A Full Complement: Employing Diverse Sources in Historical Anthropology[1]

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> We fhall therefore begin with thofe things which are for meer Neceffity, fuch is Clothing, Meat and Drink, &c. which how meanly forever they be reckoned to the bearing of other things, yet neverthelefs it is clear that thefe Tools and Inftruments (no lefs then thofe) do proceed from the immediat Gift of God.... Therefore there is but little reafon for their contempt, but rather the contrary: feeing they do exprefs Trads fo much behoveful for the ufe and fupport of Mans Life, and their exquefite skil, and knowledg, iffued out of the Plentiful Fountain of Gods abundant Spirit.
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> —*Academy of Armory, Book III, Chapter 6*
> *Randle Holme 1688(3):283*

Figure 1: Trades and diversions. (Holme 1688 [3]:246).

A number of fields of study (historical ethnography, ethnohistory, historical archaeology, material culture studies, history, and social history, for example) share the same interests in the cultures and societies of the past—asking questions about common, everyday life. What was it like? What did the people do? How did they think? How did they live and work and play? And how can we find out about it? While all contribute to what I like to think of as Historical Anthropology, each approaches the study from a different perspective. And none have yet managed to consistently strike a balance in use of the sources available—a balance between writing history and writing culture for the times and places where written documents are available. The sources are complimentary; the data overlap, but are not the same. Where should, or can, we begin? The documents themselves are biased in favor of the literate, which typically means they were written by white males who were fairly well-off, but are also quite revealing. As an archaeologist interested in seventeenth-century colonization, I prefer to begin with the sources that make up the material culture of the period—artifacts and

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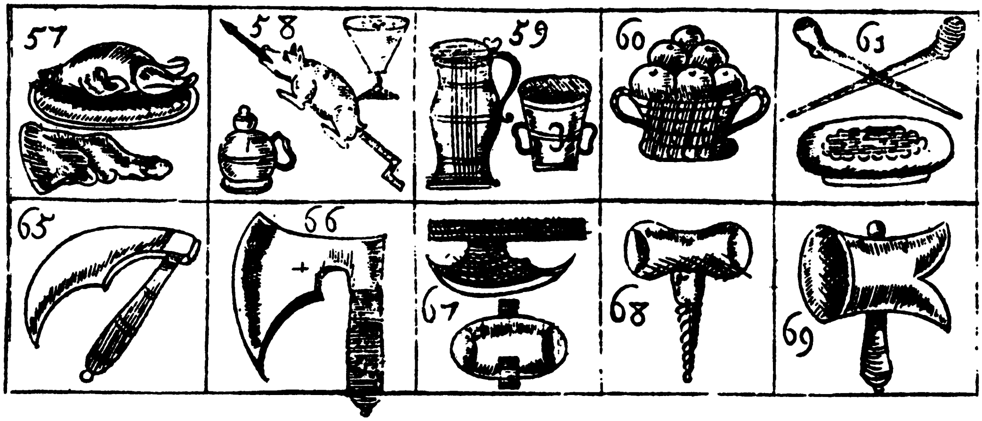

Figure 2: Some things which are for "meer Neceffity" (Holme 1688(3):284).

their contexts—which are no less biased, but *are* biased in a different way and were contributed to by a larger segment of the population. Starting from the material culture does not, however, necessarily mean starting with excavated artifacts to the exclusion of historical documents. Beyond the fact that documents are themselves artifacts, documents often include and discuss material culture—wills, inventories, account books, newspaper advertisements, and shipping records, for example, all include direct references to and discussions of material life and, thus, provide an avenue into artifacts and their contexts parallel to the material record exposed by "dirt" archaeology.

It is obvious that common objects lie in the shadow of other seemingly more important aspects of historical life when one looks at historically oriented studies today. Historians, even social historians, all too often use material culture and the results of archaeological studies merely as illustrations to add color to their narratives based on written evidence.[2] Historians who do incorporate archaeological evidence in their work generally use archaeological interpretations and make no attempt to examine or interpret the actual data.[3] Chesapeake historians Carr and Walsh are among the front-runners in their use of material culture to study the past in their use of household inventories to look at standards of living in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Chesapeake (Carr and Walsh 1980; Walsh 1988a) Their work is truly groundbreaking, in its use of large collections of data to get at changing patterns in the lives of average people.[4] However, the application of modern cultural standards in the analysis of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century standards of living can be criticized from an anthropological perspective—Carr and Walsh do not take into account the very different cultural attitudes toward cleanliness and individuality in the past. Similarly, although a growing number of anthropologists are re-introducing the aspect of history into their ethnographic accounts (c.f., Ohnuki-Tierney 1989; Sahlins 1985; Biersack 1991; Hunt 1989; Rosaldo 1980), few give extensive or in-depth treatment to material culture. As with history, this situation is starting to change as more socio-cultural anthropologists approach their work from both materialist and diachronic perspectives and collaborate with archaeologists (c.f., Appadurai 1986; Rogers and Wilson 1993; Kirch and Sahlins 1992; Clifford 1988).[5] Material culture studies, which specifically study objects, are often approached from a decorative arts

