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**BURIED BEYOND BUITENGRACHT: INTERROGATING
CULTURAL VARIABILITY IN THE HISTORIC 'INFORMAL'
BURIAL GROUND OF PRESTWICH STREET, CAPE TOWN**

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**SUBMITTED IN FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR A
MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY (MPHIL) DEGREE
DEPARTMENT OF ARCHAEOLOGY
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2006

ABSTRACT

This study presents the first analysis of the cultural material from Prestwich Street, the largest historical burial ground that was excavated in Cape Town between 2003- 2005. The Prestwich Street burial ground was an 'informal' burial ground for the underclass during the 18th and early 19th century Cape Town. The burials make a contribution to the material visibility of the underclass who are difficult to see in the material remains of the everyday. The history of the underclass is first discussed through the documentary evidence that outlines the cultural origins and composition of the labouring class, and their organization and the social conditions under which they lived. The documentary evidence on the urban development of Prestwich Street is also reviewed. This provides the background for the description and analysis of a small sample of burials from the larger Prestwich Street assemblage. This sample was based upon the attributes of burial style, dental modification and grave goods. Plotting these attributes showed that most burials fall into discrete spatial clusters. These clusters and other associated attributes are then discussed in terms of cultural background and identity with the help of appropriate ethnography. An Islamic burial style is identified as well as various attributes which underpin African origins. It is suggested that Islamic burials at Prestwich Street provide a glimpse into the consolidation of the Muslim community through the 18th century. In contrast, interpretation of the discrete distribution of other burial clusters requires caution. Their formality may be the product of shorter term and perhaps expedient events, and consequently, there were several different scales of burial process at Prestwich Street. This analysis and interpretation asserts the archaeology of Prestwich Street into the public debate around the treatment of these remains. It is hoped that these details provide an awareness of archaeology's potential contribution to the history of Cape Town's 'underclass'.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like firstly to thank my advisor, Dr. Simon Hall, who has watched the ideas for this thesis metamorphose dramatically over the past two years. His patience and support of every phase of this process, particularly during the last few months, have been extraordinary. His effort has made all the difference in the production of this study, especially when the pressure was on.

Dr. Antonia Malan has shown incredible integrity in her continued commitment to the ongoing Prestwich Street-related issues. Her excellent ability to navigate the archival and documentary seas has helped to establish the foundation for this study.

It was under great duress that the Archaeology Contracts Office managed the excavation at Prestwich Street. The burial sample I have had the privilege to work with is a testament to their quality of work under pressure. I am deeply indebted to Mr. Tim Hart and Mr. Dave Halkett for bringing me onto the team of Prestwich excavators in the first place, and to later trusting me to analyse data that has been at the center of such a contentious issue. They have been unbelievably accommodating and supportive during the analysis phase, including supplying much-coveted office space for the sorting and cleaning of the material. I sincerely hope that this study justifies your invaluable support.

Dr. Alan Morris has treated me as an adjunct member of his 'team' right from the beginning, in recognition that we are working towards the same goal. He readily supplied papers, articles and information, on not only the Cobern Street excavation, but on related cases that would inform the Prestwich burials, which has made all the difference in the scope of this study. In return, I hope that this thesis makes a strong case for 'your side' of the research.

And finally, I would like to thank Mr. Bruce Paxton who has stuck by me on this tumultuous two-year academic exercise – through my frustrations and inspirations and tried to keep me calm throughout it all. He tempered my impatience with the GIS software and spent many hours editing, and took such good care of me while I was writing up. Thank you, B, I truly appreciate everything you do.

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INTRODUCTION

THE NECROGEOGRAPHIC COMPLEXITIES OF POST-APARTHEID CAPE TOWN

"Every social order systematically takes advantage of the disposition of the body and language to function as depositories of deferred thoughts." Pierre Bourdieu

On April 21, 2004 in Cape Town, South Africa, the remains of more than 700 individuals unearthed at a Green Point construction site were relocated to a disused mortuary. Boxes of remains were draped with the national flag, and prayers were said over them in a private ceremony, which included a Muslim imam, an Anglican minister, a rabbi and a traditional Khoesan cleric. An honor guard of traffic officers stood at attention as sundry community leaders led the somber procession through the city streets. The public transfer of the 'Prestwich Place'¹ remains of paupers and sailors, slaves and 'free blacks', was necessitated by a call for a symbolic gesture on behalf of the individuals from an 18th century informal burial ground who played a central role in building Cape Town, as noted on the 'Notice of Transfer of Human Remains' generated from the Mayors Office:

It is also believed that these are remains of people who were not afforded respect and dignity, in life and in death...You are called upon to join us as the people of South Africa mourn and commemorate the toil of their ancestors and *acknowledge their lives as part of our heritage and the heritage of generations to come.*

A little over a decade earlier in 1993 across the Atlantic ocean, a Muslim imam, a Yoruba chief, and a Baptist minister presided over a large public 'homecoming' ceremony in Washington DC to commemorate the over 400 sets of human remains to arrive at Howard University after their

¹ Prestwich Place is how it is popularly known, and the name originates with the initial name of the development. For the purposes of this study, however, I shall be using the name 'Prestwich Street' to mean the consolidated erven of the excavation site.

removal from the construction site of a 34-story office tower in downtown Manhattan.² A high level of enthusiasm welcomed these remains from the 18th century 'African Burial Ground' (ABG) which, it was anticipated, would greatly contribute to a deeper understanding of the lives of Africans in New York City in the 18th century. The bones were expected to yield new knowledge of the lives of the ancestors, in effect - 'acknowledging their lives.' After intensive public consultation, a decision was made that the Cobb Laboratory at Howard University would have a five-year mandate to analyse the remains, after which time a memorial site would be established. The remains generated widespread interest resulting in an Interpretation Center of the 'ABG' focusing on the history of early Africans in New York. The ancestors' stories were to be finally 'uncovered', their 'truths' told, and then respectfully and symbolically 'laid to rest'.

These two burial grounds are bound intricately together by the same world system - products of the embryonic stages of international commerce, and of the racist systems that allowed for the enslavement of the 'other'. These individuals, resurfacing at their respective sites, which has launched a critical exploration of the archaeology of ethnicity, identity and 'roots', and the democratization of knowledge against legacies of slavery in the U.S., and colonialism and apartheid in South Africa. As Terrence Epperson has stated, the contestations around the African Burial Ground were ideal opportunities to address, "the social construction of racial categories, the formulation of hegemonic and counter-hegemonic historical consciousness, and the role of descendant communities and their allies in archaeological research".³

² An initial religious ceremony was held two months earlier on September 8, 1993 at the actual archaeological site in New York City. The same religious leaders were present, and the ceremony included West African drumming and dance. This was organized based on the recommendations of the Steering Committee for the African Burial Ground to commemorate the transfer of the first set of human remains from the site to Howard University. The large 'homecoming' described above took place on November 5, 1993.

³ Epperson, Terrence W, 'The Politics of 'Race' and Cultural Identity at the African Burial Ground Excavations, New York City', *World Archaeological Bulletin* 7.

In June 2003, permits were in place for the Archaeology Contracts Office (ACO)⁴ to begin demolishing the standing structures on plot 67710 in the Green point area of Cape Town, to make way for a 'New-York style' high-rise complex in this increasingly trendy, up-market neighborhood of the city.⁵ The large three-story industrial building to be demolished dated from the late 1950s. Almost immediately upon commencing earth-moving activities, human remains were discovered. These remains were quickly identified as being part of an informal burial ground which had been built over from the mid 1800s – a historical layer of the city which has since emerged as a unique opportunity to explore the 'covered or 'hidden' histories of the underprivileged of historical Cape Town. As these bodies surfaced, so did the complexities of knowledge ownership in an arena colored by the recent transformation in South African politics, and wrapped in tropes of national healing and reconciliation.

It struck me profoundly that a quote such as this:

"The beauty of this research is that the lives of these enslaved Africans are being researched, analysed and recorded...These ancestral bones are having a chance to speak the true story of their lives and are finally being heard"⁶

can only be referring to the uncovering of African skeletal remains at the ABG, but not Prestwich Street, as this contentious case in Cape Town has led to the South African Heritage Resource Agency (SAHRA) to issue a verdict prohibiting physical analysis of the remains. Why are the individuals from the Prestwich Street burials not being given an opportunity to be analysed in the same manner as at the ABG? Why has a particular community group in Cape Town positioned itself in strong opposition to the 'scientific camp' (which has come to mean

⁴ The Archaeology Contracts Office (ACO) is based at the University of Cape Town, although it is self-sustaining contracts body.

⁵ Plots are 'erven' in Afrikaans, 'erf' singular. The two erven affected by the excavation were 4721 and 67710.

⁶ Pittman, Chandra D 1998: 'If Bones Could Speak', *Transforming Anthropology*, Vol. 7, No. 1, p. 62.

both archaeologists and anatomists/physical anthropologists), while 'community' and 'scientists' in New York were able to work together towards a common goal of researching these burials? Why has the sentiment of the 'descendant communities' in each case differed so greatly? 'Hidden histories' are being given an opportunity to be uncovered on one side of the Atlantic, but now that a tangible opportunity for similar practice in South Africa has arisen, this opportunity seems to not be considered at all, and in fact, denied.

Dr. Michael Blakey of the Cobb Laboratory at Howard University has stated,

"The Colonial African Burial Ground of the City of New York presents one of the rarest opportunities for reconstructing the lives and conditions experienced by our common ancestors who were enslaved and forced to build the economic foundations of the place that we know today as the United States of America. We want to consider here any insights that might be gained from our project that pertain to the human responsibilities of world citizenship"⁷.

But in Cape Town, community leaders state unequivocally that they have "no interest in 'bloodlines'"⁸. They contend that archaeologists and physical anthropologists interest in Prestwich Street is an attempt to quantify 'race', and the disinterment of bones has been equated to another 'forced removal' - and likened to an extension of apartheid ideology, particularly with regards to its historical effects on the 'colored' community in Cape Town. According to Nigel Worden, 'Apartheid not only physically separated South Africans, but also justified the divisive treatment of its citizens of differing 'races' by a rigid identification of their separate

⁷ Blakey, Michael, 1994: 'The NYABGP: An Examination of Enslaved Lives, A Construction of Ancestral Ties' for History in Our Hands: The African Burial Ground Project, *National African American Museum Project*, Winter, Vol. 2

⁸ Rev. Michael Weeder, one of leading community advocates, at meeting at District Six Museum in October 2004.

histories. There was no place for a common heritage in a country where every symbol and site was divisive, from public holiday commemorations to the logos of sports teams.”⁹

Understandably, deep distrust of power institutions continues and the specter of apartheid looms large. However, since political transformation a decade ago, the spirit of the ‘New South African’ or the Western Cape’s motto ‘A Home for All’, has not been extended to a common heritage for its citizens. Is the new legislation being implemented to privilege the political agendas of previously disadvantaged, which only serves to undermine its own credibility?

As a sensitive site informed by polarized belief systems, Prestwich is a textbook case. But what is unprecedented is the furor around this site that has effectively blocked ‘scientific’ study and further research into the social conditions of these individuals’ lives. Unlike the ABG case, a ruling has been passed down by SAHRA, the highest heritage authority body in the country prohibiting basic analysis, which would have included sex and age at death, as well as isotopic analysis. Concurrently, as this thesis is in preparation, the bitter conflict continues - in the newspapers, and in complaints being lodged with various watchdog or supervisory bodies. Plans are being pushed through the city council to establish a heritage/memorial center for these burial remains - ironically, a design based on the African Burial Ground memorial in Washington DC.

Against this background of antagonism and frustration, a unique opportunity of unity through the stories of the past could arise. We have a duty to ‘acknowledge their lives’ (the appeal from the Cape Town Mayor’s Office) and it is absolutely critical to assert the fundamental aim of archaeology; that is, to view archaeological inquiry as making a measurable contribution to our

⁹ Worden, N. 1997: ‘Contesting Heritage in a South African City: Cape Town’, in Shaw, B. & Jones R (eds), *Contested Urban Heritage*, Aldershot: Ashgate Publishers, pps. 31 – 61.

understanding of the early history of South Africa, within a particularly contested site to provide another perspective on the 'underclass' of Cape Town of the 18th and 19th centuries. By 'asserting the archaeology', or attempting to demonstrate 'value', in as far as answering academic questions or 'solving' empirical issues, the community's acceptance of it may still be influenced by current socio-political agendas, the legacies of apartheid, issues of identity and so on. That is, no matter how hard archaeologists try through public interventions to extol the advantages of speaking through the science to demonstrate 'bottom-up' histories, the dissonance between beliefs and empirically based research may remain.

As a consequence of the sensitivities over the physical analysis of the Prestwich Street remains, this thesis attempts to contribute to our knowledge of Cape Town's underclass by working with what we are allowed to study. This comprises the cultural material such as the occurrence of niche burial plots, the presence of individuals with dental modification and an overview of the cultural artefacts associated with the burials.

Little can be said of significance about the Prestwich Street burials if the site is not first placed in its historical context. In Section I, I review and explore the demographic composition and burial landscape of the Cape as it evolved during the first two centuries of European possession and occupancy from the establishment of the settlement in 1652 to emancipation in 1838. I discuss the difficulty of identifying the complexities of the underclass *materially*, and promote the analysis of the more formal attributes of burial as a possibility to open a window to individual lives of the labouring classes.

In Section II, I present my data and describe and discuss the variability of burial styles, the range of dental modification and grave goods, and their frequency and distribution. I will

conclude this study by discussing the implications of burial variability for the general 'informal' burial ground of Green Point.

The difficulty in discerning the variability within the 'underclass' from the documentary evidence, coupled with the current ban on physical analysis of the remains, tends to homogenize these remains. What comes out of this preliminary interrogation of some of the cultural attributes of the Prestwich Street burials is a degree of heterogeneity.

The findings will contribute towards laying particular histories open, from which various constituencies may interpret from their own knowledge system base claims of 'culture', 'identity' and 'heritage'. In some ways, this work can be seen as race against time, to use archaeology to investigate what we can, before the vault of 'memorialization' confines these people to a homogenized silence once again.

SECTION I

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF 'INFORMAL' BURIAL GROUNDS AT THE CAPE SETTLEMENT

The complex matrix of burials at Prestwich Street must be set against the historical backdrop and evolution of settlement, immigration, slavery and creolization at the Cape of Good Hope. This mélange of peoples, cultures and traditions formed and re-formed by these processes. I posit that the diversity of the Cape labouring classes is inevitably reflected in the burial landscape. In Chapter One I will provide an overview of the historical processes and events that created the social landscape of the Cape. Chapter Two will anchor the geography of Prestwich Street and the 'informal' burials within the context of cultural landscapes and urban expansion, and in Chapter Three I will discuss the archaeology of social identity of informal burial grounds of Colonial Cape Town.

CHAPTER ONE

THE DEVELOPING DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE AT THE CAPE OF GOOD HOPE

The aim of this chapter is to provide an overview of the processes that created the diverse social landscape of Cape Town from the establishment of the settlement to the end of the slave trade. This overview provides the essential context through which to view the expansion of the 'informal' burial landscape of Cape Town that will be explored in Chapter 2. In order to suggest who might have been buried in the historic cemeteries, it is critical to understand the demographics and cultural backgrounds that fell within the catchment of Cape slavery, as well as the complexities of the processes that brought people of varying rank and status to the Cape. This overview is based on documentary and archival evidence, which raises some difficult challenges in 'acknowledging the lives' of the historically invisible underclass – challenges which archaeology has an opportunity to inform on.

The Establishment of a European Settlement at the Cape of Good Hope

The Dutch East India Company (or *Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie*, 'V.O.C')¹⁰ was a non-governmental consortium of 'chambers of commerce' formed in the beginning of the 17th with ambitions to stake a claim in the East Indian spice trade. The decline of Portuguese power and their ultimate defeat in India (1612) by the VOC, won the Dutch trading concessions from the Mughal Empire of the Indian sub-continent. A commercial trade in cotton and silk goods, indigo, saltpetre and spices from South India commenced, with eventual expansion of activities to the Persian Gulf, Southeast Asia, and East Asia, with Batavia (modern day Jakarta in

¹⁰ The Dutch East India Company is referred to in various ways: the English acronym 'DEIC', the Dutch acronym 'VOC', or sometimes simply 'the Company'. In this thesis I will use 'VOC'.

Indonesia) becoming an important center for these regional trade routes. The Cape of Good Hope was never originally intended to become a major settlement at the southern-most tip of Africa. Rather, it was established in 1652 as a refreshment outpost to re-supply ships for the long voyage to and from the trade centers and VOC headquarters in the East.

Robert Shell romantically described the process of colonizing the Cape as closing “one arc of a primordial population movement that had begun in Africa nearly one hundred millennia before” and when the Dutch imported slaves from the eastern side of the Indian Ocean, another population arc closed.¹¹ The establishment of this commerce station in Africa set in motion a dynamic process of exchange resulting in cultural contact at a level of diversity possibly unparalleled in history up to that time. The nature and consequences of such interactions have direct implications for the politics of heritage in Cape Town (and indeed, all of South Africa) today.

Various European cultures merged with immigrant and slave cultures of Bengal, Borneo, Ceylon, China, India, Japan, Java, Persia, Madagascar, numerous African (Bantu-speaking) peoples, and the indigenous Khoekhoen groups in the creation of an urban community. A myriad of religious and ethnic traditions were represented, and the associated language families made southern African home to “one of the most polyglot populations of the world, a dramatic reunion of all the main branches of humankind.”¹²

Although Commander Jan van Riebeeck arrived with the first garrison at Table Bay in 1652, their party was only one in a sequence of earlier European visits (and claims) to this tip of

¹¹ Shell, Robert C.H, 2001 *Children of Bondage: A Social History of the Slave Society at the Cape of Good Hope 1652-1838*, Johannesburg: Witswatersrand University Press, p. xxv.

¹² Shell, 2001: xxv.

Africa over the previous centuries.¹³ The indigenous pastoral Khoekhoen (in particular, the Goringhaiqua clan), who populated the good grazing land for their fat-tailed sheep around the base of the Table Mountain, had bartered with European visitors before and were amenable to some levels of trade, but not overly enthusiastic.¹⁴ Foreigners kept a high degree of vigilance when around these 'ferocious cannibals' after several skirmishes during initial contact that resulted in a number of European deaths. This, coupled with what was considered to be a habitual ambivalence on the part of the Khoekhoen towards foreign visitors' presence, fueled a perception among the Europeans of the enigmatic nature of the Khoekhoen¹⁵. Van Riebeeck was instructed to keep up good relations with the local Khoekhoen in order to procure necessary goods and information, as well as to promote regular trade in livestock and valuables from the interior, such as ivory and potentially gold. At the onset of Dutch occupation, the garrison was completely reliant on seaborne provisions until the first plants in the Company gardens were harvested.

The 'dramatic reunion' of populations was set in motion almost immediately when the VOC garrison was hamstrung by the need for a greater labour force, for the

"cutting and hauling of timber...the construction of the first fort and buildings, for fishing, sealing and whaling; for salt works, brick making, cultivation, livestock herding and exploration; and for the primary task of the refreshment post; the servicing of the visiting Dutch East India Company vessels and their crews."¹⁶

¹³ Including the Portuguese and English. The English actually staked a claim for the British Crown at the Cape in 1620.

¹⁴ See Schrire, Carmel, 1995: *Digging Through Darkness: Chronicles of an Archaeologist*

¹⁵ Worden, N., E. van Heyningen & V. Bickford-Smith, 1999 *Cape Town: The Making of A City*, Cape Town: David Philip, p. 14. This image of the Khoekhoen would persist into the era of the Dutch occupation, and is based on several skirmishes Europeans had with them, including an incident in 1510 when 50 members of Portuguese party under Francisco de Almeida were killed. However, in the Khoekhoen's defence, they had been provoked by the Portuguese.

¹⁶ Armstrong, James C, 'The Slaves, 1652 – 1795' in Elphick R & Gilomee H (eds) 1989 2nd Edition, *The Shaping of South African Society*, Cape Town: Maskew Miller Longman, p.76

Within two months of his arrival at the Cape, Van Riebeeck tendered a request to the Council of the Indies in Batavia for permission to import slaves to do “the dirtiest and heaviest work” and failing that, for permission to enslave the local Khoe population of the Cape. Both requests were denied.¹⁷

Consequently, for the first years of Dutch occupation the labour force was drawn primarily from Company employees (or ‘servants’ of the Company) who came from all areas of Europe, not just of Dutch origin, and an initial small number of personal slaves. Rather than an aversion to the institution of slavery, this was merely a cost-cutting measure by the Company; the directors were as yet uncertain about the future of the outpost, and therefore not ready to incur the costs of such capital investment as slaves. Contract wage labourers from Europe¹⁸, and other initial measures were suggested, such as importing freed slaves and ‘free’ Chinese. The VOC even “persuaded and assisted persecuted French Huguenots to emigrate to South Africa as ‘free’ settlers.”¹⁹

In 1657 many of the VOC employees were released from their contracts and were plied with incentives such as freehold land grants, seed, tools and an initial loan as encouragement to take up farming as free burghers in areas southwards around the base of Devil’s Peak from Mowbray to Constantia. In the face of crop failures and “inadequate cultivation techniques”, many burghers relied on provisions of rice from the East Indies. Some opted to return to Europe.²⁰ By 1654 the labour situation was dire, and the Company finally acquiesced, granting permission to import slaves. It was not until 1658 that formal arrangements were made for a

¹⁷ Armstrong, 1989: 76

¹⁸ Similar to European diversity among VOC employees, similar breadth of origin was represented by contract wage labourers, or *knechts*, from (*inter alia*) Belgium, England, France, Germany, Holland and Scandinavia, who were also seconded from VOC service.

¹⁹ Shell, 2001:5 Also see his explanation of the term ‘free’ in the footnotes on page 1.

²⁰ By 1717 the Company decided to discontinue assisting European immigration to the Cape, as wage labour had failed.

slaving expedition to Angola, but this never came to pass as slaves arrived that year through other channels.

The Involvement of the Dutch East India Company in the Slave Trade

Slavery had been an established system in most parts of the world for millennia and domestic slavery, for example, had even existed in Holland but had ceased by the 17th century. The Dutch (like the Portuguese before them) had tapped into one of the world's oldest slaving systems on the Indian Ocean rim – a slave trading area that dates from c. 1580 BCE.²¹ James Armstrong has written, "The East India experience of the Dutch meant that slavery came to the Cape fully developed, governed by laws already in force (the Statutes of India of 1642, and their amendments) and overseen by Company officials with experience of the institution in the East Indies. The forms which slavery assumed at the Cape could not be influenced by pre-existent forms of bondage in indigenous society, for there were none."²² Although the Dutch did not base their commerce on the slave trade, they were drawn into the local slaving systems extant during that period, especially after conquering and occupying northeast Brazil from 1634 to 1638.

The first slaves at the Cape were either personal slaves (including some in Van Riebeeck's household) or stowaways, as in the case of Abraham of Batavia who arrived in 1653. Van Riebeeck also bought slaves from visiting officers, or received them as gifts from passing ship captains. Two young girls from 'Abyssinia' (ages ten and twelve), for example, were gifts to his wife, Maria, from the French Admiral De La Roche. These slaves were later claimed by the Company.

²¹ Shell, 1994: xxxiv

²² Armstrong, James, 1989: 76

There were no slaves at the Cape in 1652 and at least 25,754 by 1798, which exceeded the free population total. Slaves were generally classified into three categories: those owned by the VOC, household slaves or slaves in private hands, and farm slaves living in the rural areas. By 1808 approximately 63 000 slave had been imported from four main areas: mainland Africa (26.4%), Madagascar and the Mascarenes (25%), India (25.9%) and Indonesia (22.7%)²³ (Fig. 1.1).

