

**ABSTRACT****The Archaeology and History of  
Jamaican Ceramics: 1655 - 1840**

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The history of Jamaica's ceramic industry stretches from prehistoric times to the present. Because of the abundance, availability and inexpensiveness of the base material—clay, the industry became and remains an important and viable part of the local economy.

Ceramic objects comprise the largest single body of information and documentation for two of the most important migrant groups that settled in Jamaica, namely the Amerindians and the Africans. Although their potential as a type of historical evidence has been noted by several authors, analysis of and research into the Jamaican ceramic industry has been of an extremely limited nature.

This thesis will use the archaeological record and documentary evidence to define the technological, formal and functional aspects of the industry. An attempt will also be made to identify its origins, as well as to use the ceramic record as evidence of the sociocultural environment of its producers. Ethnographic data will be used to examine the

issue of the degree of continuity between the study period and the present.

Two major archaeological collections were examined; the New Street (2) site of Port Royal excavated by Tony Priddy; and the old King's House site excavated by Duncan Mathewson.

Five ceramic complexes were identified in these collections for the period 1655 - 1840: (1) Amerindian (2) African Jamaican (3) European Jamaican (4) Syncretic (5) African North American. The first complex contained one Amerindian-Jamaican sherd. The rest of this complex was imported from Central or Northeast South America. Complex 5 was also imported. Complexes two to four were the products of indigenization, local manufacturing together with transported ideas, techniques, and type models. Two major ceramic production centers were identified from historical and ethnographic research.

The analysis of the decorative and technological elements of the indigenized complexes for sociocultural meaning indicates that the ceramic complexes existed within independent sociocultural entities that exhibited significant degrees in status differentiation. The conclusion drawn is that the internal marketing system afforded a degree of economic independence to the enslaved population, enabling the creation of an African Jamaican socio-cultural entity that

paralleled the development of a European Jamaican and  
syncretic or creole sociocultural entity during this period.