Introduction

The year 2017 marked the centennial transfer of, the now, U.S. Virgin Islands from Denmark to the United States. Though entangled with the residuum of Danish colonialism, and the lasting impact of U.S. neo-imperial rule, topics related to representations of the past, the preservation of heritage in the present, and the contemporary politics of remembrance are at the forefront of public dialogue on both sides of the Atlantic in light of this commemoration. Archaeological and archival research adds historical depth to these conversations, providing new insights into the lived experiences of African descendant people in the Caribbean from enslavement through post-emancipation. Moreover, this archipelago specific line of research addresses a gap in the literature, as very little archaeological work has explicitly focused on the experiences of enslaved and later free Afro-Caribbean people in the former Danish West Indies (e.g., Blouet, 2013; Lenik, 2004; Odewale, 2016).

Historical archaeological work throughout the Circum-Caribbean tends to favor Anglo-American, British, French, and Spanish occupied sites. This favoritism may partly be due to more widely accessible archival collections on these colonial sites. However, the Danish National Archive, the Photo and Map Collection at The Royal Danish Library, as well as other archives and collections in Denmark, undertook multi-year initiatives to digitize archival records regarding Denmark's role in the Transatlantic Slave Trade. The National Archive alone has uploaded more than 5 million digital scans of documents, making possible new avenues of inquiry from scholars across the world. However, open access to newly digitized documentary sources is not without challenge. As will be explored in depth below, open access does not equate to equitable legibility of documents available, nor does it provide transparency regarding the subjective nature inherent in the production of archival collections and within processes of digitization. Scholars need to interrogate the genesis of data sources (i.e., the archaeological record and archival record) used, as these tensions within their creation are liable to be reified in interpretative frameworks that shape the historical narratives.

Through an examination of preliminary archaeological work taking place at the Estate Little Princess, an 18th-century Danish sugar plantation located on the island of St. Croix, USVI, this article explores the potentiality of archival and archaeological sources to examine past lifeways of Afro-Crucians from slavery to freedom through the lens of dress practices. This paper directly addresses the power that recovered historical material culture and documentary sources wields in the construction and dissemination of history by focusing on the history of Danish colonial spaces and the people that occupied those spaces. The archival and archaeological records on the Transatlantic Slave Trade are spaces of confinement and liberation within the production and dissemination of historical narratives about the lives of enslaved, free, and later emancipated African Diasporic people in the former Danish West Indies.

The work taking place at the Estate Little Princess is a Black Feminist archaeological gesture towards redress, reckoning with permutations of epistemic violence within the archaeological and archival record. Epistemic violence, as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1993) reminds us, is a colonial production that works to enact violence on subjugated people by legitimating certain knowledge forms and disavowing others. The result of epistemic violence is the proliferation of silences that truncate and conceal the experiences of African Diasporic people within the archival and archaeological records of enslavement in the former Danish West Indies. Silences are not innocuous. In this article, I suggest that silences are indicative of operations of power and oppression inherent in the creation and dissemination of a nationalist narrative of "innocence," as it pertains to Denmark's involvement, subsequent divestment, later denial and now neo-liberal engagement with the Transatlantic Slave Trade and its afterlives.

Nordic countries in the last decade have begun a process of reckoning with their involvement in the Transatlantic Slave Trade, most notably in the scholarship on Afro-Swedish experiences (Adeniji, 2014; Cuesta & Mulinari, 2018; McEachrane, 2012, 2014; Miller, 2017; Osei-Kofi et. al., 2018; Sawyer & Habel 2014). In her work *Figuring Blackness in Sweden*, Monica Miller notes Sweden's investment in a narrative that positions the nation as "morally superior and advanced, having avoided the most direct political, social, and cultural consequences of twentieth-century Europe's most significant upheaval" (Miller, 2017). Miller goes on to state that the result of this narrative is the ideology that "racial problems happen elsewhere" (Miller, 2017). *Afro-Nordic Experiences*, an anthology edited by Michael McEachrane (2014), is part of the new wave of interdisciplinary scholarship exploring the present-day experiences of people of African descent in Nordic countries. Within the anthology, scholars explicitly tie the experiences of Afro-Nordic people to Nordic countries' involvement in the enslavement of millions of Africans throughout the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries.

Though not to the extent of their Swedish counterparts, Denmark has followed this wave, acknowledging that the agricultural prosperity of its colonies during the 18th and 19th centuries -- conscripted by enslaved labor and the decimation of native populations -- made it one of the wealthiest nations in Europe. Part of Denmark's

reckoning with its past has included public programming, state-funded exhibitions, and a public acknowledgment of its role in enslaving Africans in the former Danish West Indies. These actions are not without complications.

It is through these very actions that Denmark continues to position itself as “morally superior and advanced,” having possessed the ability to move forward as a country not troubled and defined in terms of race, but unified through an ideology of “nation.” As Miller stated in regards to Sweden’s national narrative, Denmark has produced a narrative invested in an understanding that “racial problems happen elsewhere.” This understanding that “racial problems happen elsewhere” upholds a notion of colonial “innocence.” Lill-Ann Körber (2018) explores a notion of “innocent colonialism” as it relates to Denmark’s recent engagement with its colonial past. “Innocence” for Körber is seen through Denmark’s “reluctance...to acknowledge accountability, guilt, or debt” for its involvement in the Transatlantic Slave Trade and the subsequent aftermath of such wrongdoing, experienced by marginalized peoples in Denmark and in their former colonies (Körber, 2018, p. 27).