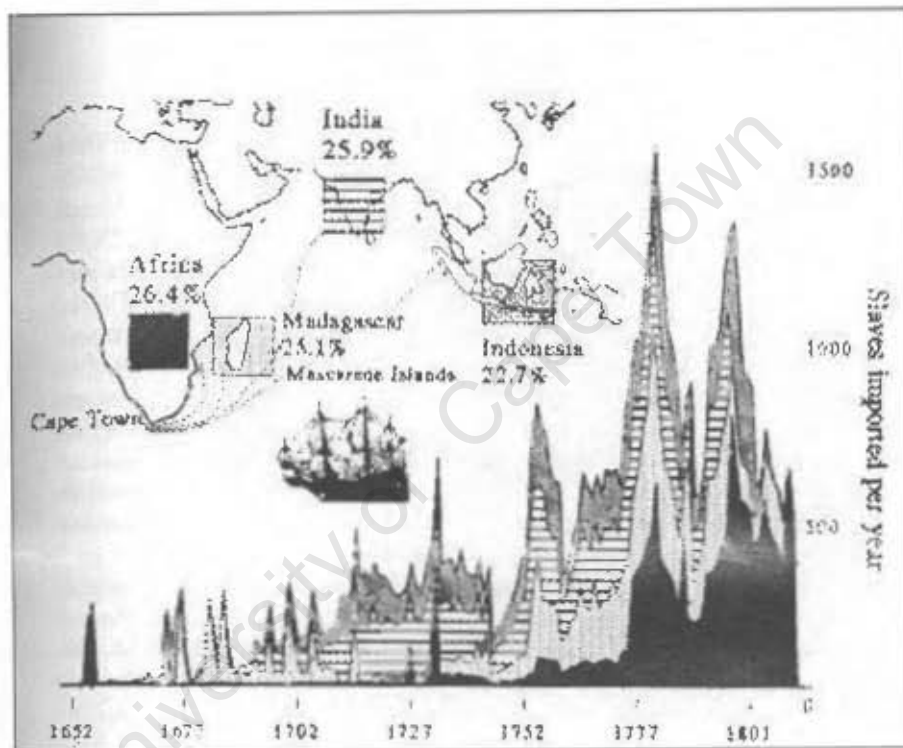


Figure 1.1. Origins of slaves imported to the Cape annually²³

Determining an exact number of slaves has been extremely problematic for historians. The numbers of slaves at the Cape in any given year are drawn from the inventories of slave ships, VOC town censuses, fertility rates, death rates and records of slaves sold to passing ships. However, because the private dealing of slaves was prohibited by the VOC it can be assumed

²³ Shell, 1994: 41.

²⁴ Ibid

that most slaves never entered the official records, and consequently the numbers obtained from official sources are seriously conservative.

Slaving Politics of the Company

The Dutch *West India Company* had claimed rights to the entire west coast of Africa and forbade the VOC from slaving or trading in their waters. Its location as the western-most outpost of the VOC meant that the Cape settlement was also on the periphery of the Dutch *West India Company* commerce region.

The need for slave labour compelled the Cape outpost to launch a secret voyage to Dahomey on the Guinea coast and the first shipload of 228 slaves arrived in 1658. By chance, a Portuguese slaver bound for Brazil was captured and 174 Angolans from that cargo (who were mostly children) were brought to the Cape. Slaving during these early days of the Cape settlement was by no means systematic, and the arrival of West and Central African slaves (as well as those slaves en route from East Africa) was a random and haphazard affair. Those that did end up at the Cape came to early colonial South Africa through "smuggling, shipwrecks, or as naval prizes".²⁵

In order to avoid friction with the *West India Company* (as well as the well-armed Arab and Portuguese slavers controlling the east African coast), the VOC, established an eastward orientation for labour. The Company preferred not to go through middlemen, thus a generally well-organized and stable trade developed, and over 39 slaving expeditions were mounted up until 1786. When the Company had surplus slaves, most of the sales were to burghers or Company officials and consequently a significant distinction arose between Company-owned

²⁵ Shell, 1994:41

slaves and privately owned slaves, which will be discussed below. The burghers owned the largest numbers of slaves by far. James Anderson's quantification of VOC slaving voyages and the recorded numbers of slaves resulting from these voyages appear in Table 1.1:

Table 1.1 VOC- sponsored slaving voyages, 1652-1795²⁶
(Number of Slaves delivered to the Cape in green)

REGION	1652-1699	1700-1749	1750-1795	TOTALS
Madagascar	12 (1,064)	9 (779)	12 (977)	33 (2,820)
African East Coast (incl. Mozambique Zanzibar)	-	-	5 (974)	5 (974)
Delagoa Bay	-	several (280)	-	several (280)
Dahomey	1 (226)	-	-	1 (226)
TOTALS	13 (1,290)	9+ (c.1,059)	17 (1,951)	39+ (c.4,300)

However, Robert Shell has also tabulated the total number of slaves for each year from 1652 to 1835 and his numbers are quite different to these listed in Table 1.1. For the year 1752 for example, the given number is 7,193 and for 1796 it is 22,442.²⁷ He bases these numbers on Lodge slaves, VOC officials' slaves and burghers' slaves combined, along with what he admits as "heroic assumptions"²⁸. Nevertheless, the discrepancy between many of the historians' tabulations is due to varying estimations of *privately* owned slaves at the Cape.

Beyond Company-Sponsored Slaving Expeditions

Another means by which the Cape settlement procured slaves was from VOC ships on the return voyages from Batavia and Ceylon. These ships were coming from some of the most

²⁶ Armstrong, 1989:78

²⁷ Shell, p. 447. These numbers also used in van der Ross, R.E., 2005 *Up From Slavery: Slaves at the Cape their origins, treatment and contribution*, Amperstand Press, p. 38.

²⁸ Shell, 1994:445.

remote outreaches of Company routes, and slaves were often brought onboard by Company commandants and officers as labour during the voyage and then sold at a lucrative price at the Cape, where slaves were in great demand. James Armstrong has stated that, "The number of slaves which were brought to the Cape by the annual return fleets is not easily determined" but he contends that their overall contribution to the Cape's slave population "was small."²⁹ These figures, however, only reflect the documented 'official' VOC transactions. The *private* slave trade played a major role, and while private exchange was supposed to be illegal without Company approval, it was nevertheless condoned by the Cape administration that turned a blind eye.

Shifting Slaving 'Sources'

In the first decades of the 18th century, large numbers of slaves were imported from the Indian sub-continent³⁰. However, slaves from this region declined during the 18th century in favor of slaves from Madagascar³¹ and the Indonesian archipelago (Fig. 1.1).

Extending further into the 18th century, Robert Ross contends that in the 1760s the majority of imported slaves came from mainland or island Asia, but by the 1780s this trend had changed.³² He notes that in 1767, a prohibition was enacted against the importation of Asian slaves into the Cape on Company ships. The official reason, in part, was to control unauthorized use of shipping space on Company ships. Ross has stated, "more importantly it was a result of a panic in Cape Town after Buginese and Sumatran slaves had murdered a company official and run

²⁹ Armstrong, 1989:79

³⁰ The Dutch gained an advantage in India when Portuguese power declined towards the end of 16th century. The Dutch took control of Goa, as well as established trading posts at Chinsura in Bengal and at Surat in Gujarat. By 1661 they had control of the Coromandel coast, and a major portion of Malabar coast after capturing Cochin and Cranganore. (Da Costa, Y., and Davids, A. 1994: *Pages from Cape Muslim History*, Schuter and Shooter (PTY) Ltd, Pietermaritzburg.)

³¹ See Shell for a discussion of the decline of slaves from the Indian subcontinent.

³² Ross, Robert 'Last Years of the Slave Trade to the Cape Colony,' in Clarence-Smith, W.G. (ed) 1989 *The Economics of the Indian Ocean Slave Trade in the Nineteenth Century*, London: Frank Cass, p. 212.

loose for some weeks on the slopes of Table Mountain. Ethnic stereotyping of slaves was such that the fear of the few men in this group of outlaws was extended to all slaves from Sulawesi and indeed from the whole of Indonesia.”³³ However, it is debatable just how effective these ordinances were.

Dutch slaving interests were significantly disrupted after the Dutch-Anglo War of 1780 - 1784. The British gained navigation rights around the Indonesian archipelago and in the post-war treaty the Dutch naval and commerce areas were ceded to the British Crown. The number of Dutch ships bringing slaves to the Cape declined dramatically and according to Robert Shell, “The Anglo-Dutch War proved to be the true watershed date for the origin of Cape slaves.”³⁴

Consequently, this dramatic interruption of Dutch cargo monopoly severely affected the slave supply and resulted in Cape burghers publicly competing for slaves brought in from the East Coast of Africa by French and Portuguese slavers. Ross has stated, “From the mid 1780s onwards, there were a considerable number of ships which sailed from one of the East African posts to the Caribbean or Brazil. Between April 1783 and December 1793 at least 60 ships on such a journey entered one of the Cape harbours for a longer or shorter period, and were thus certainly able to sell slaves.”³⁵ After 1808, the British navy captured many of these slavers and brought ‘Prize Negroes’ to the Cape for a period of ‘apprenticeship’. This resulted in a much greater demographic profile of Bantu-speaking Africans at the Cape than previously, contributing further to the Cape cultural melange.

³³ Ross, Robert 1989:212 (sourced from the Simon’s Town ship logs).

³⁴ Shell, 1989:45

³⁵ Ross, 1989:212

The Nature of the Slave Force: Company Slaves and domestic slaves

There has been much academic inquiry and research into the institution of slavery during the VOC period, particularly through the lens of the Slave Lodge as its occupants were far better documented than “the numerically more important slaves of the burghers.”³⁶ The Slave Lodge was built in 1679 to house the Company’s slaves, making it the second oldest colonial structure in Cape Town after the Castle. The building underwent many alterations and phases of rebuilding during the 17th and 18th centuries and only parts of the current structure are original fabric from the slave period. The Lodge is unique in the history of slaving practices, and is the only surviving Dutch East India Company slave quarters of its kind in the world. Economic needs were fairly constant in the 18th century, and the VOC was realistic about their labour needs. This resulted in the Lodge slave population staying well below 1,000 during the whole of the VOC period.³⁷ It is estimated that between 7000 and 9000 slaves passed through the Slave Lodge over a period of 132 years, and it was the largest slaveholding institution in Southern Africa throughout its existence.

The Lodge also housed Asian and Indian convicts (*bandieten*), the mentally disturbed, and some political exiles. The mortality rate was very high because of epidemics (e.g. smallpox), and outbreaks of other infectious diseases and new arrivals were particularly susceptible to mortal illnesses.

While most of what is known about the slaves in the Cape is based on the Lodge slaves, this does not amount to much. We know where they came from and their date (and rate) of death,

³⁶ Armstrong, 1989: 85

³⁷ Ibid

but only half of their names have been traced and no archaeological record of Lodge slave burials has yet been found.³⁸

As noted previously, the Lodge slaves were just a fraction of the Cape's slave population because the overwhelming majority of urban slaves worked in domestic and private households. This is Robert Shell's main point in *Children of Bondage*.³⁹ Household slaves in private hands were very different from Company-owned slaves. Uneven sex ratios and division of labour were major characteristics of private vs. Company slaves at the Cape. Through the 18th century "adult male slaves exceeded the number of women slaves considerably, so that by 1796 there were about twice as many men as women slaves."⁴⁰ This unequal sex ratio was most evident in the division of the work force. Women were primarily taken in as domestics for Cape households, while men most often performed the more physically taxing labour in the town, which would have affected life expectancy and mortality profiles.⁴¹

Baptism

The debate on the baptism of slaves reached a level of intensity that necessitated comment by Reformed Church leaders who assembled as the Synod of Dordt in 1619. No consensus was reached by the Synod, and the onus was thus placed on slave-owners to bear the burden of Christianizing and baptizing their slaves. Cape slave owners were concerned that baptism would "narrow the gap between slave and settler in status"⁴² and that the slaves would no

³⁸ Nigel Worden, pers. comm.

³⁹ Also see Antonia Malan's work on domestic inventories and slavery in Cape Town. By 1821 the average number of people per house in Cape Town was 11, of whom nearly half were enslaved or had been slaves.

⁴⁰ van der Ross, R.E., p. 38.

⁴¹ These profiles can make predictions for the physical anthropology to test. Gender and age at death of slaves, for example, would be able to further inform the documentary evidence.

⁴² See Ibrahim Rhoda's work on the early Muslim communities of the Strand. (Progress Report 24 April 2003, p. 4)

longer become 'property' upon baptism and could not be sold again. As private slave owners, they interpreted this ruling "to suit their labour needs and sense of self."⁴³ The Dutch Reformed Church at the Cape was also complicit in maintaining the status quo, as there are no records of any worthy initiative on behalf of the Church or missionary societies towards the Christianizing of slaves.⁴⁴ Religious affiliation and conversion would have an impact on burial, by dictating where (in theory) one could and couldn't be buried.

Lodge Slaves were nearly all baptized and recorded separately from those slaves who were privately owned. Only a very small number of private slaves were baptized and manumitted (baptism was a prerequisite for manumission). As slaves could not contract legal marriages and Muslim and Jewish marriages were not recognized, "it is safe to say that before the abolition of slavery the majority of children were born out-of-wedlock...European settlers and birds of passage added substantially to the numbers of out-of-wedlock births. The baptism of illegitimates was thus an issue for the population as a whole and not primarily an underclass."⁴⁵ Recognition of Christian paternity gave legitimacy to these children, which also had consequences for future Church membership, marriage and rights to inheritance. One does find records of a few women who were able to obtain baptism for their children without acknowledgement of paternity or sponsorship, but this is very rare.⁴⁶

Free blacks

The free blacks were a comparatively small yet diverse category in the colonial Cape. The origins of this class are found in the ex-slave population (through manumission, conversion and

⁴³ Malherbe, Candy, 2004: 'Baptism and Identity Creation at the Cape of Good Hope, 1665 to 1840', for discussion at 'Castle, Coercion and Control' research group meeting, African Studies Centre, UCT 11 March 2004

⁴⁴ Rhoda, quoting Shell.

⁴⁵ Malherbe, 2004:2

⁴⁶ Malherbe, 2004:3. See also Gelman Taylor and Stoler viz. Batavian women and inheritance

miscegenation), political exiles and Chinese convicts. While numerically small, they occupied an important sector of the Cape Town retail economy and occupations, from involvement with various shipping industry-related work, tailors and shoemakers, candlestick makers, saddlers, furniture-makers, masons and fishermen - to name but a few of the many skills mentioned in travelers accounts, court records and secondary sources. Free women also held particular positions such as seamstresses, washerwomen, and domestics.⁴⁷ The free blacks held certain privileges in the colony, such as the freedom to own and sell land and to own their own slaves and livestock. They could borrow from the Church Council, and were free to return to Asia if they asked permission and paid their own costs.⁴⁸ The free blacks occupied the lowest rung of slave-owners in socio-economic hierarchy of the Cape.

Political Exiles

There were a number of political exiles incarcerated at the Cape on orders from Batavia. Those people perceived as threats to VOC hegemony and commerce in the East Indies (often religious or political leaders capable of rallying support that would undermine VOC control), were banished as exiles to the Cape. Exiles were considered intellectually dangerous and attempts were made to keep them isolated from others.⁴⁹

Political exiles often were the leaders of resistance movements against foreign rule. Islam was quite widespread across the Indonesian archipelago during the period of Dutch occupation and Muslim religious Figureheads were often involved in inciting disobedience against Dutch legislation, particularly when public practice of Islam was prohibited. Once captured, their

⁴⁷ See Elizabeth Jordan 2004: "Washerwomen, Culture and Community in Cape Town: A Archaeological, Historical and Oral Historical Study".

⁴⁸ Armstrong, p. 146. For an in-depth exploration of 'Free Blacks', refer to James Armstrong's chapter in *The Shaping of South African Society 1652 - 1840*.

⁴⁹ See Robert Shell's paper, 'Islam in South Africa, 1653 - 2001', presented to the Seminar on Slavery and Political Exile, Slave Lodge, Cape Town, 23 March 2005.

period of incarceration was spent on Robben Island or other isolated rural outposts around the Cape Peninsula.

This process of censoring and removing Muslim leaders from Indonesia inadvertently encouraged the diffusion of Islam at the Cape. An important figure in Cape Muslim history, for example, is Shaykh Yusuf, who was banished to the Cape in 1693, accompanied by twelve imams, two wives and twelve children. He was sent to Zandvliet, a farm, located near present-day Strand on False Bay. From here, it has been argued, that Shaykh Yusuf laid the foundation for the practice of Islam at the Cape.⁵⁰ Nigel Worden, who challenges the degree of influence attributed to Yusuf Islam's has stated, "oral traditions, backed by strong circumstantial evidence, suggests that Islam was also spread by other shaykhs and their followers among the *bandieten* and exiles who were placed on Robben Island, at Constantia and other parts of the Peninsula, even before Sheikh Yusuf's arrival."⁵¹

Although there had been Muslim slaves, exiles and free blacks in Cape Town from the 17th century, a sense of community only began to emerge markedly in the 18th century. A growing tolerance to Islam on the part of the VOC authorities partly contributes to this, although "the Dutch certainly did not welcome Islam neither did they try to destroy it."⁵² The resistance to baptism, as discussed above, fueled slave and free black conversion to Islam, and was a significant factor in Islam's growth and expansion at the Cape. Unbaptized slaves were forbidden to marry in Christian rites, so many chose to formalize their union through Islamic custom. The religion also offered social networks and support, which "transcended divisions of

⁵⁰ Ibrahim Rhoda contests Shaykh Yusuf's influence on the establishment of a Muslim community at the Cape, positing that while Shaykh Yusuf did have a small following at Zandvliet, communication between Cape Town and the outposts for Muslims was difficult due to VOC control of travel and communication between convicts and exiles (who were generally the first Muslims at the Cape). Rhoda also explores the demographics of Javanese exiles to arrive at the Strand in the 18th century and the establishment of an early Muslim community there.

⁵¹ Worden et al, 1999:77

⁵² Worden et al, 1999:124

class, if not race”⁵³, through which they experienced an equality of status otherwise denied to them. There is evidence that celebrations of the Prophet’s birthday and the end of Ramadan were held in the homes of free blacks by 1772. By the 1790s regular Friday prayers were being conducted in the stone quarries, at the foot of Signal Hill. These practices indicate the development of a culture “which was distinct from the dominant ethos of the Company and free burgers.”⁵⁴

It was not until 1804 that religious freedom was allowed and the public practice of Islam was permitted. The establishment of a Muslim community, coupled with the date of legal practice of Islam, has significant implications for the religious identity and chronology of burials at Prestwich Street.

Creolization

The process of creolization of slave society developed as people from diverse cultural backgrounds were fused together by the unrelenting condition of slavery. The processes of miscegenation and inter-marriage, created new social dynamics, particularly as the numbers of ‘locally born’ increased⁵⁵. It is difficult to speak of the labour force in Cape Town being based on a racialized system – race played a role, but a changing role: “the importation of many groups of slaves from many different societies, coupled with the process of creolization and intermixture, made Cape slavery based solely on the biracial system...increasingly impossible to justify”.⁵⁶

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Worden et al, 1999:77. Also see Robert Ross 1983, *Cape of Torment: Slavery and Resistance in South Africa*, London: Routledge.

⁵⁵ See Nigel Penn 1999, *Rogues, Rebels and Runaways: Eighteenth Century Cape Characters*, Cape Town: David Philip.

⁵⁶ Shell, p. xxxv

Cape-born creole slaves were sometimes “indistinguishable in appearance from their owners” (who themselves could have been free-blacks or poor burghers) and their “green-and-blue eyes” surprised many visitors to the Cape.⁵⁷ The portrait of the Storm family (Fig. 1.2), with the distracted light-skinned slave child on the far right, illustrates this point.



Figure 1.2. Portrait of the Storm Family, circa 1760.

Robert Shell’s graph (Fig. 1.3) tabulates the growing percentage of local births between the 17th and 19th centuries that contributed to the process of creolization. Although this graph presents creolization as a function of Cape births, it was also an on-going social process.

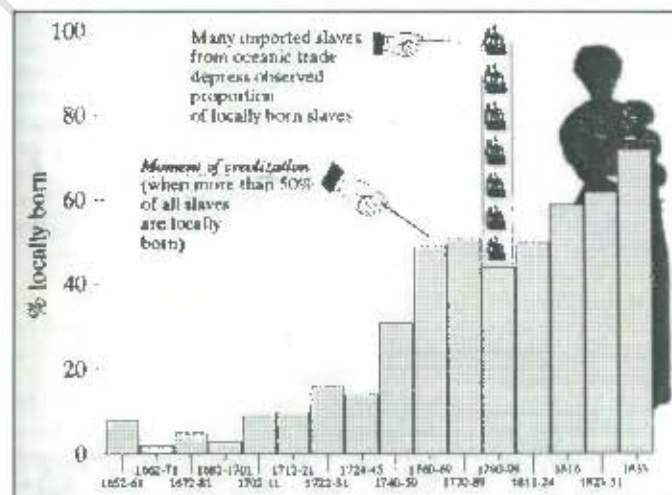


Figure 1.3. Percentage of Slaves locally born at the Cape, 1652 to 1833

⁵⁷ Shell, p. xxxiv

Class development

The social structure of Cape Town was rigidly controlled by the VOC. The “hierarchical ordering of the Cape Colony” can be inferred from the regulations (*plakaaten*) which attempted to control the ‘pomp’ demonstrated by VOC officials.⁵⁸ Assertion of class standing was made through rituals and symbols⁵⁹. Batavian sumptuary laws (to regulate personal and moral behavior) were adapted to the Cape as the Tulbagh Code, which restricted the wearing of certain kinds of clothes to persons of certain ranks:

Only senior officials could wear velvet, only junior officials could have gold or silver shoe buckles, while emancipated slave women were forbidden to wear silk, lace or hooped skirts and were confined to chintz or striped linen. Slaves were obliged to dress in ‘totally plain’ clothes, unless they belonged to high-ranking officials, in which case they could wear livery. But none were supposed to wear shoes.”⁶⁰

The visibility of social hierarchy was asserted top-down, and critical importance was placed on clothes or procession to delineate between ranks of class. This system grew in magnitude for burghers and upper societal echelons as the Cape settlement expanded during the 18th century. This control of personal appearance by class and rank does have obvious implications for burials, as the material remains of dress may indicate social standing in life.

There was heterogeneity and distinct differences in legal status and class on the lower rungs of the social order. Free blacks, political exiles, convicts, European labourers, military regiments, and sailors are all part of the *mélange*. The Cape settlement was also considered a ‘hospital’ station where the ill from various military companies and commercial ship crew would come to

⁵⁸ Ross, Robert 1999, *Status and Respectability in the Cape Colony 1750 – 1870*, Cambridge University Press, p.34

⁵⁹ Hall, Martin, 2000, *The Archaeology of the Modern World: Colonial transcripts in South African and the Chesapeake*, London: Routledge.

⁶⁰ Worden et al, 1999:73

convalesce.⁶¹ Many of those who were not present and accounted for at the settlement also had their final resting place in the sandy Table Bay shore, from foreigners who died on passing ships, to those bodies washed up from the substantial amount of shipwrecks.⁶²

According to Martin Hall, the Europeans in this class were a motley crew:

“...people of different legal status contributed to the *mélange* that was the bottom end of southern African colonial society. VOC soldiers were drawn from the European peasantry, often vagrant before boarding ship as a last resort....As a seaport used, at least sporadically, by all European trading with the east, Cape Town attracted a wide variety of transients, deserters and refugees from European poverty. Given this history and diversity, the concept of an ‘underclass’ is more flexible and appropriate than a more specific category.”⁶³

Furthermore, similar to the diversity among Europeans there was also great differentiation in the legal standing of various slave groups from the East. Slaves, particularly from certain geographic areas (refer to ‘Stereotypes and slave distribution’ below) held the lowest rung of this ‘underclass’ society. Petty criminals from Asia and India, including the Chinese, were also subsumed into slave labour, or into the free black class.

Despite the rigid social order imposed by VOC authorities on Cape society, it is unlikely that the labouring classes viewed themselves in such stratified terms. Shared leisure time for the fraternity of workers led to a level of social cohesion – and most importantly, the *taphuis*, or tavern, was the center of Cape Town’s social scene. Nigel Worden describes the meeting of the

⁶¹ From the VOC East Indies, although other ships no doubt took advantage of the medical presence here. Cape Town continued to be regarded as a ‘hospital’ station by the British military into the 20th century.

⁶² Ship crew members and military were often buried en route, although if far out to sea, many had ocean burials.

