

## ***Encomienda in Jamaica: Evidence for Forced Indian Labor in Jamaica 1509-1534***

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*Spanish enslavement of the Indigenous people of the Caribbean under the system of encomienda began on Hispaniola and spread with devastating and destructive consequences to the other islands of the region as they were claimed and colonized. Jamaica's Indigenous population entered into the European colonial economy somewhat later than those on the other islands of the Greater Antilles due to the island's lack of lucrative mineral resources. When the island was settled in 1509 it became the first Spanish colony to base its economy on market-oriented agriculture, and its native labor was viewed as one of the island's greatest natural resources. While the role of Indigenous women within Iberian domestic settings in the Circum-Caribbean region has been well documented, the archaeological investigations of a sugar mill, butchery, and several workshops at the site of Sevilla la Nueva has provided an opportunity to explore both the Indigenous and European responses to issues of cultural survival, and adaptation. This study will examine the archival and material evidence for the presence and role of coerced Taíno workers within the mixed labor regime of a variety of commercial enterprises and advance our understanding of the indigenous members of this early colonial settlement.*

*L'esclavage par les Espagnols des populations indigènes des Caraïbes sous le système de l'encomienda a commencé sur Hispaniola et s'est étendu avec des conséquences dévastatrices et destructrices aux autres îles de la région à mesure qu'elles étaient revendiquées et colonisées. La population indigène de la Jamaïque est entrée dans l'économie coloniale européenne un peu plus tard que celle des autres îles des Grandes Antilles, en raison de l'absence de ressources minérales lucratives sur l'île. Lorsque l'île a été peuplée en 1509, elle est devenue la première colonie espagnole à fonder son économie sur une agriculture orientée vers le marché, et sa main-d'œuvre indigène était considérée comme l'une des plus grandes ressources naturelles de l'île. Alors que le rôle des femmes indigènes dans le cadre domestique ibérique dans la région des Caraïbes a été bien documenté, les recherches archéologiques d'une sucrerie, d'une boucherie et d'un certain nombre d'ateliers sur le site de Sevilla la Nueva ont permis d'explorer les réponses indigènes et européennes aux questions de survie et d'adaptation culturelles. Cette étude examinera les archives et les évidences matérielles de la présence et du rôle des travailleurs Taïnos forcés dans le régime de travail mixte d'une variété d'entreprises commerciales et fera progresser notre compréhension des membres indigènes de cette première colonie.*

*La esclavitud española de los pueblos indígenas del Caribe bajo el sistema de encomienda comenzó en La Española y se extendió con consecuencias devastadoras y destructivas a las otras islas de la región conforme fueron siendo reclamadas y colonizadas. La población indígena de Jamaica se introdujo en la economía colonial europea con cierto retraso con respecto a otras islas de las Antillas Mayores debido a la falta de recursos minerales lucrativos en la isla. Cuando la isla fue asentada en 1509 se convirtió en la primera colonia española en basar su economía en una agricultura orientada al mercado. Si bien el papel de las mujeres indígenas en los entornos domésticos ibéricos ha sido bien documentado en la región circumcaribeña, investigaciones arqueológicas en una fábrica de azúcar, carnicería y varios talleres en el emplazamiento de Sevilla la Nueva brindan la oportunidad de explorar las respuestas tanto indígenas como europeas a problemas de adaptación y supervivencia cultural. Este estudio examina evidencia material y archivística de la presencia y función de trabajadores taínos coaccionados en un régimen de trabajo mixto en varias compañías comerciales, lo cual mejora nuestra comprensión de los miembros indígenas de este temprano asentamiento colonial.*

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## Introduction

For the Indigenous cultures of the Caribbean the Renaissance voyages of discovery and the subsequent arrival of Europeans on their shores initiated a period of rapid demographic decline and cultural transformation as a result of the introduction of European diseases, violent confrontations, enslavement, and crown sanctioned forced labor (Henry 2019:85). But to simplify these initial encounters into purely narratives of conquest and devastation is to ignore how the Indigenous inhabitants of the islands actually responded to and were transformed by their interactions with the Spanish, let alone take into account the many contributions they made to the development of new cultural and social systems during the early decades of colonial encounters (Anderson-Cordova 2017:6-7). Far from being passive victims, over the past few decades studies of Spanish-Indian contact in the Caribbean, particularly on the islands of the Greater Antilles, has shown that notwithstanding the severe impacts of disease and colonial policies, Indigenous peoples were active agents in the processes of colonialism and engaged in a wide range of friendly and antagonistic social arrangements including alliance making, trading, co-operation, intermarriage, resistance, escape, and outright rebellion (Keehnen, Hofman and Antczak 2019:1). Equally, the Iberian colonists, uprooted from their homelands, had to develop new strategies to adapt to a wholly new physical, economic, and socio-political reality that was the Americas (Deagan 2004; Anderson-Cordova 2017; Keehnen, Hofman and Antczak 2019). Fifty years of historical and archaeological research has explored both Indigenous and European responses to issues of cultural survival and continuity, resistance and power negotiations, accommodation, acculturation, transculturation, and ethnogenesis (Willis 1976; McEwan 1983; Deagan 1985; McEwan 1986; Ewen 1987; Deagan 1988; Woodward 1988; Ewen 1990; Deagan and Cruxent 1993; Deagan 1995a; Deagan 1996; Deagan and Cruxent 2002a; Deagan and Cruxent 2002b; Woodward 2006; Funari and Senatore 2015). This research has demonstrated that depending on the duration, geographic setting and context of these intercultural encounters, there will be significant variations in responses by both the European

settlers and Indigenous cultures (Deagan 2004). This study will examine the archival and material evidence for the presence of coerced Taíno labor within diverse residential settings and commercial enterprises in Sevilla la Nueva, the first Spanish capital on the island of Jamaica, to advance our understanding of their role in building a new social and material reality in this contact period settlement.

## History of the Early Spanish Jamaica

The history of Jamaica, and St. Ann's Bay in particular, is elaborately entwined with Columbus and his heirs beginning on May 5, 1494 when he sailed into a bay on the north coast of the island that he named *Santa Gloria* (later St. Ann's Bay) while on his second voyage to the Americas (Woodward 2006:74). Columbus returned to the bay in June 1503 on the final leg of his fourth voyage of exploration as he was forced to seek shelter because the two remaining ships of his squadron were too waterlogged to make it back to Hispaniola. For more than a year Columbus and his men endured, at times, uneasy relations with the local Taíno, on whom they relied on for food (Woodward 2006:74). Columbus himself was silent about this time in his journals, however, his eldest son Diego Colon who accompanied him on the voyage, kept an historic account of the year's events noting the island was thickly populated and the Taíno village of Maima was about a quarter league's distance from their beachhead (Woodward 2006:79).