This propagation of innocence undergirds Denmark’s hegemonic national narrative and acts as a form of epistemic violence that invalidates and erases the outcries of Afro-Danish people who vocalize the myriad of ways in which processes of racialization and institutional forms of racism structure their everyday lives (Danbolt & Wilson, 2018). The rise in academic scholarship (Danbolt, 2017; Jensen, 2018; Körber, 2018; Simonsen, 2007) and visual and performing arts (see works by La Vaughn Belle & Jeanette Ehlers, 2018) concerning the 2017 commemoration, along with the rise of the Movement for Black Lives in Denmark (Danbolt & Wilson, 2018) peels back the veneer of Danish society, exposing linkages between past and present African Diasporic experiences.

Recent historic archaeological investigations taking place on the islands of St. Croix (Blouet 2013; Dunnivant et al., 2018; Lenik, 2004; Odewale, 2016), and St. John (Armstrong, 2003), also cannot be divorced from the 2017 commemoration of the centennial transfer. Both the archaeological and archival records are part of the ever-growing tool kits from which scholars and artists are pulling to explore the era of enslavement and its afterlives on both sides of the Atlantic. This article is part of the afterlife of slavery, and a form of “wake work,” pulling from Christina Sharpe (2016), that tends to the dead by grappling with the myriad of ways slavery ruptures the present. Sharpe states that “in the wake, the past that is not past reappears, always, to rupture the present” (2016, p. 35). Dilapidated coral-constructed windmills, “great houses,” factories, and enslaved village domestic structures are omnipresent and hyper-visible throughout the island of St. Croix, making Sharpe’s words even more pertinent. The 17th-, 18th-, and 19th-century architectural reminders of the plantocracy, that rest as the foundation of the post-oil refinery derelict economy of the present, ruptures the façade of “innocent colonialism,” rendering the present illegible without daily confrontations with the past.

Historical documentation coupled with material culture allows scholars an avenue of redress in the wake, as we attempt to provide more flesh to the historical narratives of African Diasporic and European peoples who lived and labored during the era of Transatlantic Enslavement. The more than 5 million documents disseminated through The National Archive digital repository help make this wake work possible, as scholars explore the historical impacts of racism, classism, and sexism on present-day Afro-Virgin Islanders and Afro-Danish people as symptomatic of the afterlife of slavery. However, digitization efforts should not go uninterrogated, as they too contain within them vestiges of colonial guilt, making it impossible to untangle the processes of their creation from the social context in which they were produced.

In the following paragraphs, I offer a critique of the archaeological and archival records while simultaneously illuminating them as spaces of potentiality and possibility to gain insights into the “interior lives,” to pull from Toni Morrison (1990), of the enslaved and later free African diasporic peoples of the former Danish West Indies. This article works to blur disciplinary boundaries intentionally. While I acknowledge that the physicality, processes of creation, and methodology of retrieval for the two data sources are very different, I call into question the seemingly unquestioned historicity of the archaeological and archival records. Within this interrogation, I examine my confrontation with the digital archive, question the seemingly objective nature of digitization

processes, and illuminate the messiness of material culture recovered from the Estate Little Princess in an attempt to locate the past lived experiences of African Diasporic women in the former Danish West Indies.

Locating Voices of African Diaspora Matter Within the Archives

Within my research at the Estate Little Princess, I am interested in generating a gendered history of the former Danish West Indies, asking specifically about the past lived experiences of African Diasporic women at the site. As a scholar of the Transatlantic Slave Trade, attempting to locate the historical narratives of African Diasporic women necessitates an engagement with the historiography of the Americas. Work from Black Feminist social historians (Berry, 2007, 2017; Finch, 2010; Fuentes, 2016; Lindsey & Johnson, 2014; Stevenson, 2007) illuminates how the historiography of the Americas is produced through the creation and reification of epistemic violence within the archive. I would add to this significant work that the archaeological record, along with historical narratives derived from its interpretation, also produces a reification of epistemic violence.

The ongoing wave of post-processualism within the field of archaeology, primarily feminist archeological studies (Claassen, 1992; Conkey & Spector, 1984; Gero & Conkey, 1991) and studies on race, racism and racial politics (Epperson, 1999, 2004; Franklin & Paynter, 2010; Mullins, 1999, 2001, 2012; Orser, 1998, 2004), attempts to address formations of epistemic violence within the archaeological record. The archival and archaeological records are often spoken of as intrinsically different, produced, and studied through different methodologies. However, for a moment, I want to posit that one of the connecting threads between them is the pervasive ways in which epistemic violence structures all levels of their production and subsequent study. While there is seminal scholarship that interrogates the production of the archaeological record (Conkey & Gero, 1997; Conkey, 2007, 2003; Engelstad, 2007; Voss, 2006; Wylie, 2007), I have found that the work of social scientists, social historians, and digital humanities scholars who study Transatlantic Enslavement offers archaeologists intersectional tools to aid in the location and positionality of past African Diasporic lives in the archaeological record.