⁶³ Hall, Martin & Ann Markell (eds), *Historical Archaeology in the Western Cape*, The South African Archaeological Society Goodwin Series Vo. 7:3-7, 1993.

labouring classes: "Here Company soldiers, sailors, free blacks, poorer burghers and slaves met and drank together, and the common leisure space of the tavern overrode the formal legal distinctions of slave and free."⁶⁴ This common meeting ground facilitated interaction between the working classes, resulting in many out-of-wedlock children because both household slaves and free women spent leisure time in the *taphuis*. The Company attempted to exert control over the taverns after many of Cape Town's 'respectable' citizens complained about the "base Europeans and slaves under the influence of drink"⁶⁵ but their remonstrations had little effect. Cape Town's reputation as the 'Tavern of the Seas' persisted.

Stereotypes and slave distribution

Cape slave owners, when confronted by the diversity in their slave labour, began to categorize different ethnicities and construct stereotypes. These stereotypes fed a perception of various 'classes' of labourer. These perceptions were more rigidly fixed in the public domain controlled by the slave-owner, but within the privacy of the slaves own social stratum, these distinctions fell away.

Dominant stereotypes constructed at the Cape were based ethnic lines. Angolan slaves, for example, were "murderous and thievish" and a "foul, evil-smelling race, with villainous slits in their faces which have been cut into all sorts of patterns". They were housed in the Slave Lodge, segregated from the other slaves, and given the dirtiest work to do.⁶⁶ Mozambican slaves appear to have been well regarded, especially for the purposes of agriculture. Malagasy slaves had a poor reputation initially, but were soon considered to be skilled and industrious agriculturalists.⁶⁷ Javanese were "stubborn" and should be assigned to "hard labour farms."⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Worden et al, 1999:79.

⁶⁵ Ibid

⁶⁶ Armstrong, 1989:83

⁶⁷ Ibid

A resident of the Cape, Robert Semple, wrote extensive descriptions of the Cape Slaves. He stated that slaves from the Malabar Coast were, "in all respects the best of the household slaves. Without the inactivity or dullness [sic] of the Mozambiquer, or the penetrative genius of the Malay, he forms an excellent medium between the two – more intelligent, more industrious and more active than the former, more docile and more affectionate than the latter..."⁶⁹

However, it is difficult to say to what degree these stereotypes were subscribed to in assigning different ethnicities to certain types or work, regions or contexts. The material record may shed light on whether there was any degree of correlation between stereotype and slave assignment. If Malagasy slaves were routinely sent to agricultural outposts, it would follow that there exists a greater probability of this being reflected in the material culture of that context. This dovetails nicely with the results of an analysis of a skeleton uncovered at the Slave Lodge at Vergelegen, a country manor established in the early eighteenth century by Governor van der Stel. The remains belong to a woman in her fifties at death, who was probably buried sometime in the late 1700s (although the exact date of interment "is difficult to infer from the archeological data")⁷⁰. The isotopic analysis indicates that she spent her early childhood in a region where tropical or semi-tropical grains were a central part of the diet, and where "seafood did not feature largely".⁷¹ A change in diet is indicated later in life, when the level of seafood she consumed increased. This is consistent with historical knowledge about fish as staples of the underclass at the Cape. Sealy and Cox have stated that, "(Her dramatic change in diet) almost certainly reflects her capture and sale as a slave, eventually coming to live at the Cape."⁷²

⁶⁸ Shell, 1994:189

⁶⁹ Ross, R 1999: *Status and Respectability in the Cape Colony 1750-1870*, Cambridge University Press, p. 35.

⁷⁰ Sealy, J.C, AG Morris,, R. Armstrong, A. Markell, C. Schrire, 1993: 'An Historic Skeleton From the Slave Lodge at Vergelegen', *Historical Archaeology in the Western Cape, South African Archaeological Society Goodwin Series* 7:84-91, p. 89.

⁷¹ Ibid

⁷² Sealy, J. & G. Cox 2003: 'What can science tell us about slavery? Using bone chemistry to identify slaves at the Cape', *Science in Africa*.

Although it is not possible to determine the exact origin of this woman, one may rule out some areas based on the isotopic signature established, and it is suggested that she was living in a non-coastal region, possibly inland/highland Madagascar, or mainland Indonesian or India.⁷³

Changes during the British administration

British administration of the Cape from 1795 saw the greatest influx of settlers from a diversity of European nations. These were labourers, adventurers and artisans, drawn by the appeal of opportunities and employment in a new land. Many were redundant troops discharged from service at the end of the Napoleonic wars. Additionally, British regiments and seamen stationed at the Cape numbered in the thousands at any given point up until the 1830s.

Major changes in the urban underclass occurred in the beginning of the nineteenth century as a result of abolition and emancipation. Soaring rates of manumission saw the urban slave population in Cape Town decline dramatically, from 9367 in 1806, to only 5583 in 1834. A booming economy led to agricultural development in the interior, and this encouraged the outflow of the urban underclass and influx of European artisans and apprentices.⁷⁴ Some historians have argued that this demographic shift was not actually a decline in urban slaves, but a redistribution of labour to the rural periphery.⁷⁵

After the British slave trade was abolished in 1808, the Cape saw a 're-Africanization' of slaves imported as 'Prize Negroes' who were 'captured' by the Royal Navy from illegal (non-British) slaving vessels en route from the east coast of Africa. The slaves were then brought to the Cape, and although they were supposed to be freed, they were instead 'apprenticed' for fourteen

⁷³Sealy et al, 1993:89

⁷⁴ See Andrew Bank 1991: *The Decline of Urban Slavery at the Cape, 1806 – 1843*.

⁷⁵ Robert Shell is of this opinion, and has contested Bank's work.

years, and formed "a major increment to the unfree labour of the Cape."⁷⁶ The total 'booty' of 'Prize Negroes' is unknown, but it is estimated that at least 5,000 were imported between 1808 and 1856.⁷⁷

Conclusion

The VOC established a dynamic, organic trade affecting three continents (Europe, Africa and Asia) that shifted according to commercial and military pressures, determining the ethnic make-up of arrivals and residents at the Cape. The slave trade has been outlined in detail in this chapter to highlight the diversity of peoples and cultures affected. The first wave of slaves to the Cape in the late 17th century were West African, with India, Madagascar and the Indonesian archipelago gaining favor as the trade turned east during the 18th century. Mozambique became a main slave supply area after 1795. 'Prize negroes' were the main source of labour after the abolition of the slave trade in 1808. Cape society became increasingly multicultural through the 18th century, with free blacks, political exiles, and various social and legal strata of European entwining their cultural threads (through the processes of Creolization and miscegenation) to create the diverse social fabric of the city. This pluralism is sure to be reflected in the burial landscape of the city, as new cemeteries are established according to religion or affiliation. The 'population arcs' indeed closed at the southern-most tip of Africa, and the Cape burial landscapes took shape around this global diversity.

⁷⁶ Armstrong & Worden, 'The Slaves, 1652 – 1834' in *The Shaping of South African Society 1652 - 1840*, p. 120. Also See Ross, *Cape of Torments*.

⁷⁷ Shell, 1994:148, referencing Christopher Saunders estimation.

CHAPTER TWO

PRESTWICH STREET IN CONTEXT: THE EXPANSION OF CAPE TOWN'S BURIAL LANDSCAPE

*Daniel questioned Bart and his wife about the Cape, and then it was as if Bart himself didn't quite recognize the place. Since when were their corpses swinging on a gallows behind the dunes, as he'd seen at Hell's Door and in Batavia? What big castle was that behind the dunes? What had they done with the Fort? What did all these white houses mean? Why was the sea so far away from the dunes now? Why did everything seem so dry and dusty?*⁷⁸

The curve of Table Mountain, flanked by the sentinels of Devils Peak and Lion's Head cradled a secure city 'bowl' which provided both psychological and physical security, at least in the early days of the outpost. But for the same reasons that the locale was selected, the natural boundaries soon became physical limitations as the pressures of urban expansion increased. The increasing number of years of Cape settlement and population growth had an obvious corollary in the expanse of the burial landscape: the mortality Cape society suffered meant that space had to be found for burial. This chapter is concerned with the identification and location of this burial geography, and in particular where Prestwich Street fits, in the geographical and chronological contexts.

The city 'bowl' contained the main features of the town – the Castle, Company's Gardens and the Slave Lodge. However, the town was separated from the Castle by an open field, creating

⁷⁸ Sleight, Dan, *Islands*, Secker and Warburg, South Africa, 2004, p. 522. Dan Sleight's historical fiction novel, *Islands*, is based on archival documentation. The author is a highly respected authority on the early historical period of the Cape.

“something of a no-man’s land between town and Company headquarters.”⁷⁹ There were no town walls and therefore no distinct boundaries between urban, periphery and rural zones. The spatial limits of initial settlement were marked by naming streets ‘*Buiten*’ (or ‘outer’) in Dutch. These streets are still main thoroughfares in the Cape Town city bowl today: *Buiten*, *Buitengracht*, *Buitenkant*, and *Buitensingel*. Plots of cultivated lands, mainly market gardens, stretched up along the flanks of the mountain. On the western side of town were intermittent sand dunes, behind which was primarily *vlei* (marsh/wetlands).

The natural environment of the Cape was heavily impacted by European settlement – the wildlife was decimated, and wood cutting had left the Cape with a severe timber shortage which destroyed the vegetation cover, and topsoil was washed down the mountains and into Table Bay. This process of erosion pushed the existing shoreline further into the bay, and “time after time they have been obliged to lengthen the quay that has been made in the harbor.”⁸⁰ The shortage of wood is also reflected in anecdotal and archaeological evidence of people being buried without coffins.⁸¹

The dune cordon at the foot of Signal Hill (or ‘Lion’s Rump’) had provided an area for the disposal of human remains for local Khoekhoen groups who had used the area to bury their dead for hundreds of years⁸². The dune cordon ran right through what is now the Central Business District of Cape Town (Fig. 2.1).

⁷⁹ Worden et al, 1999.

⁸⁰ Worden et al, 1999:39, referencing Anders Sparrman, *A voyage to the Cape of Good Hope* (2 vols, Cape Town 1973-51 57 and n.63

⁸¹ Laidler, PW and Gelfand M 1971: *South Africa: Its medical history 1652 – 1898*, Cape Town, Struik, p. 55.

⁸² Cobern Street excavation (1994-95) yielded a Khoisan burial with associated pottery, etc. These sand dunes have yielded much archaeology related to human occupation of coastal zones in southern Africa. See Heather Apollonio and Glenda Cox MA theses on Cobern Street, also Alan Morris 1997.

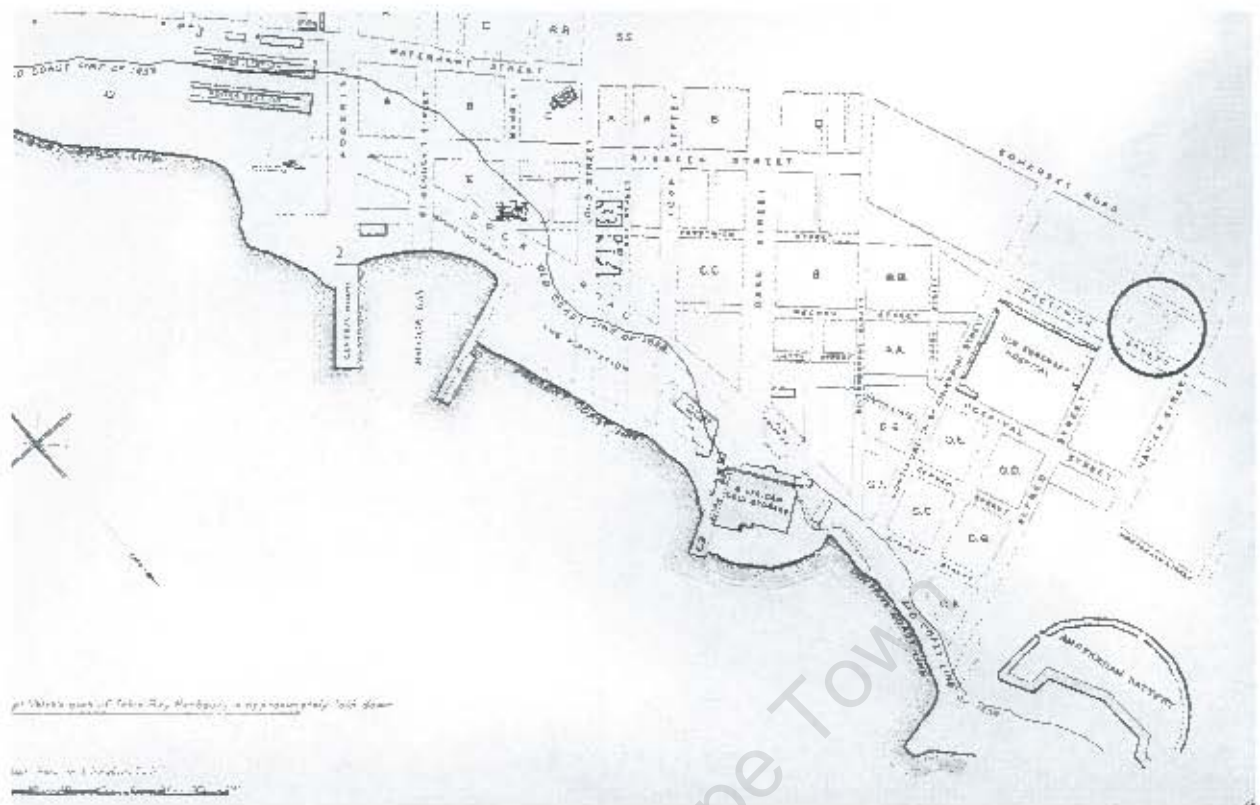


Figure 2.1. 1858 Shoreline, with Prestwich Street site circled. The 1858 shoreline would have already been modified from the 17th or 18th century coastline through the processes of deliberate infill, rubbish dumping, and soil run-off over the course of settlement.

Prior to European presence at the Cape and the subsequent formal layout of the town boundaries, the 'city bowl', was a part of the Khoekhoen cultural and burial landscape. An excavation under 19th century houses in 1994 at Cobern Street, just a city block north of the Prestwich site, uncovered burials which included the remains of four individuals displaying Khoekhoen characteristics and who were buried in customary upright and flexed position.⁸³ During the colonial period, the dunes of this area also provided easy disposal for small pox fatalities, executed criminals, suicide deaths, or shipwreck victims. Bone chemistry analysis of the human remains from Cobern Street substantiated this diversity. Isotopic signatures have suggested that a number of individuals uncovered from the Cobern Street site lived in tropical climates for the first part of their lives, spending their later years at the Cape, consistent with

⁸³ Morris, A.G and D. Constant. 'The Cobern Street Cemetery: Using cranial variation to reconstruct the biological diversity of the common people of 18th century Cape Town'. Paper presented to the Fourth World Archaeology Congress, University of Cape Town.

what one would expect from victims of the slave trade. Furthermore, a number of individuals had isotopic signatures consistent with that of Europeans, as well as those born and raised locally at the Cape.⁸⁴

As the settlement grew, physical definition of the town became more pronounced. The dune cordon on the western side of the town was referred to as a 'wasteland' and the activities occurring there would have been seen as being 'outside of' civilized town life. In light of these conceptualized spatial boundaries, it is no surprise that the outer gallows, or 'Gallows Hill' was located on a hill among the dunes beneath Signal Hill:

"During the period 1680 to 1795 almost one slave per month was publicly executed in Cape Town...In one 1721 example, drawn from a rather full Cape chamber of horrors, the court sentenced Franciscus Xavier van Tranquebar to be crucified upside down and for the coup de grace to be withheld; at death, the Caffers were to drag the cadaver 'backwards and forwards' through the main byways and streets of Cape Town, taking it to the outskirts of the town (at the present day traffic headquarters, Gallows Hill, Green Point) there to be hanged, first on a wheel and then on the gallows, "and there to be left until the birds of the heavens and the air itself consume the body"⁸⁵

Most sentences decreed that the guilty person should be taken to the place where communal sentences are usually executed and there be "punished until dead."⁸⁶ Thus, the punishment would be carried out at the main execution grounds in town near the Castle representing society's foundation and core, but then the corpse would be dragged through the streets "to the outer place of execution"⁸⁷ (Gallows Hill, Green Point) and left there to decompose before taken

⁸⁴ Cox, G., J. Sealy, C. Schrire & A Morris, 2001: 'Stable carbon and nitrogen isotopic analyses of the underclass at the colonial Cape of Good Hope in the 18th and 19th centuries', *World Archaeology: The Archaeology of Slavery* 33(1): 73-97.

⁸⁵ Shell, 1994:193, quoting VOC 4091 (1242).

⁸⁶ Worden, N and Groenewald, 2005: *Trials of Slavery: Selected Documents concerning Slaves from the Criminal Records of the Council of Justice at the Cape of Good Hope, 1705 – 1794*

⁸⁷ Ibid

down and buried. As a matter of expediency, it can be assumed that those less fortunate souls who spent their final intimate moments with the hangman at the Gallows, were buried nearby. According to Worden and Groenewald, "Being dragged to the outer gallows and buried there beneath it was especially dishonourable punishment."⁸⁸ The connection between the two gallows was highly symbolic. Physically moving between the two spaces meant a literal removal of the offender from the town, in effect cleansing the town from the pollutant. The spatial division between town and periphery was imbued with meaning with regards to exile and rejection from Cape society.

The Cape settlement underwent a slow but steady evolution into a town. The 1731 census recorded a total population of just over 3000 people, overwhelmingly male, with 45% slaves or prisoners. There were 959 Company employees, not quite double the number of Company slaves (585). Free burghers and free blacks were the second largest category, at 785 total, with a large number of private slaves (767) and *bandieten* accounting for 80.⁸⁹ The early Dutch East India Company's flagging profits and early setbacks meant that Cape Town of the early 18th century lagged behind the cosmopolitan bustle of trade centers in the East. Nigel Worden describes it as "still a relatively primitive place, whose outward image of neat and whitewashed houses concealed a less organized and pleasant reality."⁹⁰

⁸⁸ Worden, N and Groenewald, *Trials of Slavery* 2005. This can raise predictions for the archaeology, as reflected in the mode of burial. It would be a fascinating study to test if the archaeology can discriminate between 'dishonourable' death and death by natural process for these cases. For example, bone analysis can decipher the markings of birds and scavengers which may possibly offer an interpretation for mode of death.

⁸⁹ Worden, et al, 1999:50

⁹⁰ Worden et al 1999.

Beyond Buitengracht – Green Point in the Seventeenth Century

*The veld behind the Company gardens was gold and white with spring flowers. They picked some and walked through the flowers to the outer canal at the western edge of the town, following from there the stream to the sea, as far as the slaves' graveyard, where they placed flowers on Jan Vos's grave. Some graves had a stone at the head, but not one had any inscription... They walked still further outside the town, past the shelters of homeless Hottentots at the dunes... On the beach to the right of them stood the gallows and wheel of the outer justice, where the executed were displayed. There were no corpses, but three large crows examined them from the crossbeam as if taking their measurements. In front of the gallows lay a vast olei, thickly sprinkled with the white dots of water hyacinths.*⁹¹

An early (undated) French map makes reference to the flanks of Signal Hill as the location of a 'Hottentot' (Khoekhoen) village (Fig. 2.2). While it is certain that the Khoekhoen used these dunes for living places as well as the disposal of their dead as noted previously, this map is the only documentary evidence of the existence of a Khoekhoen settlement. The issue here is that Khoekhoen and San burials are part of a very different cultural landscape and sequence that shared the same geography as the 'historical' VOC period. However, to date, the ability to identify and separate this component from the historic burials has been relatively successful.

It is not known whether the French map was merely a retrospective artistic embellishment, or a literal scene witnessed by the map artist. A Khoekhoen settlement on what was to become the outskirts of Cape Town, past the 'wasteland' of what would become Green Point, would not have been improbable. Accounts from the 16th century explicitly mention a group of Khoekhoen living at the mouth of the Salt River (the site of the doomed Portuguese on-shore expedition). The indigenous Khoekhoen would have exploited the good grazing ground in the

⁹¹ Sleight, 2004:507. This is a fictionalized description of the Khoekhoen village, possibly based on this same French map.

area before displacement by European settlement.⁹² Upon the establishment of VOC interests at the Cape, expansion of settlement activities forced the Khoekhoen further from the town. This started the unequal trade exchanges while concomitantly increasing their dependence upon the settlement as they were often plied with drink and other 'desirables', as payment in kind for livestock and produce.

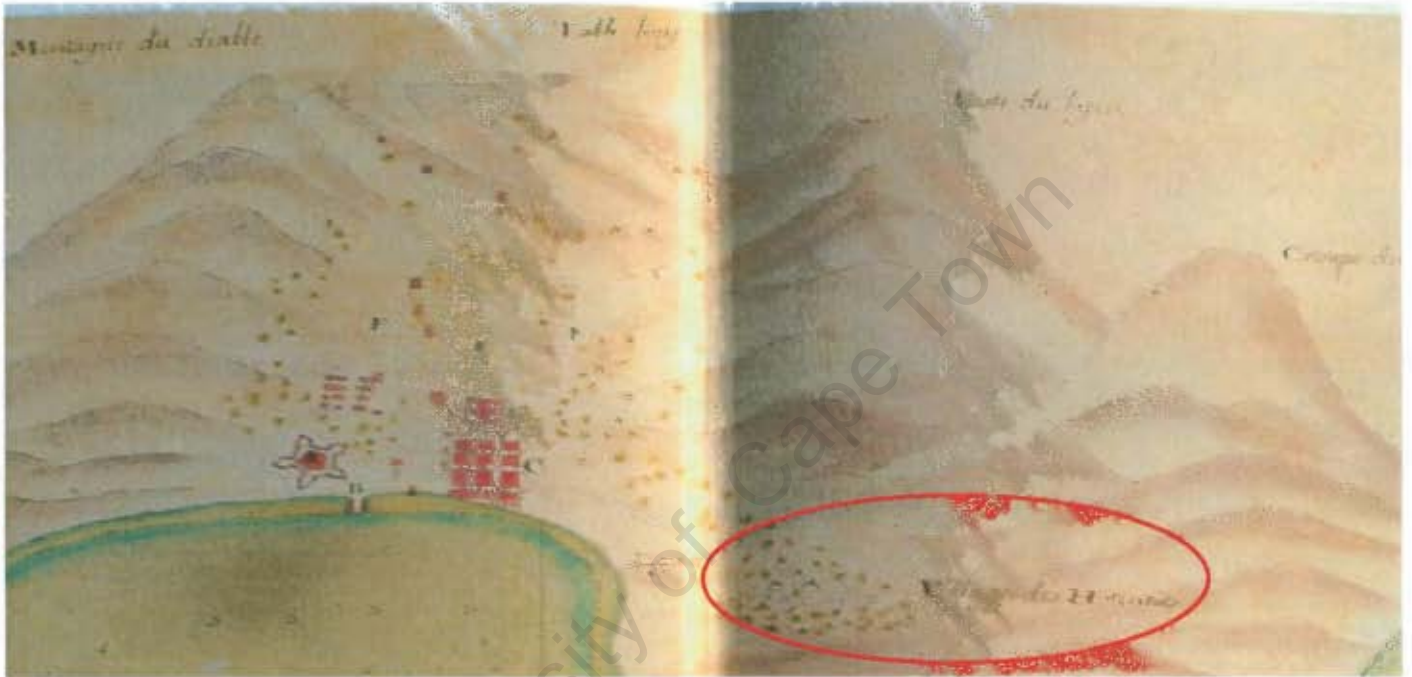


Figure 2.2. French Map of Table Bay settlement (Cape Town), approximate date c. 1700. Khoekhoen ('Hottentot') village circled⁹³.

⁹² Van Riebeeck also recognized and took advantage of this topographic feature for his own livestock.

⁹³ Boucher, M and Penn, N (eds) 1992: Britain at the Cape 1795–1803, Houghton, SA, Brenthurst.

Beyond Buitengracht - The Eighteenth Century

Green Point was largely undeveloped during the 17th century and “the ground consisted of windblown sands about 1.5 m thick that lie on an ancient hard gravel and clay layer. People were clearly using the site as the surface sands were soft and could probably be dug by the naked hand or with simple tools such as spades.”⁹⁴ The burial grounds unearthed at Prestwich Street would have been located within this general ‘wasteland’ often mentioned in journals and early descriptions.