In 1508 Diego Colon was appointed Governor of the Indies. In an effort to forestall any further erosion of his family's claims in the New World, in 1509 he ordered a former military officer, Juan de Esquivel, to take 60 settlers and establish a settlement in the bay of *Santa Gloria*, which was known to have both a sheltered harbor and a large, peaceful Indigenous populace (Morales Padrón 2003:51-52; Woodward 2006:79). Esquivel was charged with prospecting for gold and establishing agricultural and ranching properties with an aim at producing supplies for local markets and colonizing efforts in Central America (Wright 1921:71). As a native of Sevilla, Esquivel named his settlement, Sevilla la Nueva (Morales Padrón 2003:52). Initially Esquivel enjoyed the confidence of the Crown for

in his reports to the king, Colón indicates that Esquivel had promoted agricultural endeavors, introduced cattle, sheep and sugar cane to the island and distributed land and indigenous laborers to some of his men by means of the *encomienda* (Wright 1921:73). However, rather than submit to a harsh regime of manual labor on the Spanish farms and building projects, the Taíno soon began to rebel and many fled into the rugged mountains (Osborne 1988:20). In response, Esquivel rounded up some of the local *caciques* (chiefs) and killed them as a means of subjugating their followers, thereby ending all further resistance (Wright 1921:87; Wynter 1984a:5-6). Once reports about his inhumane treatment of the Taíno reached the authorities in Spain, the King ordered a *residencia* (routine review of an official's tenure) of Esquivel's governorship. In 1514 King Ferdinand conferred the position of Governor of Jamaica on a Basque *hidalgo*, Francisco de Garay, who was not only a successful miner, slave trader and former notary and chief constable of Santo Domingo, he was also an uncle by marriage of Diego Colon (Wynter 1983:176; Weddle 1985:97). In 1514 prior to taking up his new appointment in Jamaica, Garay signed an *asiento* or *concierto de compañía* (partnership agreement) with King Ferdinand for the settlement and economic development of island (Wright 1921:73; Woodward 2006:81). In 1519 this partnership was extended for another three years (Morales Padrón 2003:57).

In the period between Esquivel's demise and Garay's arrival in May of 1515, the Spanish authorities on Hispaniola appointed Pedro de Mazuelo as Jamaica's new treasurer. Mazuelo quickly set securing his own power base among the island's residents (Wynter 1984b:2) and was openly hostile to Garay when the latter arrived from Spain. Initial tensions notwithstanding, Garay's experience as a fair administrator quickly won over the island's Spanish residents and one of his first actions was to redistribute the Taíno workers equitably amongst the settlers and to the estates which he held in partnership with the King (Morales Padrón 2003:58). During Garay's tenure the island's role as the primary provisioning *entrepôt* for the colonization of Mexico and Central America began to grow. The settlement was profitable, the population

continued to expand; new *estancias* (farming estates) were created to produce sugar, cassava bread, and rear sheep and cattle (Chamberlain 1949:18; Wynter 1983; Morales Padrón 2003:56). Garay also established two additional settlements and in a letter from the Crown to Garay in 1518, the Governor was commended for moving the town of Sevilla la Nueva a short distance from where it was originally established (Wynter 1984b:2-3). However, archaeologists have yet to establish if he relocated the town, or merely moved some of the buildings to higher ground away from the shore. Early in his tenure Garay built the first sugar mill on the island and milled cane for all the settlers (Woodward 2006). He was in the process of building a second mill in 1523 when he left the island to take part in the conquest of Mexico, where he died shortly thereafter (Wright 1921:76; Morales Padrón 2003:59; Woodward 2006).

Pedro de Mazuelo, the island's treasurer quickly resumed the role of Governor (Wright 1921:76; Woodward 2006:84). From 1524 until 1534 the economy of Jamaica appears to have gone into sharp decline as fewer ships stopped at the island making it difficult for the remaining settlers to transport their produce to regional markets. Further, Mazuelo manipulated the affairs of Jamaica to benefit his estates on the south side of the island. During this period there were numerous complaints from Francisco Garay's son, Antonio and other colonists about the Treasurer that focused on his misappropriation of both Indian labor, food, sheep, and monies from the treasury (Wynter 1983:112-113; Wynter 1984b:5). Even the Church complained he was stealing funds sent to the island by the Crown to build the abbey at Sevilla la Nueva (Wynter 1984b:6; Osborne 1988:38). Unfortunately, the regional Spanish authorities delayed acting upon the King's request to examine the financial improprieties of Mazuelo, and by the time formal proceedings began in 1535, the Treasurer had already gained permission to move the remaining residents of town to a new settlement on the south coast near his estate (Robertson 2005:18). The year 1534 is generally accepted as the date for the abandonment of Sevilla la Nueva. The British invaded Jamaica in 1655, and the abandoned remains of settlement were gradually buried

beneath the cane fields of a large sugar estate. Today this area is part of the Seville Estate Heritage Park belonging to the Jamaica National Heritage Trust (JNHT).

Many historians have noted that during the course of the sixteenth century Spain, in many respects, squandered the labor and natural resources of the Indies and in the process overlooked the commercial opportunities that Jamaica and the other islands presented (Morales Padrón 2003:xx). From the end of second decade of that century, the Antilles were viewed primarily as a “springboard” from which to launch larger expeditions to the mineral rich areas of the continent. Thus, the fate of Sevilla la Nueva parallels that of many other early sixteenth-century Spanish colonial settlements and colonies in the Circum-Caribbean, in that their existence was tenuous and short-lived as their fate was dependent not only on their ability to sustain themselves but also develop a robust economy that would benefit the Crown (Morse 1962:323).

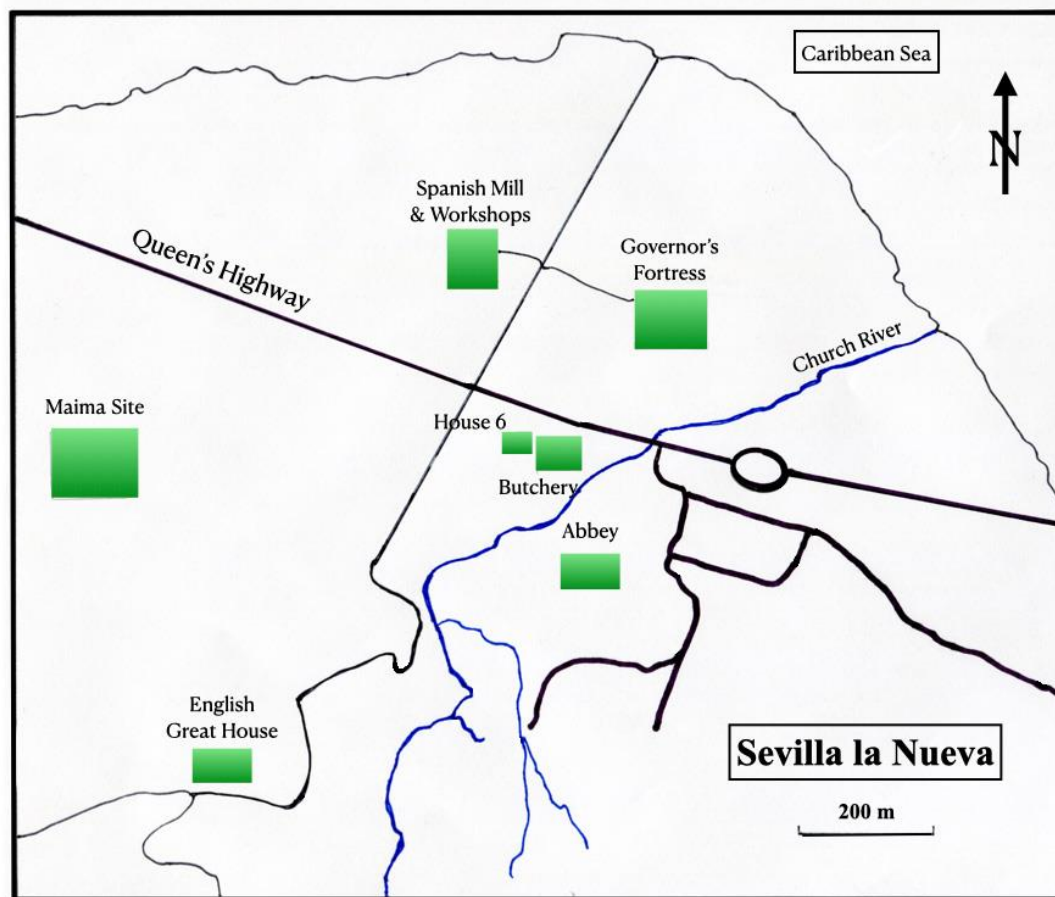
Native labor was Jamaica’s greatest asset and harnessing this force to the benefit of the Crown was the *raison d’être* of the Spanish colonizing ventures on the island. Based on their previous experiences on Hispaniola, the Spanish who came to Jamaica in 1509 were intimately familiar with the socio-political characteristics of the Taíno chiefdoms and were able to exploit this to their advantage in their efforts to subdue the island’s native population (Anderson-Cordova 2017:51). Initially, the Crown was torn between the desire to care for the souls of the Taíno by converting them to Catholicism and need for them work at either mining or producing food to sustain the colonists, so the authorities were reluctant to resort to outright enslavement of the natives to achieve their ends (Wright 1921:71). They were, however, not adverse to instituting a medieval Castilian system of forced labor known as the *encomienda*, to achieve their ends. The use of *encomienda* on Hispaniola and later elsewhere in the New World, received official sanction by Crown in the Decree of December 20, 1503 (Anderson-Cordova 2017:36). The *encomienda* was an institution through which a Spaniard (an *encomendero*) received a restricted set of rights over a specified number of Indian workers whereby they could extract tribute in the form of