Saidiya Hartman's (1997, 2007, 2008, 2019) work provides a methodology for the study of the archives through a discussion regarding how scholars encounter African Diasporic experiences in the archive. Hartman's (1997) work on archival production illustrates how African Diasporic women occupy spaces of silence and have been subject to erasure within archives on the Transatlantic Slave Trade. Processes of erasure in the past and silences that pervade the archive in the present are symptomatic of ongoing iterations of epistemic violence. For Hartman, the historiography of the Transatlantic Slave Trade is grounded in epistemologies of the "fort or barracoon," that focus on the quantitative. This focus on the "fort or barracoon" renders Black bodies as commodities within the historiography of the Americas and reflects inequalities that thrive within the present.

Jessica Marie Johnson expands on Hartman's notion of fort and barracoon epistemologies rooted in the quantifiable by examining studies of enslavement at the "digital crossroads." Johnson warns that the term data gestures "to the rise of the independent and objective statistical fact as an explanatory ideal party to the devastating thingification of black women, children, and men" (2018, p. 58). The notion of "thingification" that Johnson articulates, pulling from Marxism, is the result of fort and barracoon epistemologies. I argue this "thingification" is a point of slippage for archaeologists who come to study people through the materiality of their lived experiences. The space between studying things and the "thingification" of the people we study is a space of moral and intellectual tribulation for archaeologists that study the African Diaspora (Battle-Baptiste, 2012). Data science has long ingrained itself within archaeological methodology; however, new waves in digital humanities, the drive for open-source data, and large data sets for intra- and cross-site comparative analysis brings the warning of "thingification" to full view within the field. Hartman and Johnson act as reminders for archaeologists that we must make sure that data science, as a tool, is not utilized to reify silence and erasure by replacing the flesh, voice, and lived experience of those we examine with statistically significant artifact variations and distributions.

Vestiges of epistemic violence also occur in the archival record, especially as archival collections undergo large-scale digitization projects. Hartman's and Johnson's call to interrogate the seemingly objective nature of archives and the production of quantitative datasets resonate within digitization efforts that result in open-access e-catalogs comprised of reference numbers that numerically link physical objects (i.e., diary, plantation ledger, photograph, painting) to their digital surrogates. As mentioned above, open-access and equitable accessibility to knowledge do not always equate. Accessibility to open-access e-catalogs, such as the 5 million documents disseminated through The National Archive digital repository, still requires specific hardware, such as a desktop computer with high-speed internet, that can access and download digital files. What this means is that those who do not have access to this hardware - for example, due to geographic location or social-economic status - do not have access to open-access e-catalogs.

Additionally, processes of digitization that allow copies or digital surrogates of a physical object to be available online are made possible through a process of social mediation. The result of this social mediation is the production of a digital surrogate that is propagated as an objective facsimile of the original physical object. However, the process of social mediation, which is shaped by the social context in which a digital surrogate is produced, questions the notion of objectivity. The result of social mediation is the creation of a digital surrogate that is laced with subjectivity, steeped in the decision making processes of collection managers that are often reflections of institutional values. As I have outlined above, government-funded institutions uphold the values of the Nation. In the case of Denmark's National Archive, the result is a production of digital surrogates laced with notions of "colonial guilt" and "innocence" that reproduce silences and erasures in the archival record. In the example that follows, a digital surrogate is examined, and the affordances (searchability, annotations, metadata) of the surrogate are interrogated to illuminate slippages in the historicity of digital collections.

Locating erasures within processes of historical production in the archaeological and archival records matters. This article seeks to illuminate fundamental ambiguities within the historiography of the Atlantic World. Michel-Rolph Trouillot (2012, p. 02) stated that the production of history is an ongoing process where actors and narrators create "both 'what happened' and 'that which is said to have happened.'" Trouillot (2012, p. 26) interrogates the production of history, stating that: "Silences enter the process of historical production at four crucial moments: the moment of fact creation (the making of sources); the moment of fact assembly (the making of archives); the moment of fact retrieval (the making of narratives); and the moment of retrospective significance (the making of history in the final instance)."

Examining Denmark's state-funded archival collections, explicitly accounting for national interest, requires scholars to take up Trouillot's call to critically interrogate the production of archival collections. Trouillot positions the creation and dissemination of history as always already subjective. For example, in the winter of 2018, I was sifting through the Danish Royal Library's digital photography collection online. I queried their collection for images of the Danish West Indies and came across postcards of African diasporic people from the 19th and 20th centuries. One image of particular interest, given my research pursuits, was an early 20th-century postcard that featured a young woman of African descent from the Danish West Indies (Figure 1). The postcard was cataloged under the title "Ung Pige" (*Young Girl*). The digital object I viewed had limited affordances, not containing any searchable keywords that would denote the race (i.e., Black, Negro, Slave, Enslaved, Creole) of the person in the image. It quickly came to my attention that none of the digitized postcards in the collection contained searchable keywords affiliated with racial designations. As a result, I would have to view each image to subjectively determine who could have been interpolated as being of African descent. Upon viewing the back of the postcard titled "Ung Pige," I could see that before the postcard's digitization, someone wrote on the card in pencil "Ung Neger Pige" (Figure 2). While the Danish term "Neger" could be regarded now as a derogatory descriptor for someone of African descent, I found it interesting that rather than catalog the postcard with a 21st century politically correct racial signifier, all racial signification was erased. This cataloging practice is found throughout the collection.



Figure 1. The front of an early 20th-century postcard of an Afro-Caribbean Woman in the former Danish West Indies. Courtesy of the Danish Royal Library Digital Collections.