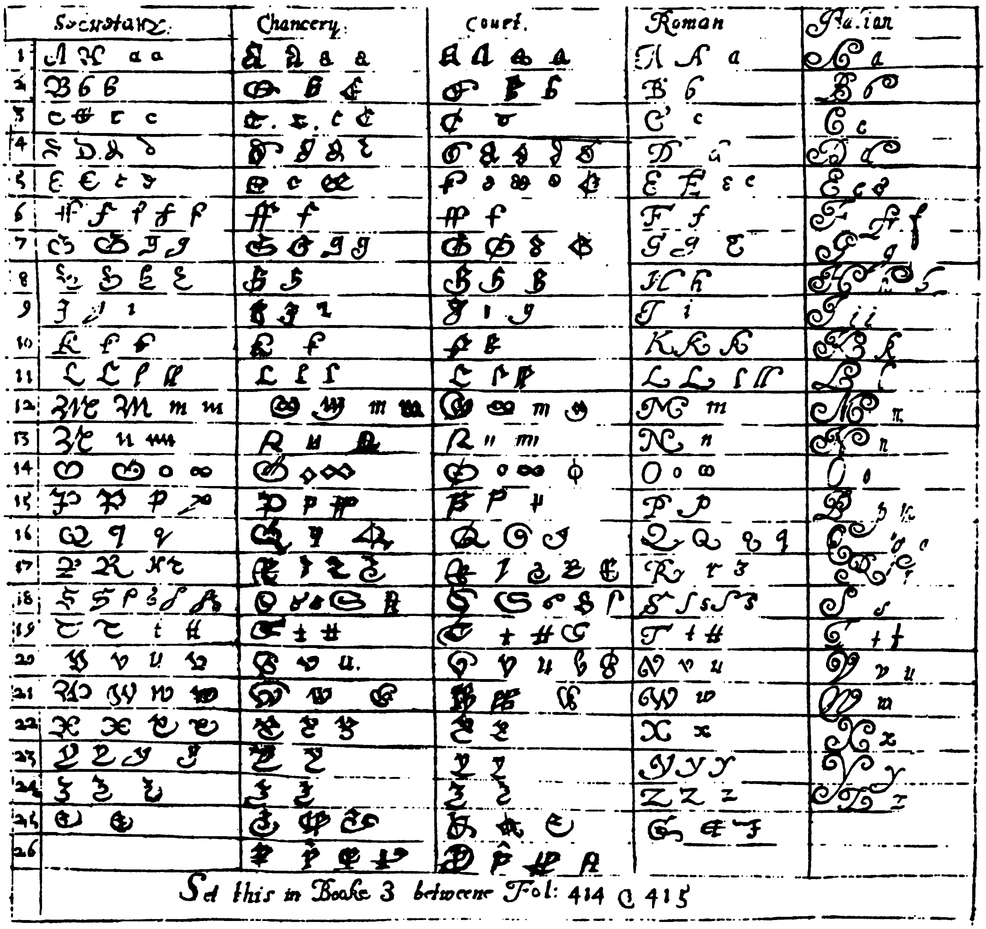

Figure 3: Examples of seventeenth-century scripts (Holme 1688(3): folio between pages 414 and 415).

perspective; the focus is not on the common and everyday, but on the fancy, artistic, elite, or quaint. While not completely immune from the denigration of "thofe things which are for meer Neceffity,"[6] historical archaeologists begin with them in their attempts to describe, explain, and interpret life and culture in the past. Historical archaeologists are in the enviable position of having a wide variety of sources relevant to their object of study and are in an excellent position for conducting anthropological research for the periods of European expansion across the world.

Historical archaeologists are well versed in using documents associated with specific sites for extrapolating and interpreting an archaeological site. We talk about how we can, should, and do use all available sources to their fullest potential to interpret life and culture in the past. Unfortunately, much of the rhetoric is just that—talk about what should or could be done with the available sources. Until recently, relatively few historical archaeological accounts actually used the full complement of sources available—written histories, historical documents, pictorial sources, and archaeological assemblages—to go beyond interpreting specific sites or assemblages to interpreting and describing daily life and material culture on a local, regional, or inter-regional level—which is one of the next possible steps in making historical archaeology a relevant sub-discipline of anthropology and of greater import to historians. The trend toward interpreting culture and writing accounts of life and culture in the past can be seen in the growing number of ethnographically oriented studies, which include Deetz (1978, 1988, and 1993), Kirch & Sahlins (1992), Bragdon (1988), Rogers and Wilson (1993) Edwards and Brown (1993), and Yentsch (1994), as well as many of the papers in this volume.