goods, metals, money, or direct labor services. In exchange, the *encomenderos* were obligated to pay a tax to the Crown and they were supposed to protect the Indians and provide them a nominal payment in the form of instruction in the Catholic faith and the Spanish language (Yeager 1989:843). The property rights over the Indians prohibited the *encomenderos* from buying, selling, or renting their laborers to others. Further, they could not relocate their labor allotment from their proximate geographical area, or pass these property rights to their heirs beyond a second generation (Yeager 1989:843). Depending on the status of the *encomendero* the Spanish governors could assign an entire Taíno village to a single individual, with the labor draft being organized and mediated through their *caciques* (Deagan 2004:601).

In the case of Jamaica, the right of *repartimiento* (the distribution of Indian labor to Spanish landholders) was vested in the Governors: Esquivel, Garay and later, Mazuelo. Most of the settlers who came to Jamaica during the 25 years of Sevilla la Nueva’s existence were men who in Spain had been members of the lower classes and some are referred to as *moros* (Moors) (Wynter 1983:111-115). Once in the New World however, even with minimum grants of native labor, they assumed an elevated status in society they could never have achieved in their homeland. Interactions between the Spanish and the Taíno on these remote island frontiers took place through both formal institutions of labor, tribute, and religious conversion, but also more informal ones of intermarriage and concubinage (Deagan 1985:282). The analysis of the Indigenous ceramics, lithics and faunal remains found at Sevilla la Nueva in Jamaica does provide an understanding of how some of these processes worked to shape the colonial society of this primarily agricultural settlement during the first decades of the 16<sup>th</sup> century (Woodward 2006a).

### Excavations of Sevilla la Nueva

The exact location of the town of Sevilla la Nueva was discovered by chance in 1937, but formal excavations of the site by Charles Cotter, a local planter and archaeologist, did not commence until 1953 (Cotter 1970; Cotter n.d.) (**Figure 1**).



**Figure 1. Sevilla la Nueva, the first Spanish capital of Jamaica 1509-1534. The site is located on the JNHT's Seville Heritage Estate, west of St. Ann's Bay.**

Over the past 70 years archaeological investigations of Sevilla la Nueva have demonstrated that the coastal landscape in this area has been greatly modified over the past half millennium. This research has also demonstrated that the early sixteenth century Spanish colonial remains are both diverse and well preserved, albeit deeply buried under thick layers of alluvium (Cotter 1948; Cotter 1970; Hammond 1970; Osborne 1973; López y Sebastián 1982; Lakey, Thompson et al. 1983; López y Sebastián 1986; López y Sebastián 1986a; López y Sebastián 1987; Woodward 1988; Woodward 2006; Woodward 2006a; Burley and Woodward 2020, Cotter n.d.). Despite these extensive archaeological programs, investigators have yet to determine the full extent of the settlement or if there ever was a town in the conceptual framework of an aggregated and nucleated centre

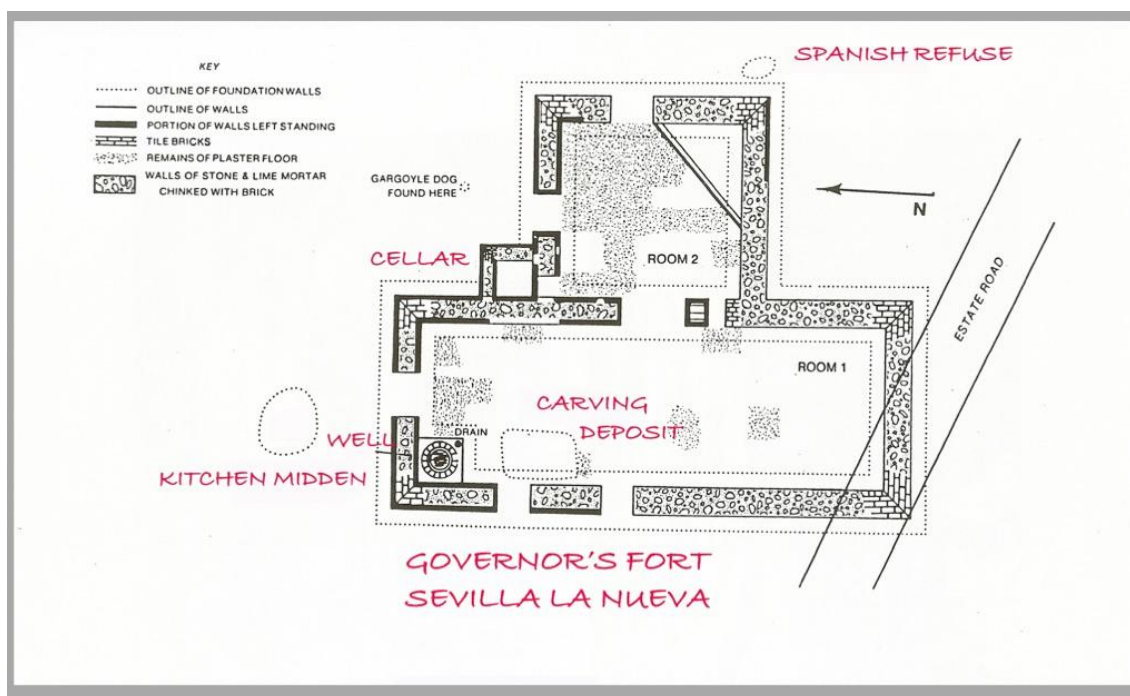
(Burley and Woodward 2020:6). To date, all the identified Spanish features, save the Abbey, are situated on the flat narrow fertile alluvial coastal plain that is bordered on the north by the shore of St. Ann's Bay, the south by the limestone escarpment of the Montpellier plateau and on the east by the Church River.

During his 18 years of investigations, Cotter primarily focused on the excavation of the Governor's fortress with its adjacent "gun emplacement" and Garay's sugar mill located 300 m west of the fortress. He also surveyed the fields either side of the Queens Highway and documented concentrations ( $n=25$ ) of Spanish bricks, each potentially demarcating additional residential or workshop features. He did not test these deposits during his lifetime, but they were investigated as part of the 2004, 2008-2009 Simon Fraser University (SFU) program. Cotter

assumed he was dealing with single event deposits, so he employed only basic horizontal controls during his excavations and kept field notes (Cotter n.d.). As part of a larger project searching for the two caravels that Columbus abandoned in St. Ann's Bay in 1503 that was initiated by the Institute of Nautical Archaeology in 1981, Robyn Woodward conducted an analysis of the ceramic and faunal material collected by Cotter from Sevilla la Nueva for her Master's thesis at Texas A & M University (Woodward 1988). The Spanish Archaeological Mission (SAM) under the direction of Sr. López y Sebastián worked on the site for eight years (1981-1987) and excavated some 327 - 2 m<sup>2</sup> or 4 m<sup>2</sup> units, but other than three short preliminary reports that identified the site, they did not publish their research or file copies of their artifact inventories or field notes with the JNHT. Analysis of the more than 300 boxes of artifacts collected during this project has not taken place.