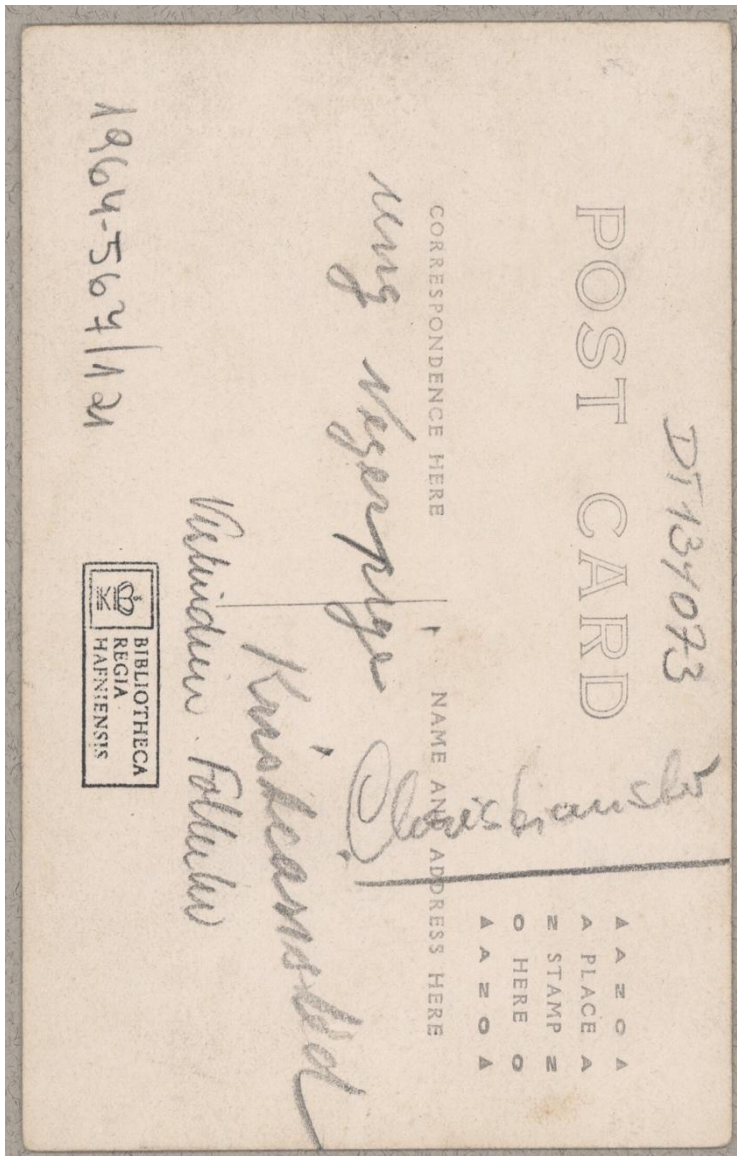


Figure 2. The back of an early 20th-century postcard of an Afro-Caribbean Woman in the former Danish West Indies. Courtesy of the Danish Royal Library Digital Collections.

My mind raced with questions. How can an archival collection of 19th- and 20th-century postcards of the Danish West Indies, a society imbued in contentious processes of racialization, come to be cataloged in the 21st century without any mention of racialized identifiers? What mattered in the process of “fact assembly” when it came to how images and documents are cataloged? Historical figures, those who were of European and African descent, had no cataloged racial signifiers. I highlight this example of racial erasure in an attempt to demonstrate how Denmark’s investment in a narrative of post-racial innocence produced an archive on the Transatlantic Slave Trade that stripped historical actors of their racial identifiers. However, race as a social construct and racism as an experiential fact mattered in the past and matters in the present. Not acknowledging racial distinctions does not change that fact; instead, it blurs, conceals, and confines the different lived experiences of peoples of African descent on the island.

Expanding on these challenges, specifically as it relates to uncovering the experiences of women in the archive, Hartman (2008, p. 3) states that researchers come to the Black feminine body in the archive through “little more than a register of her encounters with power” and that these encounters provide “a meager sketch of her existence.” The digitization of millions of new historical documents from repositories in Denmark provides more avenues for these encounters within historical photography, probate records, runaway slave advertisements, and lists of Afro-Crucian female property owners in “Free Gut,” a section of St. Croix located in Frederiksted, to name a few. However, practices of erasure make it much more challenging for scholars querying online databases for documents. These newly accessible digital repositories make available formally uncharted spaces of inquiry. It is within the uncharted that Black women emerge, albeit obscurely. Through an examination and critique of Denmark’s digital archival repositories in the following section, I chart a course through documentary sources illuminating fleeting encounters with African Diasporic people in order to illuminate spaces of challenges within spaces of possibility.

Unlikely Entryways: Textiles, Ship Logs, and Modes Of Sartorial Surveillance

My interest in sartorial practices as a lens through which one can examine the complex interplay between agency and structure lead me to archival documents in the hopes of uncovering information regarding every-day dress practices engaged by Afro-Crucians during the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries. Below, I discuss my entryway into Danish archival repositories and historical documents that demonstrate shifts in sartorial practices over time and the unexpected social impact they had in the Transatlantic World.