So, why is it taking so long for historical archaeologist to truly incorporate the full complement of available sources in their work? At least part of the answer comes from the sources themselves. As Nancy Farris notes, "If anthropologists were to tap this storehouse, they would have to master the sources and techniques of historical research " (1986:ix). Documents are not easy to use—they are obscure and are biased in both content and survival; they are difficult to read, to locate, and to interpret. In short, the sophisticated use of documents requires the same kind of expertise that interpretation of archaeological assemblages and material culture demand. And most historical archaeologists have not been trained to locate and interpret relevant documents. Some even go so far as to claim that documents are unlikely to shed light on the issues we consider important or, that documents are not a proper object of study for archaeologists.[7] Resistance to using documents among historical archaeologists is not unlike the failure of historians to fully use material culture and archaeological materials in their writings. Documents are, have been, and will continue to be useful for those who try, but it will never be easy. Documents are a biased, consciously composed record that needs to be carefully treated for intentional bias in a way that is not typical of the archaeological material record. In addition, access can be problematic. There is no guarantee that the relevant documents survive or are located in an accessible collection. Documents are often not completely catalogued or are not catalogued in a way useful for the kinds of questions archaeologists or anthropologists want to ask of them; many archives, for example, are set up for genealogical work.[8]

Once located, the documents still need to be read, interpreted, and analyzed. A variety of problems in reading and low-level interpretation include: working from hard to read microfilms, untranscribed documents where the handwriting and scripts require knowledge of paleography, and heavily edited transcriptions that are not always reliable nineteenth-century published transcriptions are particularly suspect, as Anne Yentsch points out when she compares original and published court records in New England—in one example, details were left out of a transcript because they were sexual in nature (1980:6–9). A reader of the published version might have a very confused idea indeed as to what the case was actually about. Also, published collections of official documents often include only a selection of the available material of interest to the transcriber, author, or publisher with little or no notation as to the quantity or type of documents left out (c.f., Lefroy 1981).

Pictures, like written documents, are also complex compositions that present a whole different set of difficulties in access and interpretation.[9] They can fill out our ideas of what items originally looked like, how they were used, who used them, when they were used, and generally remind us that people were involved in the creation of the architectural features, pot sherds, floral and faunal debris, and other household garbage that comprise the archaeological record. But pictures are also biased accounts—as much, or more so, than written documents and, as with written documents, the biases are themselves a source of information. Drawings, paintings, etchings, woodcuts, and even photographs are consciously composed. Certainly, some elements were included in pictorial compositions as necessary, natural, or normal components of a picture which can tell us something about the painters' and intended audiences' cultural attitudes and perspectives. However, many elements of pictorial representation were carefully and thoughtfully included and placed; pictures are filled with intentional meaning (Berger 1972; Sontag 1977). Margot Winer's analysis and comparison of the nineteenth-century colonial representations and the physical realities in the Eastern Cape of South Africa, for example, extracts a great deal of social information in their reflection and shaping of how the world is viewed (Winer this volume).

Making cultural interpretations from documents and pictures also requires a great deal of effort and skill beyond a simple "reading" of individual pieces. As Beaudry, Cook, and Mrozowski point out:

> Making direct one-to-one match-ups between producers of documents and excavated artifacts is of limited utility under any circumstances; documents do, in point of fact, encode connections among people at many levels: face-to-face relations of kin, family, household, neighborhood, and community; impersonal relations of power between factory owners and workers, and so forth (1991:160).

The critical interpretation and analysis of documents, especially collections of documents, provide excellent access to social and cultural inquiries. Primary records—such as probate inventories, account books, and kinship or genealogical materials—are often most useful to us as collections; large groups of documents can tell us much about the communities they were made in. For example, analysis of the appraisers who took inventories, the decedents whose estates were inventoried and their places of residence, excavated from the collection of probate inventories from Plymouth Colony, reveal a complex network of social and economic relationships that are both surprising and revealing—there was little or no communication between two adjacent townships,[10] while in other cases appraisers traveled extraordinary distances to perform their official duties.[11] Travelers' accounts, period histories, diaries, letters, newspapers, and other accounts are useful individually, but often need to be examined as a part of larger collections to get at and disentangle the conscious and unconscious agendas of the authors. It takes a concerted, time consuming effort to become familiar with new sets of data, their strengths and weaknesses, and to apply them to archaeological and anthropological goals. Reading secondary sources, such as written histories, and working with historians are worthwhile supplements to documentary analysis, but cannot be relied upon to produce the same results that close scrutiny and familiarity with the primary sources can generate.

Inventories and Archaeology—Complementary Sources

Probate documents, especially household inventories,[12] are among the documents most frequently used by historical archaeologists; they are similar to the archaeological record insofar as they are lists of artifacts associated with a household or site. The inventories are little slices of time; each inventory is like an archaeological site and groups of inventories provide insight into how an entire communities, towns, and colonies organized and perceived their material surroundings. Inventories can be "excavated," analyzed, and interpreted to come up with a description of typical or normal households in the community. Groups of inventories can take us a long way in our efforts to depict colonial life. And, when combined with archaeological information data from other sources, it is possible to come up with a reasonably accurate and full ethnographic account of daily life in the times and places concerned.

The sources are complementary; the data overlap, but are not the same (figure 4). Where archaeological materials are generally recovered at the end of their use-lives, inventories present items in contemporary contexts. Items that show up in both are often not fully described or describable in one or the other; for instance, while often mentioned in inventories, the forms and decorative techniques of ceramic and glass wares are not described and must be recovered archaeologically. Items that show up in one record do not always show up in the other record—tobacco pipes and faunal remains are found in the archaeological record, but almost never in the documents, while the reverse is true for such items as furniture, pewter, other precious metals, and clothing. Inventories seldom record perishable foodstuffs; archaeology provides us with plant and animal remains, butchery and cooking techniques, and food preferences. Yet, the inventories can provide us with lists of the rest of the kitchen ware and subsistence tools which are only sporadically found in the ground. Joanne Bowen's work at Colonial Willamsburg provides another example of archaeology informing historical visions of the past. Local tradition, historians, and historical documents all point to the predominance and cultural importance of pork in the colonial Chesapeake. Archaeological investigations have recently shown beef to have been the preferred meat in colonial Virginia (Bowen 1994).

