Model Consumers? Clues to Ceramic Acquisition at Slave Quarter Sites in the Greater Chesapeake

1. Introduction

To what extent did enslaved households on elite plantations in the Chesapeake participate in the consumer revolution during the late fall of the eighteenth century? Although primary sources, such as manuscript and printed journals, have contributed to our growing understanding of how their experiences varied, we remain uncertain of how much of this information was truly representative of the enslaved community as a whole. This study uses the Greater Chesapeake as a case study to examine the role of ceramics in the lives of enslaved people in the area. By analyzing the frequency of certain ceramic types at various sites, we can gain insight into the economic and social practices of enslaved people in this region.

2. The Ceramic Index: Measuring Consumption Through Discard

A Ceramic Index provides a means of assessing consumption, as it is sensitive to variation in discard rates and thus is a reasonable measure of consumption.

3. Estimated Vessel Equivalents are Easy and Fun

The Estimated Vessel Equivalent method:

- Provides an estimate of vessel abundance that is not affected by rates of deposition or degree of breakdown.
- Produces data that are statistically comparable both within and between sites.
- Measures a vessel type as a proportion of a whole vessel. It is more in (quantitatively) what you have in an assemblage to assess the use of the sources used in ceramic vessel abundance (Singer et al. 1998).
- Requires no or close shards that are easily identifiable in a vessel type. For this analysis, we used near shards.

**We calculated EVEs for the vessel form categories found at all seven sites.**

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4. The Sites

*House for Families, Mount Vernon.* A restored on George Washington’s plantation, this slave quarter was constructed in 1787. It is one of the largest and most complete of the 26 recorded quarters in the area. The site’s monumental quarters were approximately 40 feet by 80 feet.

*AT14, Stratford Hall Plantation.* Ranging from 1640 to 1793, this site is the oldest and largest of the 26 recorded quarters in the area. The site’s monumental quarters were approximately 40 feet by 80 feet.

*Site B, Monticello.* A site that preserves the remains of the 1750s home of Thomas Jefferson, the site of Monticello is a large and monumental quarter. The site’s monumental quarters were approximately 40 feet by 80 feet.

5. What Does It Mean?

The EVE index contains data on the proportion of the eighteenth-century site, which reflects their use of the site over time. The data from the site’s monumental quarters present a picture of a site with a high concentration of vessels and the highest abundance values.

*Residential at House for Families, AT14,* and the four and the five visits to the site that have a higher concentration of vessels and the highest abundance values.

Despite their consumption, the site’s monumental quarters present a picture of a site with a high concentration of vessels and the highest abundance values.

6. Conclusions

During the late fall of the eighteenth century, the site’s monumental quarters were constructed and operated as communities of enslaved people. These communities were made up of large and monumental quarters. The data from the site’s monumental quarters present a picture of a site with a high concentration of vessels and the highest abundance values.

The site’s monumental quarters present a picture of a site with a high concentration of vessels and the highest abundance values.

**References:**