During my archaeological field season at the Estate Little Princess in the summer of 2018, I was fortunate to meet Dr. Katrine Dirckinck-Holmfeld, a scholar and artist whose work blurs the boundaries of archive, memory, imagination and the digital sphere. Our meeting was facilitated through a program hosted by the Crucian Heritage and Nature Tourism organization (CHANT), which brought several Danish scholars to the island of St. Croix. CHANT hosted several public programming events that highlighted research on Danish colonialism conducted by scholars on the other side of the Atlantic. After an artist lecture, Dirckinck-Holmfeld and I began talking more about interesting finds we came across while sifting through The Danish National Archives digital repository. It was during this conversation that she pulled out her cell phone and showed me an image she had saved of an archival document found among newly digitized ship logs (Figure 3). The document had 17 patterned textile fragments adhered to it.

Dirckinck-Holmfeld explained to me how the ship log document was used to record which patterned bolts of cotton cloth would be traded by the Danes in Ghana for enslaved Africans that would then be transported to their colonies in the Caribbean. Initially, I was amazed because a cell phone had delivered a 300-year-old document, demonstrating the ways the digital sphere bridges oceans and traverses time. Secondly, I was enthralled because, as an archaeologist that focuses on adornment working in the Caribbean, I rarely get the chance to come across textiles used in the production of clothing. Instead, we often recover the clothing fasteners that would have held textiles, cut, and sewn into clothing garments together. Overall, I was curious about the ways the document overlapped with my research regarding Danish colonial sumptuary laws that demarcated what enslaved and legally free Africans could and could not wear in the Danish West Indies. I found it interesting that the types of textiles traded in Ghana for enslaved Africans were the same textiles that, through Danish sumptuary laws, were demarcated for people of African descent in their colonies to wear. I believe these codified racial distinctions through a technology of seeing, where certain patterned textiles signaled racial, class, and status differences on both sides on the Atlantic.



Figure 3. An image of an 18th-century ship log document. Courtesy of the Danish National Archive "The West Indies" Collection.

The types of textiles the Danes were trading; specifically, the variety of patterns, are seen in several examples of colonial sumptuary laws that were implemented throughout the Americas. These laws included restrictions on 3D supplements added to the body (i.e., clothing, jewelry, hair adornments) along with restrictions on bodily modifications, specifically how one can style their hair. Laws like these were used to demarcate social differences by regulating appropriate types of dress based on the race, gender, class, and status of the colonial subject (Stoler, 2001, p. 836; Wiecek, 1977, p. 268). These laws worked to produce a technology of seeing and interpolating others through dress.

Specific to the Danish West Indies is Governor-General Schimmelmann's 1786 sumptuary ordinance. Historian Neville T. Hall has translated Schimmelmann's ordinance, stating that the law dictated that "Plantation field slaves were allowed coarse cotton or linen for daily use and, as a concession for Sundays and public holidays, cast-offs of little value" (Hall, 1992, p. 94). Hall goes on to translate the ordinance stating that the law forbid enslaved Africans from wearing "jewelry of precious stones, gold or silver, material of silk, brocade, chintz, lawn, linen, lace, or velvet; gold or silver braid; silk stockings; elaborate up-raised hairstyles, with or without decoration; or any form of expensive clothing whatsoever" (Hall, 1992, p. 94). Enslaved and free Africans were permitted to wear wool, cotton, coarser varieties of lace, and silk ribbon of Danish manufacture. The ordinance also outlined how violators of the sartorial pronouncements would receive 50 lashes.

The practice of legally attempting to demarcate difference through appearance has a long history, with sumptuary laws implemented in colonial-era New York (Bianco et al., 2006), South Carolina, and Spanish Florida (Stoler, 2001, p. 836). These sumptuary laws were a means through which the Danish government attempted to regulate dress, and demonstrate how sartorial practices act as mechanisms through which methods of racialized surveillance were used in the past. Pulling from the work of Simone Browne (2015) in *Dark Matters*, racialized surveillance "is a technology of social control where surveillance practices, policies, and performances concern

the production of norms pertaining to race and exercise a power to define what is in or out of place" (Browne, 2015, p.16). By legislating sartorial practices, sumptuary laws codified who was "in or out of place." While there is no strong evidence that these laws were heavily enforced (Hunt, 1996, p. x), their existence stands as evidence for colonial attempts to maintain social control in the Danish West Indies. Browne also outlines how tactics of racialized surveillance necessitate avenues for the production of "dark sousveillance." Dark sousveillance is theorized as practices engaged in by free, enslaved and later emancipated Africans, that push against tactics of racialized surveillance that are inherently anti-Black and can "appropriate, co-opt, repurpose, and challenge in order to facilitate survival and escape" (Browne, 2015, p. 16). I posit that quotidian sartorial practices offer an avenue through which scholars can examine everyday engagements in dark sousveillance.

The archive offers several entryways to explore the implantation of sumptuary laws as a method of racialized surveillance, as well as possible tactics of dark sousveillance engaged in by African Diasporic people from slavery through freedom in former Danish West Indies. A space of possible inquiry in the archive to assess the extent to which sumptuary laws were enforced would be exploring the now thousands of digitized pages of police records from the Danish West Indies found through the Danish National Archive online repository. These records may illustrate to what extent colonial-era sumptuary laws were enacted over time, and if enforced, who were often the culprits of such "crimes." The emphases on exploring the life cycles of such legislation derive from examples of colonial-era sumptuary laws experiencing a resurgence in the southern United States at the turn of the 20th century (Flewellen, 2018; Sitton & Conrad, 2005). Police records may act as an entryway for scholars to explore sumptuary laws over time and test whether the implantation and enforcement of such laws follow social trends or movements.

