

Yaughan and Curriboo: A New Look at Two Eighteenth-Century Low Country Plantations in South Carolina

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The Digital Archaeological Archive of Comparative Slavery (DAACS)

Intro

In the late 1970s, three large-scale 18th-century domestic slave quarter sites were excavated at the Yaughan and Curriboo Plantations in South Carolina. They remain famous for the unprecedented amount of colonoware recovered from them, as well as being one of a handful of sites with examples of both trench and post-construction architecture. Archaeological assemblages from these sites were recently cataloged into the Digital Archaeological Archive of Comparative Slavery (DAACS) database, allowing us to perform fine-grained analysis which sheds light on the architectural sequence at these sites and provides a revised chronology for detailed research.



The sites



Yaughan 75



Yaughan 76



Curriboo

The Yaughan and Curriboo Plantations, were archaeologically investigated by Soil Systems Inc., with Thomas Wheaton and Patrick Garrow as Principal Investigators. Yaughan Plantation had two distinct quartering areas referred to as "Yaughan 75" and "Yaughan 76," while a single quartering area was excavated at Curriboo. The plantations are closely related spatially and were both owned by the Cordes family during the eighteenth century.

A total of twenty-nine structures were revealed at the three sites, many of them likely domestic slave quarters. Other structures included overseer houses, a brick kiln, and additional plantation outbuildings associated with rice and indigo production.

Thanks to a Save America's Treasures grant awarded to the South Carolina Institute for Anthropology and Archaeology and DAACS, information from all the assemblages has been processed, allowing us to revisit research questions using a systematic approach.



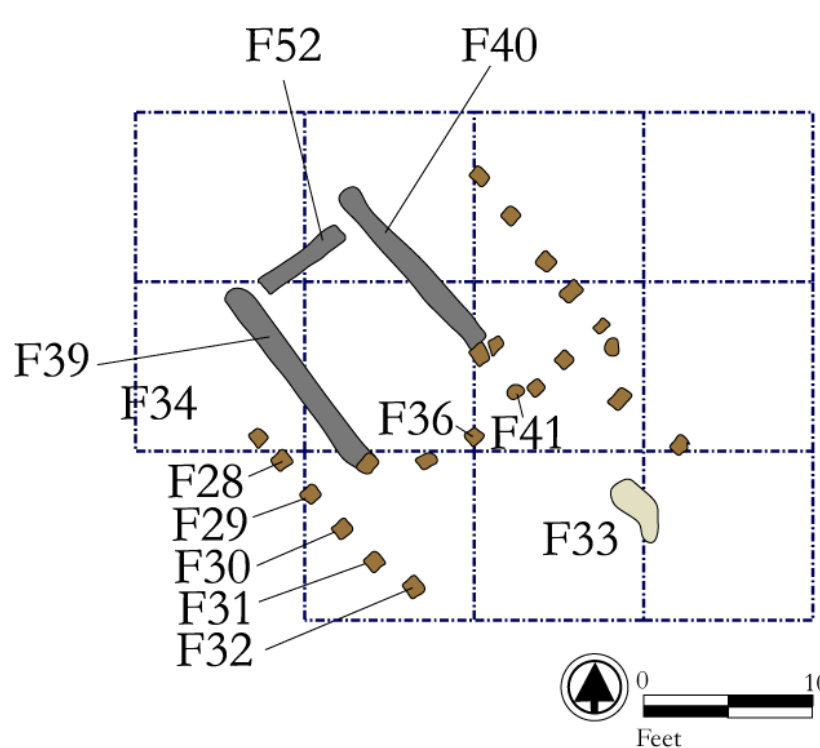
A building sequence outlined

Wheaton and Garrow posited a likely building sequence from early trench to later post construction. This was supported by the presence of a posthole feature that intruded a trench feature at one of the slave quarters at Yaughan and Curriboo. We examine the sequence at the site level using DAACS artifact and context data from all excavated features and quadrats at the three sites using a revised chronology.

The trench features at the sites likely represented mud-walled, thatch-roof structures built using methods of African origin. The shift to post architecture may have coincided with increased European presence and management influence at the plantations. An excavation block at Yaughan 76 revealed evidence of both types of structures.



