

# *Spanish St. Augustine*

## *The Archaeology of a Colonial Creole Community*

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ACADEMIC PRESS

*A Subsidiary of Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers*

New York London

Paris San Diego San Francisco São Paulo Sydney Tokyo Toronto

1983

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## *The Spanish Criollo Majority in Colonial St. Augustine*

STEVEN J. SHEPHARD

### *Editor's Introduction*

Criollos—people of Spanish descent born in the New World—embodied the Hispanic-American cultural tradition throughout the New World. Criollos for the most part retained the political, religious, and social institutions of their mother country but implemented them in a radically different social and physical environment. The adaptive measures that this required resulted in what George Foster has called “cultural crystallization” (1960:232). This crystallized criollo tradition, which included Old World European elements, New World aboriginal elements, and new forms combining Old and New World elements, was a major social and adaptive manifestation in colonial St. Augustine.

Shephard's chapter is concerned with the definition of material and stylistic elements that characterized the St. Augustine criollo tradition. He places special emphasis on Spanish and local admixture of elements in the material by-products of a range of domestic activities. The chapter provides an insight into the underlying mechanisms by which such admixture, and ultimately the criollo tradition, developed. Documents can tell us the attitudes toward criollos in the eighteenth century, but only archaeology can reveal how criollos were specifically distinct and different from Spaniards.

In 1763 the major portion of St. Augustine's population was composed of *criollos*, people of self-acknowledged Hispanic descent born in the New World. These individuals lived in a society that included *peninsulares*, or those of Spanish birth; *mestizos*, who were of mixed Hispanic and Indian



son of the ceramic assemblage from the de Hita site with those of the mestizo de la Cruz and affluent *criollo* Averó households indicated that documented economic status differences were discernible in the area of ceramics. The proportions of majolica and European utilitarian wares in the ceramic assemblage increased with increasing income, whereas correspondingly, aboriginal pottery and British wares decreased. Further comparison of the Averó and de Hita data suggest that within the *criollo* population, as might be expected, access to desired goods varied. However, when the ceramics were broken down into "tableware" and "utilitarian" categories, and compared by "Hispanic" and "non-Hispanic" criteria, the differences between the two *criollo* sites were minimized. These sites were, nevertheless, very different from the mestizo site.

#### ARTIFACTS OF PERSONAL ADORNMENT

Items of personal ornamentation recovered from the de Hita household included buttons, beads, finger rings, earrings, bone combs and fans, buckles, silver thread, a shell pendant, and a commemorative medal. The button assemblage consisted of 12 and a half buttons ranging in manufacturing dates between about 1720 and 1763 (Figure 5.13, N-W) (Pecotte 1975). This collection was composed of 5 all-brass buttons (3 octagonal, 2 round), 2 brass button holding a faceted stone, 4 formed from white metal (1 plain and 1 each set with a stone, glass, and mother-of-pearl), and 1 and a half one-hole bone buttons (see Figure 5.13). This assemblage differs from that of the de la Cruz site, where only a single button (of bone) was recovered. It also differs from the Averó assemblage, where 8% of the buttons were made of bone, as compared to 23% bone at the de Hita site. Silver buttons accounted for 25% of the button group of the Averó site, whereas no silver buttons were recovered at the de Hita site.

A total of 46 beads was recovered in the de Hita excavation (Figure 5.13, A-M). Of these beads, 96% were of decorative types, and 80% were wire wound. No Cornaline D'Alleppe or seed beads were present. The

