

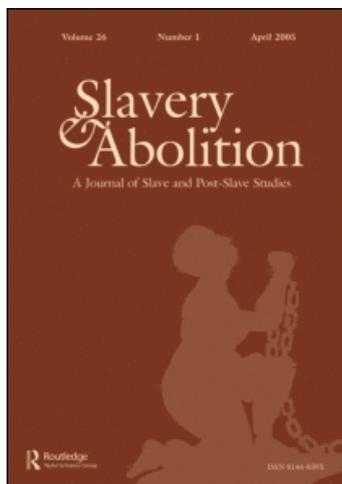
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Publisher Routledge

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Slavery & Abolition

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title-content=t713719071>

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Online Publication Date: 01 March 2009

To cite this Article Handler, Jerome S.(2009)'The Middle Passage and the Material Culture of Captive Africans',*Slavery & Abolition*,30:1,1 — 26

To link to this Article: DOI: 10.1080/01440390802673773

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01440390802673773>

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The Middle Passage and the Material Culture of Captive Africans

Jerome S. Handler

Scholars of the Atlantic slave trade have not systematically addressed the question of what material objects or personal belongings captive Africans took aboard the slave ships and what goods they may have acquired on the Middle Passage. This topic has implications for the archaeology of African descendant sites in the New World and the transmission of African material culture. This paper reviews the evidence for clothing, metal, bead, and other jewelry, amulets, tobacco pipes, musical instruments, and gaming materials. In so doing, the paper provides an empirical foundation for the severe limitations placed upon enslaved Africans in transporting their material culture to the New World.

Introduction

This paper addresses a straight-forward question on a few aspects of the Atlantic slave-trade which scholars have not systematically explored, and which has implications for the archaeology of African descendant sites in the New World and for the transmission of African culture: What, if any, objects of personal belonging and material culture in general did Africans transport aboard slaving vessels in their forced passage across the Atlantic? It is almost self-evident, and there is no strong evidence to the contrary, that objects such as pottery, weaponry, tools, baskets, wooden carvings, shrines and so forth did not make the Atlantic crossing with captives and that ‘there was no significant transfer of tangible items.’¹ Although Europeans occasionally brought some objects of African manufacture to the New World, the question of ‘transfer’ by enslaved Africans themselves is more problematical with respect to personal effects, such as clothing, personal adornment, particularly metal, bead, and other jewelry, amulets, clay pipes, gaming materials, and musical instruments. These are the cultural categories for which some documentary data are available, even though the data are highly variable in both quantity and quality.

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Clothing

An examination of many sources dealing with West and West Central African slaving activities strongly indicates that many, if not most (given the limits of literary sources, quantification is impossible), captive Africans were stripped of their clothing not long after their capture or during their treks overland in coffles and/or riverine transport from the interior to coastal ports. These trips could sometimes last for months, take place over many miles, and involve any number of African middlemen slave-traders. Clothing could range from elaborate robes or gowns made from woven fabrics, sarongs and skirts, to loincloths or breechclouts of various styles and materials, depending on the cultural area and socioeconomic level of the captive.² If not completely denuded of clothing during their transportation to coastal embarkation points, when captives were loaded (or just prior to being loaded) on European slaving vessels, the evidence indicates their clothing was removed and that the transatlantic crossing was usually made in a state of nudity or, at most, in ragged or tattered loincloths, breechclouts, or some form of genital covering. In order to demonstrate this, in what follows I give examples of the evidence from primary sources. It bears stressing that although this evidence is widely scattered, is never detailed, and is usually quite fragmentary and sketchy, if not ambiguous, it does provide a more or less consistent picture.

Captured Africans reporting on their experiences offer several examples of clothing removal. Augustino was shipped across the Atlantic to Brazil in 1830, when he was about 12 years old. Testifying through an interpreter before a British House of Lords committee in 1849, he reported: 'when we were put on board [the slave] ship, the clothes of all the negroes going on board [the] ship were stripped off them, even to the last rag'. Ali Eisami, from the empire of Bornu in today's northern Nigeria, was captured and sold to Europeans in 1818. On boarding the slave ship, 'they took away all the small pieces of cloth which were on our bodies, and threw them into the water'. Abu Bakr (Abubakr al-Siddiq), a Mande speaker from Jenne in present-day Mali, was captured in warfare around 1805 and 'on that very day they made me a captive,' he reported, 'they tore off my clothes [and] bound me with ropes'.³

Examples from European sources are more numerous, but also are never detailed. In his well known account of Barbados, based on his residence in 1647–1650, Richard Ligon reported how 'planters buy [newly arrived Africans] out of the ship, where they find them stark naked, and therefore cannot be deceived in any outward infirmity,' and a Swiss traveler to Virginia in 1701 observed that when captive Africans were landed from the slave ships 'they are entirely naked.'⁴ Jonathan Atkins, on a slaving voyage in 1721, reported on the 'great number of slaves . . . brought down to Whydah [Ouidah] and sold to the Europeans naked; the Arse-clouts they had . . . having been the plunder of the populace.' A British Navy carpenter, James Towne, had spent several months on shore during several trips to West Africa in the 1760s; he learned that when captured inland, sometimes many hundreds of miles from the coast, both male and female captives were 'stripped naked'. In the late 17th century Willem [William] Bosman, an official of the Dutch West India company and chief

factor at Elmina on the Gold Coast, wrote that before captive Africans were loaded onto the slave ships ‘their masters strip them of all they have on their backs, so that they come aboard stark naked, as well women as men. In which condition they are obliged to continue, if the master of the ship is not so charitable (which he commonly is) as to bestow something on them to cover their nakedness.’⁵ Paul Erdmann Isert, a Brandenburger, was chief surgeon to Danish properties on the West African coast for about three years. In a letter written in 1787, he reported on the propensity of Africans to escape or commit suicide, adding ‘for this reason on the French ships they are not even allowed a narrow strip of loincloth for fear they will hang themselves by it.’⁶ William Littleton, a British slaving captain who traded for about 11 years in the 1760s and 1770s, reported that during the Middle Passage ‘we do not allow them cloaths [sic]—we could not keep them clean or preserve their health if they had cloaths [sic].’ In 1827, Théophile/Théophilus Conneau (Theodore Canot), a slave-trader who had lived for many years on the West coast of Africa, related that as captive Africans boarded a slave ship ‘their clothes are taken off and they are shipped on board in perfect nakedness; this is done without distinction of sex. This precaution is necessary to keep them from vermin. . . . and forcibly attended to, as the females part with reluctance with the only trifling rag that covers their Black modesty. As they are kept in total nudity the whole voyage, cleanliness is preserved with little trouble.’ In the 1920s, Cudjo related to Zora Neale Hurston that as he and other captives ‘stepped into the small boats which were to take them to the [slave ship] . . . the Dahomans avariciously tore their garments from them. Men and women alike were left entirely nude.’⁷ As a final example from a very late period in the Atlantic slave trade, an American slave ship, the ‘Wildfire’, was captured in April 1860 by the U.S. Navy within sight of the northern Cuban coast. The ‘Wildfire’ was taken to Key West, Florida, where, soon after it anchored, a correspondent for *Harper’s Weekly* magazine boarded the ship and sent an account of his observations to the magazine. ‘On the deck of the vessel’, he reported, were ‘about four hundred and fifty native Africans, in a state of entire nudity, in sitting or squatting position’; these were mostly boys, but ‘about fifty of them were full-grown young men’. On going below, there were ‘sixty or seventy women and young girls, in Nature’s dress, some sitting on the lockers, and some sick ones lying in the berths’. The adults were later clothed, but nothing in this account suggests that it was surprising or unusual to find these captives in a state of complete nudity.⁸

Although the account of the ‘Wildfire’ is quite clear, the meaning attached to the word ‘naked’ or ‘nude’ in the sources is sometimes ambiguous. Does the word literally mean completely devoid of any bodily covering? Or, does the word convey a very sparse covering relative to, for example, European or Arabic clothing; that is, virtually nude or minimally covered except for the genital area? In some sources it seems clear that the meaning is absolute nudity—bereft of any body covering at all. However, in other cases it is difficult to determine the meaning, or the meaning is more ambiguous, and ‘naked’ or ‘nude’ might, in fact, mean a minimal or scant covering limited to the genital area. The latter meaning is reflected in, for example, the following excerpts from first-hand accounts: In 1693, the slaving captain Thomas Phillips described