The Chavonnes Battery was constructed between 1715 and 1720, which served as a prison, slave quarters and military barracks. A military cemetery (*Soldaten kerkhof*) can be identified on maps just after this date, as a rectangle on the settlement’s outskirts, placed at an odd 45-degree angle to the rest of the town. This cemetery is assumed to be associated with the construction of the Battery, although the exact date of its establishment is yet unknown.⁹⁵

No documentation exists to identify slave burial grounds; there is only anecdotal evidence on the nature of burial, rather than the location. Initially slaves were buried in gunny sacking or blankets, but after 1710 Lodge slaves who died had to be buried in coffins.⁹⁶ Yet, during periods when mortality rates were exceptionally high, blankets continued to be used. When 200 of a total of 570 Lodge slaves died during the 1713 smallpox epidemic resources were stretched and when planks were used up, the dead were buried without coffins. In 1715, an aggrieved gravedigger named Adolph Bergers complained that burghers were undermining his job by

⁹⁴ Hart, Tim. ‘Appendix 2, Technical Report on Archaeological Excavations at Prestwich Place, Green Point, Cape Town’, Archaeology Contracts Office, UCT, Unpublished report, 11 August 2003.

⁹⁵ Antonia Malan, pers. comm.

⁹⁶ Laidler, P.W. & M. Gelfand M 1971:55

burying their own slaves themselves in "a slovenly manner"⁹⁷ and the shallow holes resulted in exposure of the bodies, to be eaten by "hyaenas, jackals and dogs".⁹⁸

Otto Friedrich Mentzel, who lived and worked at the Cape, provides an important passage on a burial ground in the 1740s:

"...situated between the Castle and the town, towards the mountain side, but, with the expansion of the town, another cemetery was formed on the west side facing the Bay and near to the big battery. Near this cemetery are also found the vaults for the graves of the Chinese who had been banished to the Cape. In the same locality is situated a burial-ground for slaves, as well as the wheel and the gibbet, upon which the condemned are carried after sunset from the usual place of execution."⁹⁹

Menzel also comments: "The Consistory charged 50 Cape gulden for a burial plot in the churchyard; the amount was doubled for a foreigner or one who had died on board ship. There was another cemetery for those who could not or would not pay this fee."

This passage gives insight into life at the Cape towards the mid-18th century and observes that shipboard deaths also contributed burials to this area. What the documents and maps make clear is that your status, religion, position and wealth whether as a permanent resident of the Cape, or someone who was in transit, determined where you were buried in the 18th century, either inside or outside the bounded official cemeteries.

After the 1755 small pox epidemic, the established cemeteries overflowed and a new cemetery was opened, on a plot of land just adjacent to the *Soldaaten Kerkhof*, but on the town side. "When existing burial grounds filled up it was necessary to open new ones near the sea (later known as

⁹⁷ Ibid

⁹⁸ Ibid

⁹⁹ Mentzel, Otto 1921: *A Geographical and Topographical Description of the Cape of Good Hope*, p. 128

Somerset Road). Corpses had been buried above corpses not yet decomposed, reducing the possible depth of burial and causing a terrible stench."¹⁰⁰

A 1767 VOC plan provides more resolution and shows two rectangular graveyards a short distance from the shoreline, one for burghers and the other for slaves (the current day Green Point area). Gordon's 1790s panorama (Fig. 2.3), shows the area just adjacent to the walled cemeteries as marked 'slaaven begraafplaats' (slave burial ground). Many of the contemporary illustrations such as drawings by Johannes Schumacher (Figs. 2.4, 2.5) show oblong markers outside of the walled cemeteries that presumably indicate the area of informal burial.

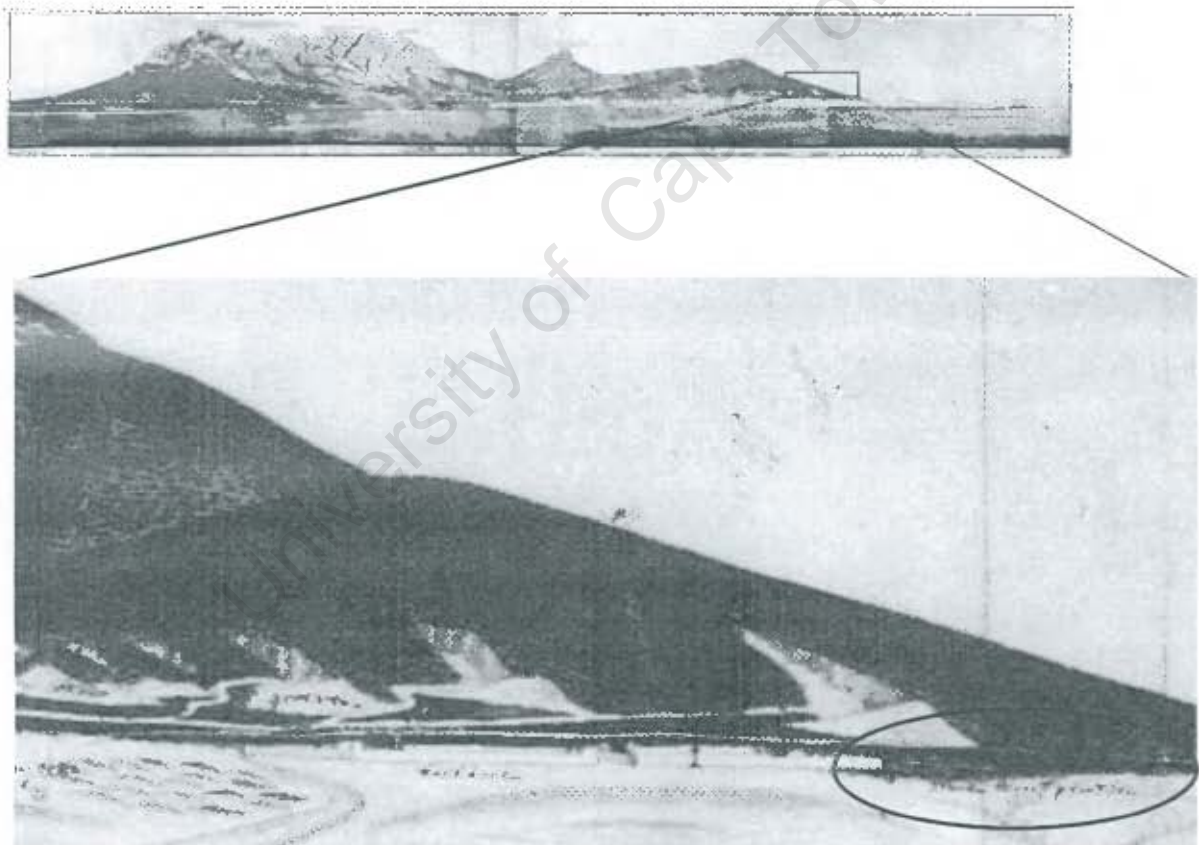


Figure 2.3. Gordon's Panorama of Cape Town, 1790s. 'Slave burial ground' (circled) is located outside of the walled military and burger cemeteries.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ Laidler & Gelfand 1971:57

¹⁰¹ CA AG 7146.38



Figure 2.4. Johannes Schumacher 1786, View of Cape Town with Lions Head (and rump). Note Chavonnes Battery in foreground. Official VOC and DRC cemeteries circled.



Figure 2.5. View of Table Bay, Johannes Schumacher, 1786. Arrow points to the VOC militia and DRC graveyards, the informal burials are just adjacent (circled)

Beyond Buitengracht – The Nineteenth Century

19th century Cape Town experienced a population boom and strained beyond the 'buiten' boundaries as pressure intensified for "more housing, warehousing and commercial development."¹⁰² The Burgher Senate initiated formal development with a land survey, and acted on plans for new roads and building lots at the base of Signal Hill. By 1818 Prestwich Street and several other new streets in this designated area had been laid out (Fig. 2.6).



Figure 2.6. Map of Cape Town, circa 1850. The urban edge of expansion (what would become known as the area of Green Point) was becoming defined by this time. The city block bounded by Prestwich and Napier streets is clearly marked on this map (circled).

A map of the Green Point area in 1836 (Fig. 2.7) illustrates the changing urban edge definition, with new streets and development marked. A paupers burial ground (the title of the map) is marked as a nebulous 'cemetery' on the periphery of the town's expansion.

¹⁰² Malan, A, Site History of Cobern Street (unpublished report).

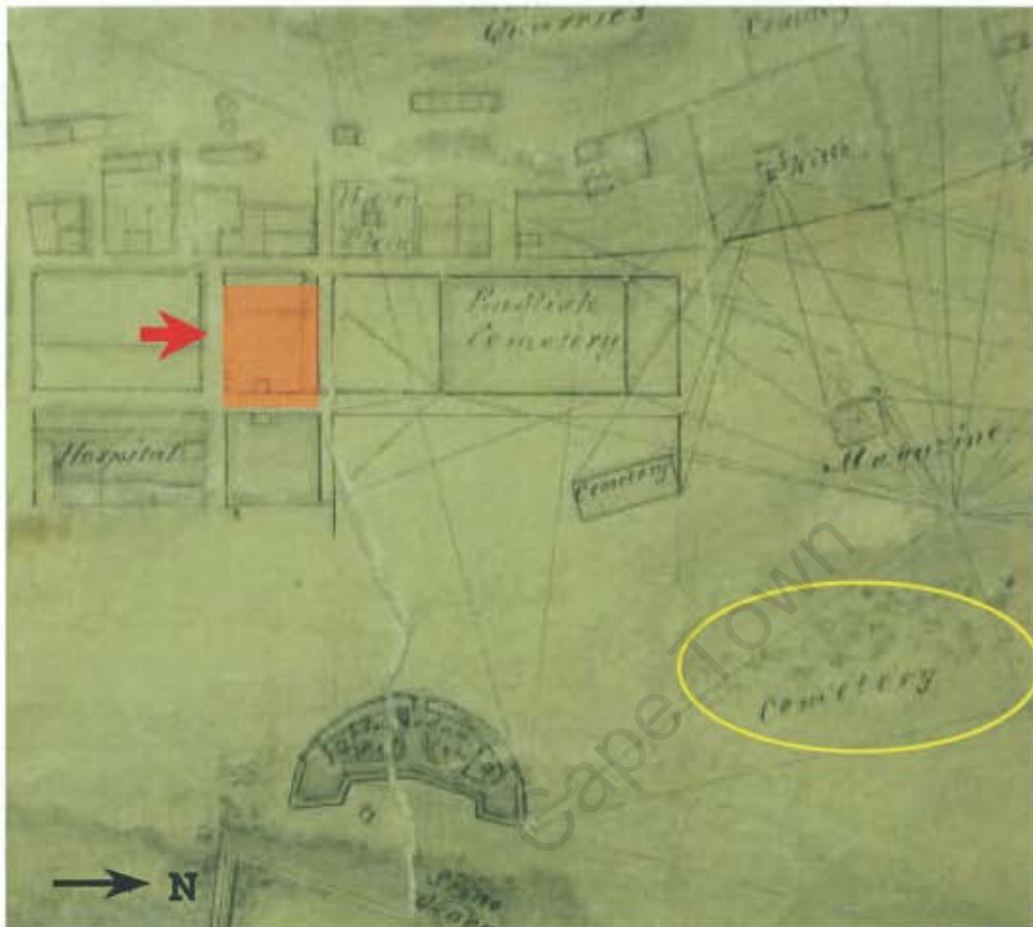


Figure 2.7. C. J Grey's sketch of Green Point and pauper's burial ground, 1836. Arrow points to Prestwich Street erven. 'Pauper's cemetery' is circled.¹⁰³

Beginning in 1817, Green Point plots were demarcated and sold. The title deeds to these 'erven' (plots) transferred hands quite often. The area bounded by Prestwich, Schiebe, Napier and Alfred Streets would have been just outside of the walls of the *Soldaten Kerkhoven*, the old military cemetery.

As the urban expansion moved towards (and indeed, *over*) this 'informal' burial landscape, it brought the nature of burials in the Green Point area into focus. In response to the public outcry

¹⁰³ CA M1/571

on the state of burial grounds and the formally lodged complaints, the Burgher Senate declared a ban on informal burials in this section of town in 1819:

'In consequence of complaints lodged before the President and Members of the Burgher Senate that Dead Bodies are buried outside the walls of the General Burial Places, to the great nuisance of the Public ... there is now a Place fixed between the Moullie and Chavonne Battery for the interment of Slaves and those (other than Moslems) that are not of the Christian persuasion'.¹⁰⁴

In 1818, the South African Missionary Society was concerned that there was no formal burial ground in Cape Town for slaves and 'heathens' who had adopted the Christian doctrine. This was motivated by the fact that human remains had been unearthed during construction in the area. The Society felt that because this area had already been used for informal burials, a 'formalization' of the grounds should occur.¹⁰⁵ Members of the church appealed to the government to provide land to establish a cemetery. It was argued that even the Moslems had their own burial ground; likewise, Christians should have their own as well.¹⁰⁶

Although it is certain that Muslims buried their dead on the slopes of Signal Hill (and in the Somerset Road/Prestwich Street area) long before 1805, it was in this year (after religious freedom was allowed) that the first piece of land was officially granted to Imam Frans of Bengal as a *Javaansche begraafplaats* (Javanese burial ground, i.e. Muslim burial ground) on Signal

¹⁰⁴ Cape Town Gazette 31 July 1819 (ref. in Murray, Marishchal1964: *Under Lion's Head: Earlier Days at Green Point and Sea Point*, Cape Town: Balkema, p. 22).

¹⁰⁵ It is unclear if these were Khoekhoen burials, or informal burials of the Dutch period.

¹⁰⁶ CA Church records V1 1/6 in 'Phase 1 Archaeological Investigation of land in Cape town previously know as the South African missionary society burial ground.' Archaeology Contracts Office, UCT, unpublished Report prepared for Grinaker projects and properties, Nov 1996. P. 2

Hill.¹⁰⁷ Achmat Davids, in his monograph on the history of the Tana Baru cemetery, has stated, "The official land grant, the first of its kind, made available a piece of land opposite a site on which Muslims of Cape Town were unofficially burying their dead for years. It was made as part of an expression of goodwill extended to the Muslims by the Batavian Republic officials following a declaration of religious freedom on 25 July 1804. The granting of religious freedom was accompanied by two specific privileges: the right to build a mosque and the granting of this burial site."¹⁰⁸

When Batavian control and the Dutch East India Company's authority officially ended in South Africa with the onset of British rule, the suppression of denominations other than Dutch Reformed Church also ceased. Their public emergence required official burial areas. In 1825, more ground in Green Point for cemeteries was requested, but the Burgher Senate initially hesitated as this land was already earmarked for development.

By the 1840s, however, several other churches - the Lutherans, English Episcopalians, Anglicans, Scots, Catholics and Presbyterians - established their own cemeteries along Somerset Road. The Scottish church granted land behind the old Somerset hospital, just adjacent to the old slave cemetery, while the Anglicans were closer to the Gallows (Fig. 2.8). The Salesian Institute in Somerset road stands on the western portion of what was once the military burial ground. The Roman Catholic Church was granted 75% of the VOC military graveyard and the

¹⁰⁷ As early as 1772, Thunberg in his travel journal (Travels in Europe, Africa and Asia) describes a Chinese burial in this area. Muslims were buried in the same vicinity. The burial ground land grant clearly defines the area as "over hunen teegenwoordige begraafplaats" (opposite their (the Chinese) existing burial ground). The Chinese burial ground in Tana Baru has been documented. The Chinese community in early Cape Town has been written on extensively by James Armstrong. In my research I have come across some interesting references to the *Muslim Chinese* of Indonesia, and use of the interment architectural design called a 'kramat' in their burial tradition in the East Indies, which seems tantalizingly similar to the 'kramats' of the Cape. Although beyond the immediate scope of this thesis, an investigation into shared Islamic tradition between the Chinese and other Muslims coming from the East Indies would be of great merit and interest.

¹⁰⁸ Davids, Achmat, 1985: *The History of Tana Baru*, Cape Town: Committee for the Preservation of the Tana Baru, p. 5

remainder was retained by the hospital.¹⁰⁹ The small section reserved for the hospital was hopelessly overcrowded, but still received more than 150 burials between 1842-1844, that included seventy drowned seamen from the wreck of the *Waterloo*.¹¹⁰



Figure 2.8. Map of church cemeteries in Green Point. Prestwich Street site highlighted¹¹¹

The intensification of the shipping industry and the upgrading of wharf services also added to the pressures of development. The north wharf opened in 1840, and parliamentary authorization for the construction of a breakwater and new harbor was passed in 1857. Because of this focus, residential and commercial development then exploded between Somerset Road and the dock area. However, it still took several decades for the Prestwich Street erven to be completely capped by buildings. The development on these erven is illustrated by the following sequence of 19th century town surveys (Figs. 2.9 and 2.10).

¹⁰⁹ Loos, Jackie, 'Digging into the city's past', *Cape Argus*, Wed. August 6, 2003, p. 11

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ CA F149/1 (vol. 4/1/1/143)

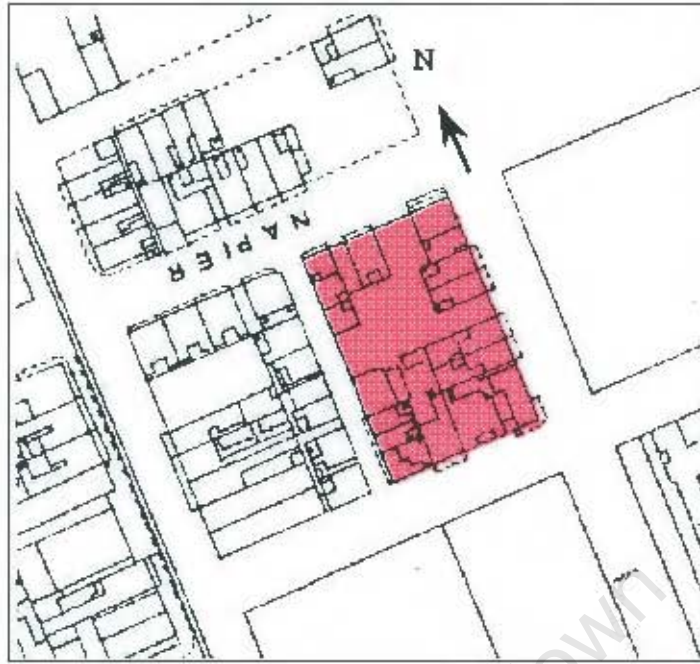


Figure 2.9. William Barclay Snow's Municipal Plan of the City of Cape Town, 1862, with Prestwich Street erven highlighted. Note the open spaces between buildings.



Figure 2.10. Walter Thom's Survey circa 1900 (but surveyed in the 1890s) clearly shows West Street dividing the block. Both erven are nearly completely developed.

The small pox epidemics and consequent severe overcrowding of the cemeteries in the latter half of the 19th century led to petitions and complaints by the public being lodged with city authorities. Vivian Bickford-Smith has contended that, "The small pox outbreak of 1882 hastened the economic downturn in Cape Town. It was also one of those occasions that forced the dominant class to look at the living conditions of the poor."¹¹² A public debate ensued over the crowded living condition, the 'poor upkeep' of the area, and 'moral shortcomings' of those living in the slum areas of Green Point and the docks. The complaints ranged from the indecent mode of internment necessitated by the crowded state of the burial ground, to general rhetoric about contamination from the under-classes.¹¹³

Consequently, the Public Health Act of 1883 was promulgated in response to the smallpox epidemics of 1858 and 1882 (and the public debate) and required that all urban cemeteries be closed for reasons of health and to prevent the spread of disease.¹¹⁴ The Church Council identified ground in Maitland in 1886, and by the end of the 19th century, all the 'official' burial grounds were reportedly exhumed and the remains were relocated to the Cape Flats. By the time Walter Thom surveyed the area in 1898 (Fig. 2.11), the adjacent Christian burial grounds were designated as 'Disused'.

Although 'uncapped' ground still existed for informal interment purposes on demarcated plots during these phases of development, the disposal of the dead in these areas would have been

¹¹² Bickford-Smith, Vivian 1995: *Ethnic Pride and Racial Prejudice in Victorian Cape Town*, Cambridge University Press, p. 100.

¹¹³ Also see Bickford-Smith, pps. 100 – 103.

¹¹⁴ Murray, Noeleen, 'Breaking 'New Ground' – the case of Cape Town's Tana Baru Burial Ground, Paper for the Associated exhibition of the work at the Bo-Kaap Museum, Sept, 2001. Also see Achmat Davids *The Mosques of the Bo-Kaap and The History of the Tana Baru, and The Revolt of the Malays: A Study of the Reaction of Cape Muslims to the Smallpox Epidemics of Nineteenth Century Cape Town*, for a discussion of the three days of riots in reaction to official move to close urban burial grounds. Davids has described the riots as "the most significant event illustrating political dissatisfaction in the 19th century history of the Muslims of Cape Town" (1985:2). Consequently, the Muslim burial site of Tana Baru was "exempted from development in exchange for relinquishing claims to the Somerset Road and Witsands burial grounds." (Malan, Antonia, 'Why are we digging up our cemeteries? Historical background to burial grounds in Green Point, Cape Town', 2005)

surreptitious and random events. Increased traffic on this previously undeveloped resting ground, coupled with the establishment of various cemeteries, including the Missionary Cemetery in 1818, would have compelled informal grave-diggers to look for ground elsewhere.

Conclusion

In Chapter Two, I have discussed the physical evolution of Cape Town from the pre-colonial cultural landscape from the seventeenth century. I have outlined the social and economic processes effecting urban development and changes in the geography of Prestwich Street through the nineteenth centuries and the correlated expansion of burial landscape in its full geographical and historical context. The initial urban design for the area that was to become Green Point was planned by 1818, and plots were sold during the 1820s. By the late 1830s it can be assumed that structures and buildings on the Prestwich erven had been erected. By 1862, the Prestwich erven were approximately 70% developed, as shown on Snow's survey map. By the 1890s, 95% of the erven was capped.

CHAPTER THREE

TOWARDS AN ARCHAEOLOGY OF SOCIAL IDENTITY AT PRESTWICH STREET

While excavating at Prestwich Street, the first two questions that were always asked by visitors were: 'How old is the site?' and 'Who were they?' Despite the historic nature of the site neither question is easy to answer despite the broad historical framework given in the previous chapters. The question of ethnicity and identity of the people buried there raises more specific questions: Were identities based on place of origin sustainable in a diverse and creolizing eighteenth-century Cape Town? How did culturally disparate people interact in Cape Town? What role did language play?¹¹⁵ ? How did other factors such as imposed or denied religion affect acculturation? Did religion provide a medium in which identities merged and shifted? To what extent did day-to-day socializing create the conditions that encouraged a common or shared identity? The historical context outlined in the previous chapters highlights the complexity of identity, an issue that presents a serious challenge to archaeology.

In order to counter the absolute dualities of identity around enslavement that sees an African identity rapidly replaced by one that mimics the dominating power of their masters, Paul Lovejoy challenges the assumption that "the enslaved population, newly arrived from Africa, was comprised of autonomous individuals with such mixed experiences that they rapidly assimilated into the 'new' societies of the New World, whether characterized 'American' or

¹¹⁵ "Ethnic diversity meant linguistic diversity as well, slaves from Angola, Dahomey, Madagascar, various Indonesian islands, South India, the East African coast and its hinterland would bring their own languages with them, consequently having difficulty communicating among themselves and with their masters. Not surprisingly a lingua franca emerged – in fact there were two. Some slaves used a form of creolised Portuguese, which persisted throughout the Company period,; - most slaves and masters conversed in an evolving form of Dutch which developed into Afrikaans." Worden, p.83

'creole'."¹¹⁶ Lovejoy asserts that the 'fragmented lives' of these slaves in the African diaspora can be reconstructed. While acculturation and assimilation are complex processes that occur at different rates for different people, he posits that there is evidence in the American experience of slavery to suggest that the slave is not entirely severed from his or her origins. He considers an approach that ignores the possibility of retaining cultural linkages to a place of origin to be a great injustice. What contributions can the burials at Prestwich Street make to this issue of cultural linkages and continuity?

Many of the above questions around identity may be beyond the scope of this research, but any archaeological investigation must be mindful of them. How can we begin to consider questions of identity in the archaeology of burial at Prestwich Street? The Prestwich burials provide an opportunity to contribute to a 'bottom-up' history of those relegated to the under-recorded realm of the 'informal' sector. The rise in what has been termed 'African-American archaeology' in the Americas may offer some direction for archaeological investigation in South Africa, as it relates to the 'bottom-up' histories of slaves and their contribution to the labouring classes of Colonial America.