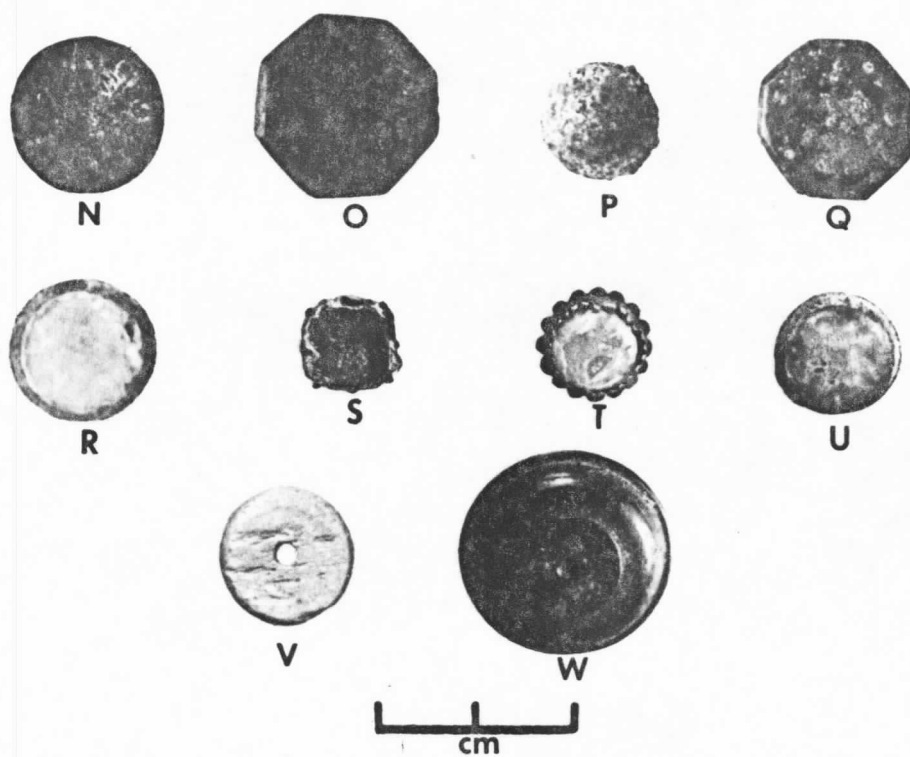
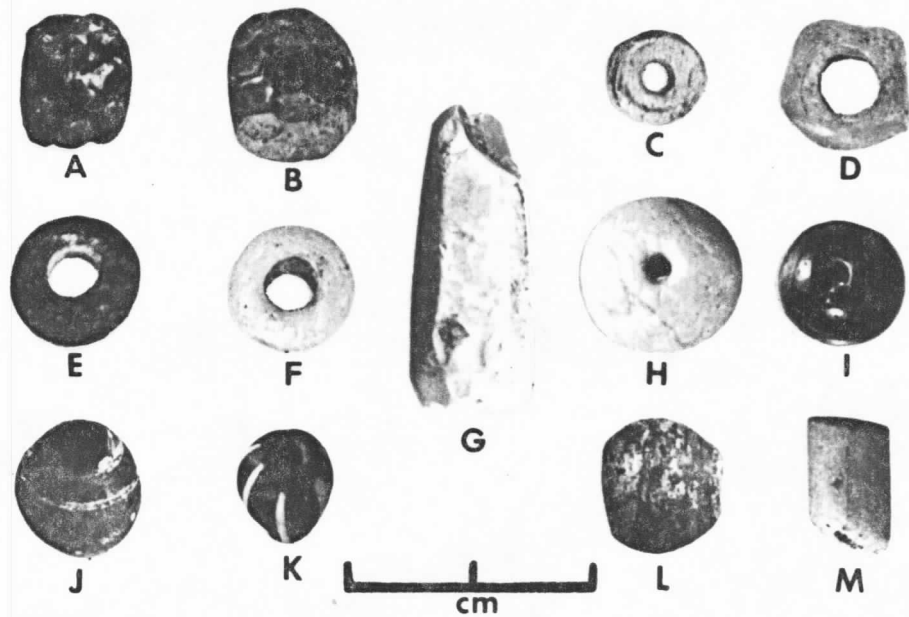
FIGURE 5.13. Beads and buttons.

##### Beads:

- A. Wire-wound, blue raspberry.
- B. Wire-wound, clear raspberry.
- C. Bone disc.
- D. Wire-wound, clear faceted.
- E. Wire-wound, orange and brown doughnut.
- F. Wire-wound, clear oval.
- G. Rose marbled stone, faceted.
- H. White opaque, oblate.
- I. Wire-wound, black glass.
- J. Wire-wound, green glass.
- K. Brown barrel, white striped.
- L. Wire-wound, dark blue barrel.
- M. Light blue tube, opaque.