Cape Verdean women whose ‘bodies were all naked, excepting a little clout about their waste, hanging down to the middle of the thigh’; in 1796, the British Army doctor, George Pinckard, boarded a recently arrived slave ship in Barbados, and observed that ‘Both sexes were without apparel, having only a narrow band of blue cloth put round the waist’; in 1774, Nicholas Cresswell, another English visitor to Barbados, witnessed Africans newly landed from a slave ship who ‘were all naked except a small piece of blue cloth about a foot broad to cover their nakedness’; and John Barnes, who had lived on the Gold Coast as a trader for thirteen years, responded to a Parliamentary query, ‘how are inhabitants of [the] Gold Coast clothed’ by saying ‘not at all, comparatively speaking, unless a yard or two of cloth round the waist may be called clothing.’⁹

Although it is extremely difficult to generalize on the many millions of captives transported across the Atlantic over the several centuries of the slave-trade and at different time periods, the data indicate that many if not most, persons, particularly adult males and children of both sexes, were completely nude and devoid of any body covering throughout the Middle Passage. Many others, particularly, perhaps, adult females had some kind of tattered or ragged cloth covering their genitalia.¹⁰

Metal jewelry and beads

Given the apparent widespread practice of stripping captives of all or a considerable part of their body coverings, to what extent did this practice extend to the removal of personal objects such as jewelry or body adornment of one kind or another?

The artisans of West and West Central Africa made a bewildering array of metal jewelry which functioned in a variety of cultural contexts from the purely esthetic to the ritual and the monetary.¹¹ Although the primary documentary sources do not specifically mention the removal of metal (or other) jewelry it is quite likely that most metal jewelry, particularly items of any value, was taken from captives even prior to their sale to Europeans and their placement aboard the slave ships; whatever remained could have been taken by their European purchasers, perhaps as souvenirs. In any event, metal jewelry of apparent African manufacture is very rarely encountered in early New World African descendant archaeological sites. Several metal objects (particularly bracelets) discovered in the early 1970s at the Newton plantation slave cemetery in Barbados (ca. 1660–1820) have a general African styling and reflect African methods of manufacture; they may have been manufactured in Africa. As far as I am aware there have been no similar finds at other New World sites. Although a number of metal artifacts of personal adornment were discovered at the very large colonial-period African Burial Ground in New York City, neither these nor those found at other North American sites appear to have originated in Africa.¹²

Nevertheless, glass beads of one kind or another are regularly recovered from North American and Caribbean archaeological sites, albeit usually in small numbers.¹³ The presence of beads, of course, suggests they played some role in the lives of the enslaved, most obviously in personal adornment, the role usually attributed to them in archaeological interpretations. However, given certain contexts and adequate historical documentation, other roles can be inferred. At the Newton cemetery, for example,

beads—which at one time may have served the living as personal adornment—interred with the burials were intentionally placed grave goods and reflect their role in the slaves' spiritual lives as well as the continuation of African practices in the New World. In at least one case, an elaborate necklace (comprised of money cowries, large fish vertebrae, canine teeth, European glass beads, and a unique carnelian bead) probably not only denoted the special status of the interred person, perhaps a healer/diviner (otherwise known as an 'obeah man' in the British West Indies) but the necklace itself might have been considered as endowed with particular magical or spiritual properties and used in ritualistic contexts.¹⁴ Consider also the very African practice reflected in the unique (among New World finds) strand of 70 glass beads and 7 cowries, interspersed among the beads, found around the hips of Burial 340, a woman interred at the African Burial Ground in New York City.¹⁵ In cases such as these, and probably others as well, the beads offer material examples that reflect behavior arguably influenced by African practices and traditions.

As is well known, beads were widely used by Africans during the era of the transatlantic slave-trade. First-hand accounts of this period regularly mention beads, even though detailed descriptions of bead types and usages are usually absent. Africans themselves manufactured beads from a variety of materials, and beads played an array of roles in African societies, including the purely ornamental in jewelry, clothing, or hair styling; as symbols or signifiers of social status and power; in ritualistic and spiritual dimensions of life, including their use as grave goods or as amulets for protection against misfortune or illness.¹⁶ Because of the importance that Africans attached to beads, glass beads, often of Dutch or Venetian origin, were one of a number of trade goods commonly used by Europeans¹⁷ although, it merits emphasis, they were not a universal trade item at all times and in all places and African consumption preferences varied. 'The same kind of beads which finds a market one year in one part of the coast,' wrote Thomas Clarkson in his celebrated essay on the slave trade, 'will probably not be saleable there the next. At one time the green are preferred to the yellow, at another the opaque [opaque] to the transparent, and at another the oval to the round.'¹⁸ And Europeans attempted to adapt to African tastes in the beads they manufactured and brought to the coast for trade.

Given the widespread presence of beads, of African or European manufacture, among populations from which captives were taken to the New World, what chances or opportunities did these Africans have to take their beads, particularly those made of non-organic material, e.g., seeds, across the Atlantic? Although direct information is lacking, the evidence reviewed above concerning clothing removal leads to a conclusion that in most cases the chance of retention was very limited: before captives boarded the slave ships, the vast majority of them were probably divested of jewelry of any kind, particularly that of any value to African captors or European purchasers.

In some cases, however, persons with beads (and metal—or even bone or ivory—jewelry) may have been permitted to carry them to the Americas. Although not mentioned in documentary sources, this possibility is raised by some archaeological finds in the New World. This may have been the case, for example, with the very distinctive

necklace and metal jewelry discovered at Newton cemetery in Barbados or even the strand of waist beads found with a woman in New York's African Burial Ground. In addition, protective amulets of one kind or another were occasionally (or often ?) allowed on board the ships,¹⁹ while in other cases, amulets or small jewelry objects may have been smuggled aboard and hidden in tattered loin cloths, for example. While no data even suggest that such smuggling occurred, it is a possibility. Africans were able to hide and move around the ships small items, such as knives or axes, which they purloined from the ships and used as weapons in revolts; in fact, the slave decks were regularly searched for 'hard-edged tools or indeed anything that might be used as a weapon.'²⁰

It is also possible that some of the beads discovered in New World archaeological sites might have been acquired at sea, aboard the slaving ships themselves. Evidence from the British slave-trade indicates that beads were occasionally distributed to enslaved Africans during the Middle Passage.²¹ This evidence is limited and does not become available until the last half of the eighteenth century.²² In a well-known account of the Atlantic slave-trade, Alexander Falconbridge, a surgeon aboard British slaving vessels in the 1780s, reported that during the Middle Passage 'the women are furnished with beads for the purpose of affording them some diversion.'²³ In the British government's major late eighteenth century inquiry into the slave-trade, a number of witnesses with first-hand experience of slaving activities testified to Parliamentary committees. Two of these witnesses mention beads. James Penny made eleven voyages to the West Indies and North America in the 1770s and 1780s. He provided a detailed description of conditions aboard the ships, and, among other comments, reported that after the late morning or mid-day meal, 'the women are supplied with beads, which they make into ornaments.' Robert Norris captained slave ships on five voyages in the late 1760s and during the 1770s. In an independent testimony he also reported that between meals 'the women and girls amuse themselves with arranging fanciful ornaments for their persons with beads, which they are plentifully supplied with.'²⁴

Quite independently of these Parliamentary witnesses, the primary sources on Barbados also suggest that beads were present on the slave ships. A British naval chaplain observed a slave sale on the island in early 1794; some of the Africans, he reported 'were decorated with beads, given to them by their captors, and bracelets round their wrists and ankles.' A few years later, a British army general visited a recently arrived slaving vessel; he observed that the 'females had all a number of different coloured glass beads hung around their necks. The master of the ship told me the chief employment, and indeed amusement, they had was in new-stringing their beads, and that they very frequently broke the string on purpose to set them to work.' African captives who acquired beads during the Middle Passage may have been occasionally allowed to keep them and bring them ashore.²⁵

In all, then, present evidence, despite its fragmentary nature, suggests that most European-manufactured glass beads recovered from New World diasporic sites were not in the possession of Africans when they boarded the slave ships in Africa. Rather, some of the beads found in these sites were acquired by captives during the

Middle Passage. Others were acquired in the New World itself through internal markets (including rural markets and shops or market stalls in towns) or by other means, including, perhaps, theft, barter, and payment for services rendered in the plantation community (e.g., healing), or possibly distribution by slave masters themselves through the plantation ‘reward–incentive’ system or what some Jamaican planters called their ‘package of “indulgences”’.²⁶

The distribution of beads during the Middle Passage reflected an effort on the part of the slavers to mollify or lighten the oppressive physical and mental conditions aboard the ships. It was not done out of altruism or magnanimity, but self-interest, given that the threat of shipboard revolt or other forms of unrest were always present.²⁷ We shall never know how the Africans themselves viewed the situation, but the European slavers, one can assume, considered the distributions as facilitating for them the process of enslavement. Similar perspectives also functioned in the distribution of tobacco and pipes.