House Block A Yaughan 76

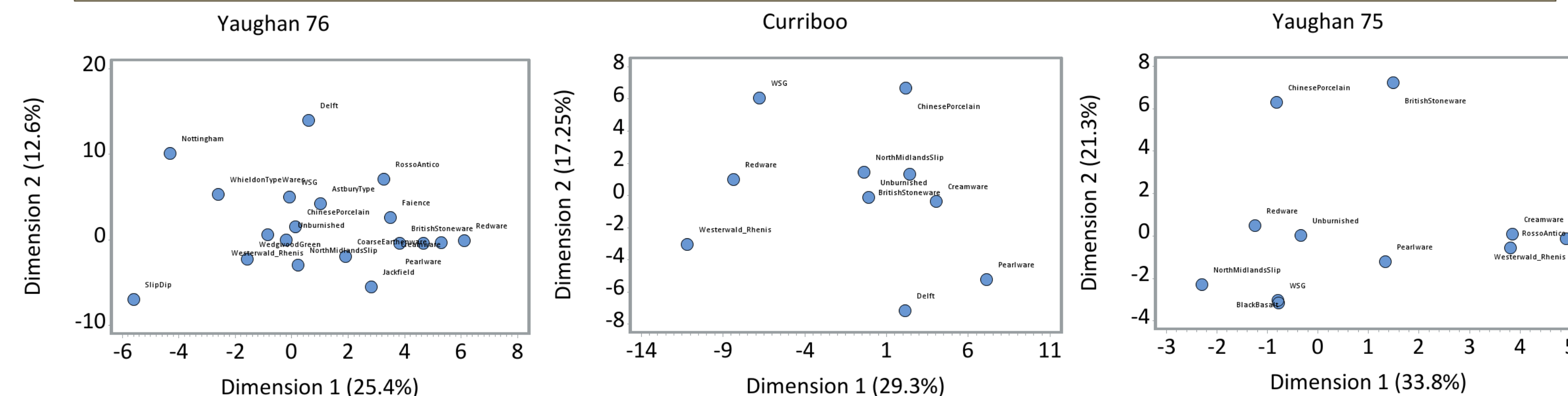


House Block A Yaughan 76 site plan

Establishing the chronological framework

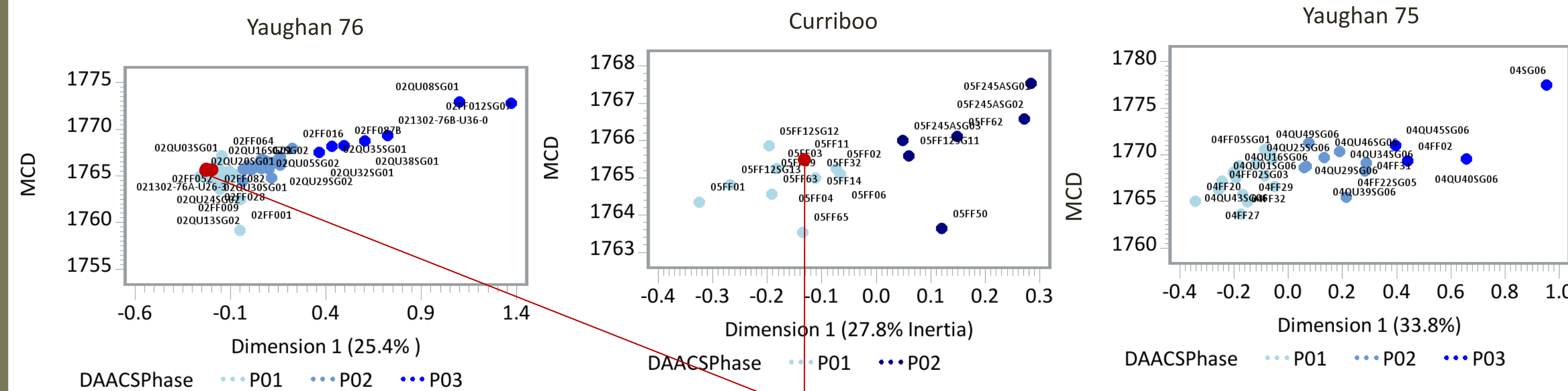
A chronological framework for the sites must first be established in order to investigate the architectural sequence from trench to post construction. Mean Ceramic Dates (MCDs) are weighted averages which provide estimated dates for sites. Correspondence analysis (CA) allows us to investigate complexities in consumption by measuring the variation in ceramic ware types and counts among assemblages and plotting the variation in two-dimensional graphical form. Given the diagnostic nature of ware types, the first dimension, which accounts for the highest inertia, often represents *time*.

Site data used in the CA are comprised of assemblages from features and units located over the entire site. Individual contexts are aggregated into analytical assemblages based on stratigraphic groupings with unit and feature divisions within. Ware types are plotted by their CA Dimension 1 scores against Dimension 2.