The Archaeology of Slavery and the Underclass in the Americas

The political and socio-cultural climate in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s "provided an intellectual premise for the archaeology of black Americans and other ethnic groups. An outgrowth of these movements was the emergence of the archaeological study of people who left few written records."¹¹⁷ The new historic preservation legislation during the same period

¹¹⁶ Lovejoy, P. 2000: 'Identifying Enslaved Africans in the African Diaspora', in *Identity in the Shadow of Slavery*, ed. P Lovejoy, p. 2.

¹¹⁷ Singleton, T. 1995: 'The Archaeology of Slavery in North America', *Annual Review Anthropology*, 24: 119-40, p. 121.

required investigation into sites threatened by (re)development.¹¹⁸ The parallels with the post-1994 South African experience are striking – the major cultural and political overhaul of the apartheid paradigm transformed the evaluation of the past, as reflected in new legislation such as the National Heritage Resources Act, no. 25 of 1999¹¹⁹. Consequently, the current political climate promotes the emergence of ‘hidden histories’ that had been silenced by the former dominant narrative. The new South African heritage legislation provided the means to ‘open up’ the past and its interpretation to all citizens. However, this legislation did not provide the means for archaeologists to do so, as their work had already been focused on interpreting these ‘hidden histories’ for over forty years, based on the same intellectual and theoretic shifts that also influenced American archaeology. But unlike the U.S., it was not until the 1990s did the national political climate concur with the aims and directives of Southern African archaeology.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ This kind of archaeology, Cultural Resource Management (CRM) is considered to be a ‘mixed blessing’ for African-American archaeology as noted by T Singleton. While it is now necessary to facilitate studies of sites which would have most likely never made it into the academic arena, the nature of contract work is limited in scope, data collected, and analysis. (Ibid, p. 121) Prestwich Street is also characterized by these limitations, but has also provided for a unique overlap of CRM, academia, public and governmental participation.

¹¹⁹ The National Heritage Resources Act (No. 25 of 1999) has ironically led to problems with identifying sites of slavery, as it does not offer parameters of this very nebulous area. The Act merely states that ‘sites of significance relating to the history of slavery in South Africa’ (Section I.(3)(i)) are included in the National Estate and can be protected under the Act. The onus is then on the promoter of the site to define the meaning and parameters of ‘sites of slavery’, which can be a very sensitive area as we have seen at Prestwich Street.

¹²⁰ The notion that complex African societies were in existence for centuries was antithetical to settler consciousness. Thus, support for the dissemination of this research during the apartheid era was obviously not particularly forthcoming. The apartheid system muzzled this area of research (e.g. Iron Age archaeology) from becoming popular knowledge by effectively controlling the education system (through textbooks and so forth) which promoted a particular view of South African history and pre-history. This was enabled by the fact that only a small number of archaeologists and academics mostly at liberal universities were producing rather esoteric work not easily accessible to the layman. See Martin Hall, 1987: ‘Hidden History: Iron Age Archaeology in South Africa’, Center for African Studies, UCT and Nick Shepherd, 1995: ‘Archaeology after Apartheid’, African Seminar Paper, Center for African Studies, UCT. Since the end of apartheid, archaeology in South Africa is only slowly beginning to be valued in the public domain as making contributions to previously invisible histories and to the democratization of the past. However, rather ironically, this cultural ‘inclusivity’ has raised new issues which continue to pose challenges to archaeology which shall be explored in Chapter 6

Letting the Material Record Speak

Two important themes have emerged in the archaeology of slavery in the Americas: the first is 'everyday living conditions under slavery' and the second is 'expressions of cultural identity'.¹²¹ Material culture is being reevaluated through the lenses of tropes such as: social contexts of dominance and resistance, and status differentiation¹²².

The search for evidence of a 'cultural identity' of slaves has been primarily based on the interpretations of artefacts. Research in the United States on the cultural beliefs of enslaved people has been inspired by the presence of cowrie shells, beads, ornaments, pierced coins, polished stones and pebbles, and reworked glass and ceramic objects uncovered at archeological sites. Archaeologists develop interpretations of material culture with the help of oral histories and ethnographic analogies. Yet, for 'African-American' archaeologists, the search for identity in the archaeology of slavery has more often than not been based on the interpretation of the material record, and "*gives primacy to evidence supporting the continuity of an African heritage rather than to its discontinuity and reconfiguration.*"¹²³ This approach, undertaken by many African-American archaeologists, has been criticized for 'playing down' what may be elements of the process of this 'reconfiguration' or acculturation.

Theresa Singleton argues that the creation of a new identity involves both processes (of continuity and discontinuity) and therefore both should be included in the archaeological

¹²¹ Singleton, 1995:123

¹²² Early Cape Town society, as was outlined in Chapter 1, had an overwhelming domestic or 'household' slave economy, as well as being highly urban. An established (but currently under revision following urban renewal projects, e.g. Boston and New York) paradigm of the U.S. experience of slavery is very different; that of a plantation-based economy with slaves primarily from West and Central Africa. A great difference also lay in categorization. A bi-racial concept of slavery arose in the U.S, while in Cape Town: "The main categories used by contemporaries to describe people were not 'black' and 'white', but 'Christian' and 'heathen'. Although the two systems of terminology were similar, the emphasis lay on cultural assimilation rather than fixed racial status. The concept of rigidly divided races defined somatically did not emerge until the mid-nineteenth century." Worden, p. 69

¹²³ Singleton, 1995:131

research of enslavement.¹²⁴ She contends that searching for identifiable artefacts ('African grammars') may not be the best approach to understanding the archaeological record during this process of creolization:

"Unfortunately at this stage of research, approaches to the study of African-American ethnicity in archaeology rely exclusively...on the identification of ethnic markers either linked to Africa or associated with African-Americans for other reasons (i.e. inexpensive cuts of meats, patterns of ceramic usage). Either approach, however is ineffective for the interpretation of the vast majority of African-American sites that yield little or no evidence of these ethnic markers...Future archaeological studies of African-American life should aim for developing a framework that draws on the critical factors that went into shaping African-American cultural identities in specific historical and social settings...Because the factors that produce cultural identities varied through time and space, the archaeological evidence of cultural identities will also be variable."¹²⁵

With this in mind, the challenge presented by the Prestwich Street burials is great indeed. Working within Singleton's suggested framework, as well as the current legal restrictions on research¹²⁶, I focus less on geographic origin of the people buried at Prestwich Street, but instead use cultural attributes from selected burials to discriminate between different burial identities and potential trends within those that relate to historical context.

A key point is that Prestwich Street site is not *merely* a 'slave site'. There is no doubt that slaves were buried there, but focusing on this fact alone simplifies the complexity of early Cape Town

¹²⁴ Also see *The Archaeology of Inequality*, Edited by Randall H. McGuire & Robert Paynter, Cambridge, Mass: Basil Blackwell, 1991. Beth Ann Bower's article, 'Material Culture in Boston: The Black Experience' (pps. 55 – 63) in particular, calls for historical archaeologists to be alert for variation in the material culture of African-American urban underclass, reflecting heterogeneity in the slave experience.

¹²⁵ Singleton, 1995:134

¹²⁶ Limitations on research have been put in effect by the South African Heritage Resource Agency, prohibiting skeletal analysis, thereby disallowing basic anatomical analysis (sex, age at death, pathologies) as well as bone chemistry analysis (isotopic) which would indicate dietary and environmental influences. This will be explored further in later chapters. Please refer to Appendix I, Letter from the South African Heritage Resource Agency, Sept 2005.

society. Prestwich Place is an important site because it represents the working or labouring classes, and such diversity may encourage the value of an archaeological approach because it may be materially expressed and more visible in the formal disposal of the dead.

Identity construction at the Cape

Although the VOC attempted to exert control over the social code (through sumptuary laws, etc), social boundaries were not as rigid in the first century of Cape settlement as they would later become. There was little or no segregation of neighborhoods based on race or class, and most sections of the city were mixed, which facilitated cultural borrowing and the advancement of cultural 'reconfiguration' and identity construction.¹²⁷ Nigel Worden identified the main characteristic of Cape cultural history as:

"the borrowing of cultural traits among groups and the emergence of synchronic cultural complexes. But borrowing was not simply a matter of European culture being transferred to Asians and Africans. It is in any event imprecise to speak simply of 'European' culture: many Company servants arrived at the Cape after a long sojourn - or even a lifetime - in the East Indies, where they had been affected by the mores of the *Indische* (Eurasian) culture in the Company's holdings."¹²⁸

Many of the earlier revisionist historians on Cape slavery have contended that slaves created no culture of their own and the only common and visible culture for the slaves to acquire was that of their masters.¹²⁹ As previously outlined, a diversity of peoples were arriving at the Cape, but rather than balkanizing into separate sustaining ethnic entities, for the most part they became subsumed into a common and 'reconfigured' identity. Andrew Bank expanded on this insight and posits, "Contrary to these bold assertions, it is (almost needless to say) a basic

¹²⁷ It is implicit that domestic slaves lived in the private homes of their owners, contributing to the 'mixed' nature of these residential areas of this period.

¹²⁸ Worden, p. 155

¹²⁹ Worden, p.156

premise...that Cape slaves did have a culture. In the urban context at least, there is firm evidence to suggest that slaves were part of an underclass culture that had both secular and religious dimensions from the late eighteenth century, if not before"¹³⁰ and that "revisionist historiography has...been hindered by its search for a *slave-specific rather than an underclass culture.*"¹³¹ He asserts:

'In a society where slaves worked alongside and interacted with non-slave labourers, the quest for a set of 'norms and values' that were unique to slaves is destined to be a frustrating one. Cape slaves in both city and countryside were part of a subordinated class and did not represent a class *'sui generis'* as in the antebellum southern plantation context. Both in terms of their economic function in society and in terms of their social contacts, slaves were integrated into an underclass that included 'free' labourers...In Cape Town itself...slaves were incorporated into a subordinate class which included free blacks, Khoi and later 'Negro' and European apprentices. The search for a Cape 'slave bubble' has therefore proved elusive, partly because of absences in the sources, but also largely because revisionists have been looking for the wrong cultural indices."¹³²

There would have been great variability in the degree and rate of assimilation and cultural (dis)continuity among all people who arrived at the Cape from abroad – convicts, exiles, slaves as well as Europeans who found themselves thousands miles from their places of birth, surrounded by a diversity of 'strange' people with bizarre customs, speaking in foreign tongues. Issues of age, gender and class are critical here and would have ranged from those slaves who were brought at a young age and most likely adapted to their new lives quickly, to those people who sporadically featured at the Cape in the early VOC years (such as black Africans) who did not have enough compatriots to buttress an identity from 'home' and were

¹³⁰ Bank, Andrew, 1991: *The Decline of Urban Slavery at the Cape 1806 to 1843*, Centre for African Studies, University of Cape Town, 1991, p.99. He also states in his endnotes that this view (that Cape slaves had a culture) has become acceptable among historians of this period. He mentions specifically Armstrong and Worden's updated version of 'The Slaves 1652-1834' as well as Robert Shell.

¹³¹ Banks, 1991:99. My emphasis.

¹³² Bank, 1991:100

thus subsumed into the colonial culture, to those who consciously retained a connection through spiritual belief or particular community and attempted to reestablish some semblance of it at the Cape (such as Muslim Javanese political exiles).

Nigel Worden has elaborated this issue and suggested that, "With the possible exception of the Madagascans, there was never a large group of slaves at the Cape with a single cultural heritage, and no ethnicity was intentionally concentrated in one locale."¹³³ For example, while the isotopic evidence suggests that the skeleton found underneath the floor of the Vergelegen Slave Lodge was from Madagascar or a similar climate. However, she was buried in a coffin and placed in a supine position, a funereal practice unlikely to have been practiced among the indigenous population of Madagascar. This placement reflects exposure to new cultural traditions. This was also an indication of her 'status'; for while she may have retained her foreign identity in life, in death it was erased and subsumed by the dominant religious and cultural substrate.¹³⁴

It has proved challenging to distill a distinct slave or 'labouring class' presence in the historical archaeological record as they resemble their masters or the 'dominant class' *materially*. The sharing of the same domestic culture (e.g., plates, bottles, and sundry functional items) and the mixing of distinct material signatures in the same municipal or domestic dumps potentially translates into a homogenization of identity in the material record.

In contrast, the burial landscape has the potential to either substantiate or contradict claims for cultural continuity. While Bank perhaps overemphasizes the degree of cultural assimilation of

¹³³ Worden et al, 1999

¹³⁴ See Sian Jones 1997: *The Archaeology of Ethnicity*

slaves into the general 'underclass', the archaeological record, particularly the burial record, may be mined for evidence to support or contradict his position.

Segregation between class and religious affiliations were enforced in the burial landscape. Burial discrimination determined inclusion or exclusion from the 'official' DRC and VOC Militia cemeteries. At the turn of the 19th century came further segregation based on religious denomination: if you were Lutheran or Anglican, Catholic or Scot, you had a place where 'your kind' was buried.

It as been shown, all subcategories of the 'labouring class' would have been buried in the area recognized as 'informal' ground by the VOC. However, their respective ability to command space within an informal burial ground would perhaps have diverged greatly. While slaves would have been almost completely disempowered and barred from exercising control over manner and locale of burial, free black's interstitial status in life may have translated into instances of 'formalized' assertions upon the burial landscape.¹³⁵ The documented Chinese burial ground on the slopes of Signal Hill may be an expression of this. Discrete Muslim burial areas (within the vast 'informal' and anonymous burial ground) may also indicate a particular social status and identity beyond merely religious orientation. The archaeology of burial may capture a degree of formality within these informal burial grounds.

Relating to degrees of formality, Andrew Bank states: "here Islam was the segregationist exception to the integrationist norm, while simultaneously reinforcing those of class"¹³⁶. Will this segregation based on Muslim identity be visible in the archaeology of Prestwich Street? Social identity and class differentiation among these groups may be amplified by cultural

¹³⁵ This is true if the slaves were not Muslim. If the slaves did belong to the Islamic faith, then it was the duty of the Muslim community to bury the person in accordance with the faith, regardless of status.

¹³⁶ Bank, 1991:128

attributes distilled from the archaeological burial record, as shall be explored in Section II of this study.

Conclusion

There is little archival documentation from which to infer how members of the 'underclass' may have viewed or identified themselves. The low literacy rate meant that they left no personal accounts.¹³⁷ Historical interpretation has tended towards a homogenization of this 'underclass' at the Cape. People with an extraordinary diversity of traditions, religions and socio-economic stratification have been viewed 'in bulk'. This has been due to the absence of any kind of meaningful records that would illuminate intimate characteristics of the disenfranchised from the 18th century.

The aim in interrogating the Prestwich Street burials is to investigate the differentiation in patterns of burial, their distribution, and presence (or absence) of grave goods. Possible symbolic meaning attached to burial style or inclusion of grave goods that may be reflections of a demographically transforming 18th century Cape Town and its social order. Cultural attributes identified in the archaeological record may reflect behaviors and attitudes towards burial that "may change under processes of adaptation to new circumstances or acculturation, and in that respect mortuary behavior is no more resilient to change than, many other aspects of culture but it can still retain potent associations."¹³⁸ It is possible that inter-personal, and inter- and intra-group relationships, as well as social dynamics on the whole, are reflected in the

¹³⁷ It is only in the transcripts of Cape judicial cases can the voices of slaves or other members of the 'underclass' be found. See Worden and Groenewald, 2005: *Trials of Slavery: Selected Documents concerning Slaves from the Criminal Records of the Council of Justice at the Cape of Good Hope, 1705 – 1794*.

¹³⁸ Mytum, Harold 2004: *Mortuary Monuments and Burial Grounds of the Historic Period*, Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers, p. 145

material culture and attributes of burial.¹³⁹ Translating pattern into process, however, is not easy and the difficulty of chronological control effects a 'flattening' out of the patterns.

While we have documentary information of how the underclass lived, the material evidence of this social stratum is often invisible in the archaeological record. Most archaeological material from this period comes from historical dumps, and the link between various types of ceramics and glass recovered and their owners is quite tenuous. While there may well be material signatures that 'represent' class, their entanglement in dumps erases the resolution of identity. It is even more of a challenge to distill any information about the lower social stratum from this material. In contrast, the Prestwich Street burials is a primary context where *formal* burials may be able to capture an essence of identity, of either the person in the grave, or hint at the factors controlling the act of burial itself.

Attitudes toward death may be teased out at different scales, the first being at the level of the 'bereaved', or immediate community. The second strand is society at large. These two strands will be considered in relation to the Prestwich Street burials. This first scale is reflected most immediately at the level of the body, which has been called a "carefully crafted artefact, further worked and transformed after the moment of death".¹⁴⁰ In this liminal space a corpse is imbued with symbolic meaning, a historically contextualized glimpse into an intimacy of customs motivated by beliefs and fears mirrored in social boundaries and coded systems. Pearson has stated, "The act of burial provides archaeologists with a wide variety of potential information about past funerary practices and their social contexts. The provision of a final resting place for someone's mortal remains is generally a carefully thought through procedure which may have

¹³⁹ Lynne Goldstein, 'One-dimensional archaeology and multi-dimensional people: spatial organisation and mortuary analysis', in Chapman, R, Kinnes, I & Randsborg, K (eds), *The Archaeology of Death*, Cambridge University Press, 1981, p. 57

¹⁴⁰ Pearson, M, 1999. *The Archaeology of Death and Burial*, Texas A&M University Press. P, 71.

taken days, months or even years to plan and execute. Burial is thus a deeply significant act imbued with meaning"¹⁴¹

Whether a wooden coffin was used, or a carefully carved-out niche cavity, or a quick ad-hoc disposal of remains in a mass grave shaft; these forms of mortuary practice are imbued with meaning. They make a statement on the living (and dying) conditions in urban Cape Town. Even if one cannot absolutely pin pattern and variability to distinct formal identities, the fact that various forms and methods of burial may be identified point to heterogeneity in tradition, and as it follows, to discrete cultural groups.

In the next section I present my data from a sample of burials from Prestwich Street with readily identifiable cultural attributes such as dental modification, niche burials, and cultural material (grave goods). Using these attributes, I search the data for pattern particularly in the spatial organization of particular burials and cultural and material attributes.

¹⁴¹ Pearson, 1999: 5

SECTION II

THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORD OF PRESTWICH STREET

When the graves in the official denominational cemeteries of Green Point were exhumed and relocated to the new suburb of Maitland at the end of the 19th century, the event was an important marker that redefined Green Point as part of the center of Cape Town, rather than the periphery.¹⁴² It also uncovered a major discrepancy in the treatment of those buried in informal cemeteries.

Based on the historical records, it had been assumed by city planners that human remains in Green Point had long been disinterred and relocated during the closing of these cemeteries¹⁴³. However, as urban renewal gathered momentum and human remains were exposed at a number of construction sites, it became increasingly evident that the area had not been cleared entirely of burials. These sites opened a series of windows into the extensive Green Point landscape, where just beneath the network of streets and blocks is what seems to be a continuous informal burial horizon.

¹⁴² Only visible or 'cemetery' graves would have been exhumed at this point, as buildings had already been built over large sections of burial ground.

¹⁴³ Hart, Tim, 2003: 7

Early archaeological assessment speculated that these burials had been placed outside the boundaries of 'formal' cemeteries and represented marginalized social classes in life. Prestwich Street has been the largest archaeological excavation to date of this unmarked and 'informal' burial landscape, and is significant because the sample is the greatest number of historical burials uncovered at a single site in South Africa. What follows is the first analysis of the Prestwich Street material recovered from this extraordinary excavation.

In Chapter Four, I briefly review the history of archaeological investigation in the Green Point area. In Chapter Five, I present my data and describe and discuss the variability of burial styles, the range of dental modification and grave goods, and their frequency and distribution. In the sixth and final chapter I move from the analysis of material culture and burial as a passive 'static' reflection to an exploration of the dynamic processes and discourses of power under which these people were buried. This discussion is premised on the principle that the dead, quite obviously, do not bury themselves, and the act of burial engaged with complex and negotiated social roles that are "manipulated, acquired and discarded."¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁴ Pearson, 1999: 32

CHAPTER FOUR

THE HISTORY OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION IN GREEN POINT

The recycling of the Green Point urban landscape has occurred in various phases. The original dunes were leveled early on in Dutch occupation, and the area was used for VOC and DRC cemeteries and 'informal' burials. This period will be called Phase One, and lasted into the early part of the 19th century when the Green Point area was surveyed and urban development began.

Phase Two is the phase of urban development of Green Point, which evolved into a structurally eclectic precinct of industrial, warehouse and harbour services, interspersed with residential homes as well as the 'official' cemeteries. As outlined in Chapter 2, development expanded over the 'informal' burial landscape during this period.

Green Point began to deteriorate physically and socially (in the eyes of the authorities) toward the end of the 19th century¹⁴⁵. The area immediately surrounding the Old Somerset Hospital was described as "bounded on one side by a disused, neglected cemetery, and on the others by dirty narrow streets"¹⁴⁶. The outbreak of plague in 1901 saw an "intense intolerance to foreigners from every part of the Continent, consisting largely of Portuguese, Italians, Levantine and Polish Jews"¹⁴⁷. Indians and Chinese were regarded suspiciously as carriers of the 'oriental plague'¹⁴⁸ and a great number of plague deaths occurred. It was natural to link disease to the high percentage of foreign occupancy and this strengthened the

¹⁴⁵ See Bickford-Smith 1995.

¹⁴⁶ Worden et al, 1999:36

¹⁴⁷ MOH-46-668, Simpson Report, 22 May 1901

¹⁴⁸ Van Heyningen 1989:334-5

'upper class' conviction that Green Point was a filthy and festering neighborhood. Steps were soon made to reduce the perceived squalor by passing legislation in 1906 for clearing the disused Green Point cemeteries.

Unbeknownst to those living on the 19th and early 20th century surface, the 'mixed' demography of their own community was a continuum of the diversity buried directly beneath their feet. In the 20th century Green Point residents were subjected to a number of enforced changes, beginning with the 1923 Urban Areas Act passed to enforce the compulsory residence of Africans in locations outside of the center of Cape Town. The 1930s saw the introduction of the Slum Clearance Ordinances that "gave municipalities and government the powers to acquire slum properties for demolition and rebuilding and also made it possible to demarcate areas for development, a course favoured by the City Engineer's department."¹⁴⁹ Not long after, the apartheid government's 1950 Group Areas Act zoned Green Point as 'White' and forcibly removed most of the residents. Many families experienced a traumatic upheaval and rupturing of social fabric when their communities were dispersed throughout the Cape Flats, similar to other more dramatic forced removals from District Six. After this time, the construction of warehouses and factories increased. Purging the social 'character' and complexity of the area resulted in a sterile, functional precinct and it became a generally overlooked part of town.

With the transformation of government in 1994, South Africa again was brought into the global community. Tourism and investment has played a major role in the gentrification and development of formerly undesirable areas. The reevaluation of Green Point is a case in point. Its central location is tied to the continuing success of the Waterfront and it was inevitable that this area would be targeted and its status elevated to an increasingly

¹⁴⁹ Worden et al 1999:147

upmarket precinct. This late 20th – early 21st century urban renewal is the third phase in the recycling of this landscape.

GREEN POINT EXCAVATIONS

When human remains were unearthed during urban development in the 19th and early 20th century (Phase 2), all went ignored and unreported. Public works such as water mains and sewage systems were installed and traversed the Green Point informal burial ground. The remnants of a stone Dutch drain, British-period iron pipes and modern ceramic pipes, for example, were uncovered during the excavation period and this activity clearly disturbed numerous burials. The bones from these burials were pulverized and cast aside.

With urban renewal (Phase 3) contract archaeologists were hired to assess the impact of development in the area and design mitigation and management plans.¹⁵⁰ There have been numerous Phase 1 Archaeological and Heritage Impact Assessments in the Green Point area, but I have chosen to highlight those that have led to an interpretation of the historic informal burial landscape over the past decade (Fig. 4.1).