Tobacco and pipes

By the very early seventeenth century, tobacco seems to have been well established in West and West Central Africa. Its cultivation was observed in Sierra Leone in 1607, and much further south, in 1611 Samuel Brun/Braun observed soldiers in the Kingdom of Kongo relieving their hunger by grinding and igniting tobacco leaves ‘so that a strong smoke is produced, which they inhale.’²⁸

Not long after its introduction by Europeans, tobacco became a desired commodity among Africans and from the mid- to late-seventeenth century, it was one of the commodities Europeans used to acquire slaves.²⁹ Many Africans appear to have preferred Brazilian tobacco because it was ‘copiously treated with molasses’ although the tobacco used in the African trade was of ‘inferior quality,’ called ‘soca’ by the Portuguese (by the French, ‘tabac de cantine’), and was not permitted into Portugal itself.³⁰ Because of their connection with Brazil, the Portuguese had an advantage in the tobacco trade on the African coast, but the English and French (as well as the Dutch and the Danes) attempted to acquire Brazilian tobacco by purchasing it from Portuguese ships trading along the coast or indirectly through other means.³¹ Most of the tobacco Europeans traded was for slave purchase in Africa, but some was also distributed to captives on board the slaving vessels.

African consumers chewed tobacco, used it as snuff, and also smoked it in pipes they themselves produced. These were frequently short-stemmed clay bowls of one kind or another, what archaeologists call ‘elbow bend’ or, simply, ‘elbow’ pipes, into which a detachable hollow wood tube or reed stem, sometimes of considerable length, was inserted. A wide range of ‘elbow bend’ pipes, dating from the early seventeenth-century, have been discovered in a variety of West African archaeological sites from the Middle Niger to the coastal area of Benin and Ghana.³²

Although Africans produced their own pipes, white clay pipes of European manufacture, particularly English and Dutch, were commonly used for purchasing slaves. The market for these products, as with beads, fluctuated from region to region and

period to period, but in general it appears that European pipes were often preferred to African ones; and African consumers even made distinctions among different pipes of European manufacture.³³

The most common pipes Europeans traded on the coast were long stemmed,³⁴ but the records also mention 'short pipes,' sometimes referred to as 'slave pipes'; the latter were probably cheaper to produce because of their short stems (but in general pipes destined for the African trade, at least by British manufacturers, were of cheaper quality). For example, the cargo lists of eight Dutch slaving vessels (out of a sample of 15) over the period from 1741 to 1779, show that tobacco and pipes, sometimes both, sometimes one or the other, were destined for slave use on board the ships (see below); of these pipes, the lists distinguish between 'korte pijpen' (short pipes) and 'lange pijpen' (long pipes).³⁵ The cargo of trade goods on a Danish slaving vessel in the 1770s included 30 dozen 'long tobacco pipes' and 90 dozen 'slave pipes,' the former of greater monetary value than the latter. Jean Barbot, the agent for the French Royal African company, reported that on a slaving voyage in 1698–99, between meals men were occasionally given 'short pipes and tobacco to smook [sic] upon deck by turns.'³⁶

These 'short pipes' or 'slave pipes' are not described, although they could have been the African-type 'elbow-bend' and 'socket stem' pipes that copied African styles and which some European pipe makers were producing specifically for the African trade.³⁷ Ian Walker describes a pipe maker of German origin who established himself in Copenhagen in 1762 and continued to make pipes throughout the century. He produced various types, including ones with 'stub stems produced by breaking off most of the stem before firing, and presumably took an attached stem of wood'; 'stub-stemmed' pipes were also made in the United States, and Walker suggests that this 'style may have particularly appealed to West Africans as the basic form resembled that of native West African pipes.'³⁸ Whatever the case, it is clear that European-manufactured pipes, whether long or short-stemmed, were not only traded on the coast for slaves, but also, as with tobacco, were occasionally distributed to captives on board the slave ships while they waited on the African coasts, sometimes for many months, to fill their complements of slaves; these distributions, however, were more common during the Atlantic crossing itself.

The motivations of European slavers to distribute tobacco and smoking pipes were the same as those which prompted them to distribute beads and allow games aboard the ships (see below), that is, an attempt to placate the captives in situations that were always fraught with tension and insecurity. Although sometimes rationalized in self-serving terms of humanitarianism or a similar sentiment, even the expression 'for ye Negroes refreshment' conjures up this image,³⁹ European slavers apparently believed that such measures were useful in their efforts to control their 'cargo' and avoid or minimize social unrest and revolts—or even put the enslaved in a better mood prior to their being sold or transhipped from one American port to another.

Tobacco, sometimes with pipes, was periodically, albeit irregularly, distributed to captives, in English/British, French, Danish, and Dutch slaving vessels (perhaps those of other nations as well) during the Middle Passage. For example, the James,

a Royal African Company ship, crossed the Atlantic from the Gold Coast to Barbados in about 2.5 months during 1675; as recorded in the captain's journal, the slaves were given "tobacco and pipes" on at least two occasions⁴⁰ and a typical load of provisions for slave vessels leaving London for Africa during the 1720s, as described by an official of the Royal African Company, included various foodstuffs as well as "1 waight [sic] of tobacco" and "5 grosse of Pipes" for use by an estimated 200 captives during the Middle Passage.⁴¹ The British captain, William Snelgrave, describing his voyages to the West Indies between 1727 and 1730, reported: 'every Monday morning, they are served with pipes and tobacco, which they are very fond of.' In 1768, the slave ship, *Fredensborg*, apparently following a common practice aboard Danish ships, distributed one pipe per week to each adult slave, and tobacco was given daily, except for Saturday; more frequent distributions, however, sometimes occurred depending on the inclinations of the ship's captain.⁴² A detailed account of the Atlantic crossing from Ouidah to St. Domingue aboard a French slaver during August 1773 (no data are given for other months) gives a more specific idea of distributions. During the first week, only women received tobacco on one day; in the second week, there were two distributions of pipes and tobacco to both men and women as well as one distribution of tobacco only to both groups. In the third week, men and women received one distribution of tobacco, and in the final week, both groups received tobacco rations, but no pipes. Thus, although both pipes and tobacco were distributed to captives during the Middle Passage, neither item was distributed consistently or regularly.⁴³

Pipes and tobacco distributions to male and female adults may have occurred more regularly on British slaving vessels by the latter half of the eighteenth century. With pipes, 'both sexes sometimes will smoak [sic],' reported a knowledgeable British slaver, but in the absence of pipes, the tobacco was consumed as snuff or chewed.⁴⁴

Whatever the frequency of distribution, the national carrier or cultural background of the ship's captain, or the time period, there are no data on whether the enslaved were allowed to keep the pipes they received on board the ships. Chances are that pipes were collected by the ship's crew after each use to be re-used at another time,⁴⁵ although this does not exclude the possibility that occasionally a pipe could be stolen and hidden, perhaps even taken ashore when the captive was landed in the New World. Although most European white clay pipes—usually recovered in the form of bowl or stem fragments—in early Caribbean and North American African descendant archaeological sites were probably obtained in the Americas, it may be that an occasional pipe was brought by some enslaved African via the Middle Passage.⁴⁶

'Dancing' and musical instruments

Dancing and musical instruments were, of course, ubiquitous and fundamental features of many African cultures. European slavers capitalized on these broad cultural attributes for their own purposes, that is, their belief that 'dancing' (i.e., some physical exercise) would maintain or improve the physical condition of the enslaved and thus enhance their marketability at New World ports.