Another area where the two types of data can come together and enhance each other is in the spatial organization, uses, and construction of domestic environments. Inventories can give us room names and suggest a general layout, but archaeology provides us with a better picture of how domestic structures were built, floor plans, and external activity areas. An excellent example of just such a use of the diverse sources is provided by Richard Candee in his study of early colonial architecture in Maine and New Hampshire where he combines architectural, documentary, and archaeological data to describe and define the house types in these colonies (1989). One issue that is, or should be, contested has to do with house size in the Chesapeake. Historians often dismiss the minority room-by-room inventories as indicating large houses and consider the more common non-room-by-room inventories representative of a "typical" one or, at best, two room cabin. This seems to be accepted common wisdom among the economic historians using inventories (Lois Carr, personal communication; Dell Upton, personal communication). Yet, this assumption is not fully supported in the archaeological record. A survey of published seventeenth-century site reports suggests that the "typical" house was larger after the very earliest period of settlement. The core house plan contained

	Household Inventories	*Archaeological Record*
When	Synchronic, each inventory depicts a household at a moment in time, but which was assembled over time. Groups of inventories are diachronic, representing a community over time.	Diachronic; sites are typically created over time.
Who	Biased toward older, well-to-do males. Few women's and servants' estates were inventoried, but inventories represent *household* goods used by everyone and "owned" by the family. Personal property of non-decedent household members *not* represented.	More democratic. Created over time by all occupants of a site. Servants, slaves, women, and the poorer classes are represented.
Value	Condition, quality, and value of items.	Lost and broken artifacts at the end of their use lives. Highly valued materials and items are not commonly found.
Architecture	Rooms named, implying a room order, but actual layout is seldom clear.	First story house and room size, layout, & construction. Upper stories usually not recoverable.
Foodways	List livestock, large quantities of grain, and non-perishable foodstuffs. Seldom include provisions for immediate consumption. Food preparation and consumption utensils and vessels listed, but actual forms may be unclear.	Floral and faunal remains, butchery and cooking techniques, species & cut preferences, & utensils/vessels represented.
Subsistence	Farm tools, livestock, craft tools, hunting and fishing equipment, servants and slaves (labor) listed.	Tools, faunal and floral remains and subsistence equipment represented.
Clothing	Cloth, clothing, and accessories of decedent listed in great detail. Clothing not owned by decedent (women, servants, children) *not* listed.	Pins, buttons, and other accessories (metal, bone, stone, & etc.) are often all that survive, but potentially represent everyone who helped create the site.
Recreation	Recreational items are seldom, if ever, listed—although they may be listed in merchants' store inventories as part of the salable stock.	Tobacco pipes, wine bottles, dice, dominos, tops and other toys are recovered.

Figure 4: Comparison of the kinds of data in the archaeological and written records.

Crafts	wood working tools, spinning & weaving, craft equipment
Display	cupboards, tables, carpets, clocks, pictures
Fire	fireplace equipment
Food Procurement & Production	firearms, fishing equipment, farming equipment
Food Processing	grain processing equipment, brewing, food processing equipment
Food Preparation	cooking equipment
Food Consumption	wooden ware, trenchers, food consumption equipment, linens, spoons & knives, tables, drinking glasses
Lighting	candlesticks & lighting equipment
Maintenance	pressing irons, locks
Personal	clothing, armor, swords, daggers, pikes, clothing accessories, books, chamber pots, looking glasses, desks
Seating	chairs, forms, stools, settles, cushions
Sleeping	beds & accessories, bedding, bedsteads, cradles
Storage, Containers	boxes, chests cupboards, trunks
Storage, Food	foodstuffs

Figure 5: Activity categories associated with artifacts listed in probate inventories.

two rooms, a hall and a parlor, and was frequently enlarged by additions. That, of course, only includes the plan of the ground floor; most seventeenth-century structures contained lofts, if they did not have formal upstairs chambers (Neiman 1993 and 1986; King and Miller 1987; King 1988; Pogue 1988; Gibb & King 1991; Kelso 1992; Carson, et. al. 1981).

Julia King's comparison of inventory and archaeological data at the Van Sweringen site (1990) exemplifies of the complementary nature of the two sources. Here, an inventory provided a synchronic picture of room use, while archaeological deposits suggested a more fluid pattern of spatial use over time. Based on spatial patterning of midden refuse in association with the structures and rooms on the site, King notes that

> the probate inventory of 1700 suggests significant functional differences in use between the kitchen and the Council Chamber [hall], the archaeological record suggests that similar activities were conducted in each space (1990:132).