Woodward returned to the site of Sevilla la Nueva in 2001 to investigate the sugar mill complex for her PhD dissertation at Simon Fraser University (SFU) (Woodward 2006). During the 2002 excavation her team encountered a

sculptor's workshop and brickworks adjacent to the mill. Between 2004 and 2016 a joint SFU/JNHT team completed the excavations of the workshops and undertook a systematical search for the Spanish residential area. Under the direction of David Burley (SFU), the fields south of the highway were surveyed and auger tested. As part of this project the Spanish butchery, and an adjacent Spanish dwelling were discovered and excavated (**Figure 1**). Additional field testing in this area pointed to two additional features south of the butchery. Woodward also excavated the Spanish abbey located by Osborne and partially investigated by Sr. López y Sebastián (Osborne 1973) while Burly directed the excavations of the nearby Taíno site of Maima (Burley et al. 2017, Henry 2017, Henry and Woodward 2019). The research design and sampling techniques for all the post-2001 excavation units at Sevilla la Nueva included strict horizontal controls, arbitrary vertical controls, and fine screening of all the deposits that has produced a more robust data base from which it has been possible to draw more nuanced interpretations.



**Figure 2. Governor's Fortress showing the location of the two main rooms, well, cellar and the adjacent middens.**

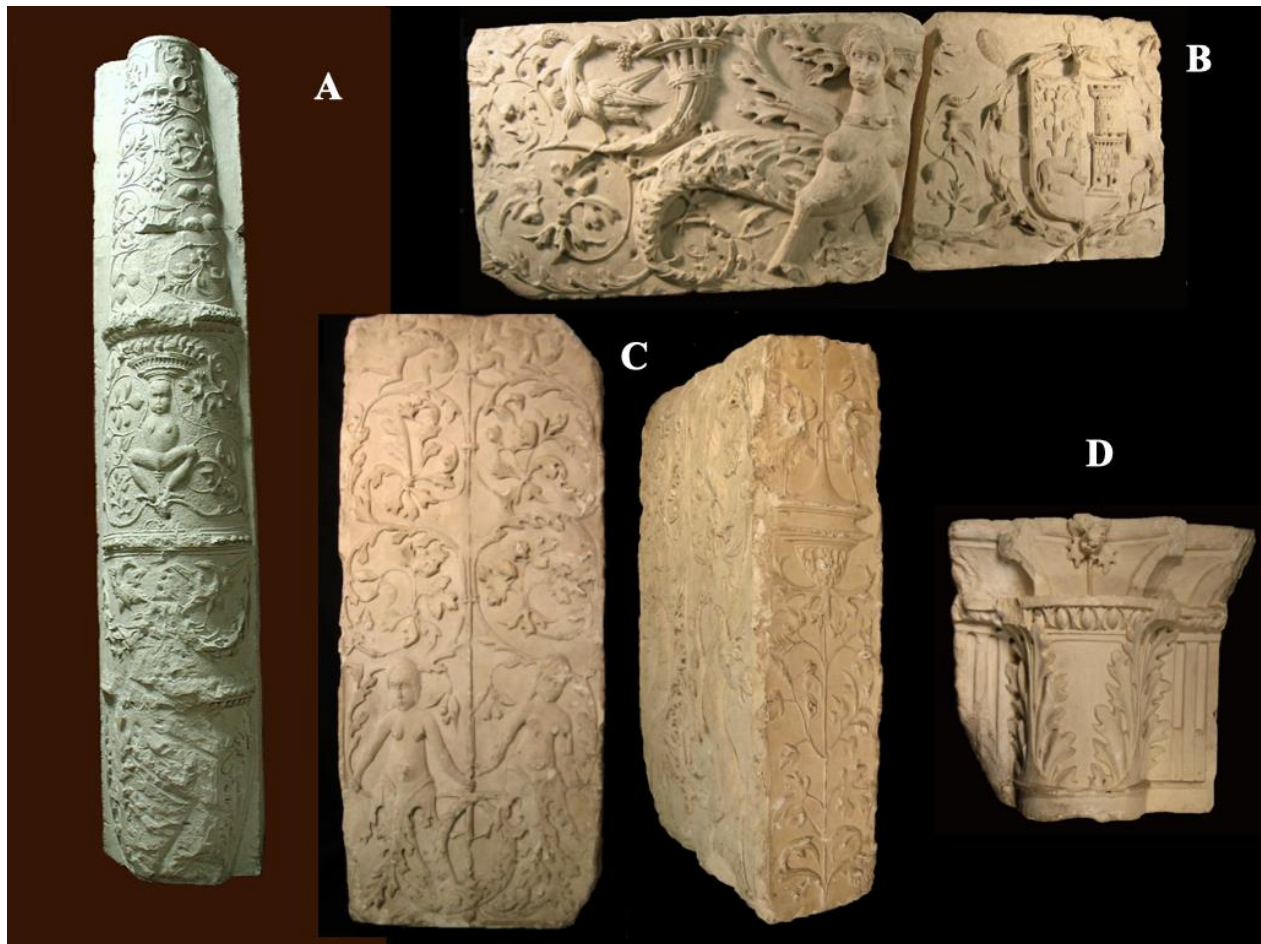


### Governor's Fortress/Castle

Unlike most of early Spanish colonies in the Antilles, the economy of Jamaica was anchored in agriculture versus mining of precious metals or pearls, specifically the rearing of sheep, cattle, and pigs for the production of salted meats and leather and farming sugar, maize, cassava for bread and cotton (Chamberlain 1949:18, Wynter 1983:233, Woodward 2006). Historic documents indicated that quantities of locally produced foodstuffs and cotton shirts were shipped to

newly established centers in Central America (Wynter 1983:181).

During Garay's tenure, the colony clearly enjoyed some degree of prosperity as is evidenced by the number of ornate limestone entablatures, door jambs, and lintels bearing coats-of-arms carved in the style of the Spanish *Plateresque* that were recovered from the well of the Governor's fortress in 1937 (Cotter 1979:105) (**Figure 2; Figure 3**).



**Figure 3. Plateresque architectural decoration recovered in 1937 from the Castle/fortress. A – Pilaster; B lintel with coat of arms; C two sides on one of the door jambs; D – engaged capital of a pilaster.**

A detailed description of the fortress and material cultural analysis of this feature has been published previously (Woodward 1988) and is summarized in **Table 1**. The array of maiolica and other Spanish earthenware vessels is representative of the elite status of the residents and includes and large array (n=360) of concave

bottomed plates, small angular bowls (*escudillas*), large casseroles, bowls, cups, pitchers, open-mouthed jars, and flat-bottomed drug jar (*albarellos*). Most of the Spanish tableware were found near the well in Room 1 of the fortress or in a refuse pit outside the west entrance of this structure (**Figure 2**).