'Dancing' the captives during the Middle Passage was practiced on British slaving vessels by the late seventeenth century, and by the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries 'dancing' may have been fairly widespread on British, French, Dutch, and Danish slavers; it apparently took place on North American vessels as well. Although European accounts sometimes glossed over this practice and described it as an appreciated recreational activity for the captives (which, in some cases, it may have been), it was in reality nothing more than forced exercise, shorn of the sacred or secular cultural contexts in which dancing took place in African societies.⁴⁷

After the mid-morning meal (there were usually 2 meals a day on British and French ships) and with weather permitting, captives were brought onto the main deck from their cramped quarters below and (for the men, with their chains sometimes removed) made to 'dance'—in the words of a British slave ship surgeon,

'in order that they might exercise their limbs and preserve health. This was done by means of a Cat of Nine Tails, with which they were driven about one among another, one of their country drums beating at the same time; on these occasions they were compelled to sing, the cat being brandished over them for that purpose. It was the business of the chief mate to dance the men, and of himself and the second mate to dance the women. The men could only jump up and rattle their chains.'⁴⁸

All accounts agree that the cat-of-nine-tails was frequently used to make captives move according to the wishes of the slavers. Whatever measures were used to force the enslaved into an activity for which they had neither the physical nor psychological energy nor desire, for Europeans the practice was 'deemed necessary for the preservation of their health,' and, of course, 'the preservation of health' was directly related to how profitable a slaving voyage could become.⁴⁹

Musical instruments furnished by the slave ship accompanied 'dancing.' Reflecting what was apparently the general practice, an early 18th-century English encyclopedia entry on the Middle Passage noted that 'the only sure means to preserve 'em, is to have some musical instruments play to 'em, be it ever so mean'; the specific 'mean' instruments are not mentioned, although the implication is they were 'African.' Later in the century a former British slaving captain testified how 'They are supplied with the means of amusing themselves, after the manner of their country, with musical instruments . . . the men play and sing, whilst the boys dance for their amusement—women and girls divert themselves in the same way.'⁵⁰ Music was largely provided by 'musical instruments of their country' or by 'instruments of music peculiar to their own country.' These instruments were collected or purchased by the European slavers in Africa and may have been part of the standard equipment on many slave ships. Specific instruments such as flutes, rasps, or rattles of one kind or another are usually not mentioned in the sources, and when a specific instrument is mentioned, it is the drum—never described in detail—sometimes referred to, in English, as 'a country drum,' implicitly emphasizing its African origin.⁵¹ Bryan Edwards, the well-known Jamaican planter and defender of West Indian slavery, in arguing that the slave-trade was not as inhumane as its critics maintained, offered as partial evidence that between meals captives were 'encouraged to divert themselves

with music and dancing; for which purpose such rude and uncouth instruments as are used in Africa, are collected [on shore] before their departure.' Edwards does not identify or describe these 'rude and uncouth instruments,' but confirms other sources that they were African, not European.⁵²

The New World banjo evolved from African antecedents, and although there are references to a banjo of one kind or another in various early American slave societies, the only specific reference to this instrument on board a slave ship is in George Pinckard's account of Barbados. In early 1796, he visited a recently arrived American slave ship, which was on its way to Georgia. During the daylight hours, he learned, slaves were brought from the below decks to the top deck 'where they were made to exercise, and encouraged by the music of their loved banjar.'⁵³

All evidence indicates that, whether of African or European origin, musical instruments were provided by the European slavers themselves, and that Africans did not bring their own personal instruments aboard the ships. Of course, African captives retained their memories and knowledge of musical instruments (as they did of so many other dimensions of the cultural systems from which they were torn), and applied these in their New World environments to create their own musical cultures (see below).

Gaming materials

Bryan Edwards wrote that between meals captives were allowed to play 'games of chance' using 'implements of African invention.' He does not describe these games, but 'games of chance' are also mentioned in several late eighteenth century sources dealing with the British slave-trade. A clue to the identity of these undescribed 'games of chance' is to be found in the testimony of James Fraser, who captained slaving vessels for about 20 years in the 1770s and the 1780s: 'They have frequent amusements peculiar to their own country,' Fraser reported, 'such as some little games with stones or shells.'⁵⁴ In this comment Fraser is most likely referring to wari (warri, mancala, oware, adjito, *etc.*), the widespread and ancient West African board game. The material requirements of this game are a wooden board (with hollowed out cups) and 36 to 48 counters or tokens. Just as the former could be made from different kinds of wood, the latter could be a variety of small objects such as pebbles, beads, stones, shells and so forth. The sources agree that Europeans brought the necessary materials, e.g., the board for play, onto the slave ships. There is no indication that Africans disembarked with them, although Wari, still played in West Africa, was also implanted in New World cultures, one version or another being found in a variety of Caribbean islands as well as among Maroon groups in Suriname and French Guiana.⁵⁵

Conclusion

Given the close to four centuries of the Atlantic slave-trade, the many thousands of shiploads of Africans taken to the New World, the variety of national carriers and the practices of individual slaving captains and crews, it is impossible to categorically

generalize on the practices that existed at all periods and places, even with respect to the limited number of topics treated in this paper. Further, one must keep in mind the changes in practices over time and how these practices varied by national carriers (i.e., the cultural practices of the European slavers) and the inclinations of particular slave ship captains.

In the final analysis, what can be said about the personal belongings, or material objects acquired on the Atlantic crossing, that enslaved Africans brought ashore in the Americas? At the best, some (any reasonable or minimal quantification is impossible) arrived with skimpy and tattered coverings of their genital areas, but many (particularly adult men and children or young teenagers of both sexes), arrived without body covering; some arrived wearing beads they had either worn in Africa (perhaps as a necklace with an attached protective amulet) or had received on the slave ship; others wore amulets around their necks, hanging from a leather thong or some fiber cord, with which they had boarded the ship; some may have possessed metal or bone jewelry considered of little value to their African captors or European purchasers and openly or clandestinely carried onto the ship; some may even have carried an occasional pipe which had been permitted, or smuggled, on board. In short, as a group, enslaved Africans brought virtually no material goods with them, and for all intents and purposes arrived empty-handed in the New World.

This conclusion is, of course, no surprise to those familiar with the Atlantic slave-trade. But this paper provides a type of empirical evidence not systematically gathered by scholars of the severe limitations placed upon captive Africans in transporting their material culture across the Atlantic.

Thus, generally speaking, the material culture of Africans and their descendants was acquired, fabricated, or created in the New World itself; and the enslaved, particularly those on seventeenth and eighteenth century plantations of the Caribbean and North America, used the 'mental blueprints' of their heritages that the Middle Passage could not erase. In all, 'when we are concerned with things material,' Posnansky has written, 'the slaves brought little [across the ocean] . . . but, most important, they brought their skills and the intelligence of their ancestors.'⁵⁶ These 'skills' which were 'transported in the minds of the enslaved' and endured through their experiences on the coffles, forts, and barraccons in Africa as well as the oceanic crossing, assisted Africans and their descendants in adapting to New World environments and in creating new items of material culture. 'Their pasts,' Mintz wrote many years ago, 'were pools of available symbolic and material resources.'⁵⁷ Material life in the Americas that built upon these 'pasts' included: fishing and hunting implements; musical instruments, for example, various types of drums, stringed instruments, rasps, rattles, etc; architectural forms (e.g., wattle-and-daub houses, the most common house type built by enslaved peoples in the early Caribbean); kitchen hearths; stools and other wooden household objects; calabash utensils; game boards (e.g., wari); a wide array of herbal medicines; pottery and basketry; beads (often using locally available flora), metal, bone, or wood jewelry; and spiritual objects (e.g., amulets for protection, materials used in divination). Historical archaeologists investigating African descendant sites in the New World occasionally recover specimens of the most durable, non-organic, among

such objects, thereby giving visual and material expression to what documentary sources often do not describe or describe inaccurately or insufficiently.⁵⁸

Acknowledgments

Jelmer Vos generously shared his unpublished data on the Dutch slave trade; David Eltis helped with sources and data; Sara Bon-Harper, Chris Espenshade, and Alexandra Jones provided information on archaeological materials in the Chesapeake and South Carolina. Benjamin Guichard assisted with French sources and translations from the French. Judith Carney, Laurent Dubois, Barry Higman, Jean Howson, and Philip Morgan offered comments on different sections of earlier drafts of this paper, and I am particularly grateful to Trevor Bernard, Neil Norman, and Marcus Rediker for their careful and detailed reading and comments on later drafts.