For each of the sites, we see a basic trend along Dimension 1, with earlier wares plotted mostly on the left, and later ones on the right. The evident pattern allows us to utilize Dimension 1 (Dim 1) as time so we can proceed with phasing the assemblages and attempting to decipher the building sequence.

Investigating the building sequence



Now that time has been established at the sites, the entire set of assemblages can be divided into rather tight temporal occupation phases along Dim 1. MCDs for the assemblages are plotted against their Dim 1 scores.

	MCD	TPQ
Phase 1	1765	1775
Phase 2	1766	1820
Phase 3	1768	1820

These assemblages are trench features at the sites. They occur in the earliest phase at each of the sites and do not appear in the later phases; however, comparative data are not available from the post structures at these sites due to small sample sizes. Despite that, the phased archaeological data confirm the trench structures are early.

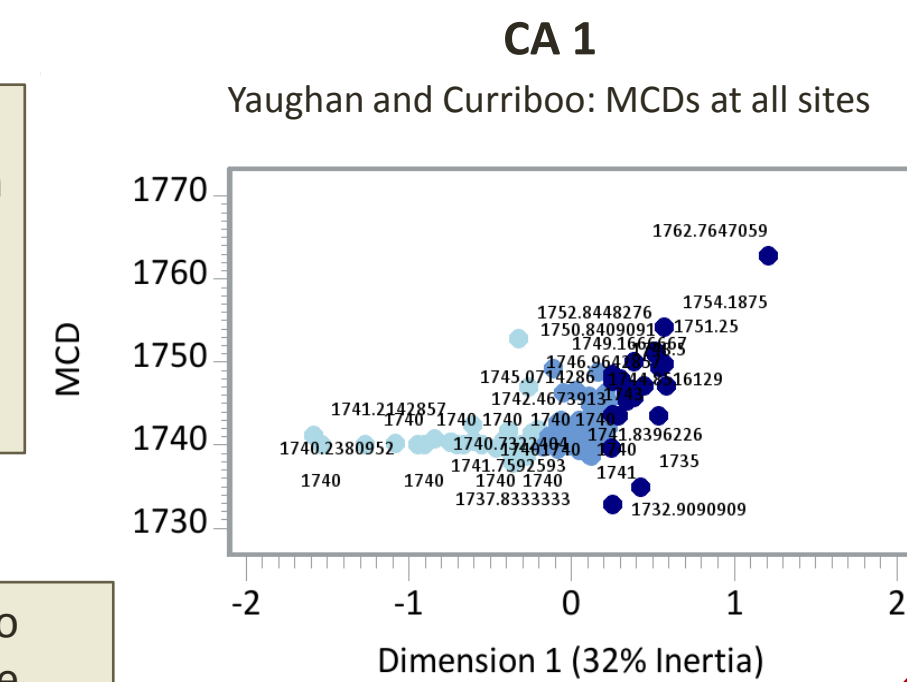
	MCD	TPQ
Phase 1	1765	1762
Phase 2	1766	1775

Yaughan 75 was occupied until slightly later than the other two sites. Though evidence of a trench structure was uncovered, only post structures were excavated whose assemblages contribute to the CA.

	MCD	TPQ
Phase 1	1769	1840
Phase 2	1769	1820
Phase 3	1770	1820

Investigating the colonoware

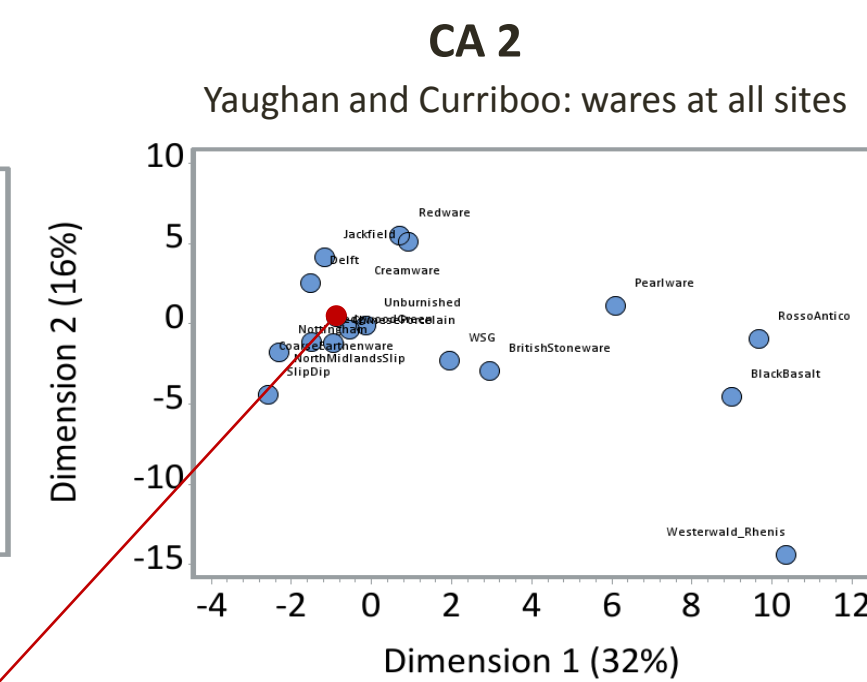
1. Data from all three sites are combined to produce a single CA in order to analyze colonoware patterning at a broader level. Assemblage MCDs are plotted against Dim 1 in CA 1.