The inventories, by themselves, can be treated as archaeological sites—they can be "excavated" and emic associations, suggesting activity categories and activity areas can be recovered. Problematic as they are,[13] collections of inventories can form diachronic, analyzable data sets; consistencies can be seen, correlations made, and norms observed in the names of rooms and objects, in the adjectives used to describe them, and in the locations of the objects themselves. Contexts are given in terms of spatial location and other objects. A comparative study of household inventories from three seventeenth-century colonies —Plymouth, Maryland, and Bermuda—provides an example from my own work.[14] The artifacts and activity categories in each inventory and the rooms they were located in were used to create a matrix from which it is possible to see spatial patterning in much the same way that archaeologists map artifact distributions on sites.

The inventories are filled with artifacts which are sometimes "located" in specified rooms and always in relation to other artifacts. Even in inventories not taken on a room-by-room basis, patterns can be seen. Specific artifacts routinely occur together; they are often recorded together as a single entry, or are listed on adjacent lines. This patterning allows for the statistical confirmation and refining of activity categories into something akin to emic categories. To compensate for wealth differences, since the rich usually owned more of the same household objects (often of higher quality) that everyone had, only the *presence* of each artifact category was recorded for each room.

There is order in the households; artifacts occur in groups that imply associated activities. Each object can be identified with a category of activities for which it is used (see figure 5) and the activities then related to the rooms they occurred in.[15] The settings these activities occur in, which ones co-occur and which are physically separated suggest mental or cultural categories. Each inventory entry was recorded in a database noting the item, its full description, value and the room that item occurred in.[16] For the purposes of this study, the item, its related activity category, and the room were examined. Analysis of what artifacts

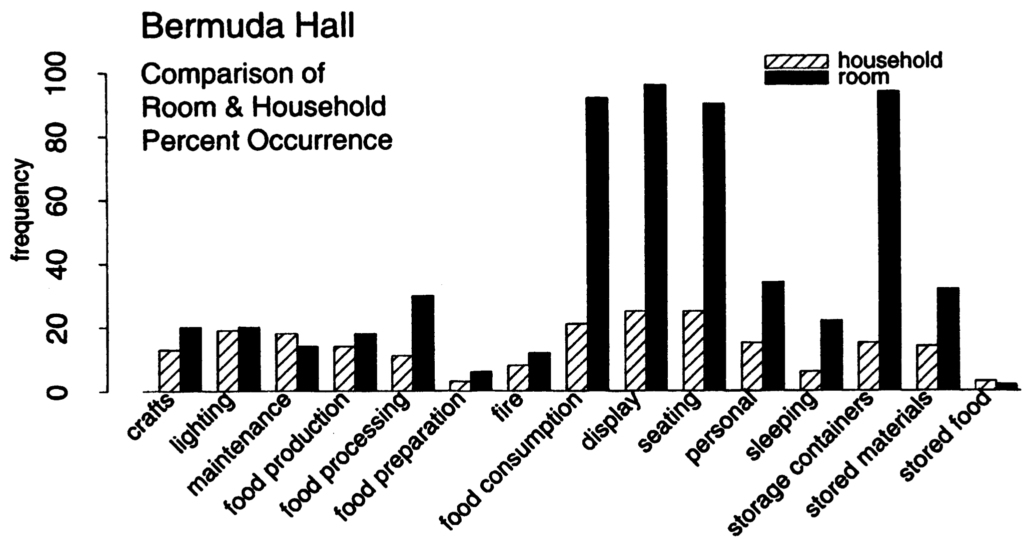

Figure 6: Room and household percent occurrence for Bermuda Hall.

Plymouth	n	Maryland	n	Bermuda	n
buttery	2	buttery	5	buttery	23
dairy	5	dairy	11	dairy	13
kitchen	30	kitchen	22	kitchen	44
hall	21	hall	22	hall	50
parlor	55	parlor	7	parlor	20
chamber	38	chamber	87	chamber	153
loft	7	loft	19	loft	5
		house	14	house	28
		closet	13	closet	3
		porch	4	porch	13
cellar		cellar	10	cellar	20
study	5			study	2
		shop	3	shop	5
		store	10	outlet	17
		nursery	2	shed	1
		passage	3	entry	6
				cuddy	3
				cabin	3

Figure 7: Room categories derived from Plymouth, Maryland and Bermuda probate inventories.

show up where provides a picture of the activity categories associated with the rooms in the typical household. When the activities noted in each room are expressed as a percentage of the total number of times each activity was observed, we can compare the uses and functions of the rooms within and between the three colonies. Two expressions of this percent occurrence are possible. The first treats the room as the data universe—the number of times each activity category was present in a room was divided by the number of times that room category occurred. For instance, 90% of all Bermuda halls contained items associated with the seating category. This provides a measure of the variety and intensity of the activities going on in that room. The second percentage treats the entire household as the data universe and provides a measure of the frequency with which an activity occurred in a room in contrast to its frequency in the entire household—the number of times the activity was observed in a room category divided by the number of times that activity was observed in all rooms. Thus while seating occurs in almost all halls, only about 25% of all seating in the household occurs in the hall (Bermuda). The room percentage occurrence provides a better look at the relative occurrence of a given activity internal to a single room type, while the household percent occurrence takes the relative frequency of a particular room type into account.