Notes

- [1] Posnansky, 'West Africanist Reflections', 29.
- [2] Contemporary illustrations of the wide range of clothing types and styles in West and West Central Africa during the era of the Atlantic slave trade are shown in Handler and Tuite, *Atlantic Slave Trade*; search categories, 'pre-colonial Africa', 'clothing'.
- [3] British Parliamentary Papers, testimony of Augustino, in 'Report from a Select Committee', 163; Smith et al., 'Ali Eisami Gazormabe', 213; Wilkes, 'Abu Bakr Al-Siddiq', 162. See also brief comments of Mahommah Baquaqua (Law and Lovejoy, *Biography*, 40–41, 153) and Venture Smith (*Narrative of the Life and Adventures*, 12–13; cf. Handler, 'Survivors of the Middle Passage', 46–47).
- [4] Ligon, *True & Exact History*, 46; Hinke, 'Report of the Journey', 116.
- [5] Atkins, *Voyage to Guinea*, 111; Towne, in Lambert, 'Minutes of the Evidence on the Slave Trade, 1791 and 1792', 17; Bosman, *New and Accurate Description*, 341. Bosman's account was first published in Dutch in 1703, and the first English translation was published in 1705. Van Dantzig ('English Bosman and Dutch Bosman') has systematically compared the latter and the former and seems to raise no objection to how the above quotation was translated.
- [6] Winsnes, *Letters on West Africa*, 176. Robert Harms suggests that slaves were 'naked' on board the *Diligent*, a French slaving vessel in 1731–32, and that they came aboard the ship in that condition (*Diligent*, 297, 312; cf. Stein, *French Slave Trade*, 102).

Reasons given as to why captives were stripped of their clothing include health and sanitation on the ships, as well as exposing any bodily evidence of disease or illness before purchase (e.g., Littleton, in Lambert, 'Minutes of the Evidence on the Slave Trade, 1788 and 1789', 219–220; Grandpré, *Voyage à la Côte Occidentale*, Vol. 1, 75; Conneau, *Slaver's Log Book*, 82; Ligon, *True & Exact History*, 46). However, Rediker (*Slave Ship*, 266) speculates that another reason may have been to prevent concealment of any weapons on their persons.

- [7] Littleton, in Lambert, 'Minutes of the Evidence on the Slave Trade, 1788 and 1789', 219–220; Conneau, *Slaver's Log Book*, 82; Hurston, 'Cudjo's Own Story', 657. Other first-hand accounts provide similar, albeit usually very perfunctory, information, e.g., Barbot, 'Description of the Coasts', 547; Duncan, *Travels*, Vol. 1, 143; Beecham, *Ashantee*, 354, 356; Hawkins, *History of a Voyage*, 92–93; Newton, *Thoughts*, 105; Robinson, *Sailor Boy's Experiences*, 55, 78; Thorp, 'Chattel with a Soul', 447; Africanus. 'To the Editor' (and Riland, *Memoirs*, 56, 57; see note 23); Edwards, *History, Civil and Commercial*, Vol. 2, 328; Oldendorp, *History of the Mission*, 214, 219. Joshua Carnes quotes an unnamed source: 'When the poor slaves . . . are driven

down to the sea-shore, they are stripped naked, and strictly examined by the European surgeons, both men and women, without the least distinction of modesty' (Carnes, *Journal of a Voyage*, 237). Cf. Mouser, 'Théophilus Conneau'; Jones, 'Théophile Conneau'.

A report of slaving activities on the African coast was given to the *St. Helena Gazette* in 1848. This tiny British colony in the South Atlantic had become a depot for illegal slaving ships captured by the British navy. By this date, about four decades after the British had abolished the slave-trade, these captured ships presumably were not British. Enslaved Africans were taken from their holding areas on the coast to the beach. Before being branded with the slave dealer's mark and loaded onto the canoes that transported them to the waiting slave ship, 'the little piece of cotton cloth tied round the loins of the slave is stripped off' (quoted in Jackson, *St. Helena*, 259).

- [8] "Africans of the Slave Bark Wildfire", *Harper's Weekly* 4 (June 2, 1860): 244–346. This article has several engravings based on daguerreotypes, the most famous of which shows the deck of the 'Wildfire' with its rescued captives huddled together; see Handler and Tuite, *Atlantic Slave Trade*; image reference 'E027'.
- [9] Phillips, 'Journal of a Voyage', 201; Pinckard, *Notes*, Vol. 1, 228–229; Cresswell, 'Journal', 79; Barnes, in Lambert, 'Minutes of the Evidence on the Slave Trade, 1788 and 1789', 100; see also, Winsnes, *Reliable Account*, 115.

Speaking of slaves purchased by the French, a French naval officer visiting Angola in 1786–87 briefly commented: 'cleanliness forces us to keep them completely nude. This state is hardly embarrassing to them because modesty/indecency/shame is a sentiment that they do not know' ('la propreté nous impose la loi de les tenir complètement nus. Cet état n'est point gênant pour eux, car la pudeur est un sentiment qu'ils ignorent'; Grandpré, *Voyage à la Côte Occidentale*, Vol. 1, 75).

What being stripped entirely naked meant to many West and West Central African men and women (children were generally completely naked), coming from a diversity of cultures and value systems, and whether denuding categorically meant for all the millions concerned, 'profound humiliation and disintegration of identity' (Gomez, *Exchanging Our Country Marks*, 159) are large and relevant questions in considering the impact of enslavement; yet, to deal with these questions would stray far from the central aims of this paper and would require another type of empirical investigation into African societies at the time of the Atlantic slave trade.

- [10] Aside from comments quoted above, in 1797 the Governor of Jamaica generalized that the newly arrived African came off the ship 'with only a rag around him' (Balcarres, quoted in Buckley, *Slaves in Red Coats*, 48). Describing the Portuguese slave-trade in Central Africa, Miller's detailed and vivid description notes that captives held in the coastal barracoons received 'no clothing' and those taken from the barracoons to the embarkation points were 'dressed in loincloths (tangas) or crude camisoles made . . . of burlap wrappings' (*Way of Death*, 398, 402–403n92).

There are many contemporary images/illustrations of captive Africans in coffles, embarking on the slave ships, and on the slave ships themselves; these invariably show them with some kind of covering over the genital area, never completely devoid of any covering. Even the few illustrations based on eye-witness drawings fall into this pattern. It seems that these illustrations are more a reflection of European artistic conventions than an absolutely accurate portrayal of actual conditions (Handler and Tuite, *Atlantic Slave Trade*, passim).

European clothing was sometimes given as a reward to captives, such as 'guardians' (slaves who policed other slaves during the Middle Passage) who performed special services for the European slavers (Smallwood, 'African Guardians', 683, 685).

- [11] Types of metal (and other) jewelry worn by West and West Central Africans during the era of the Atlantic slave trade are shown in Handler and Tuite, *Atlantic Slave Trade*; search category, 'jewelry'.