The Materiality of African Diasporic Sartorial Practices: A Case Study at the Estate Little Princess.

My work at the Estate Little Princess (ELP) adds to the growing historiography on the former Danish West Indies, adding material culture data to the history of Afro-Caribbean past lifeways. St. Croix, the largest of the three islands that once comprised the former Danish West Indies, has a long colonial history beginning with Spanish colonists in 1493. Since then, it has been ruled by seven different colonial flags, with its most prolonged occupation under Danish rule from 1713 to 1801 and from 1815 to 1917 (Hall, 1992; Odewale, 2016; Tyson, 1992). ELP is located approximately 1.75 miles west of Christiansted Harbor on the north coast of St. Croix (Figure 4). A former Danish sugar plantation, the estate was established in 1749 by Frederik Moth, the first Danish governor of St. Croix (Tyson, 1992, 2010; Tyson & Highfield, 1994). The plantation was purchased and sold by several European descendant planters throughout the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries. After the estate was no longer actively producing sugar, it was acquired by Clayton and Opal Shoemaker as a summer home in 1949 (Wright et al., 1980). After the deaths of the Shoemakers, the plantation was willed to The Nature Conservancy (TNC) in 1991, and the site is now the TNC's Virgin Islands and Eastern Caribbean programs headquarters (The Nature Conservancy, 2017). The purpose of this article is not to provide a detailed history of the European descendant estate owners, but to discuss the lived experiences of African descendant people at the site. As a result, a brief history is provided here; however, limited archival (Tyson, 1992; Wright et al., 1980) research has been done about the former owners of the estate.



Figure 4. Map of Project Location (Dunnivant et al., 2018).

The buildings constructed at the Estate Little Princess cover a history that spans over 200 years (Wright et al., 1980). The architectural remains at the estate include three houses, a sugar factory/distillery building, a sugar mill, a well tower, and several outbuildings including the remains of an enslaved village, later known as a free laborer village (Dunnivant et al., 2018). Archival research indicates that by 1786, 127 enslaved Africans labored at the site and lived in 53 houses that comprised the enslaved village area. Of the 53 domestic structures, 25 of these were masonry made, while the remaining 28 were “wattle village houses,” making the enslaved village area architecturally diverse. A watchhouse noted as ‘slavevagterbusene’ in estate inventories was also originally constructed at the estate but was removed and reconstructed at the Whim Museum, a public heritage site owned and operated by the St. Croix Landmarks Society. The architectural remains of the ELP were added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1980 (Dunnivant et al., 2018).

The estate is a rural coastal plantation that, at its height in 1772, harvested 130 acres of sugarcane with the 141 enslaved Africans who labored in the agricultural fields and the rum distillery. Sugar production was arduous and dangerous work for the coerced enslaved labor force in the Caribbean. Enslaved and later free Afro-Caribbean at the Estate likely worked from sunup to sundown, only to then return to their own homes to complete the labors of housekeeping as well as maintenance of their own subsistence farm. The plantation was dedicated predominantly to the production of cane sugar, which was continuously cultivated and processed on-site until the early 1920s, making the estate one of the last operating sugar plantations on the island of St. Croix (Wright et al., 1980). The site remained continuously occupied from 1749 through the 1960s (Tyson 1985; Wright et al., 1980).

Decades of soil derogation along with devastating hurricanes in the late 19th and early 20th centuries results in the decline of sugar production at the ELP in the early 1900s. The last recorded sugar cane harvest was a mere 50 acres in 1942 versus 155 acres of harvested sugar cane 128 years prior. In addition to nutrient-deficient soils, increased production costs after the abolishment of slavery in 1848, and the ever-pervasive threat of natural disaster, the demand for cane sugar began to wane in favor of beet-based sugar. By the 1950s, the buildings--which had long been in disrepair--started to collapse and succumb to storm damage that occurred as a result of a hurricane that struck the island in 1928. Ongoing archaeological work at the estate included a reassessment of

the site after the landfall of both Hurricanes Maria and Irma in 2017 (Dunnivant et al., 2018). There are ongoing efforts to rehabilitate the historic structures identified at the Estate Little Princess conducted by TNC.

Ongoing archaeological work at the Estate Little Princess is part of an award-winning project built in collaboration with the Society of Black Archaeologists (SBA) and the Slave Wrecks Project (SWP), an international collaboration between the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture, the National Park Service (NPS), and the George Washington University Capitol Archaeological Institute. Founded in 2011, the SBA is a non-profit organization dedicated to advocating for proper treatment of African and African diaspora material culture through the promotion of academic excellence and social responsibility (Odewale et al., 2018).

Examining Sartorial Practices

During the enslavement and post-emancipation eras in the Danish West Indies (1733-1917)-- periods marked by racialized servitude, sexual exploitation, and economic disenfranchisement-- Afro-Crucians were styling their hair with combs, lacing glass beads around their necks, dyeing coarse-cotton fabric with indigo-berry and vine sorrel, and fastening buttons to adorn their bodies and dress their social lives. Through my work, at the ELP, I posit that quotidian sartorial practices, how people dressed their bodies for their everyday lives, are practices of self-making that, through their repetitive daily engagement, constitute the body and form identities. Building off the work of Mary Ellen Roach-Higgins and Joanne B. Eicher (1992), I define sartorial practices as social-cultural practices, shaped by many intersecting operations of power and oppression, including racism, sexism, and classism, that involve modifications of the corporal form (e.g., scarification, body piercings, and hair alteration), and all three-dimensional supplements added to the body (e.g., clothing, hair combs, jewelry). While much of the archaeological work on adornment practices among Afro-Americans (African and African-descendant people in the Americas) focuses on the era of enslavement, little archaeological work examines sartorial practices as an avenue for identity formations from slavery through freedom. The ELP, with an occupation that spans over 200 years, makes an excellent case site to explore this change over time.