The Taíno ceramics (n=1797) recovered at the fortress account for 64% of the ceramic vessels and like the assemblage from the nearby Taíno site of Maima is representative of the later Meillacan Ostionoid (White Marl Phase) of the island. Most of the sherds were non-descript body sherds of thin-walled bowls or carinated boat-shaped vessels used for food preparation and storage. The Taíno vessel form assemblage also

included, the neck and spout of a water bottle and an intact round single-spout inhaling bowl typically used for ritual imbibing of *cohobas* (hallucinogenic powders). Inhaling bowls have most frequently been found in domestic middens on Taíno sites (Kaye 1999:61; Woodward 2006a) although in the context of the fortress, it could also have been used as a serving vessel for the Spanish residents.

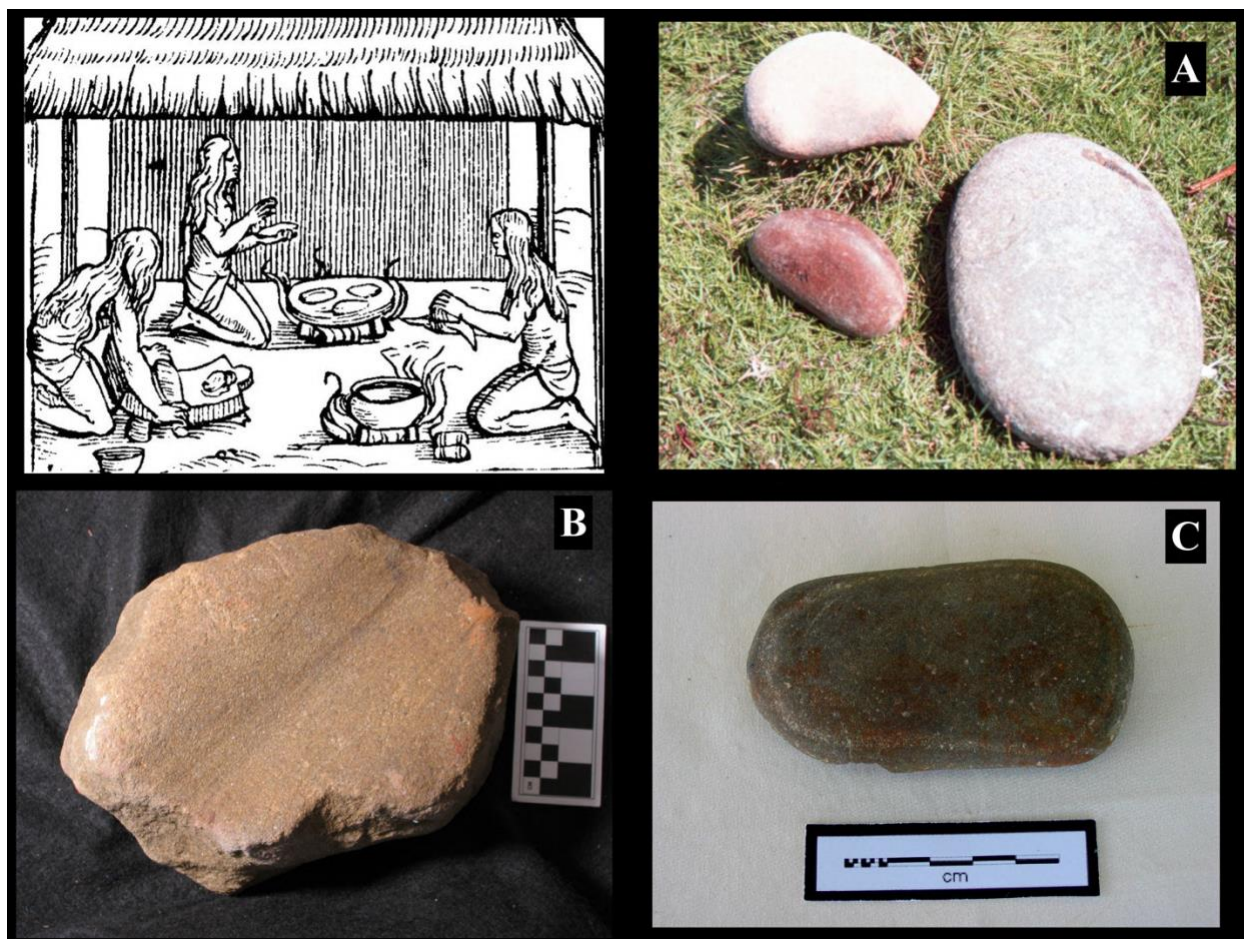
**Table 1. Vessel Form Ceramics from the Governor's Fortress.**

Category	Number	% of Spanish	% of Total
Columbia Plain	179	19	6.4
Isabella Polychrome	3	.3	.1
Caparra Blue	6	.6	.2
La Vega Blue on White	3	.3	.1
<i>Melado</i> ware	55	5.7	2.0
Red-paste lead glazed ware	13	1.5	.5
Green Basin Ware	8	.8	.3
Early Style Olive Jar	591	61.7	21.4
Feldspar Inlaid Ware	1	.1	.03
Unknown Spanish earthenware	100	10	3.6
<b>Total Spanish</b>	<b>959</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>34.63</b>
Taíno ware	1781		63.7
Taíno Griddle (buréns)	16		.6
St. Ann's Bay Ware	39		1.4
<b>Total Vessel Form</b>	<b>2795</b>		<b>100</b>

What is even more indicative of the presence of Taíno women working in the domestic sphere of the fortress is the presence of cassava griddle (n=16). Cassava bread, *casabe*, made from the root of the bitter manioc (yucca), was the mainstay of the Taíno diet. While the Spanish preferred to eat their traditional grain-based bread, they discovered that wheat did not grow well in the tropics, so were forced to eat the local equivalent. As *casabe* does not go stale or mold, the Spanish quickly realized it was ideally suited for both shipboard rations and to sustain the *conquistadores*. In 1535 Fernando Oviedo y Valdez provided a detailed description of how *casabe* was produced by female natives

using a shell scrapper to remove the rough skin, and then grating the root on a rough stone with stone pestles (manos) (Bel 2020). A worn metate, three smooth granite cobble hammerstones (**Figure 4**) were found along with most of the Taíno ceramics in Room 2 of the fortress. Within the fortress there was a clear separation of domestic activities represented by the preparation of non-European foods and use of native ceramics from the public spaces where Spaniards were able to outwardly replicate many aspects of their Iberian culture including their architecture and the use of traditional European building materials of brick and stone and dining on imported glazed ceramics (McEwan 1995:224).





**Figure 4.** Spanish engraving of the Taíno production of casabe. A: handstone from the fortress, B: metate from fortress, C: pounding stone from the Sculptor's workshop.

While locally produced Taíno ceramics were widely used as cooking wares at a number of early sixteenth century Spanish sites in the Caribbean (Willis 1976; McEwan 1995), it is evident from the presence of a distinct type of colonoware, referred to as St Ann's Bay ware (n=39) that was recovered at the Governor's fortress that traditional native wares did not meet the needs for all European dining and serving requirements. This demonstrates a degree of cultural adaptation at the domestic level that has only been found at a few Spanish Contact sites, but never in this form (Woodward 1988; Woodward 2006a). As Jamaica was the most windward of the Antilles, it was on the periphery of the main shipping routes and invariably had less access to imported

household goods and foodstuffs. As a result, it appears that as part of the *encomienda* native potters were forced to abandon elements of their traditional crafts and adopt not only European methods of processing clay but also new vessel styles to make up for the lack of specific categories of imported utilitarian earthenware. Gender roles in Taíno society were generally non-exclusive, but contemporary chroniclers assumed that most of the pottery production in Taíno society was done by women (Deagan 2004:601). While formed using the same hand-coiled technique as the White Marl-type of Taíno pottery, most of the St. Ann's Bay ware has a more granular yellowish-brown paste resulting from the addition of sand temper. It was observed that the walls of the small bowls and the goblet are slightly

thicker than local wares, enabling them to be more impervious to heat and therefore better suited for Spanish domestic use (García-Arévalo 1990; Woodward 2006:186). In addition to the jug and small goblet (**Figure**

**5**) the assemblage included the remains of six bases of small bowls that had either a triangular wedge added to their bases as a crude ring-foot or showed evidence of where this wedge original was placed.