- [12] The Barbados jewelry is shown in colour in Handler and Tuite, *Atlantic Slave Trade*; image references 'B72_coiledbracelet', 'B72_flangedbracelet', 'B72_simplebracelet'. The jewelry is described and illustrated in black/white in Handler, 'African-Type Healer/Diviner', 105–106, 107, 111–112 and Handler and Lange, *Plantation Slavery in Barbados*, 153–158; see also, Bianco et al., 'Beads and Other Adornment', 382–417. A few finger rings of wood and bone/horn, of possible African origin, have also been found in North American sites (Singleton, 'Archaeology of Slave Life', 158, 188n11, 12).
- [13] For example, Handler and Lange, *Plantation Slavery in Barbados*; Armstrong, *Old Village*; Stine et al., 'Blue Beads'; Higman, *Montpelier*, 252–257; Heath, 'Buttons, Beads, and Buckles'; Reeves, 'Profusion of Beads'; Wilkie and Farnsworth, *Sampling Many Pots*; Bianco et al., 'Beads and Other Adornment'; cf. Karklins and Barka, 'Beads of St. Eustatius'; DeCorse, 'Oceans Apart'.
- [14] A colour illustration of the Barbados necklace and its distinctive carnelian bead is shown in Handler and Tuite, *Atlantic Slave Trade*; image references, 'B72_necklace', 'Carnelbead'; the latter and a similar one, both originating in Western India, are discussed in Handler, 'From Cambay in India to Barbados'. For the burial with which it was found, see Handler, 'African-Type Healer/Diviner'; cf. Handler, 'Slave Medicine and Obeah'; Bilby and Handler, 'Obeah'. An early eighteenth-century 'sub-adult' interment in Virginia was buried 'with a string of glass beads around the neck'; although the function of this bead necklace is uncertain, according to the investigator it may have served some 'protective function' (Fesler, 'From Houses to Homes', 172, 207 [fig. 5.31]).
- [15] Bianco et al., 'Beads and Other Adornment', 153–154, 387; cf. LaRoche, 'Beads'. Only a handful of money cowries (*Cypraea moneta*) have been recovered from African descendant sites in the Americas, and most of these have been found singly and not as part of larger bead units such as necklaces or bracelets (Singleton, 'Archaeology of Slave Life', 157, 188n9; Yakubik and Mendez, *Beyond the Great House*; Gordon et al., *Report of Two Seasons of Excavation*; Brown, *Fairfield Quarter*). Cowry shells are absent from early African descendant sites in South Carolina (as reported by Chris Espenshade, personal communication, 13 March 2007), and one to three cowries have been found in about five sites in the Chesapeake, as reported on the *Digital Archaeological Archive of Comparative Slavery* (www.daccs.org). There are, however, two major exceptions: Seven money cowries were recovered at Newton cemetery in Barbados, and all of these were found in one necklace; and as a matter of coincidence with respect to the number seven (?), all of the seven cowries recovered from the African Burial Ground in New York City were also found with one burial, on the strand of hip beads (Handler and Lange, *Plantation Slavery in Barbados*, 125–130; Bianco et al., 'Beads and Other Adornment', 387). It is most likely that all of the New World cowries arrived via the Middle Passage, but it is impossible to determine if they were worn or brought by the enslaved.
- [16] E.g., DeCorse, 'Beads as Chronological Indicators'; Stine et al., 'Blue Beads', 53–56; Handler, 'African-Type Healer/Diviner'; Ogundiran, 'Small Things Remembered'; DeCorse et al., 'Toward a Systematic Bead Description System'; Bianco et al., 'Beads and Other Adornment' (and sources cited in these publications). Bead usage among West and West Central Africans during the era of the Atlantic slave trade is shown in contemporary illustrations; see Handler and Tuite, *Atlantic Slave Trade*; search category, 'bead'.
- [17] For example, Adams, *Sketches Taken During Ten Voyages*, 104–05; Alpern, 'What Africans Got for Their Slaves'; Davies, *Royal African Company*: passim; Barbot, *Barbot on Guinea*, Vol. 1, 105–06; Yacou, *Journaux de Bord*, 50; Robinson, *Sailor Boy's Experiences*, 37; DeCorse, *Archaeology of Elmina*, 149.
- [18] Clarkson, *Essay on the Slavery and Commerce*, 28. John Barnes, a British trader who had lived in West Africa for thirteen years, also expressed the variability of demands for beads in the region (in Lambert, 'Minutes of the Evidence on the Slave Trade, 1788 and 1789', 100).
- [19] The very limited direct evidence for amulets is nonetheless quite suggestive of a wider pattern. A slave ship from Angola was blown off course near Cuba in 1857; captured by a British naval

vessel, it was taken to Port Royal, Jamaica. The incident was described in a letter to the editor of the *Illustrated London News*. Accompanying this letter were photographs of the 370 survivors sent by the letter writer. These photographs, in turn, were used to make the engravings of the ship and its survivors that were published in the *Illustrated London News* in 1857. The engravings show many of the captives wearing amulets hanging around their necks by leather (?) cords (see Handler and Tuite, *Atlantic Slave Trade*, image references '1ln595b, c, d, e'). In another case, Rediker (*Slave Ship*, 307) describes an incident involving three young girls on a slave ship that docked at Charleston, South Carolina in 1804. A strong bond of friendship had developed among them, and when one of the girls was to be separated from the other two, amidst the anguish of the scene 'one of the girls took "a string of beads with an amulet from her neck, kissed it, and hung it on her friend's"'. There is no way of telling where these beads came from but the fact that they were part of a necklace with an amulet suggests the whole ensemble was brought on board the ship itself in Africa. Also suggestive are the two distinctive animal bones recovered from the wreck of the Danish slave ship, the *Fredensborg*. Svalesen reasonably speculates they may have come from some type of protective amulet and 'it is not inconceivable . . . that such an object could have been smuggled aboard' (*Slave Ship Fredensborg*, 185–186).

During the Middle Passage in 1750, John Newton reported an incident aboard the ship wherein 'some of the men slaves' were alleged to have poisoned the water in the 'scuttle casks'; upon inquiry, however, it was found that 'they had only conveyed some of their country fetishes, as they call them, or talismans into one of them, which they had the credulity to suppose must inevitably kill all who drank of it' (*Thoughts*, 56). This quote does not make clear if the 'country fetish' was imbued with its magical properties on board the ship itself, or if it had been brought aboard by the enslaved. Whatever the case, the incident also reflects the possession of small, personal objects aboard the ship.

- [20] Rediker, *Slave Ship*, 237, 280, 293, 295, 296; cf. Taylor, "If We Must Die", 69, 76, 95; Harms, *Diligent*, 311; Smallwood, 'African Guardians', 681–682. The Dane, Ludvig Romer, who spent ten years in West Africa, primarily on the Gold Coast, cautioned his slave trading countrymen, while implying that such events had occurred, 'you must be constantly on guard that no slave gets hold of a knife or any other type of tool, in the fort as well as on board the ship' (Winsnes, *Reliable Account*, 226).
- [21] I have little information for other national carriers, although this practice may have taken place on some French ships; e.g. Villiers, *Traite des Noirs*, 97.
- [22] Finds from the wreck of the 'Henrietta Marie' suggest this practice may have started much earlier. This English slave ship sunk near the Florida Keys in 1700 on its return voyage to England after selling its slaves in Jamaica. Over 11,000 beads of a variety of types and colors were recovered from the wreck (Moore and Malcolm, 'Seventeenth-Century Vehicle'; cf. Moore, *Site Report*, App. F, note 1). These beads were undoubtedly the residues of trade goods used in West Africa, but some may have been distributed to slaves during the Middle Passage. Moreover, there are other indications that slave ships did not dispose of all of their beads along the African coast, and instead carried them back to Britain from the New World. For example, the British slave ship, *Judith*, arriving at Barbados from Africa in 1729, still had a large quantity of beads aboard (Donnan, *Documents*, Vol. 2, 380). Philip Morgan has raised the question, for which I cannot provide an answer: 'Could it be that a portion of the beads . . . put on board a [slaving] ship and assumed [by scholars] to be for trading purposes on the African coast . . . [was] in fact aimed for the Middle Passage leg of the voyage?' (personal communication, 17 Jan. 2007).
- [23] Falconbridge, *Account of the Slave Trade*, 210. See also Africanus, 'To the Editor' [and Riland, *Memoirs*, 58, 59]. Leo Africanus was a pseudonym used by the abolitionist Zachary Macaulay. He sailed aboard a slave ship from West Africa to Jamaica in 1795, and published his observations in *The Christian Observer*, a magazine founded in London in 1802 and edited by Macaulay at the time. James Riland (*Memoirs*) plagiarized large sections of Macaulay's