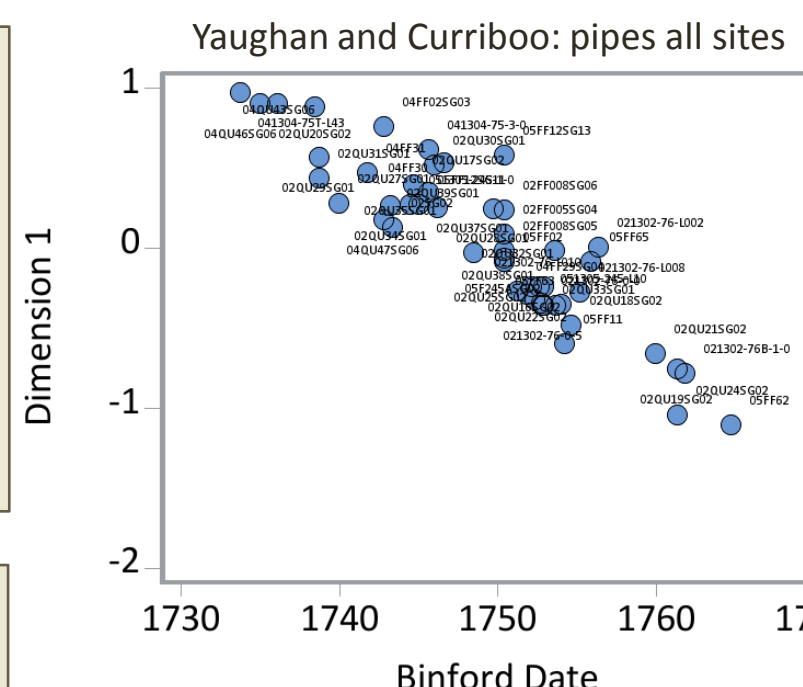
2. Wheaton and Garrow noted two distinct groups of colonoware at the sites which we summarize as follows:

- *Unburnished* group: possibly locally-made, thicker, coarser paste; found in high frequency at all three sites
- *Burnished* group: likely produced off-site, thinner, often has mica inclusions; found in low frequency at all three sites

3. When *Unburnished* colonoware is included in CA 2, Dim 1 appears stable with most wares seriated along the dimension. Interestingly, the *unburnished* clusters right along with tablewares despite its unusually high frequency.

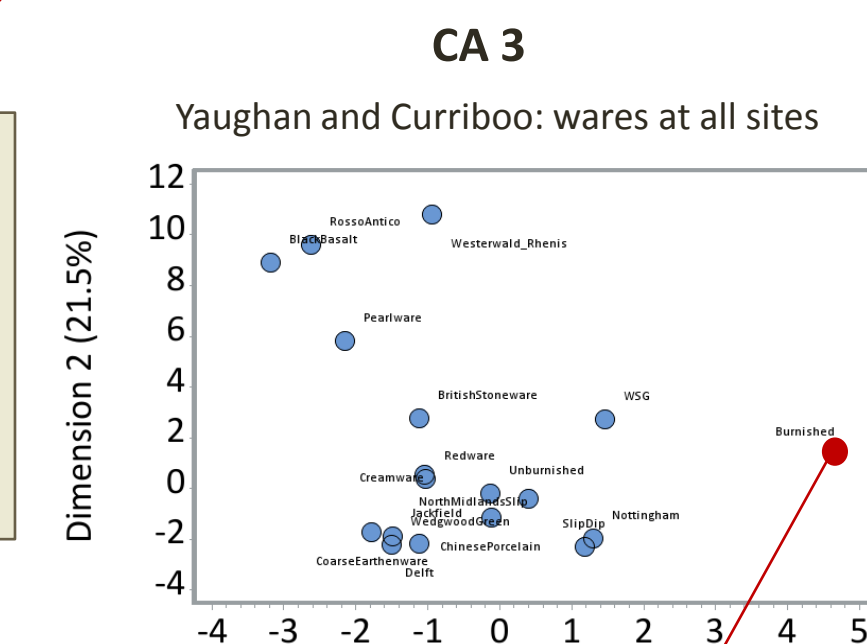


5. Using clay pipe bore diameters as independent evidence, we test whether we can trust Dim 1 as time in CA 2. Good correlation between ceramic Dim 1 scores and calculated Binford pipe dates confirms Dim 1 in CA 2 is time. Conversely, we conclude Dim 1 in CA 3 is *not* time.