This research builds on three bodies of interdisciplinary scholarship: archaeological analyses of adornment, Black feminist theory, and historical archaeology of enslavement and post-emancipation. Within historic archaeological scholarship on adornment, the multivalent meanings behind artifacts recovered in the archaeological record that relate to dress practices are tools for the formation of identity (Beaudry, 2006; Fisher & Loren, 2003; Galle, 2004; Heath, 1999, 2004; Loren, 2001, 2010; Thomas & Thomas, 2004; White & Beaudry, 2009). I argue that beads, buttons, rivets, suspenders, bodices, hairpins, and hook-and-eye closures are some of the material culture data that, alongside documentary data, serves as evidence of sartorial practices of self-making that form identity and constitute the body through daily iterative practice. Within this project, my conceptualization of processes of identity formation draws from Meskell's (2002) theorization of "iterative practices" where she states that "identities are multiply constructed and revolve around a set of iterative practices that are always in process, despite their material and symbolic substrata" (2002, p. 281). Pulling from Meskell, I argue that beads, buttons, rivets, suspenders, bodices, hairpins, and hook-and-eye fasteners are some of the "small things" that, along with documentary data, serve as evidence of "iterative practices" that comprise sartorial "practices of self-making" engaged in by individuals.

The emphasis on intersecting operations of power and oppression, including racism, sexism, and classism within my definition of dress draws from Black feminist theory. Black feminist theory--specifically the usefulness of intersectionality as an analytical tool--comes from Kimberlé Crenshaw's (1991) theorization of intersectionality, which locates the positionality of Black women in particular at the intersections of gender, race, and class operations of power and oppression. Black feminist archaeology aids in the interpretation of African Americans' past lived experiences as wholly complex rather than compartmentalizing multiple facets of Black experiences (Agbe-Davies, 2001, 2007; Battle-Baptiste, 2012; Franklin, 2001; see also Wilkie, 2003, 2004).

From its inception, historical archaeology of African diasporic past lifeways concerned itself with identity politics (Davidson, 2004; Fairbanks, 1974; Ferguson, 1980; Franklin, 2001; Otto, 1980; Singleton, 1998). Archaeological investigations of the African diaspora have expanded beyond the U.S. to include the West African coast (Decorse, 2001; Kelly, 1997), South Africa (Hall, 1987, 1993), Brazil (Funari, 1999; Orser & Funari, 2001), and the Caribbean (Armstrong & Kelly, 2000; Armstrong & Mark, 2003; Bates et. al., 2016; Singleton, 2015). However, while the Caribbean has become the site of more archaeological excavation, work tends to center Anglo-American, British, French, and Spanish sites of enslavement and post-emancipation. My research at the Estate Little Princess brings a site of enslavement and post-emancipation from a Danish West Indian lens into conversation with scholarship on the Circum-Caribbean, providing data sets that can be placed in comparison with other sites for further analysis of African diasporic experiences. By integrating documentary and archaeological data, my current research at the Estate provides a framework for testing inferences about the relationship the matrix of domination has to the formation of identity through the lens of dress, across space and time in the former Danish West Indies and the broader Atlantic world.

Archaeological excavations at the site during the summer of 2017 and 2018 resulted in the recovery of over 16,000 artifacts with shovel probes unearthing material culture (e.g., ceramics, glass, metal) pertaining specifically to the era of enslavement and post-emancipation. This work is preliminary with plans to continuing excavating at the enslaved and later free laborer area for another 3-4 years.

Conclusions: The Potentiality of the Archaeological and Archival Record: The Syntheses of Material Culture and Documentary Data

I am opening this conclusion with a circa 1890 image of two-house servants who labored at the Estate Little Princess (Figure 5). The man wears a top hat, trousers, and a buttoned froc. The woman has her hair pulled back and covered with a scarf. She wears a short gown, a long petticoat that falls to her ankles with an apron. Their hands are intertwined as they stare back at the camera. The back of the photograph reads, "Nanna Hetta about 1890." Less than 50 years after the abolition of slavery in the Danish West Indies, I wonder how Nanna Hetta, her ancestors and her descendants, who labored and lived at the Estate Little Princess, constituted their existence through everyday, quotidian practices of self-making.



Figure 5. A 19th-century image of two-house servants that labored at the Estate Little Princess. Courtesy of Mr. and Ms. Dawson.