- account, including sections referenced in the present paper, in his edited account of an unidentified Jamaican Creole who reported on his return to Jamaica from England aboard a slaving vessel in 1801. For details, see Ragatz, *Guide for the Study*, 232–233, 306, 383; and Hochschild, *Bury the Chains*, 253–254, 398n254.
- [24] Norris and Penny, in Lambert, ‘Report of the Lords of Trade on the Slave Trade, 1789’, 117, 118–119.
- [25] Wiliams, *Account of the Campaign*, 12–13; Jeffery, *Dyott’s Diary*, Vol. 1, 93–94. On the Mataponi River in Virginia in 1732, William Grove, a visiting Englishman, observed recently arrived captives aboard two slave ships: ‘The boyes and girls all stark naked; so were the greatest part of the men and women. Some had beads about their necks, arms, and wasts [sic], and a ragg or piece of leather the bigness of a figg leafe.’ Another traveler to Virginia in 1701 also observed the complete nudity of newly arrived Africans, except for the ‘corals of different colors around their neck and arms’. Neither observer mentions if the beads were acquired on board the slave ships or belonged to the captives before they left Africa (Stiversson and Butler, ‘Virginia in 1732’, 31; Hinke, ‘Report of the Journey’, 116).
- [26] Higman, *Montpelier*, 241; cf. Handler and Lange, *Plantation Slavery in Barbados*, passim.
- [27] On shipboard revolts and European fears of them, see Newton, *Thoughts*, 103–104; also, Taylor, ‘If We Must Die’, passim; Christopher, *Slave Ship Sailors*, passim; Rediker, *Slave Ship*, passim; Smallwood, ‘African Guardians’.
- [28] Hill, ‘Archaeological Smoking Pipes’, 115; Jones, *German Sources*, 61 and note 97; cf. Heywood and Thornton, *Central Africans, Atlantic Creoles*, 216–217. DeCorse (*Archaeology of Elmina*, 163, 240n56), McIntosh et al. (‘Tobacco Pipes’), and Philips (‘African Smoking Pipes’) have summarized some of the major issues on the introduction of tobacco to Africa.
- [29] E.g., Robinson, *Sailor Boy’s Experiences*, 37; Labarthe, *Voyage*, 77, 112, 143; Hernaes, *Slaves, Danes*, 351; Plasse, *Journal de Bord D’un Négrier*, 72. Cf. Eltis, *Rise of African Slavery*, 174, 184; Heywood and Thornton, *Central Africans, Atlantic Creoles*, 216–217; Metcalf, ‘Microcosm’, 379, 380, 382, 389; Verger, *Trade Relations*, 12–17.
- [30] Verger, *Trade Relations*, 13; Villiers, *Traite des Noirs*, 104.
- [31] Verger, *Trade Relations*, 12–17; Lambert, ‘Minutes of the Evidence on the Slave Trade, 1788–1790’, 8–9, 13–19; Labarthe, *Voyage*, 83, 112, 140–141, 145; Mettas, *Repertoire des Expéditions*, Vol. 1, 423, 649; Vol. 2, 363, 379, 765. Cf. Eltis, *Rise of African Slavery*, 174, 184; Roberts, ‘Smoking in Sub-Saharan Africa’, 46–47; Villiers, *Traite des Noirs*, 97, 104; Metcalf, ‘Microcosm’, 382, 388, 394.
- [32] For contemporary images of ‘elbow bend’ pipes used by West and West Central Africans during the era of the Atlantic slave trade, see Handler and Tuite, *Atlantic Slave Trade*; search category, ‘pipe’. Only one example of such a pipe has been reported from an African descendant site in the New World. It was discovered at Newton plantation cemetery in Barbados and is illustrated and described in Handler and Norman, ‘From West Africa to Barbados’; see also Handler and Tuite, *Atlantic Slave Trade*, image reference, ‘B72_pipe’. For tobacco and pipes in Africa, see, for example, Hill, ‘Archaeological Smoking Pipes’; Philips, ‘African Smoking Pipes’; Jones, *German Sources*, 117, 255; DeCorse, *Archaeology of Elmina*, 149, 165–67; Kelly, ‘Change and Continuity in Coastal Benin’, 92–95; McIntosh et al., ‘Tobacco Pipes’, 192; Ozanne, ‘Notes on the Early Historic Archaeology of Accra’, and *Tobacco-pipes of Accra and Shai*; Shaw, ‘Early Smoking Pipes’, 274; York, ‘Excavations at New Buipe’.
- Given that Africans were generally stripped of clothing and, presumably, other personal belongings before they even boarded the slave ships, it is highly unlikely that they brought their own pipes on board, although this may have happened occasionally (Handler and Norman, ‘From West Africa to Barbados’).
- [33] Robinson, *Sailor Boy’s Experiences*, 38; Labarthe, *Voyage*, 77, 83, 88, 250; Hernaes, *Slaves, Danes*, 351; Yacou, *Journaux de Bord*, 48–49; cf. Metcalf, ‘Microcosm’, 380, 382. Archaeological research at seventeenth and eighteenth century deposits at Elmina, Gold Coast, yielded

evidence for about 400 times more European, primarily Dutch, pipes than those produced locally (DeCorse, *Archaeology of Elmina*). For French pipes used in the African trade during the eighteenth century, see Walker, 'Potential Use of European Clay Tobacco Pipes', 186–187. Pipes may not have been a common trade item in the English/British trade until the eighteenth century; in any case, pipes are singularly absent from the many trade goods mentioned in the large correspondence of the Royal African Company, 1681–1699 (Law, *English in West Africa*, passim; Robin Law, personal communication, 30 Oct. 2008).

[34] For example, Walker, 'Potential Use of European Clay Tobacco Pipes'.

[35] Sometimes captains may have used these items for slave purchase while on the coast, rather than saving them for distribution on the Atlantic crossing.

Unpublished data on the Dutch trade has been provided by Jelmer Vos, and is derived from his on-going research into the records of the Middelburgsche [Middelburg] Commerciale Compagnie. Around 1740, this Dutch firm became involved in the slave trade, transporting captives to Surinam and other Dutch colonies in the Caribbean (personal communication, 4, 5 Sept. 2007). For data on tobacco distributions also derived from these records by W. S. Unger, see Emmer, 'History of the Dutch Slave Trade', 743.

[36] Hernaes, *Slaves, Danes*, 352; Barbot, *Barbot on Guinea*, Vol. 2, 780.

[37] Tobacco and European manufactured white clay pipes were occasionally distributed to the enslaved on Barbados plantations. The pipes were usually long-stemmed, but in 1796 an island visitor reported how plantation slaves would 'carry in their breeches pocket a short pipe, about an inch in length from the bowl' (Pinckard, *Notes*, Vol. 2, 115). These 'short' pipes may not have been distinct types, but merely white clay pipes whose fragile stems had broken off. Because they were so poor, slaves probably used their pipes, even with broken stems. In more modern times, according to elderly Barbadians I interviewed in the early 1970s, the white clay pipes commonly smoked by the working class were frequently smoked very close to the bowls after the stems had broken. On the other hand, the 'short' pipes may have been distinctive types: a 1789 Jamaican source, for example, mentions that some planters on that island furnished their slaves with, among other goods, 'short tobacco pipes' (quoted in Brathwaite, *Development of Creole Society*, 232).

[38] Walker, 'Potential Use of European Clay Tobacco Pipes', 188–189; Walker, *Clay Tobacco Pipes*, 415. cf. DeCorse, *Archaeology of Elmina*, 165. A large number of 'so-called Negro pipes' was recovered from the wreck of the Fredensborg, whose voyage to the West Indies took place in 1768; these undescribed pipes were 'of a cheap quality' and many were apparently made by a Norwegian pipe manufacturer (Svalesen, *Slave Ship Fredensborg*, 186).

[39] Quoted in Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery*, 159–160.

[40] Quoted in Donnan, *Documents*, Vol. 1, 204 (for the original see PRO/The National Archives T70/1211). In the late 1670s, the Arthur, another Royal African Company ship, sailed from Calabar to Barbados in almost two months. During the voyage, according to the journal kept by the RAC's agent, two distributions of tobacco took place; pipes are not mentioned. At the end of the voyage, 'about 10 lb of tobacco' remained of the various provisions that had been brought from England and which had been specifically intended for the captives on the Middle Passage (for the original see PRO/The National Archives T70/1213; on-line http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/slavery/pdf/Arthur_Transcript.pdf. Excerpts are published in Donnan, *Documents*, Vol. 1, 226–234).

[41] Public Record Office/The National Archives, T70/1222, f. 8 (thanks to David Eltis for this reference).

[42] Snelgrave, *New Account of Some Parts of Guinea*, 163; Svalesen, 'Slave Ship Fredensborg: History', 456, 458n14; Svalesen, *Slave Ship Fredensborg*, 107, 112, 186; see also Barbot, *Barbot on Guinea*, Vol. 2, 780; Oldendorp, *History of the Mission*, 216, 219.

[43] Yacou, *Journaux de Bord*, 49, 192–193; also, Plasse, *Journal de Bord D'un Négrier*, 140; Harms, *Diligent*, 311. As for pipes on French vessels, in the late eighteenth century a French slave ship

captain advised that only tobacco, not pipes, be permitted on board. 'One must never permit the Negroes the use of pipes,' he cautioned, 'for fear of fire; tobacco should be grated and given as a powder' ('Il ne faut jamais permettre aux negres ni negresses aucun usage de pipes. Quand on leur donne du tabac, a eux le soin de le raper pur le prendre en poudre. . . mais jamais de pipes, crainte de feu'); Brugevin, 'Observations Touchant le Soins des Negres', 97). Yet, other primary sources are quite clear that smoking pipes were sometimes distributed on French vessels (e.g., Barbot, 'Description of the Coasts', 547; Yacou, *Journaux de Bord*, 192-193; Plasse, *Journal de Bord D'un Négrier*, 140). There was probably no hard and fast rule and captains followed different practices; the same variability surely took place on the ships of other nations.

There is also some indication that pipes and tobacco were occasionally given to captives while they were kept in the coastal forts, awaiting shipment overseas (St. Clair, *History of Cape Coast Castle*, 220).