Not surprisingly, the activities (as represented by artifacts) that took place in the households of the three colonies are very similar, but how these activities are dispersed throughout the households differs. There is a continuum from Plymouth to Maryland to Bermuda. The Plymouth households were generally composed of the fewest number and type

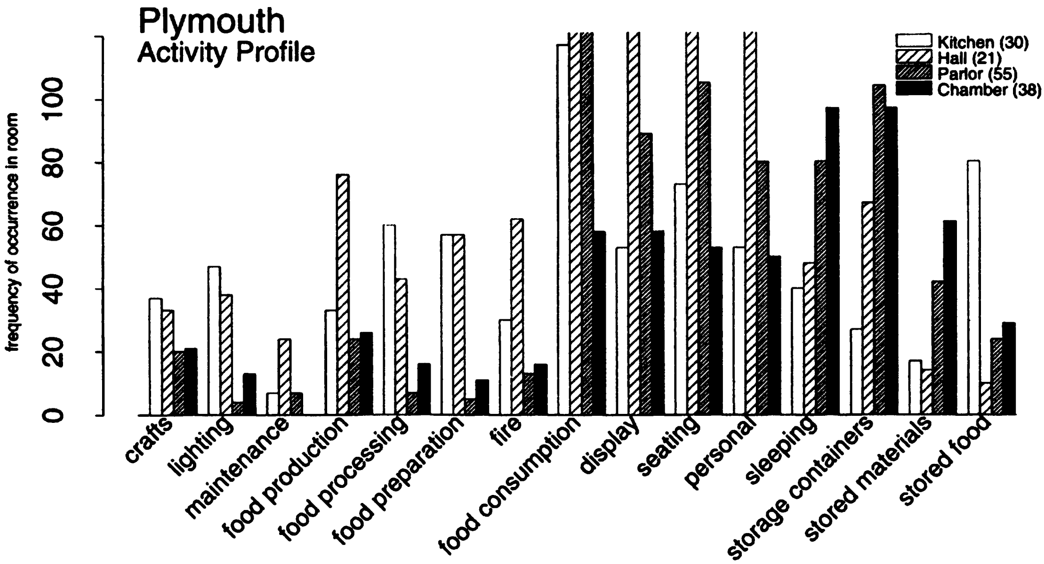

Figure 8: Room percent occurrence comparison for Plymouth Kitchen, Hall, Parlor, and Chamber.

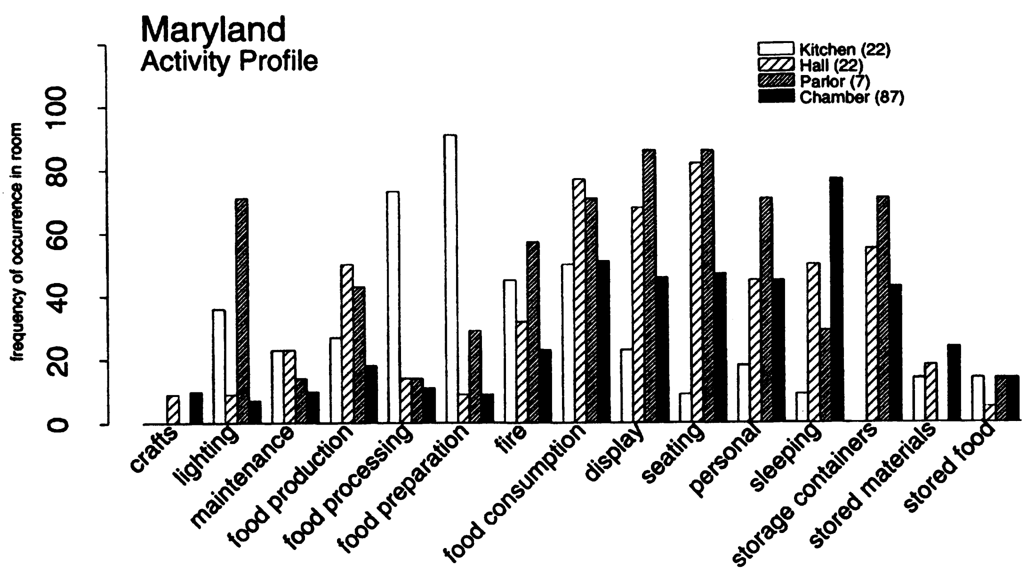

Figure 9: Room percent occurrence comparison for Maryland Kitchen, Hall, Parlor, and Chamber.