¹⁵⁰ ‘Salvage’ archaeology, as driven by Cultural Resource Management (CRM) contract work is constrained by time and financial burdens across the globe. Legal implications can also be a major factor determining the quality and thoroughness of the work. On-site and subsequent data capturing and analysis are usually limited. However, the marriage of CRM and academia is a fruitful one, as CRM work usually opens up an abundance of new sites and artefacts not usually focused on by academics. There is great potential for post-graduates to take advantage of this work, however, acknowledging the above-mentioned limitations resulting in data that may not always be as complete as one would hope.



Figure 4.1. INSERT: Aerial photograph of Cape Town, Enlarged view of Green Point with the location of archaeological excavations discussed in the text. (Photo from Google Earth)

Coburn Street (1994)

Coburn Street, just one block north of Napier and Prestwich streets, exposed what we now know to be a continuous burial horizon between the two sites, although this was unknown at the time (Fig. 4.1). The exposed graves "clearly represented a small portion of what remained unexposed."¹⁵¹ The developer agreed to a systematic excavation, "despite the fact, as yet, the site was not protected under the National Monuments Act No 28 of 1969, as amended (however, once exposed, the skeletal material was protected under the Human Tissues Act of 1983, as amended)."¹⁵² An emergency salvage excavation unearthed approximately 65 burials, representing 121 individuals - both of historic and prehistoric age. The historic burial grounds were conservatively dated to the 18th century¹⁵³. The Khoekhoen burials date to c. 1000 AD, and are unrelated to the historic burials.

The Coburn Street burials generated much publicity and public debate that presaged events at Prestwich Street. During 1995 and 1996 a group of bioanthropology specialists analysed and interpreted the burials and material culture from the site. A period of intensive research on the underclass of Cape Town followed, resulting in several papers and two MSc theses on the subject¹⁵⁴. The majority of papers emphasized the physical anthropology and "detailed the historic background of the collection, age and sex distributions, palaeopathological evaluation, and dental health and practices"¹⁵⁵.

¹⁵¹ Apollonio, H; D. Halkett, T. Hart, A. Malan, A. Morris, 'Report on the Excavation of an 18th Century Burial Ground at Coburn Street, Cape Town', Unpublished Report, p. 2.

¹⁵² Apollonio et al, p. 2.

Also, the new National Heritage Resources Act was not promulgated until 1999.

¹⁵³ A conservative date range given in Apollonio's thesis on the Coburn burial site is "no later than 1755 to about 1827, or somewhat earlier, when the land was prepared for development.", p. 84.

¹⁵⁴ See Heather Apollonio 1998, and Glenda Cox 1999. See related publications: Cox, G., J. Sealy, C. Shrire & A Morris, 2001: 'Stable carbon and nitrogen isotopic analyses of the underclass at the colonial Cape of Good Hope in the 18th and 19th centuries'. *World Archaeology: The Archaeology of Slavery* 33(1): 73-97

¹⁵⁵ Apollonio et al, p. 3.

Victoria Junction (1996)

The Victoria Junction site was on land that had once been Anglican and Ebenezer cemetery ground (Fig. 4.1). A “significant amount of disarticulated bones” were found despite archival evidence that the burials had been exhumed c. 1900.¹⁵⁶ The Archaeology Contracts Office suggested that exhumation “only took place on marked graves... The absence of grave markers could have been due to the markers having been removed previously or that the graves were simply unmarked (unlikely if buried after 1832). The other possibility is that these graves are unmarked because they pre-date the Anglican cemetery.”¹⁵⁷ It is more than likely that the ‘formal’ Anglican and Ebenezer churches interred bodies into ground that already contained unmarked historic burials.

Victoria and Alfred Waterfront – Marina (2000) and British Petroleum Site (2003)

The discovery of human remains at the Waterfront indicated the variable quality of exhumation and relocation procedures in the early 1900s. In the case of the former South African Missionary Society cemetery, no human remains were found during test pit excavations in 1996. However, in the Waterfront Marina in 2000, a high number of generally intact remains were discovered and disinterred by archaeologists (Fig. 4.1). These remains were identified as being part of the “massive early 19th century paupers burial ground (possibly known as ‘White Sands’) that existed close to where the inner basin is today.”¹⁵⁸

The British Petroleum site (2003) is most likely related to this same pauper’s graveyard – a secondary deposit of densely packed and crushed human remains were “crammed into a

¹⁵⁶ Hart, T.J.G., ‘Heritage Impact Assessment of West Street and Erf 4721 Green Point, Cape Town’, Archaeology Contracts Office, UCT, Unpublished report, Dec 2003 p. 7

¹⁵⁷ Hart, T.J.G., Second report on the Archaeological monitoring of earthmoving on parts of the Victoria Junction Site, Somerset Road, ACO, UCT Unpublished report prepared for The 406 Fairweather Trust, October 1996.

¹⁵⁸ Hart, Tim, 2003:8.

25 m x 1, 8 m trench amounting to no less than 40 m³ of human bone.”¹⁵⁹ The ACO suggest that contractors working on the construction of the inner basin in the late 19th and early 20th century uncovered a copious amount of human remains and (re)disposed of them in this mass grave.

Prestwich Place (2003)

The Prestwich Place development consolidated West Street (owned by City of Cape Town) and the two erven 167710 and 4721 into a single construction site for an upmarket ‘New York-style high-rise’ development (Fig. 4.1).¹⁶⁰ The southern plot (Erf 167710) was to be cleared first (site of the building named ‘Prestwich Place’), and then Napier House, a warehouse building dating from the 1960s located on the northern plot, would be demolished second (Fig. 4.2).



Figure 4.2. Panorama of Prestwich Street site during the 2003 exhumation, facing west. Table Mountain is on the left of the photo, and Signal Hill is in the middle. Napier House is the large building on the right. Note the cars parked along West Street. Napier House and West Street were demolished in 2004 after these erven were cleared of burials. Photo by Antonia Malan.

Human remains were discovered shortly after site clearing began in June 2003. As a result of the new heritage legislation, all work stopped immediately until legal requirements were met. The developer was obliged to apply for exhumation permit as archaeology and burials would be disturbed in the process of construction work. This permit was issued by the

¹⁵⁹ Ibid

¹⁶⁰ Advertisement by developer.

South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA) on 5 June 2003 to the Archaeology Contracts Office in order 'to perform a rescue exhumation of human skeletal remains' (see timeline of Prestwich bureaucratic negotiations in Appendix I).

The controversy around the treatment of the Prestwich Place human remains has been ongoing for two and half years at the time of writing. The outcome as it now stands, is that the SAHRA has effectively blocked physical research on the human remains, and has stated that no direct testing and analysis (anatomical) of the remains shall take place.¹⁶¹ This presents major challenges for the identification of common heritage for South Africans, and shall be explored further in Chapter Six.

¹⁶¹ See SAHRA letter in Appendix I.

CHAPTER FIVE

TRANSCRIBING THE BODY: BURIAL PATTERNING AT PRESTWICH STREET

ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

There are two main stratigraphic layers at Prestwich Street: an unconsolidated sand layer, averaging 1.5 m in depth towards the western boundary of the site that caps a deeper clay layer over the whole of the site (Fig. 5.1). While certain areas of the site were extremely dense with burials, there were other areas of up to 4 m² that were sterile.

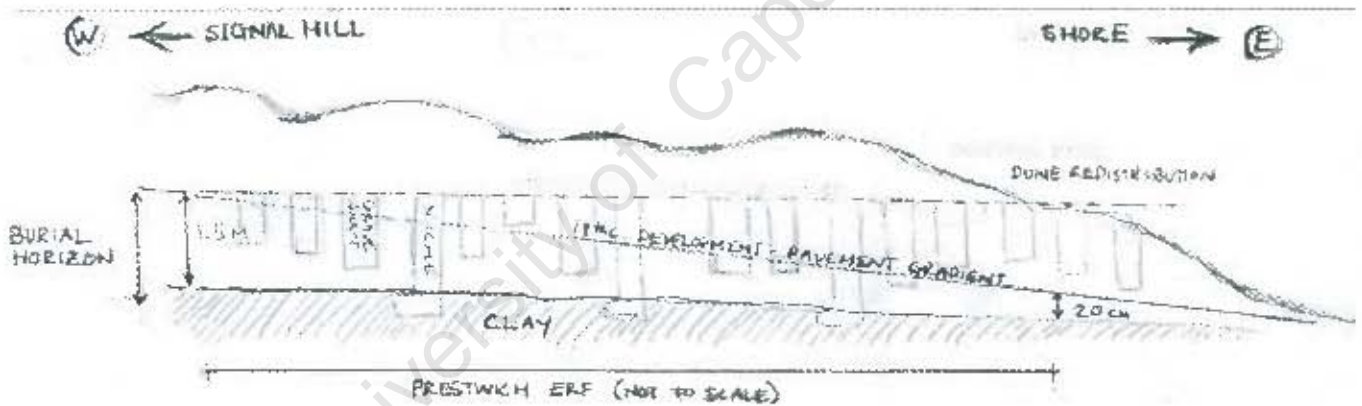


Figure 5.1. Schematic cross Section of Prestwich Street stratigraphy and burial horizon (Not to Scale)¹⁶²

The relative ease of digging grave shafts in sand and an often urgent need for a rapid and expedient disposal of bodies meant that the upper sandy layer was the main burial focus and grave shafts infrequently breached the interface between the upper sandy and lower clay layers. However, it is exactly those burials that were dug into the lower clay layer that are to be investigated in this study.

¹⁶² Drawing by author

The main impression of the Prestwich burials is that there was little overall patterning in the burials due to the disturbance of many of the skeletons. Historic reasons for the disarray are firstly, that graves were generally unmarked and succeeding gravediggers did not know if there were already burials in the ground. Furthermore, the high rate of death, especially during episodes of disease and epidemics, took priority over sensibilities around burial disturbance when the goal was to dispose of the bodies expediently. Tim Hart, head of the Prestwich Street excavation, described the burial horizon as follows:

"In many instances 3 to 4 bodies were layered on top of each other at different times. Burials that had only been in the ground a few months were being dug up to make way for the newly dead – their body parts being scattered over the site in untidy heaps or thrown back into the fills of the lower and later graves. We have encountered numerous instances of coffins broken through by people trying to dig a hole to put in another grave. This state of disarray of the burial ground is consistent with the historical observations on the poor control of burials in Cape Town, especially during the smallpox epidemics of 1755 when the death rate in Cape Town was very high and the diseased corpses had to be buried immediately."¹⁶³

Prestwich site field notes comment, "complex burial of individuals casually thrown into a single grave in an apparently undignified and ad hoc fashion."¹⁶⁴ Dramatic positions of human remains can speak to particular conditions of death: sudden death through execution (the executed were most likely buried near Gallows Hill), health epidemics, homicides, the disposal of the dead from shipwrecks and other major accidents.

Secondly, the post-depositional processes of urban development and renewal resulted in extensive sub-surface disturbance, having affected the integrity of many of the burials.

¹⁶³ Hart, T.J.G, 2003: Appendix 2, Technical Report on Archaeological Excavations at Prestwich Place, Green Point, Cape Town, 26. It is critical to note that burial sequences were not recorded using a Harris Matrix.

¹⁶⁴ Prestwich Street excavation site record forms: Individuals Numbers 761-764.

Urban development in the 19th century (Phase 2) leveled the Green Point area and cut a gradual slope from west to east (Signal Hill to the harbor). This, no doubt, cut through and destroyed many burials in the eastern part of the erven (Fig. 5.3). The difference between the deepest and shallowest Prestwich Street graves was 3.470 meters.

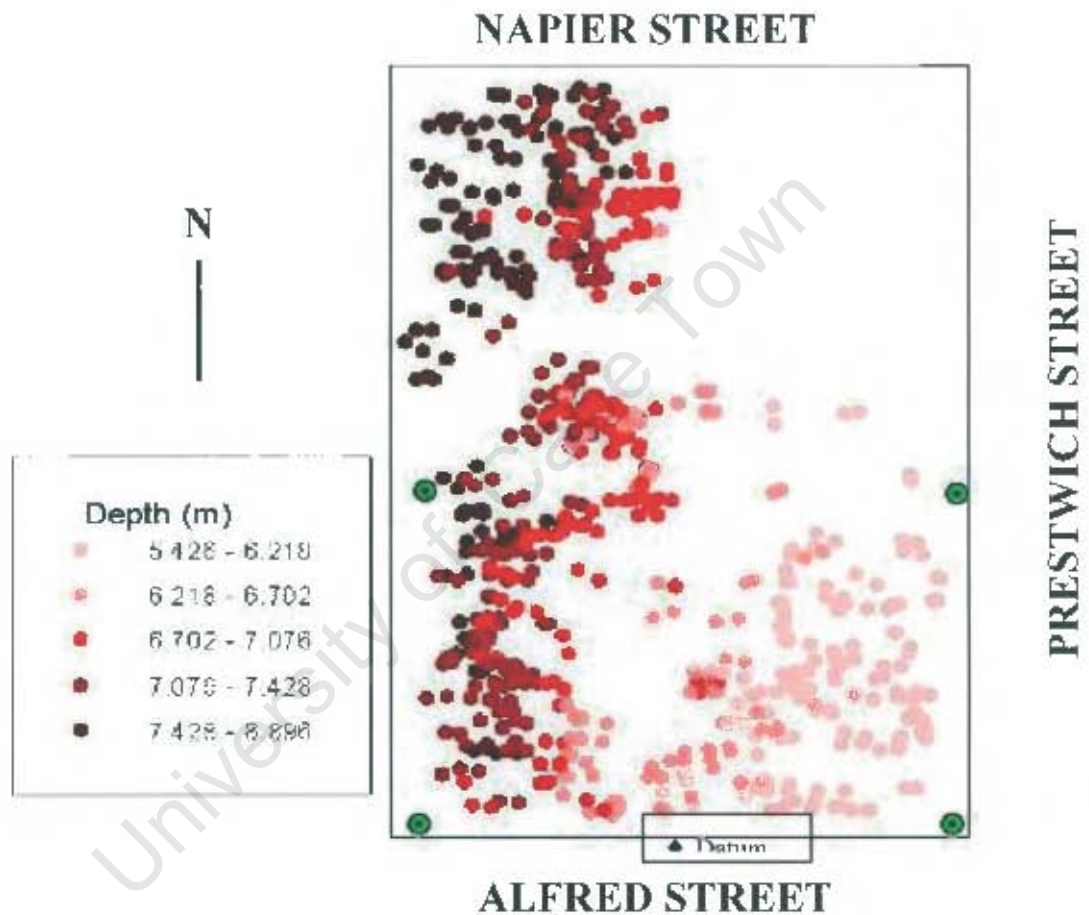


Figure 5.3. Distribution of burial sample set showing the relative depth of burials below the datum point. The shallowest grave shafts on the east side of the erven compared with the west.

The impact on the Prestwich Street burials during urban development (renewal) was considerable. The Napier House construction in the 1960s, for example, cut through numerous graves and the human remains that continued to surface were ignored and went unreported. The deep basement at the eastern side of Napier House effectively wiped out

any trace of the graves that were most certainly there. This void is reflected in the abrupt discontinuity of burials in the northeast quadrant (Fig. 5.4).

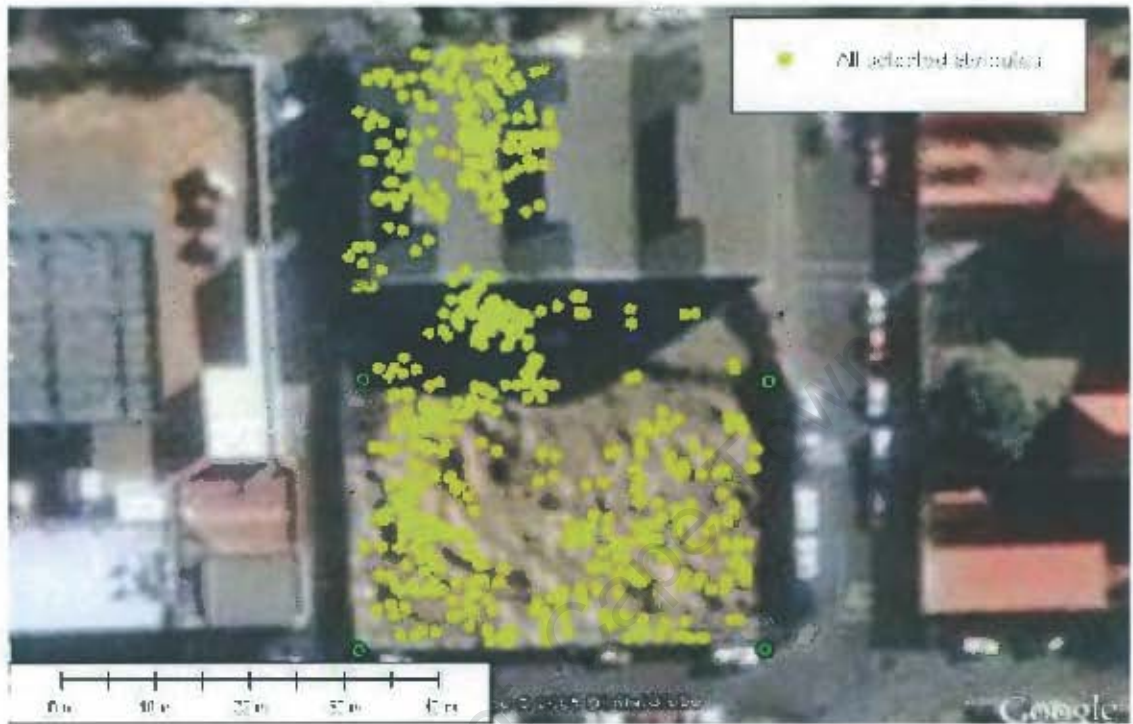


Figure 5.4. Aerial view of Prestwich Place excavation site and Napier House (before demolition) with my burial sample set plotted on to the photo. Note the absence of burials in the northeast quadrant as a result of the Napier House basement foundation that obliterated burials in that area.

METHODOLOGY

EXCAVATION PROCEDURES

A team of excavators worked for two seasons (2003 - 2005) exhuming the human remains at Prestwich Street. The upper sandy layer was scraped back with shovels or trowels until a discoloration of soil indicating a grave shaft edge was observed. The shaft was followed down, and any human remains were then carefully exposed with brushes and small tools. Once exposed, location and dimensions of each grave shaft and individual (or group) were recorded using a LEICA E.D.M (Electronic Distance Measuring Machine) total station. The human remains were photographed with both analog (slide) film, and digitally. Each individual or 'group' was drawn on a separate form, and basic information such as orientation, age, burial style, visible pathologies, and grave goods, was recorded. The remains were dried in the sun, excess dirt was cleaned off, and they were labeled and stored in specially designed cartons in disused mortuaries at Woodstock and Somerset Hospitals.

Cataloguing Remains

A system of classification was put in place to make sense of the burial disarray (Table 5.1). Due to disturbance caused by the manner of burial as well as post-depositional factors, remains were ranked by their degree of disturbance on a sliding scale of certainty. The cataloguing of the remains was determined by the physical characteristics of the bones *in situ*. The burial horizon was densely packed and jumbles of disarticulated and crushed pieces of bone often overlaid intact remains.

When a primary context was identified (i.e. complete graves) and bones were articulated which could define one person, an 'Individual' number was given. If a jumble of bones was

found, but none of the bones were articulated, this was a secondary context and a 'Group' number was assigned.

Table 5.1. Burial Categories at Prestwich Street

BURIAL TYPE	CONTEXT	ARTICULATION	TOTAL
INDIVIDUAL	Primary	Yes	1272
GROUPS	Secondary	Rarely	460
SHAFT FILL	Secondary	Rarely	Many*
GENERAL/PICK-UP	Secondary	No	Many*

* 'Many' denotes an unquantified Minimum Number of Individuals (MNI)

The 'Groups' constituted disarticulated jumbles of bones, where the provenance and mode of burial conditions was usually quite difficult to decipher, for example, "Three crania and assorted long bones that appear to have been dumped into a very disorganized shaft or hole...at least one individual with filed teeth."¹⁶⁵ This is similar to the conditions encountered at Cobern Street, where: "These are highly disturbed burials consisting mostly of semi-articulated or disarticulated skeletal material. These burials have little or no contextual material and often appear to be the result of older burials being disturbed to make room for more recent interments."¹⁶⁶

However, in some cases where the burial was disturbed but some articulated parts were *in situ*, an 'Individual' number would still be assigned as the bones were in an articulated and

¹⁶⁵ Field notes from site record form for 'Group 10'.

¹⁶⁶ Apollonio, H; D. Halkett, T. Hart, A. Malan, A. Morris, 1998: 'Report on the Excavation of an 18th Century Burial Ground at Cobern Street, Cape Town, Unpublished Report.

thus diagnostic position. If a mass jumble of bones were uncovered, with some articulation present, a 'Group' number was assigned.

Often, a group of bones or even a full skeleton was uncovered while excavating a grave shaft. If these were no longer articulated, they were noted as 'Shaft Fill'. These remains were most likely primary context graves which were either uncovered during grave digging (Phase 1) or during development of Green Point (Phase 2). These individuals were just tossed back into the grave shaft with the loose soil once the newly dead was interred, or displaced during earth-moving construction work.

While no *intact* Khoekhoen burials were found at Prestwich Street, we do know from the four Khoekhoen burials at Cobern Street that they do occur in the immediate area. The recovery of grindstones with ochre stain, fragments of indigenous pottery and ostrich eggshell from Prestwich Street indicate the original existence of prehistoric domestic camps. If there were any prehistoric burials, these must have been uncovered during the intense interment activities in the area and tossed out and entangled in the jumble of disarticulate bone in the 'Group', 'Shaft Fill' or 'Pick-Up' categories.

'Shaft Fill' is important when considering the integrity of finds found in these particular contexts. For example, glass beads as well as baby bones were found in the shaft fill of an adult buried in a coffin (No. 501). These beads do not have a primary association with the adult, nor necessarily with the baby, and the baby is clearly not associated with the adult. Finally, random scatters of bones that surfaced during earth-moving activities. These were collected and labeled as 'General' or 'Pick-up' (Table 5.1).

In total, 1272 articulated individuals were unearthed, and 460 Groups. These numbers, combined with the numerous remains from the 'Shaft Fill' and 'General' categories give a minimum of at least 2500 people.

SAMPLE SELECTION

The majority of Prestwich Street burials were 'conventional Christian'¹⁶⁷ style interments. These burials are not under analysis in this thesis. However, they provide a comparative benchmark that focuses attention on burials that are different. 'Christian' burials, that are a stylistic class and dominate the sample, await future analysis. In the Christian tradition the dead are placed in a supine position with arms crossed over their body or straight down their sides, on a west-east axial orientation, with heads towards the west in order to rise and face the rising sun on Judgment Day. Hardware from a coffin, such as handles or nails, was another signifier of a conventional 'Christian' burial style.

I selected 276 individual burials from the total 'Individual' sample on the basis of attributes that stood out from the conventional burials. These attributes are: 1) burial style, 2) dental modification and 3) the inclusion of grave goods.

Of the 276 burials in my sample, 70 were coffin burials. However, there were many more burials in a supine position, with arms crossed over their bodies. These burials had no coffin remains and only a color differentiation of the surrounding soil indicating the presence of a grave shaft. It is conceivable that these individuals were wrapped in blankets, possibly during periods of wood shortages at the Cape or because they were paupers

¹⁶⁷ I will use the term 'conventional Christian' as other South African archaeologists have described this pattern in this way. However, I find this term problematic in this context. Those buried may not have held any allegiance to the Christian tradition, but instead buried by owners or gravediggers who adhered to this faith and related customs. Additionally, 'conventional' is only conventional from a Eurocentric position.

without any financial means. Other associated artefacts included shroud pins, which were recovered quite frequently and often associated with infants. The on-site survey data was used to create a database of all burials with one or more of the above attributes. Survey points were plotted for distribution data that was used to interrogate the degree to which the selected attributes were spatially patterned.¹⁶⁸

PATTERN AND VARIABILITY IN BURIAL STYLES

From the total number of Individuals (n=1272), I identified styles of burial and cultural attributes that were atypical. From my selected sample set of 276, I classified burial style into three categories: 'niche burials', 'possible niches', and 'side burials'. The cultural attribute of 'dental modification' was also selected and this crosscut all three burial styles. Several of the individuals with dental modification were also buried in Christian style, but I chose to correlate this category with 'burial style' to test their relationship with multiple burials (more than one person buried together in one grave shaft).