- [44] Penny, in Lambert, 'Report of the Lords of Trade on the Slave Trade, 1789', 117; Heatley, *ibid.*, 123; Norris [who specified that only men were 'supplied with pipes and tobacco'], in Lambert, 'Minutes of the Evidence on the Slave Trade, 1788 and 1789', 3-4; cf. Walker, 'Potential Use of European Clay Tobacco Pipes', 179; Villiers, *Traite des Noirs*, 97.
- [45] For example, Svalesen, *Slave Ship Fredensborg*, 112. Aboard a Spanish slaver bound for Cuba in 1827, Theophile Conneau wrote: 'Pipes and tobacco are . . . distributed with some economy, as they cannot all be allowed a pipe. Half a dozen boys light a pipe each, and they go round the decks giving so many whiffs each person' (*Slaver's Log Book*, 83).
- [46] For example, archaeological recoveries in Barbados, the Bahamas, Jamaica (including Maroon sites), New York City, South Carolina, and Virginia (Blakeman and Riordan, 'Appendix B'; Armstrong, *Old Village*, 187-191; Higman, *Montpelier*, 241-242; Wilkie, 'Methodist Intentions', 292-297; Perry and Woodruff, 'Coins, Shells, and Other Items', 429-430; Agorsah, 'Scars of Brutality', 345; *Digital Archaeological Archive of Comparative Slavery* (www.daacs.org).
- [47] Phillips, 'Journal of a Voyage', 246. For practices on French ships, see Barbot, *Barbot on Guinea*, Vol. 2, 780; Plasse, *Journal de Bord D'un Négrier*, 134-135, 140; Munford, *Black Ordeal*, Vol. 2, 299; Yacou, *Journaux de Bord*, 196; Brugevin, 'Observations Touchant le Soins des Negres', 97; Harms, *Diligent*, 295-298; Stein, *French Slave Trade*, 103. For Danish and Dutch ships, see Svalesen, *Slave Ship Fredensborg*, 108-09; Winsnes, *Reliable Account*, 226; Emmer, 'History of the Dutch Slave Trade', 743 (relying on the work of W. S. Unger); and Goslinga, *Dutch in the Caribbean*, 350. 'Dancing' may have been absent on Portuguese/Brazilian ships; in any case, it is not mentioned in well-known secondary sources (e.g., Miller, *Way of Death*, 408-37 and *passim*; accounts in Conrad, *Children of God's Fire*, 15-23, 35, 39).
- [48] Arnold, in Lambert, 'Report of the Lords on the Slave Trade, 1789', 125-126. See also, British Parliamentary Papers, 'Report from a Select Committee', 187; Falconbridge, *Account of the Slave Trade*, 209-210; testimony of John Hall, in Lambert, 'Minutes of the Evidence on the Slave Trade, 1790', Vol. 72, 519.
- [49] Falconbridge, *Account of the Slave Trade*, 209-210; also, Arnold, in Lambert, 'Report of the Lords of Trade on the Slave Trade, 1789', 125-126; Phillips, 'Journal of a Voyage', 246; British Parliamentary Papers, 'Report from a Select Committee', 188; cf. Harms, *Diligent*, 296-297.
- [50] Chambers, *Cyclopaedia*, Vol. 2, 623; Norris, in Lambert, 'Report of the Lords of Trade on the Slave Trade, 1789', 118-119. African instruments were probably played by Africans themselves perhaps, although direct evidence is lacking, shipboard captives who were drafted for this purpose (including the 'African Guardians'), or African-born sailors aboard the ships (Norris, in Lambert, 'Report of the Lords of Trade on the Slave Trade, 1789', 118-119; Rediker, *Slave Ship*, 105-106, 216; Christopher, *Slave Ship Sailors*, 51-90, *passim*; Smallwood, 'African Guardians').
- [51] Arnold and Penny, in Lambert, 'Report of the Lords of Trade on the Slave Trade, 1789', 117, 118-119, 125-126; Fraser, in Lambert, 'Minutes of the Evidence on the Slave Trade, 1790', Vol. 71, 28; Hall, in Lambert, 'Minutes of the Evidence on the Slave Trade, 1790', Vol. 72,

519; Arnold, in Lambert, 'Report on the Lords of Trade on the Slave Trade, 1789', 125–126; Pinckard, *Notes*, Vol. 1, 230; Falconbridge, *Account of the Slave Trade*, 209–210; Conneau, *Slaver's Log Book*, 83; Africanus, 'To the Editor' [Riland, *Memoirs*, 52, 54, 58; see note 23]; Stein, *French Slave Trade*, 103; Brugevin, 'Observations Touchant le Soins des Negres', 97; Winsnes, *Reliable Account*, 226.

There is ample evidence for the presence of drums aboard the slave ships, but there is no evidence that any of these drums were brought on board by the enslaved themselves. An example of a 'country drum' is today housed in the British Museum where it is identified as an 'Asante-style drum'. This wooden drum originated in West Africa, but was acquired in Virginia, probably between 1730 and 1745, for Hans Sloane, founder of the British Museum. The drum was probably brought to Virginia aboard a slave ship (see <http://www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/compass>).

Romer (note 20) also mentions drums, but he is the only source to mention 'pipes' (flutes?) as one type of African instrument taken on board the ships (Winsnes, *Reliable Account*, 226, 246).

- [52] Edwards, *History, Civil and Commercial*, Vol. 2, 329. Although African instruments, particularly drums, were the most common musical instruments, European instruments were occasionally used. In the 1690s, Captain Thomas Phillips reported that captives were made to 'jump and dance . . . to our bag-pipes, harp, and fiddle' ('Journal of a Voyage', 246; my emphasis), and referring to the 1740s, Romer (note 20) wrote that aside from African instruments the slave ship "officers bring hurdy-gurdies and music boxes with them from Europe" (Winsnes, *Reliable Account*, 226, 246). The drum was also used on French ships, but the accordion may have been a popular instrument during the eighteenth century; however, the statement by Robert Harms, citing only Phillips (above), that 'many English ships used bagpipes' cannot be supported by the evidence (Munford, *Black Ordeal*, Vol. 2, 299; Harms, *Diligent*, 295, my emphasis).
- [53] Pinckard, *Notes*, Vol. 1, 230. Pinckard does not state what agency brought this instrument on board. For early references to the banjo and other African-derived instruments in early New World slave societies, see, for example, Epstein, *Sinful Tunes*, 21–58; Handler and Frisbie, "Aspects of Slave Life in Barbados"; Price and Price, *Afro-American Arts*, 252; Schopf, *Travels in the Confederation*, Vol. 2, 260–262.
- [54] Edwards, *History, Civil and Commercial*, Vol. 2, 329; Fraser, in Lambert, 'Minutes of the Evidence on the Slave Trade, 1790', Vol. 71, 28; see also testimonies of Matthews, in Lambert, 'Minutes of the Evidence on the Slave Trade, 1788 and 1789', 19; and Penny and Norris, in Lambert, 'Report of the Lords of Trade on the Slave Trade', 117, 118–119. Romer (note 20) also mentions that Europeans in their efforts to 'keep their slaves in good humour' brought 'games, whistles, and music boxes' on board the ships, but he provides no details on these games (Winsnes, *Reliable Account*, 245–246).
- [55] Cheska, *Traditional Games and Dances*, 44–46; Herskovits, 'Wari'.
- [56] Posnansky, 'West Africanist Reflections', 29; Posnansky, 'Towards an Archaeology', 198.
- [57] Mintz and Price, *Birth of African-American Culture*, 18–19; Mintz, 'Foreward', 1970:7–8.
- [58] In this context, one can also consider the incorporation of European manufactured goods within African-like or African-derived cultural practices. For example, white clay pipes as grave goods accompanying burials at Newton cemetery in Barbados, among enslaved Jamaicans, and some early eighteenth-century Virginians, or the incorporation of glass containers or bottles, metal nails and other objects of European origin into various spiritual contexts such as grave site rituals, Obeah practices, and, possibly, shrines (e.g., Handler and Lange, *Plantation Slavery in Barbados*, 199–203; Armstrong and Fleischman, 'House-Yard Burials', 46–49; Bilby and Handler, 'Obeah'; Fesler, 'From Houses to Homes', 170–172; Walsh, *Calabar to Carter's Grove*, 106–107; Samford, *Subfloor Pits*, passim; Jamieson, 'Material Culture and Social Death', 46–51; Singleton, 'African Diaspora Archaeology', 258–259).

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