**Figure 5. St. Ann's Bay ware jug and goblet from the Fortress.**

The faunal assemblage (n=1533) from the Governor's fortress and its environs reveals an overwhelming predominance of domestic European mammals (99%) dominated by pork, sheep, and cow. Only 1% was local deep-water fish and there were no examples of endemic birds or native *hutia*. This faunal assemblage was highly fragmented and not charred, suggesting that most of the meat was boiled - typical of Iberian food preparation techniques versus the indigenous method of roasting food over an open fire (Woodward 1988:126). The partial adoption of some European culinary techniques by the native women working in the fortress provides a new dimension of our understanding of the types of accommodations made by the Taino women living and working living in Spanish households.

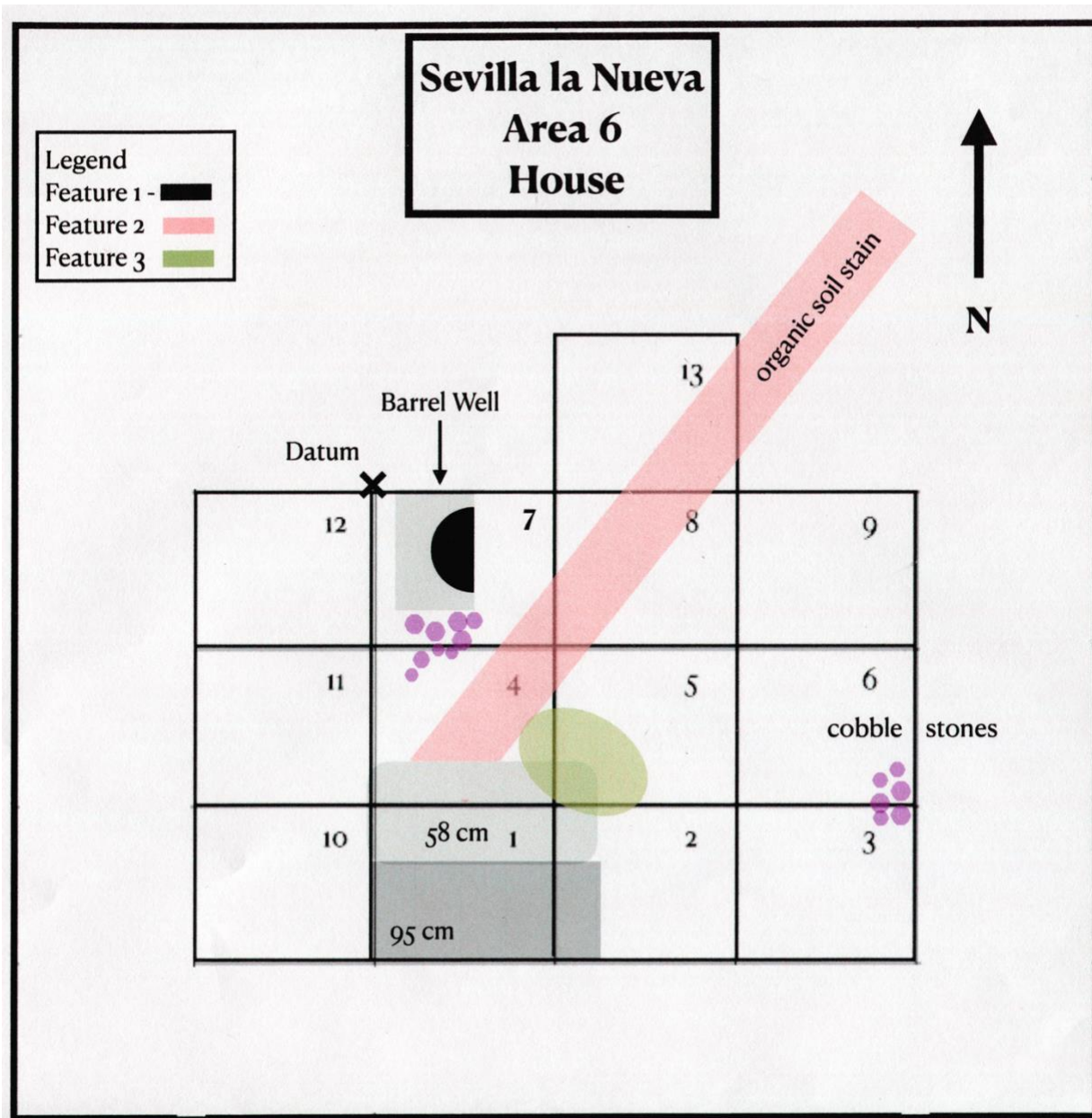
#### **Area 6 - House**

In 2008 two m<sup>2</sup> test units were dug at 20 m intervals both south and west of the southwest corner of house/butchery feature that was discovered in the south field in 2004 (**Figure 1**). The diversity and volume of Spanish ceramics, roof tiles brick and faunal material found in the first of these units 20 m west of the butchery, suggested the location of a Spanish residential feature. The excavation of this feature was expanded to 13m<sup>2</sup> in 2009 and revealed a kitchen midden, long, dark soil stain across the site that is either a foundation trench or evidence of a wooden sill or sleeper of a house foundation (**Figure 6**). On the north-west side of the trench another roughly circular soil stain was exposed, and this has the profile and appearance of a barrel



well, like those encountered in the sixteenth century residential deposits in St. Augustine's, Florida (Kathleen Deagan, personal

communication 2009). Though not complete, the excavations to date of this feature, have revealed some interesting findings.



**Figure 6. Area 6 House: Green circle: midden deposit; pink line: house sill.**

Most of the Spanish and Taíno vessel form ceramics, roof tiles, lithics and faunal materials were found in the units on the east side of the sill foundation. Remains from Spanish domestic spaces have proven to be sensitive indicators of ethnicity, socioeconomic status and gender relations (McEwan 1995:197). The

modest architectural remains, presence of a common barrel well versus a vaulted brick well, and the significant differences in the variety and number of imported Spanish tableware (**Table 2**) indicates this dwelling belonged to a person of lower social status. Taíno ceramics, however, are present in roughly equivalent amounts suggesting

Taíno women were also present within the domestic sphere of this residence. A small number of cert flakes were also recovered during the 2009 excavation. The Taíno had a tradition of using unworked or expedient tool technology, and these small blades were used for cutting vegetable fibers to making baskets, mats, hammocks but also for scrapping cassava and

processing fish all of which are everyday domestic activities for native women (Rouse 1992:53). There are also a larger number of marine shells than was expected, some of which were found with the faunal material and charcoal in Unit 1 and may have been food refuse, others may have been used as scrapers in the preparation of *casabe* (Table 3).