##### Buttons:

- N. Round brass.
- O. Octagonal brass.
- P. Domed white metal.
- Q. Octagonal brass.
- R. White metal with mother-of-pearl.
- S. Faceted blue gem in brass setting.
- T. Crimped white metal with opaque stone.
- U. White metal with glass over foil.
- V. Drilled bone disc.
- W. Round brass.



Avero site yielded only 6 beads, including 3 wire wound, 2 elongated tear-drop shaped amber beads, and 1 jet black rosary bead (Deagan 1976:62, 71). Again a stronger European element is seen in the *criollo* sites as compared with the mestizo site, and the proposal by Deagan (1974:112) that possibly "acculturated Indians and mestizos displayed European glass beads more prominently than did Spaniards or *criollos*" does not seem to be borne out by the additional data now accumulated.

Three finger rings were found at the de Hita site. Two of the rings were nearly identical and consisted of three or four strands of silver-plated copper wire topped with swirls of finer wire (Figure 5.14, B and D). The third ring was a thin flattened copper band with overlapping ends and scoring along the band edges (Figure 5.14, E). The Avero site yielded one fine brass ring with a setting of three stones (Deagan 1976:55), and a plain brass band was recovered from the de la Cruz site. Other jewelry included a copper earring consisting of a hollow ball, a curved wire, and a dangling cone (Figure 5.14, C). Parts of two identical earrings were found at the Avero site (Deagan 1976:65, 71). Another interesting ornament recovered from the yard area was a well-made oval ground shell pendant with a neat hole drilled at the top (Figure 5.14, G). No similar ornaments have been reported on a colonial Spanish site, and this piece was probably manufactured locally.

Four identifiable buckles dating from the first half of the eighteenth century were recovered. One buckle was a small brass shoe buckle with a simple rectangular design (Figure 5.14, F); and another larger one was of iron (Figure 5.7, A). A belt or harness buckle was also recovered, shaped like a rounded rectangle with a pewter frame and iron moving parts. The other buckle was a wide belt or harness type of double buckle variety (Noël Hume 1970:86). It was flat brass with hand-wrought edges (Figure 5.7, B).

A small brass bell (Figure 5.14, H) was found in the well area and may have been sewn onto clothing as an ornament or used as a hawk's bell, as suggested by Noël Hume (1970:58). The remains of well-made bone fans and combs were also present at the de Hita site (Figure 5.15, C, F, and G). Eleven bone hair comb fragments were found of types common to the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries (Noël Hume 1970:174). Five carved-bone fan blade pieces were also found (Figure 5.15, D), possibly representing luxury items in the dress of women in a

FIGURE 5.14. Miscellaneous metal and ornaments.

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|--|-------------------------------------|
| A. Brass musket side plate.                  | F. Brass shoe buckle.               |
| B and D. Copper wire finger rings.           | G. Flat, drilled shell pendant (?). |
| C. Copper earring with tinkler cone.         | H. Front and back of a brass bell.  |
| E. Flat brass finger ring with scored edges. | I. Brass thimble.                   |

colonial garrison town. One fragment of a very similar carved-bone fan blade was found at the Averó site as well (Deagan 1976:48, 55). Ornamental items that were also part of both the Averó and de Hita assemblage were silver threads that probably are the remains of silver lace (Deagan 1976:48).

Although it is difficult to determine the precise place of manufacture for many of these articles of ornamentation, European items do predominate in the assemblage. Hispanic ornaments, as well as a few objects associated with Indians, are represented. The shell pendant and perforated commemorative medal (Figure 5.16) are associated with Indians and thus may serve as evidence of local influences.

The overall nature of this personal adornment assemblage is similar to the Averó assemblage, in addition to fans, earrings, and beads, included silver buttons and a fine brass inset ring. However, compared to the mestizo de la Cruz assemblage, which included only glass beads, shoe buckles, and a single ring (Deagan 1974:84), the de Hita collection is more ornate, European, and varied.