The burial styles were sub-divided into sub-categories on the basis of associated features (Table 5.2).

Table 5.2. Sub-Categories of Burial Styles at Prestwich Street

NICHE BURIALS	SIDE BURIALS	DENTAL MODIFICATION
No Features	Right side	Individual
Clay ball inclusions	Left side	Double burial
Stone inclusions	Flexed	Triple burial

Niche burials were sub-divided on the presence of absence of 'stones' or 'clay balls' with the bodies. Side burials were categorized based on the position of the body. Dentally modified individuals were sub-divided on whether the burial was an individual or shared.

¹⁶⁸ There was a matrix of control points plotted for the excavation of at least 12 points. Control point 4 was used as datum. See Figure 5.3

ORIENTATION OF PRESTWICH STREET BURIALS

Burials with an east/west axial alignment (i.e. heads towards the west, feet towards the east) make up the majority of the burials (Fig. 5.5), which is consistent with the Christian tradition discussed above. This dominant burial orientation is repeated at Cobern Street, where this predominant burial pattern comprised 79.5 % of the graves exhumed¹⁶⁹. The Cobern Street burials were generally oriented slightly southwest (rather than due west) towards Signal Hill.

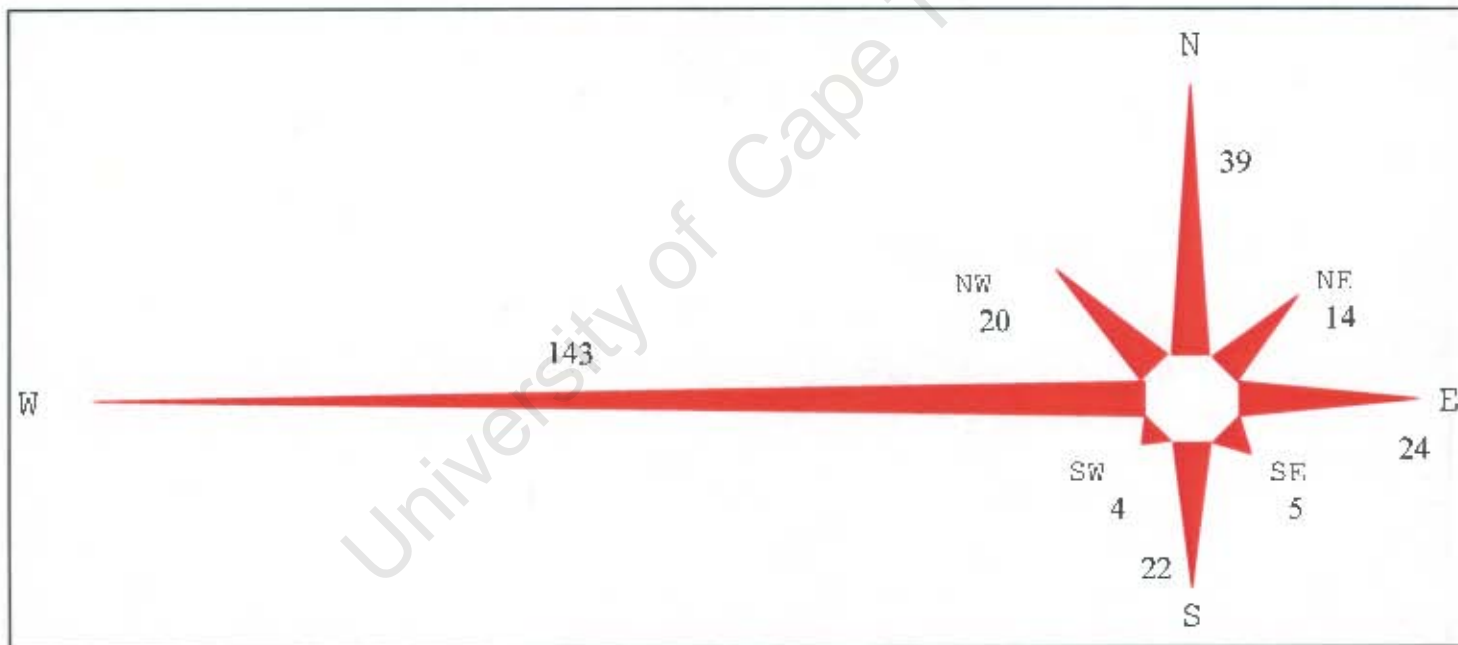


Figure 5.5. Windrose diagram illustrating burial orientation (axial alignment) of sample set (n=276). The overwhelming majority of burials in this sample are oriented west (head to the west, feet to the east).¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁹ Apollonio, 1998:87

¹⁷⁰ Sample in Fig. 5.6 is only 271 of the total sample set because there are five burials that did not have the data recorded on the site forms. These are listed as 'unknown' orientation in my data set.

BURIAL STYLE

NICHE BURIAL

In contrast to Christian style burials, some burials were dug into the lower clay layer and were oriented in a north/northeasterly direction. The orientation refers to the 'axial alignment' of the body (i.e. the *head* was to the north/northeast and the feet were to the south/southwest). The shafts were dug deeply into the clay layer, and an alcove or niche was cut into the side at the bottom of the shaft. The individual was generally placed on his or her right side (but in some cases had slumped either forward or backward) (Figs. 5.6 and 5.7). Wood panels were used to seal off the niche from the shaft. In some graves there was also an inclusion of burial 'furniture' such as clay 'pillows' upon which the head rested. Grave furniture may also include moulded clay balls placed dorsally along the body, or stones placed in the same manner (Fig. 5.8) The distinction between the grave 'furniture' of clay, stone balls and clay pillows, and 'other grave goods' (such as coins, beads, buttons, etc. to be dealt with later in this research) is critical here, because other than grave 'furniture', there are no additional grave goods found in the niche burials.

There are 39 individuals in this category, with 7 'possible niche' burials (Tables 5.3 and 5.4). The 7 'possible niche' individuals are in graves that preserve attributes of niche burials, but without obvious niches. Furthermore, several of these burials were oriented in a southern direction. Further comparison of these individuals with the rest of the niche burials helps determine if they can indeed be grouped with the niche burial category.



Figure 5.6. Empty niche graves (remains exhumed) of No. 858 (foreground) and No. 848

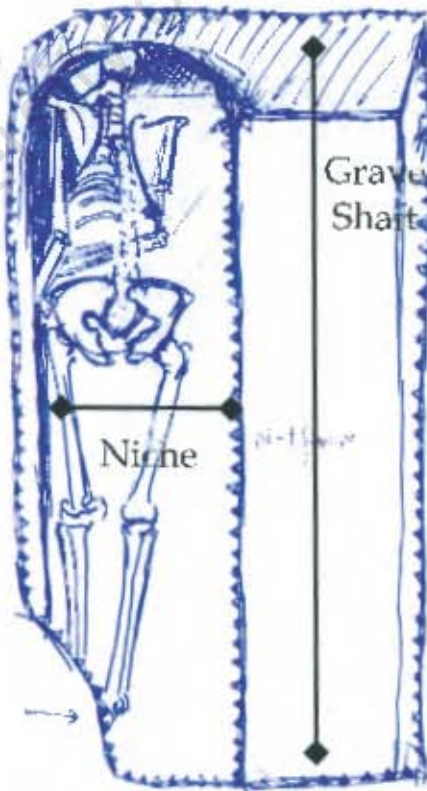


Figure 5.7. Illustration of Individual 880 (Cluster 1) showing components of niche burial.



Figure 5.8. Individual No. 1168, Cluster 2. Five moulded clay balls were placed behind the head, shoulders and legs. Even when no discernable grave shaft or niche could be identified, the occurrence of clay balls determined that these burials could be considered in the 'niche' category, as their alignment and orientation were comparable with the others. This subadult was on his/her right side, oriented north. None of the burials in the niche category were orientated towards the west or southwest.

The breakdown of niche burial orientation is shown in Figure 5.9.

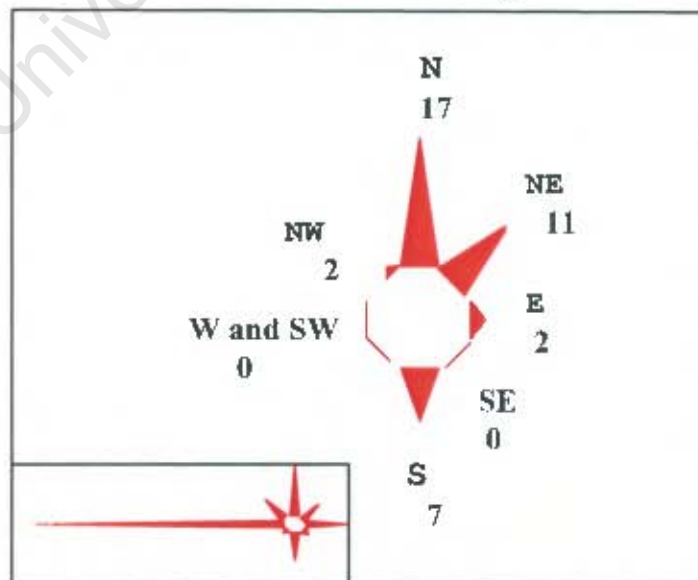


Figure 5.9. Windrose diagram illustrating orientation (axial alignment) of niche burials

Table 5.3. Niche burials and attributes (*This attribute refers to spatial clustering of niches dealt with below.)

INDIVIDUAL	CLUSTER*	AGE	ORIENTATION	FACING	SIDE	STONES	CLAY BALLS	WOOD
275	3	adult	S	E	RHS	0	0	no
323	3	adult	S	E	RHS	0	0	no
375	3	adult	S	E	RHS	0	0	no
429	3	adult	S	E	RHS	0	0	no
439	3	adult	NE	NW	RHS	1	0	no
479	3	adult	S	E	RHS	0	0	No
553	3	Adult	S	E	RHS	3	0	No
566	3	juvenile	N	W	RHS	0	0	No
568	3	adult	N	W	RHS	5)	No
576	3	baby	N	W	RHS	0	0	No
600	3	adult	N	W	RHS	1	0	No
675	3	adult	S	E	RHS	0	0	No
767	None	adult	N	W	RHS	0	0	No
843	1	adult	NE	NW	front	0	0	No
848	1	adult	NE	NW	RHS	0	0	No
854	1	adult	NE	NW	front	0	0	yes
858	1	adult	NE	NW	front	0	0	yes
867	1	adult	NE	NW	front	0	0	No
871	1	adult	E	N	RHS	0	0	No
873	1	adult	N	W	front	0	5	No
876	1	adult	NE	NW	back	0	0	yes
880	1	adult	NE	NW	RHS	0	0	No
929	None	adult	NW	SW	RHS	1	0	No
965	1	adult	N	W	RHS	0	0	No
1112	2	adult	N	W	RHS	1	0	yes
1115	2	adult	N	W	front	0	6	No
1127	2	adult	N	W	front	0	0	yes
1162	2	juvenile	E	N	RHS	0	0	yes
1168	2	juvenile	N	W	RHS	0	5	No
1177	2	juvenile	N	W	RHS	0	3	No
1181	2	juvenile	N	W	RHS	0	2	No
1184	2	juvenile	N	W	RHS	0	6	No
1185	2	juvenile	NE	NW	RHS	3	0	yes
1188	2	adult	N	W	RHS	0	1	No
1191	2	juvenile	N	W	RHS	0	3	No
1194	2	juvenile	NE	NW	RHS	4	0	No
1198	2	adult	NE	NW	RHS	0	2	yes
1202	2	juvenile	N	W	RHS	3	0	No

Table 5.4. Possible Niche Burials

18	None	juvenile	NE	NW	RHS	3	0	No
40	None	baby	E	N	RHS	3	0	No
283	3	adult	N	W	RHS	7	0	No
288	3	adult	S	E	RHS	0	0	No
335	3	adult	S	E	RHS	1	0	No
350	3	adult	SW	E	RHS	0	0	No
651	3	adult	S	E	RHS	4	0	No

'SIDE' BURIAL

'Side' burials are individuals who were positioned along their right side, left side, on their front, or in a flexed position with the knees folded up. These were identified as different from the Christian style because they were not in coffins, nor in supine position. 'Side' burials differ from niche burials in that they have no niche attributes such as alcoves or grave furniture. There were 62 'Side' burials among the total 'Individuals' category (n=1272).

Table 5.5. Total percentages for Prestwich 'Side' burial categories

	NUMBER OF BURIALS	% OF TOTAL SIDE BURIALS	% OF TOTAL INDIVIDUALS (n=1272)
RIGHT SIDE	35	56.4%	2.7%
LEFT SIDE	19	30.6%	1.5%
FLEXED	4	6.45%	.31%
FRONTAL	4	6.45%	.31%

Included in the side burial category are three individuals with dental modification (all three have filed incisors) in individual side burials. Two were on their left-hand side and one on the right-hand side.

BURIAL STYLE DISTRIBUTION

NICHE BURIAL

It was clear during excavation that the niche burials did not occur randomly over the area excavated. Plotting the burials shows that there is pattern in the distribution of niche burials and that they occur in distinct clusters of variable definition. One cluster occurred in the northern half of the excavation, one cluster was in the center, and a more diffuse 'cluster' is in the southern half of the excavation that may in fact represent two separate sub-clusters. (Fig. 5. 10). There also may be another cluster just beginning to show along the western edge of the excavation. The Clusters were numbered according to their spatial cohesion. Cluster 1 had the greatest uniformity in orientation and alignment, Cluster 2 less so, and Cluster 3 had the least uniformity, the niches were dispersed and orientation was random (Table 5.4).

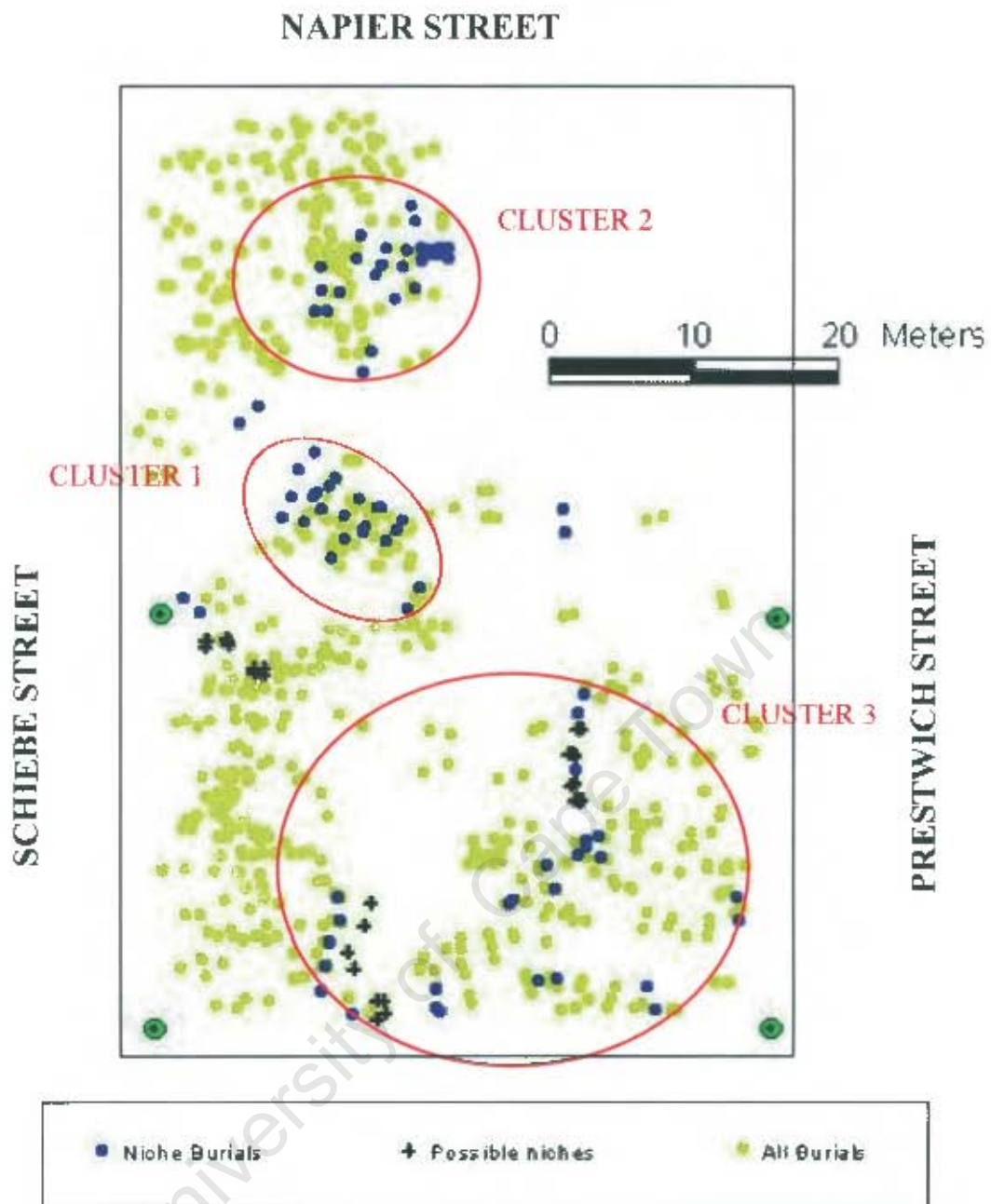


Figure 5.10. Distribution of niche burials and possible niche burials. The blue points represent 'head' and 'feet' of each individual. The green points represent my entire sample ($n = 276$).

CLUSTER 1

Cluster 1 was found beneath West Street, which was the road between the two crven that made up the Prestwich development. These burials were the deepest of the three clusters, with the shafts and niches dug well into the lower clay layer. There were ten burials in this cluster with Individuals 929 and 762 as outliers (Fig. 5.11). This outlier status is confirmed because the orientations are at odds with the other ten niche burials. The preservation of the remains was very good. All ten burials were adults and all were oriented to the northeast (Fig. 5.12).

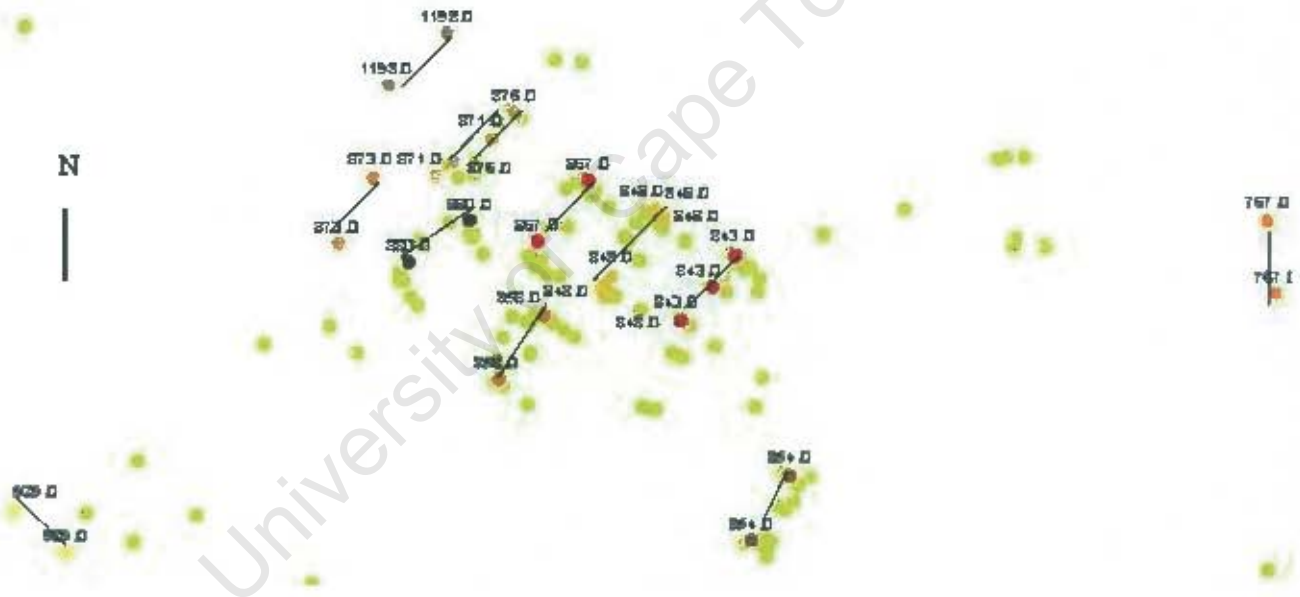




Figure 5.12. View of Cluster 1 niche burials, oriented northeast. Niches of Individual Nos. 843, 848 and 858 are shown (remains already removed from the niches). Photo by Tim Hart.

The majority of niches in Cluster 1 had been carefully hollowed out with alcoves or recesses for the head and feet, and some had clay 'pillows' underneath the crania. There was a step approximately 5 cm from the base of the grave shaft to the level of the niche. Wood remnants were found in three of the burials (Table 5.3). This is the only niche cluster where remains are also lying face down (50%). This is probably due to post-depositional slumping of the bodies from their original position on their right sides.

One individual (No. 848) has dental modification and is the only individual of all three niche burial clusters to have this attribute. This will be discussed in the Dental Modification section.

There were *no grave goods* associated with any of the Cluster 1 niche burials. One burial (No. 873) had five moulded clay balls placed along the dorsal aspect of the body, between

the edge of the niche and the shaft ledge. This individual was an adult. One other individual (outlier, No. 929) had one shale stone, also placed dorsally.

The Cluster 1 niche burials did not have any other burials stratigraphically above them in the upper sandy layer and were, therefore, undisturbed. This grouping may represent a discrete community of burials, where the living had command or control of that particular space. The implications of this will be explored further in Chapter Six.

University of Cape Town

CLUSTER 2

Cluster 2 was located in the northern section of the excavation under Napier House. This cluster comprised fourteen burials, at least nine of whom were sub-adults (Table 5.3).¹⁷¹ There is a general pattern in the orientation (axial alignment) to the northeast, with some directional variability (Fig. 5.13). These burials were mostly found at the interface between the upper sandy layer and lower clay layer rather than dug deeply into the clay. Although the majority of these burials are in the sandy layer and do not have defined niche cavities, they are categorized as niche burials based on their orientation, their right side position, and the inclusion of moulded clay balls and stones deliberately placed along the dorsal aspect of the bodies (Table 5.3).

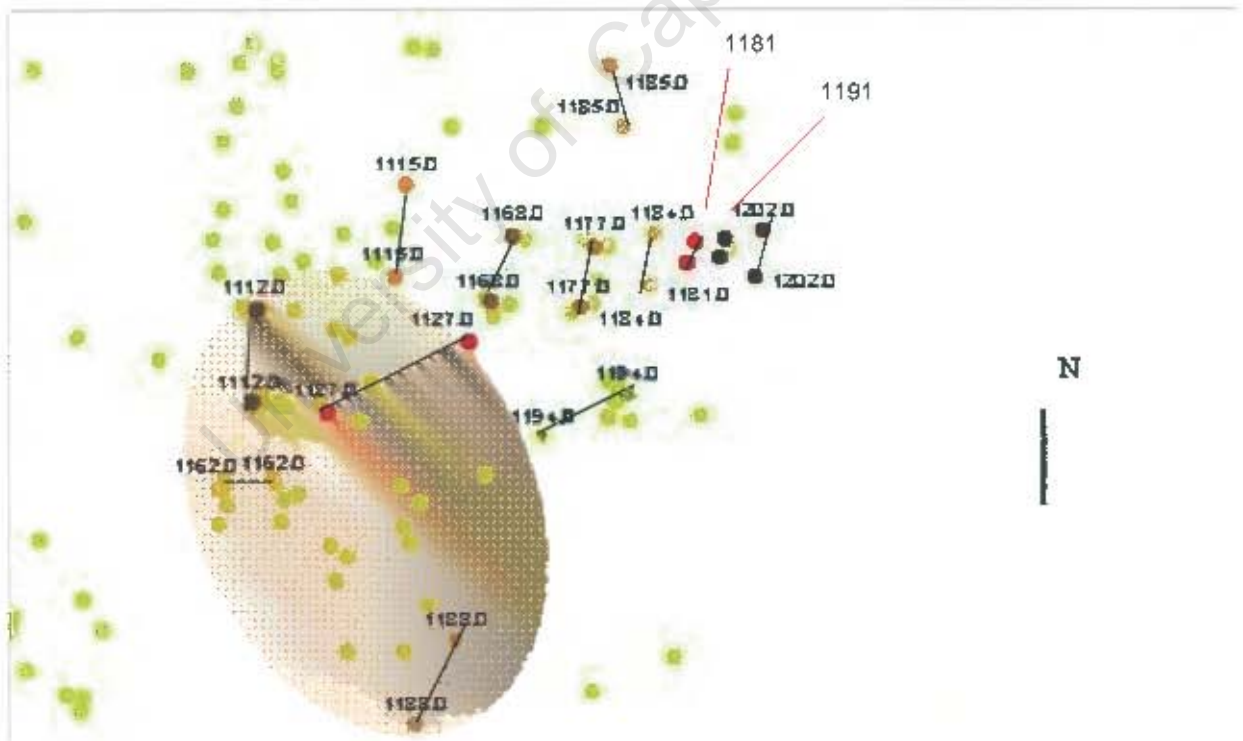


Figure 5.13. Enlargement of Cluster 2 (from Fig. 5.10) niche burials. Numbers are the individuals catalog numbers, representing head and feet for each body. Burials with distinct alcoves and niche cavities are highlighted in red.