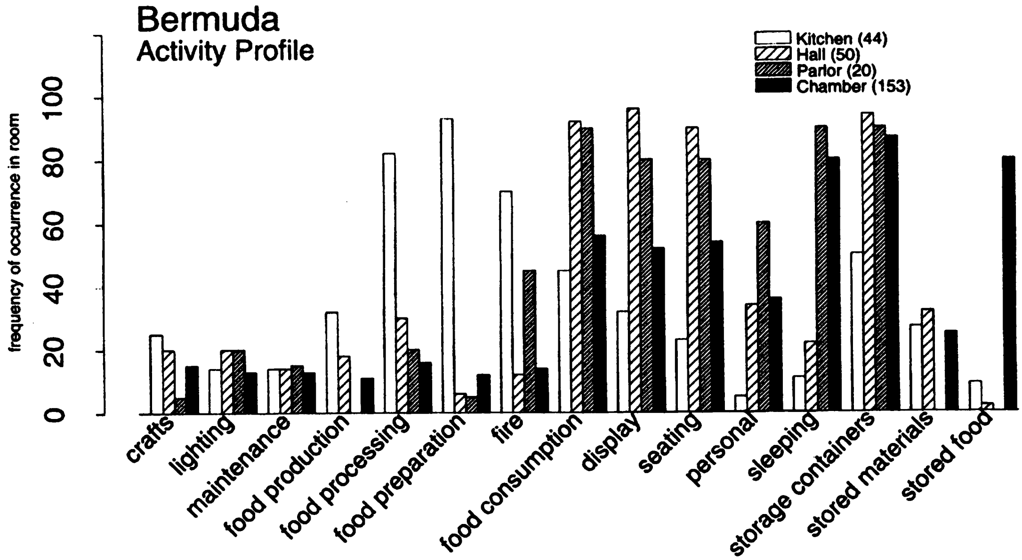

Figure 10: Room percent occurrence comparison for Bermuda Kitchen, Hall, Parlor, and Chamber.

of rooms while Bermuda households had the most. Consequently, rooms in Plymouth households were less specialized than the rooms of the more divided Bermudan households.

A basic division in the organized use of space becomes apparent almost immediately on examining the activity profiles of the various rooms. This can be conceptualized as the difference between the bedroom and the kitchen (a division familiar to many Americans today). Food processing and food preparation related artifacts are (generally) found in very different rooms than those in which people sleep. The more rooms in the house, the more pronounced this dichotomy becomes. Obviously, in a one room dwelling, all activities take place in the single room (hall). However, if this dichotomy is indeed "real" (i.e., it reflects an emic perception of what kinds of things and activities "go together"), artifacts in the single room house will be segregated in different parts of the room. This supposition is supported both statistically[17] and anecdotally by one inventory which referred to a "buttery in the hall."

Most of the room-by-room inventories from Plymouth suggest that the minimal dwelling consisted of a hall and a parlor. The activity profiles of the hall and parlor overlap to a considerable degree, but sleeping and personal categories are found more frequently in the parlor than the hall. Likewise, more of the subsistence related artifacts are found in the hall. Other rooms in the house build on this division. The kitchen is similar to the hall, but even more devoted to food processing and preparation; dairies and butteries are even more specialized. Similar, but not identical patterns are observable in the inventories from Maryland and Bermuda. The same basic division is observable in all cases, but it is expressed in different ways in each colony. In Plymouth, the hall and kitchen overlap in their activity profiles to a large degree, while in both Bermuda and Maryland, they do not; the halls here are not used as frequently for food processing and preparation, while the kitchen is; the hall "looses" these functions. Interestingly, the Bermuda hall most closely resembles the parlor; with the food related activities relegated to the kitchen, its main function seem to revolve around social gatherings or visiting (sitting, eating, and display).

The three communities can be used as foils for each other. Each reflects the others in some aspects while remaining distinct in others; the differences actually emphasize the similarities. The three colonies show varying degrees of similarity that combine to suggest a basic, underlying "Englishness." An analysis of activity categories derived from the inventories indicates distinct but overlapping spheres in the households—with the kitchen and the chamber at the extremes. Groups of activities are separated spatially in the household suggesting a differentiated system of settings and activities. The pattern becomes evident in the three-way comparison.

Obviously, what has been presented here is the barest beginning and outline of the kind of study proposed. A full analysis of the inventories is ongoing and archaeological data has yet to be fully incorporated. Significant numbers of domestic sites in New England and the Chesapeake have been excavated and reported on—collecting, collating, and analyzing the materials is a major, ongoing task that is fully as large as transcribing the inventories and entering them into a data base has been.

An archaeological reading of documentary collections can take us a long way in the study of colonial life, but not all the way. Combining archaeological and documentary analyses can only improve the picture. Together they can lead us to a better understanding of how people organized and perceived their lives—how they saw the relationships between objects, activities, and space. These, in turn, will lead us to the meanings behind them. The discipline of historical archaeology is in a position to make significant contributions to the study of historical anthropology and historical studies in general. Historical archaeologists have the understanding and training to work with the material culture and archaeological record and have demonstrated the ability and willingness to attempt this step in the development of historical studies—other disciplines and sub-disciplines need us to lead the way and show them new ways of using material culture and the archaeological record to contribute to social and cultural studies in historic periods. At the very least, we need to put our data into formats that others will consider significant and relevant.

Notes

1 An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Society for Historical Archaeology Conference on Historical and Underwater Archaeology, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. January 5–9, 1994. I would like to thank to Mary Beaudry, Martin Hall, Margot Winer and Beth Prine for their suggestions and insights in preparing this paper.