### *Conclusion*

Analysis of the archaeological remains of the de Hita household has indicated the hybrid nature of *criollo* material culture. The proportional mix of Hispanic and European artifacts to mestizo and Indian artifacts supports the expectation based on Foster's model that the *criollo* material cultural assemblage was intermediary on a continuum from completely European to "completely indigenous." Furthermore, the prediction that the more visible socio-technic materials, such as personal adornments, would be items of Hispanic or at least European manufacture was sustained. In contrast, material categories related to technomic activities, as in the case of food and food preparation items, showed a stronger local influence.

Comparison of the de Hita artifact assemblage to those of the lower income mestizo de la Cruz and more affluent *criollo* Averó assemblages provided insight into the variability in colonial St. Augustine's material culture. This indicated that higher economic status was reflected not only in higher proportions of European items but particularly in higher proportions of Hispanic items as compared with items associated with the aboriginal population.

Distributional analysis of lot elements revealed a pattern of systematic waste disposal, with refuse deposited in large pits on the periphery of the lot away from the house structure and its adjacent yard area (see also Chapter 10). This is in contrast to the British pattern of refuse disposal at entryways, which South (1977:47) has termed the "Brunswick Pattern."

These differing behavioral patterns may reflect differences in British and Spanish cultural traditions, determination of which awaits further testing.

Finally, it may be concluded that the *criollo* population had reached, by the eighteenth century, a state of "cultural crystallization," as defined in Foster's model (1960). This is evident in the composition of the *criollo* assemblage, which includes European goods, aboriginal items, and new forms related to the Florida environment (house construction, for example). Only continued investigation of *peninsular*, *criollo*, and mestizo households can establish the nature of variability in the archaeological assemblages associated with the heterogeneous households in this community, and the roles of economics, ethnicity, and occupation in the formation of this variability.

north structure, where none were present. Items of aboriginal origin (other than pottery) were placed in the "Activities" group (Table 6.7) and were also distributed evenly across the site (these included a projectile point, a fragment of a stone gorget, and a fragment of drilled shell).

Some tentative conclusions regarding the distribution of materials across the site (Table 6.7) may be drawn, despite the secondary nature of many of the deposits. The greatest concentration of artifact materials was in the south structure, whereas the least was in the north structure. Refuse was concentrated in discrete pits, abandoned wells, and small areas of sheet deposit adjacent to the kitchen structure and well. Aboriginal ceramics, which were the most numerous artifacts at the site, were concentrated most intensively in the secondary refuse deposits in the site center and associated with the south structure. This same aboriginal pottery did, however, constitute roughly the same proportion of the assemblage within each discrete site area. Despite the differential distribution of the wares themselves across the site, aboriginal ceramics constituted approximately the same proportion of the assemblage from each discrete site area, when each area is considered separately (Table 6.5). These aboriginal wares are related at the site to women's activities of food preparation and thus clearly support the expectation that aboriginal influence would be seen most strongly in nonsocially visible women's activities.

Other items associated with women's activities at the site, such as nonceramic food preparation wares, clothing maintenance, child care, and personal adornment were primarily concentrated in and around the presumed kitchen structure. Male-related items such as tobacco pipes, arms, military items, and architectural items were all concentrated most heavily in areas of secondary refuse deposit, throughout the site, such as trash pits and backfilled wells.

Glass beads—items of feminine adornment or clothing ornamentation—were concentrated in the kitchen area, whereas the few other personal items were found in the structures. These included a finger ring and a San Marcos rouge pot. The largest proportion of tableware ceramics was present in the south structure and the kitchen building. The proportion of Hispanic tablewares to non-Hispanic tablewares is markedly higher in the house structures than it is in the kitchen structures or refuse areas.

Tables 6.4, 6.6, and 6.7 show the distribution of materials through the analytical groups proposed by South (1977). As noted earlier in the chapter, an immediately apparent feature of this distribution is the preponderance of ceramics in the assemblage, particularly aboriginal ceramics within the Kitchen group.

*Statistical Patterning of  
the de la Cruz  
Assemblage*