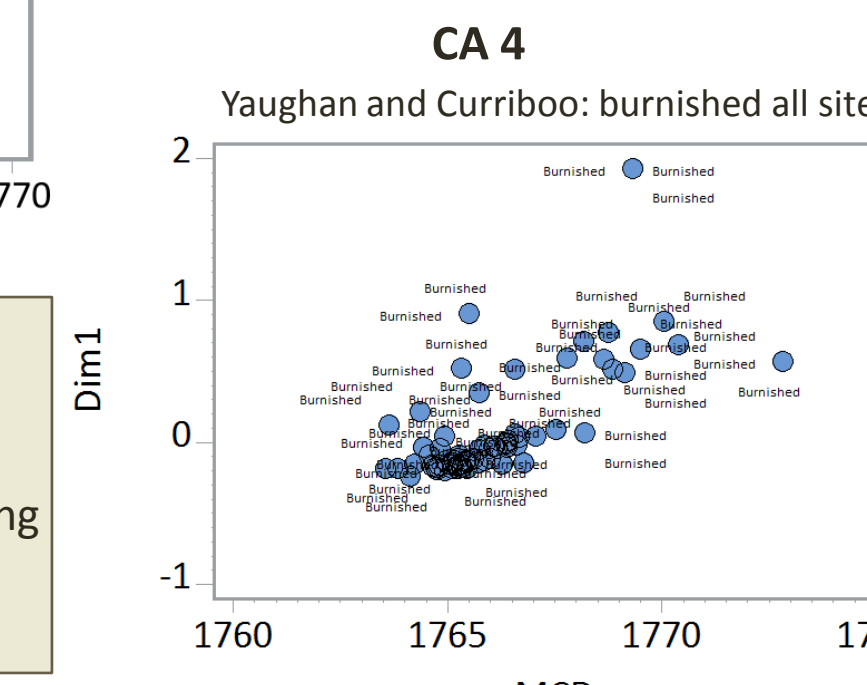


6. Further confirming Dim 1 is not time in CA 3, we see in CA 4 that *burnished* colonoware was recovered throughout time at all sites. What, then, is the nature of the variation being measured in CA 3?

7. Some researchers have attributed *burnished* colonoware to itinerant Native American potters. This might somehow be reflected as variation along the dimension and requires further investigation to fully understand.



4. *Burnished* colonoware is plotted in CA 3 and the entire configuration is affected. *Why is this the case?*



Conclusions

This analysis of data from Yaughan and Curriboo confirms that the trench structures indeed date to the earliest time periods at the sites. Using a systematic approach, we use correspondence analysis to build on the ground-breaking research of Wheaton and Garrow, and refine occupation-date estimates by establishing a phased chronological structure within which to investigate the sequence. The analysis, combined with newly available digital artifact and contextual material from these sites, paves the way for unprecedented comparative research in the future.

The unusually high frequency of colonoware recovered at Yaughan and Curriboo presents unique research opportunities. The results presented here confirm the likelihood of at least two distinct groups of colonoware: one possibly manufactured locally, and one group likely produced elsewhere. The distinction between the groups is highlighted using correspondence analysis at the three-site level. More research is required to interpret the results, which will be aided by the chronological framework established here.

References

1983 Garrow, Patrick H., Amy Friedlander, Thomas R. Wheaton. *Yaughan and Curriboo Plantations: Studies in Afro-American Archaeology*

1985 Acculturation and the Archaeological Record in the Carolina Lowcountry in *The Archaeology of Slavery and Plantation Life*, edited by T. Singleton, Academic Press, Orlando, Florida.

Acknowledgements

The South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology prepared these collections for DAACS digitization. Beatrix Arendt, Lynsey Bates, and Jesse Sawyer cataloged the collections, including the enormous amount of colonoware! Thanks to Karen Price of Mount Vernon who took many of the colonoware photographs. Thanks to Fraser Neiman for his helpful input on content.