**Table 2. Ceramic Tableware from Spanish Features at Sevilla La Nueva.**

Ceramic Category	Governor's Fort	Sugar mill	Workshops 2002	Workshops 2004	Butchery	Area 6 House	Areas 5,7,8
Maiolicas	191	11	32	136	104	64	44
<i>Melado</i>	55	19	11	39	38	140	6
Glazed Red Paste Earthenware	13	3	36	113			
Green Basin Ware	8		1	1	23	4	2
<i>Bizcocho</i>					32	6	
Lead glazed Earthenware		5		10	82	3	38
Feldspar Inlaid ware	1				2		
Olive Jar	591	19	6	117	262	6	99
Misc. unglazed Spanish earthenware	100	20	15	74	47	17	10
<i>Tinja Mudejar</i>			1				
<b>Total Spanish</b>	<b>959</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>490</b>	<b>590</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>199</b>
Taino Ceramics	1781	122	153	386	880	351	86
Cassava Griddle	16	23		14	23	1	
<b>Total Taino</b>	<b>1797</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>153</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>903</b>	<b>352</b>	<b>86</b>
St. Ann's Bay Ware	39	4			14		2
<b>Total - Tableware</b>	<b>2,795</b>	<b>227</b>	<b>237</b>	<b>890</b>	<b>1,507</b>	<b>592</b>	<b>287</b>

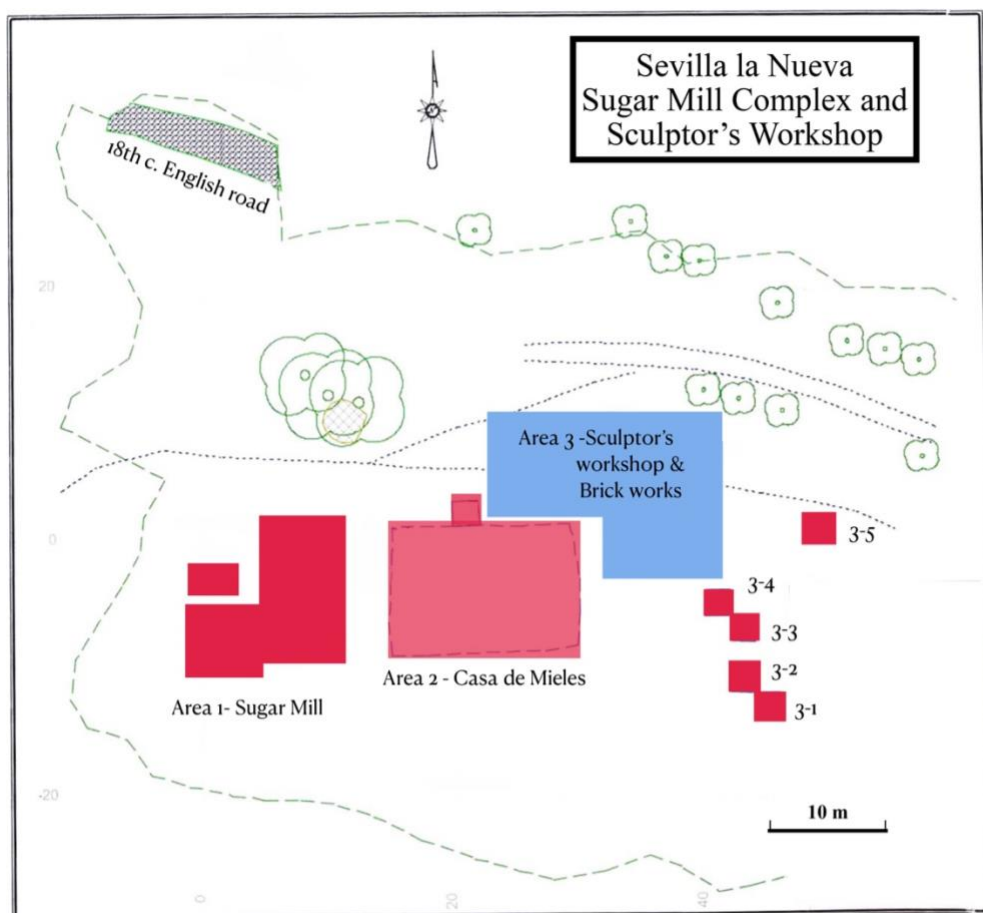
**Table 3. Non-Ceramic Artifacts from Sevilla La Nueva.**

Artifact type	Sugar Mill	Workshops 2002	Workshops 2004	Mid-Field Units	Butchery	Area 6 House	Areas 5,7, 8
Glass Beads	10	4	12 rosary beads	1			
Glass			5 melted Venetian		11	3	
Shell Beads		1					
Marine Shell				132		44	
Shell Scraper							
coral			87				
Faunal	20		23	136	17,883	447	
Shark teeth	2						
			29				
Spanish Nails	26	4	24		46	11	11
Iron strap					9	9	2
Horseshoe			1		1		
Fastener		1	1				
Shoe buckle		1			1		
Unknown fragments	35		7	38	6		2
Lead shot	2		1	1			
Lead sheet	1	1	5				
Copper sheeting				2 copper pins	4		
Stone chopping block		1					
Whetstone			3				
Taino Lithics	547	14	16	61	22	31	2
Hammer stones			2	1			
Core tools			3				

### The Butchery, Sugar Mill and Workshops

The butchery, sugar mill and adjacent workshop formed another arena for a specific set of social relations where coerced Indian labor worked alongside European craftsmen and sugar

technicians (**Figure 7**). Archival records state that Indian laborers were assigned to work on the *estancias* to assist with livestock and the harvesting of crops (Wright 1921; Wynter 1983; Morales Padrón 2003).



**Figure 7. The plan of the Sugar Mill, brick works and Sculptor's Workshop and mid-field test units 3- to 3-4.**

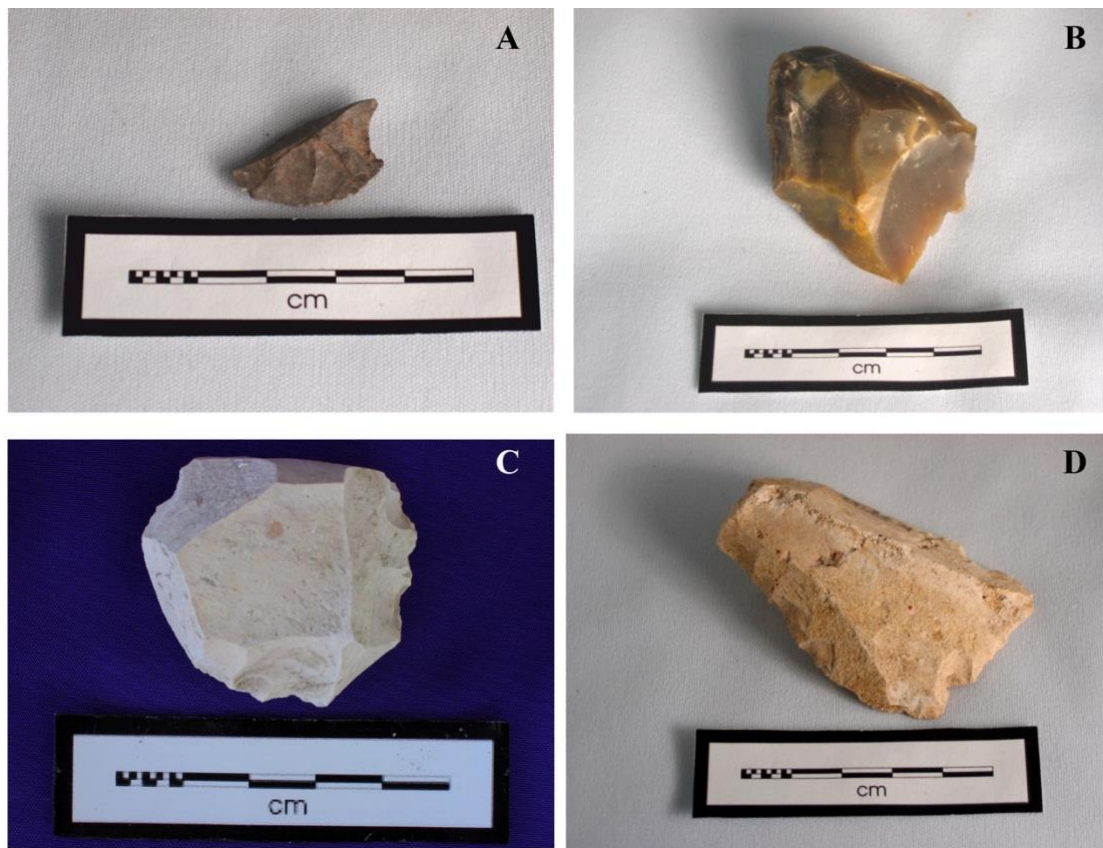
Additionally, in a letter dated 21 March 1524, the King, Charles V, notes that during the 14 years that the Spanish had been on the island, a number of natives had been taught the rudiments of masonry and brick-making and were employed in the construction of houses, the fort and the governor's castle (Osborne 1988:36). Later that year Pedro de Mártir d' Anglería, the third Abbot of the island, requested that these skilled Indians be employed to build his church and the King granted this request (Osborne 1988:36). The presence of Taíno men in the archaeological record at Sevilla la Nueva is less