My interest in examining sartorial practices of self-making among Afro-Caribbean people on the island of St. Croix lead me to explore avenues of inquiry in the archaeological and archival record. With the Estate Little Princess as a case study, through a synthesis of material culture and documentary data, I will explore sartorial practices over time as an avenue through which to explore the complex entanglements of structure, agency, and the enduring legacy of enslavement. Analysis of material culture data for my research will consist of me cataloging and analyzing material culture recovered from the ELP to the standards of the Digital Archive of Comparative Slavery (DAACS). DAACS host a digital, relational (SQL) database of excavation and artifact information that can be queried online, making archaeological data on the African diaspora widely accessible. Using the DAACS database guarantees that material culture recovered from the ELP is cataloged and analyzed systematically to allow intra-site and cross-site comparison. Through the use of SQL, I will analyze clothing and adornment artifacts at the ELP by querying the assemblage for patterns of archaeological variation to assess frequencies in the distribution of artifacts as a means of inferring the acquisition and disposal of clothing and adornment goods and potential shifts in dress practices. Material culture data recovered will be analyzed to determine what effect, if any, operations of power and oppression had on patterns of discard, the cost of goods, market accessibility, and aesthetic valuation. Discard patterns within the archaeological record may provide inferences regarding the aesthetic choices people at the ELP were making in regards to dress over time.

In addition to material culture recovered, I will create a database that includes all references to adornment and clothing, including clothing type, decoration, and the rate of appearance over time from documentary sources. I will collect and analyze historical photographs and postcards held in the Danish Royal Library as well as the Danish National Archives that provide documentary data regarding late 19th and early 20th centuries dress practices. Additionally, I will utilize the Royal Danish Library digital newspaper collection to analyze runaway slave advertisements in six volumes of *The Royal Danish American Gazette* (1770-1801), five volumes of *The Royal Saint Croix Gazette* (1813-1815), 5,824 volumes of the *St. Croix Avis* (1844-1917), and 296 volumes of the *Dansk Vestindisk Regierings Avis* (1815-1843). These advertisements will provide data regarding Afro-Crucian's appearance when they absconded during enslavement (Figure 6). I am currently in the process of creating a database that records attributes based on the advertisements, including whether clothing is mentioned and to what extent. This database will be used to assess clothing practices engaged in by enslaved Africans when they absconded while allowing for a comparison to what enslaved Africans were wearing to the criminalization of sartorial practices outlined in sumptuary laws.

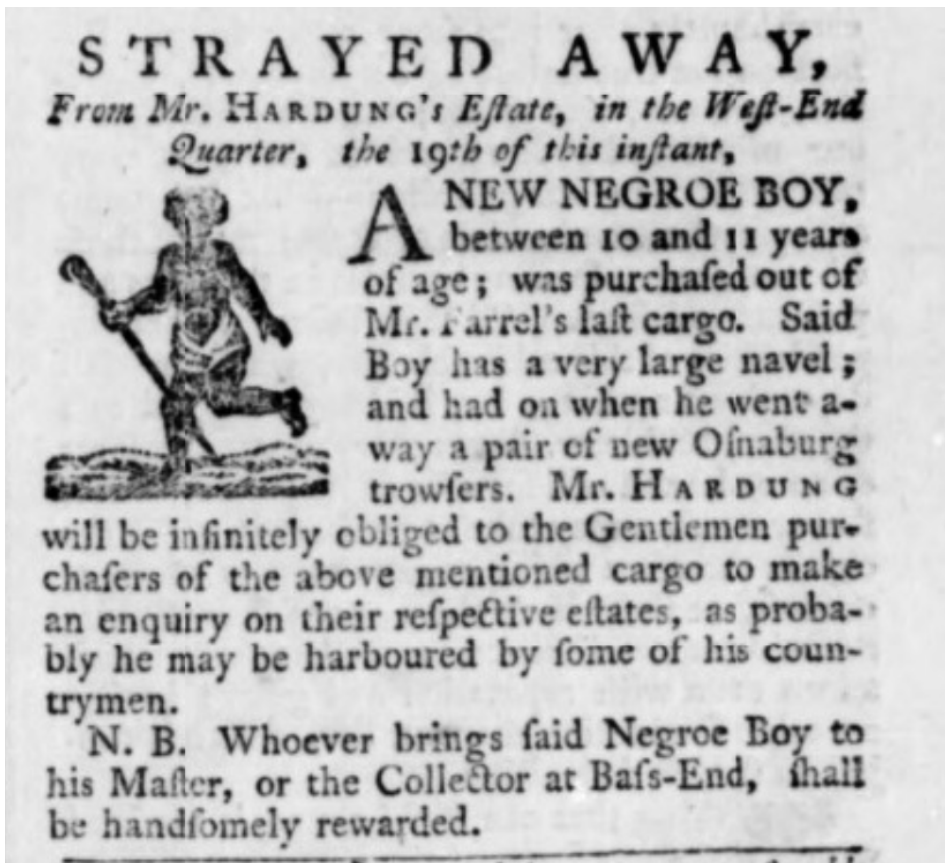


Figure 6. An advertisement for an absconded enslaved person, placed in *The Royal Danish American Gazette* July 25th, 1770. Courtesy of the Royal Danish Library digital newspaper collection.

This database will create a baseline from which to draw comparisons to material culture recovered from the ELP and provide contextual data regarding quotidian dress practices among Afro-Crucians across time, ideologies of race, gender, and class, as well as legal practices of control and surveillance through dress. Through the use of material culture and documentary evidence, my research will shed light on hegemonic ideologies of gender, race, and class, as well as the pragmatic realities of the social and economic conditions of slavery and freedom through the lens of sartorial choice. Archaeological work, coupled with archival research, provides additional strands of data from which to test hypotheses about the methods of surveillance and practices of sousveillance. Together, documentary and material culture allow for a rich exploration into the materiality of sartorial practices at the interstices of structure and agency.

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