2 Notable exceptions may be found in Braudel 1981; Larkin 1988; Fischer 1989; and Isaac 1982.

3 This is not to deny the vibrancy of the work of cultural and social historians—a growing number of historians are incorporating anthropological perspectives into their accounts of

the past (e.g., M. King 1991; Fischer 1989; Carr, Morgan and Ruso 1988; Isaac 1982; Larkin 1988; Sobel 1987; Cronon 1983; Allen 1982; Tate and Ammerman 1979; Ulrich 1982)

4 Other historian's works seriously treating material life include: Carr, Morgan and Ruso (1988); Horne (1988); Cronon (1983); Allen (1982).

5 Significantly, ethnohistory seems to be more closely associated with anthropology than history, if a review of the authors publishing in the journal *ethnohistory* and entitling their works as ethnohistoric studies is a good indicator.

6 By this, I refer to the difficulty historical archaeologists often have in relating artifactual data to documentary data and composing interpretive accounts. The preponderance of site reports with tables of mean ceramic dates, types, and so on with little or no cultural interpretation of the data illustrate this point.

7 I found the survival and frequency of this attitude to be quite surprising because historical archaeologists have been touting the documentary record for so long. It has, however, dominated some of the recent discussions on the *histarch* list, an electronic mail forum for historical archaeologists on the internet (August–September 1994) and occasionally shows up in print (cf. Neiman 1993:273).

8 For further discussion of these and other reasons archaeologists resist using the documentary record, see Beaudry, Cook and Mrozowski (1991).

9 Illustrations, paintings, and drawings are, however, even less accessible than documents. They are not catalogued in ways easily used by the archaeologist or anthropologist. Pictures are not collected together—you can't just go to the archives and ask to see pictures of the seventeenth century, much less of 17th century life. They must be found in period books and newspapers, in art museum collections by the artists' name, or in art books featuring specific artists' work, stylistic periods, or schools of art. Since this process is either time consuming or somewhat random, the same illustrations are often used over and over again. Maria Franklin's (this volume) serendipitous location of two related paintings depicting slave life in Virginia provides a case in point—she is apparently the first to make the connection between the two pictures and has generated intense interest among archaeologists interested in the material culture of slaves. Noël-Hume has, perhaps, made the best, if uncritical, use of pictorial evidence in historical archaeology, which may be seen in the Martin's Hundred Museum at Carter's Grove, Colonial Williamsburg and in *Martin's Hundred* (1982). Noël-Hume's use of paintings and pictures is the result of a great deal of time, effort, and perseverance. Using illustrations also requires the labor of dealing with obtaining permission and getting high quality copies for publication. But it is still worthwhile—they help us put the people back in our constructions of the past and can add another dimension to our understanding of the thoughts, feelings, biases, and agendas of the people whose life and history we are attempting to describe.

10 That is, no communication in conducting such official business as the taking of probate inventories. This was probably due to a religious controversy between the two towns.

11 This example is extracted from the author's ongoing research and research conducted during a graduate seminar in Historical Archaeology at the University of California, Berkeley led by James Deetz, 1986–1989.

12 Probate inventories, by their own account, are "True & Perfect" lists of all the "Goods, Chattels, & Cattles" of a deceased individual, usually the head of a household; they were used in 17th century English communities to ensure that all heirs received their portions, that executors did not deplete the estates of minors, that the debts of the estate were honored, and that persons indebted to the estate paid up. The inventories are lists of the contents of a household recorded by peers of the deceased. They list the name, quality, condition, and value of each item and often record what room they were found in.

13 At first glance, probate inventories simply provide an enumeration and evaluation of goods owned by a person at death, hinting at the daily activities of that person and other members of the household. Because they were taken by many individuals, single inventories from the 17th century tend to be idiosyncratic to the point there they are almost useless except as a list of some of the things people had. Among the many problems and biases of the inventories are:

- Some are taken on a room-by-room basis while others are not.
- Spelling follows 17th century norms (or lack of norms).
- Local custom and law, which regulated the inventorying process, varied widely between communities.
- Samples by wealth categories are erratic and favor wealthy males.
- Samples for specific years are erratic.
- The inventories are not complete listings of everything in a household. The personal property of other household members, provisions for the immediate use of the family, and small miscellaneous *stuff* only mentioned as *implements* and *lumber* may all be excluded.

14 Collections of all the available inventories from each colony comprise the database of nearly a thousand documents. The percentage of inventories taken on a room-by-room basis varied, with Plymouth having the least (13%) and Bermuda the most (74%).

15 Obviously, not all activities took place in the household, but their occurrence does imply the activity took place in relation to the household. In this sense, we are actually studying the storage of artifacts.

16 A computerized database was designed to retain the original format and content of the inventory entries as much as possible while standardizing them sufficiently to enable intelligible queries of the data. This was done by breaking the entries down into their syntactical "parts of speech." The inventories were transcribed into computer files (ASCII text) and run through a parsing program (written by Carl Thelen) which separated each word in the inventory into the appropriate database field. Fields include the quantity,

measure, condition, quality, material, color, purpose, name of item, other description, value, room name, and room modifier. Original spellings were retained in the database. Additional fields were added to contain the proposed activity category and the corrected spellings of item names or aggregate item names where the item entry was unclear without its context or an informed probate reader—i.e., "six yards of narrow blue" is a type of cloth.

17 Inventories consistently show high correlations in the co-occurrence of specific, related artifacts grouped together in the activity categories shown in figure 5.

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