visible than that of the women, as they were mostly assigned to do manual labor in locals on the periphery of the settlement. Those who were employed in the butchery, quarry, mill, or sculptor's workshop, would have been trained in the use of the appropriate European tools for their tasks. That is not to say the Taíno are invisible in the archaeological record, as the presence of a large amount of small, flaked chert blades ( $n=577$ ), several chert cores ( $n=3$ ) and two hammer-stones supports the archival record of Indian laborers being assigned to labor in these work areas (**Table 3; Figure 8**). Small flakes of locally



sourced chert were used for scaling and processing fish, cutting vegetal fibers used to make rope or palm fronds for roofing for their houses. The lack of Spanish roof tile at the workshop and mill site, and the large amount of

ash and charcoal was found around the limestone architectural details and unfinished carvings suggest these structures, like traditional Taíno dwellings, were thatched but burned after being abandoned.



**Figure 8. Taíno lithic flakes (A, B) chert core (C) and chert core tool with edge for cutting/scraping.**

There was evidence of food being consumed around the mill and workshops in the industrial quarter, but there was little evidence of cooking activities taking place in the immediate vicinity (griddle sherds here were recovered from SAM backfill). It should be noted however, that sherds of cassava griddles ( $n=23$ ) were found at the butchery. Unlike the Governor's fortress only small bowls (*escudillas*) a single plate a flat-bottomed jug, are the types of Spanish tableware forms found in the industrial quarter (Woodward 1988; Woodward 2006:242, 244). In 16<sup>th</sup> century Spain, *escudillas* are typically associated with the working man's table because they could be used for both drinking and eating, which is clear the case at the mill (Lister and Lister 1974:20). The distribution of the Taíno and Spanish ceramics plus faunal remains in the sculptor's workshop

suggest two distinct areas where food was consumed, both of which are on the periphery of the workshop floor where most of the sculpture was found. Unit 24 in the northwest corner of the workshop contained a large amount of Taíno pottery, marine shell, and faunal remains (fish and pig), but no Spanish tableware. Most of the maiolica and *melado escudillas*, rosary beads, two large whetstones, plus some Taíno ceramics, faunal remains and marine shell but few Taíno lithics were recovered from Unit 34 on the northeastern boundary of the workshop. This distribution suggests that Taíno workers congregated and ate separately in northwest corner of the workshop away from the Spanish craftsmen on the eastern perimeter.

Cotter also recovered 11 glass trade beads recovered during his excavation of the

sugar mill, and another four small multi-colored chevron beads were found in the workshops (**Figure 9**). Glass trade beads are found at some, but not all Contact period Spanish sites in the Caribbean and were obviously being used as a medium of reward or exchange with the Indian

workers at the mill and workshop. The Taíno liked to wear necklaces with ornaments of shell, stone, coral, or ceramic beads. The coral beads found at the workshop are typical of the Taíno and provide further evidence of their presence in these spaces.



**Figure 9.** Glass trade Beads found at the Mill and workshops on the left; coral beads from the workshop on the right.

Early chroniclers noted that the Taíno women were accomplished weavers of cotton. Cotton was a wild plant at the time of Contact that was processed into fibers used in the production of nets, hammocks, belts and loin cloths (Wilson 1997:135-136). Stone whorls have been found at a number of pre-Contact sites across the island associated with both the Ostionan and Meillacan periods. A wooden spindle has also been found at Image Cave, Manchester (Lesley-Gail Atkinson

Swaby, personal communication 2022). After the Spanish introduction of sheep to Jamaica, documents record that woolen cloaks and cotton shirts were exported from the island (Wynter 1983:233). Production of textiles was clearly another activity in which Taíno women were drawn into the *encomienda*. The recovery of a single spindle whorl made from a re-purposed fragment of Columbia Plain maiolica (**Figure 10**) from a mid-field test Unit 3-3 (**Figure 7**), offers some evidence of this industry at this site.



Spindle whorl



**Figure 10.** Columbia Pain ware spindle whorl from Unit 3-3.

## Conclusion

Despite the Crown's concern about the welfare of the Indians and requests that they should not be overworked, the early economy of the Indies was based on the forced exploitation of their labor (Morales Padrón 2003:59; Anderson-Cordova 2017:52). Even though Sevilla la Nueva only existed for 25 years, the effects of European disease, military subjugation of their leadership, and the social abuses that occurred through the institution of the *encomienda*, were no less destructive to this island's Taíno population than they were elsewhere in the Caribbean. It is widely assumed that as most of the adult Taíno of working age spent considerable time away from their villages in service of the Spanish their economic, social, religious, and artistic organization collapsed in parallel with their numbers (Deagan 2004:602). Our research, however, has provided evidence of both Taíno men and women participated in every facet and level of Sevilla la Nueva's society and economy throughout the town's existence.

The Iberian population of Sevilla la Nueva, like many of the nascent Iberian colonies in the Caribbean was largely made up of male settlers which lead to incorporation of local Taíno women, either as wives, concubines, or servants in domestic activities in Spanish households of every social stratum as is evidenced in the Governor's fortress and the modest house in Area 6. With most the domestic activities, from food procurement, preparation, and ceramic production for these specific activities, being carried out by native women, Spanish households quickly incorporated Taíno foodways into their daily lives and diet through the agency of these

women (Deagan 2004:622, Anderson-Cordova 2017:70). Beyond the domestic sphere, there is also archaeological evidence that supports the written accounts of textile production at this settlement. The production of cotton cloth and St. Ann's Bay ware to meet the requirements of the Spanish local and regional markets is evidence of contact-induced change in the lives of native women moving in the other direction from the Spanish to the Taíno. Likewise archaeological examination of the Spanish butchery, sugar mill and workshops at Sevilla la Nueva supports the archival record of coerced indigenous workers being employed in those activities. Beyond the menial work, the historic records detail that the Taíno men being forced to work in these industries acquired specific European production skills including masonry. In these industrial settings the transmission of contact-induced change is more unidirectional from the Spaniard to Taíno, however, in the personal sphere of food procurement and eating, they appear to have maintained their traditional through their use of chert blades and native ceramics.

The diverse array of Taíno cultural materials found in association with Spanish features at Sevilla la Nueva demonstrates Spanish-Taíno engagement was continuous, robust, and varied. This site clearly holds great potential to correlate archaeological data from both the Spanish and adjacent Taíno site, with the extraordinarily rich reserve of archival documentation that exists to gain a more robust understanding of the cultural transformations that occurred because of their forced interaction under the *encomienda*.

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