¹⁷¹ The individual record sheets describe these burials as: 'small adult', 'young adult' or 'juvenile'. Anatomical analysis is needed to determine the precise age classes of these remains. The term 'sub-adult' is used.

Only four of these burials, three of which are adult, had distinct shafts and niches as found in the Cluster 1 niche burials (Nos. 1112, 1127, 1162, and 1188). These burials had intact alcoves and retained the distinctive niche cavity characteristics because they were dug into the clay layer that allowed them to retain niche cavity integrity. They are located to the southeast of the other burials in this cluster and closest to the Cluster 1 niche burials. In contrast, nine of the other remaining burials in this cluster are sub-adults and were buried in the shallower sandy layer.

There was greater variation in orientation (axial alignment of bodies) in Cluster 2 compared with Cluster 1, which were all oriented to the northeast. In Cluster 2 the burials were less systematic and uniform, and individuals were oriented at varying degrees from east to north (Fig. 5.13).

Several of the burials were either disturbed or overlaid by other burials. Individual No. 1194 was overlain by a person with filed teeth. Other niche burials in Cluster 2 were also impacted by later burials, for example the cranium of Individual No. 1185 was beneath a person buried in Christian style (No. 1179). There is also evidence that the digging of niche burials in this area impacted upon other earlier burials. The inhumation of Individual No. 1191, for example, disturbed a previous burial and truncated that particular grave shaft. This indicates that the same area had been used before and after the niche burial episode.

A significant feature of the Cluster 2 niche burials was the presence of 'clay balls' that had been placed dorsally along the body (Fig. 5.8). Eight burials had one or more clay balls (Table 5.6). This may be a significant association because clay balls only occur in two niche burials outside of this cluster.

Table 5.6. Cluster 2 burials with clay balls

Individual	Age	Orientation	No. of Clay Balls
1115	Adult	N	6
1168	Sub-adult	N	5
1177	Sub-adult	N	3
1181	Sub-adult	N	2
1184	Sub-adult	N	6
1188	Adult	N	1
1191	Sub-adult	N	3
1198*	Adult	NE	2

*1198 is in between Cluster 1 and Cluster 2

The general pattern for Cluster 2 was for multiple clay balls to be placed behind the body at various positions between the neck and the feet. Some of these burials were disturbed and this might account for the lower number of clay balls in some of these burials (i.e. Nos. 1181 and 1191). In contrast, Cluster 1 had only two burials with clay balls (Nos. 873 and 1198), which were both on the periphery of Cluster 1. The number of clay balls does not seem to vary according to age. The principle of 'balls' placed dorsally was also expressed with stone, and stone 'balls' were used in four of the niche burials in Cluster 2 (Table 5.7).

Table 5.7. Cluster 2 burials with stones

Individual	Age	Orientation	No. of Stones
1112	adult	N	1
1185	Sub-adult	NE	3
1194	Sub-adult	NE	4
1202	Sub-adult	N	3

In contrast, there were no stones included in the Cluster 1 burials (Fig. 5.14). Stone and clay are not found together in the same burial in any of the clusters. Again, there does not appear to be any discrimination by age, although the qualitative age profile for Cluster 2 is sub-adult. There are no data on the sex of these individuals.

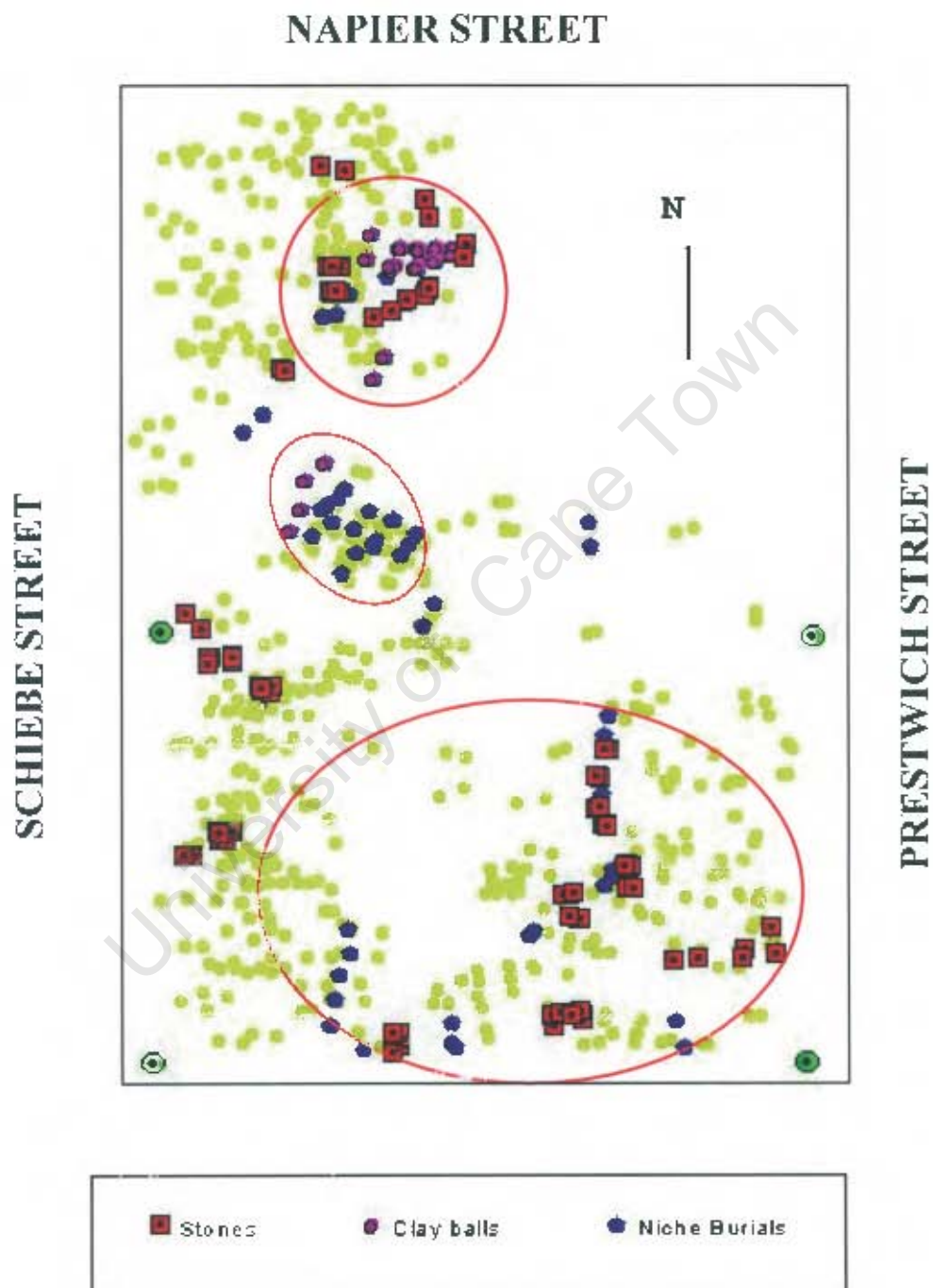


Figure 5.14. Distribution of burials with associated clay balls and stones. Niche clusters circled in red. For each individual burial there are two symbols represents 'head' and 'feet' respectively.

CLUSTER 3

Cluster 3 occurred in the southern half of the excavation, where the upper sandy layer was shallow due to the 19th century land leveling. There does not appear to be any general patterning, but several areas consisting of two or three niche burials could be considered 'mini-clusters' (Fig 5.15). A little over half (58%) the burials are oriented to the south and this is the only cluster in which a southern orientation for niche burials occur (*the head is towards the south and the feet are towards the north.*) Their distribution, however, appears to be random.

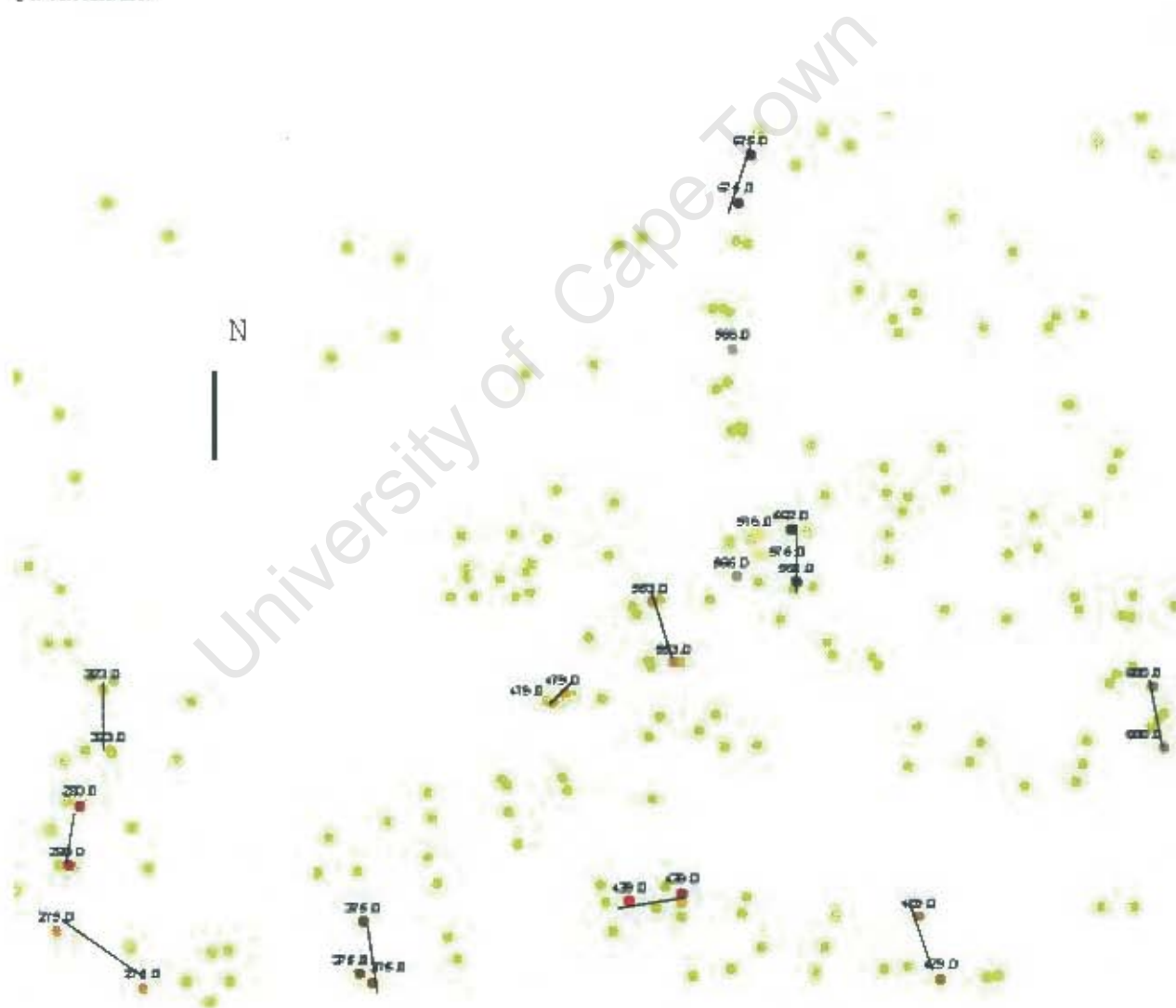


Figure 5.15. Enlargement of Cluster 3 (from Fig. 5.10) showing twelve dispersed niche burials. Numbers are the individuals catalog numbers, representing head and feet for each body.

It is notable that only stones are found in Cluster 3 niche burials, and that there are no clay balls (Table 5.8).

Table 5.8. Cluster 3 burials with stones

Individual	Age	Orientation	Stones
439	Adult	NE	1
553	Adult	S	3
568	Adult	N	5
600	Adult	N	1

Stones are *not* found in Cluster 1, found *with* clay ball burials in Cluster 2, and are *only* found in Cluster 3, where no clay balls were recovered. A changing preference in material suggests continuing 'episodes' and evolution of niche burial interment, which in turn supports the notion of an historical process for this community.

The 'possible niche' burials along the western boundary of the Prestwich site may well be the edge of another niche cluster beginning to appear beneath Schiebe Street, as they also have associated stones.

POSSIBLE NICHE BURIALS

The seven 'possible' niche burials do suggest alignment or clustering with the definite niche burial patterning (Fig. 5.16 and Table 5.3). Five of the possible niches are located in Cluster 3 and two are located along the western boundary of the site, where another cluster may extend under Schiebe Street, as stated above. It is notable that one of the Cluster 3 'possible' niche burials (No. 283) had filed incisors, and seven stones placed dorsally.

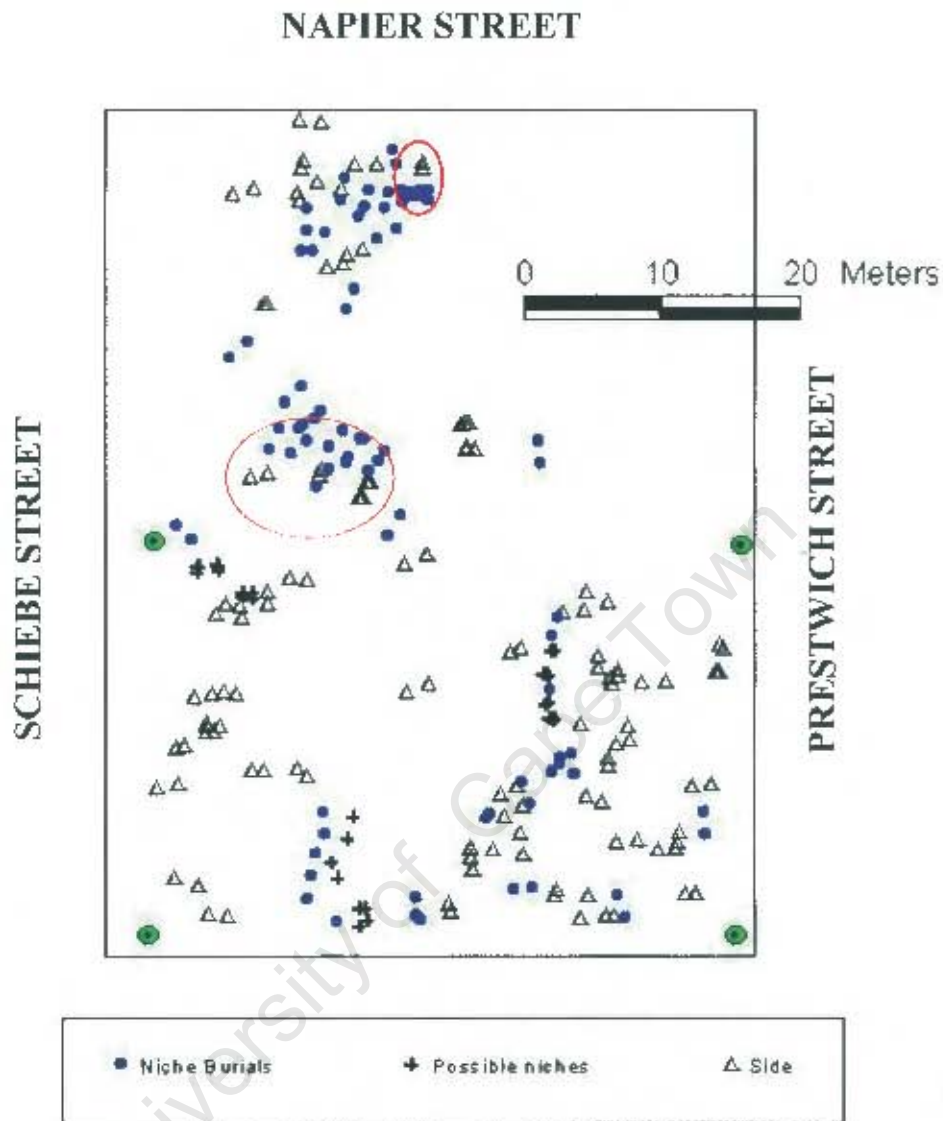


Figure 5.16. Distribution of niche burials, 'possible' niche burials, and 'side' burials. Distribution of 'side' burials in Clusters 1 and 2 are circled in red.

'SIDE' BURIALS

The 'side' burial sample was used as a comparison with the niche clusters to test if any of the right-hand side burials were closely associated with any of the niche burial clusters, or with the 'possible' niche burials (Fig. 5.16). However, the side burials were found to be dispersed randomly throughout the site and most were found to be oriented on a west-east axis (Christian convention), effectively ruling them out as being niche burials.

Only four right-hand side burials were found to be oriented in a similar way to the niche burials clusters (Fig. 5.16). One baby (No. 1175) was closely associated with Cluster 2, and two adults (Nos. 886 and 837) and a baby (No. 849) were closely associated with Cluster 1. The baby in Cluster 1 is the only sub-adult in this Cluster and did not have any particular niche attributes except for being positioned on the right side.

University of Cape Town

CULTURAL ORIGINS OF NICHE BURIALS

In the previous section, I reported on the distribution results of niche burials, possible niche burials and 'side' burials. In this section I trace the cultural origins of the niche burial style through an ethnographic survey of people who were at the Cape in the 18th century. As has been previously discussed in Section I, people brought to the Cape during the VOC period were geographically and culturally diverse. Labour was brought from the Indian sub-continent, Madagascar, the Indonesian Archipelago and East Africa, and exiles and convicts arrived from the East Indies. It is within these geographic and cultural substrates that an identity for the niche burial style may be sought.

Niche burials can be found among many cultural traditions and it is with the help of ethnography that the archaeological record may be amplified and the most plausible analogues may be drawn. Similar form does not equate to similar meaning, and the concepts expressed in niche burials are likely to be widely divergent between cultural groups. The use of ethnography may suggest the cultural origins of individuals buried in this manner.

I acknowledge that the use of ethnographic analogy in archaeology is considered problematic because ethnography's synchronic frozen snapshot of culture and 'tradition' does little to address social and cultural change.¹⁷² This ethnographic comparison is however important in order to narrow the possibilities. Equally important is that continuity

¹⁷² See Ian Hodder. Also Paul Lane and Andrew Reid 2004: *African Historical Archaeologies*.

in cultural practice has to be embedded in a community who retained and potentially expanded their power to assert cultural practice in death.

On the basis of ethnography, several groups can be immediately ruled out. Hindu custom of cremation leaves little archaeological trace. Both the aristocratic and lower classes of Madagascar, from differing ethnic groups, ended up at the Cape, thus a common social identity was highly improbable. People of Madagascan origin (particular those groups in the highlands, such as the Merina) built ornate tomb structures and did not practice sub-surface interment in graves¹⁷³. This leaves three groups to be considered in this section: Bantu-speaking people (African), the Khoesan, and the Indonesians (East Indies archipelago).

Among the Bantu-speaking groups, the ethnography of the Nyakyusa of Malawi, the Bathonga (Tsonga) people of Mozambique will be considered. I base this choice of ethnography on documentary evidence that record black Africans arriving at the Cape via slaving vessels from the Eastern African region of Malawi and Mozambique.¹⁷⁴ There is no doubt that there were Bantu-speaking individuals in Cape Town by the end of the 17th and beginning of the 18th centuries, but numbers would have been low. The settlement saw an

¹⁷³ See Bloch, M, 1971. *Placing the Dead: Tombs, Ancestral Village and Kinship organization in Madagascar*

¹⁷⁴ See Robert, R. 'Last Years of the Slave Trade to the Cape Colony,' in Clarence-Smith, W.G. (ed) 1989: *The Economics of the Indian Ocean Slave Trade in the Nineteenth Century*, London: Frank Cass as well as Alpers, Edward 1975: *Ivory and Slaves in East Central Africa*, Berkeley and London, and Alpers, Edward 1999: *Becoming 'Mozambique': Diaspora and Identity in Mauritius*, Paper written for the Harriet Tubman Seminar, York University, Toronto, 15 November 1999. Alpers contends that the category 'Mozambique' is a term used as 'a convenience' for slave-owning classes for the various ethnic groups of East Africans. There is a large body of literature on the East African slave trade, and it is known that certain groups (such as the Yao, whom Alpers calls "the dominant long distance traders of East Central Africa") acted as middlemen, often preying on other groups from the hinterland. Captured slaves were brought from both west and eastern sides of Lake Malawi, western Tanzania and possibly even further afield. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to address every Bantu-speaking group's mortuary practice. I look at practices of the Nyakyusa and Bathonga (of the Malawi/Mozambique region) and Bavenda (Limpopo, Southern Africa) which illustrate localized variability, embedded within the same worldview.

increase of black Africans as the century progressed, particularly after the Anglo-Dutch War treaty in 1774.

The Khoekhoen and San will be considered briefly since Khoekhoen burials were among those uncovered at Cobern Street in Green Point. Finally, Islamic burial practice will also be reviewed, as it is well documented that the Muslim community in 18th century Cape Town continued to expand.

ETHNOGRAPHY OF BURIAL PRACTICE AMONG BANTU-SPEAKING GROUPS

The conceptualization of death as rebirth is prevalent throughout the Bantu-speaking world. Being reborn as an ancestor is structurally manifested in burial practice where a sub-surface burial cavity is a 'womb' and the 'flexed' position of the body represents the foetal state - possibly reflecting a belief that the dead person should leave the world in the same position he or she had entered it, or 'reborn' as an ancestor.¹⁷⁵ The Nyakyusa, for example, who lived west of Lake Malawi and in southern Tanzania, incorporated this worldview into mortuary practice as is outlined in this 1939 ethnography:

*'The grave is ten or more feet deep with a cave at the bottom to one side. Some graves are oblong, some round or oval, according to different local and family customs. In the round and oval graves the body is placed in the cave in a sitting position, in the oblong graves lying at full length on one arm; but in both cases the dead man is set to face the direction from which he and his people have traditionally come...The body is washed, wrapped in clothes and put into position in the cave. Personal possessions are often placed with the body, and they go with them to the place of the spirits...(the niche) is closed either with a stiff mat or with the door of the dead man's house, in accordance with local custom.'*¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁵ Hattingh, Shawn, *'Death as Birth: Reexamining the K2 Burials and Associated Grave Goods'*, Unpublished Honours thesis, University of Cape Town, 2000.

¹⁷⁶ Rheinallt, Jones, J.D., C.M. Doke (eds) 1939: 'Bantu Studies: A Journal devoted to the Scientific Study of Bantu, Hottentot & Bushmen', Vol. XIII, Johannesburg: University of the Witwatersrand Press. My italics.

The niche and shaft are symbolically the womb and the birth canal through which the dead must pass to be reborn as an ancestor. Like the Nyakyusa of Malawi, the Bathonga placed their dead in niches and oriented the bodies to symbolically acknowledge their ancestral place of origin, in order to acknowledge and assist the dead in their passage. A grave was "dug in such a way that its long axis is directed toward that cardinal point whence the ancestors came, so that the deceased, having his head slightly bent backwards, is intended to look in that direction."¹⁷⁷ This distinctive niche is described by Henri Junod:

"So the grave is, in a way, double. It presents two levels, the higher, the large hole, gives access to the smaller, the circular ovoid grave. The first is called *the square* (*hubu*) of the deceased, the second is *his hut* (*yindlu* or *shinyatu*). He will dwell in the hut, but come out from in and sit in his square underground, just as he did when living in his village."¹⁷⁸

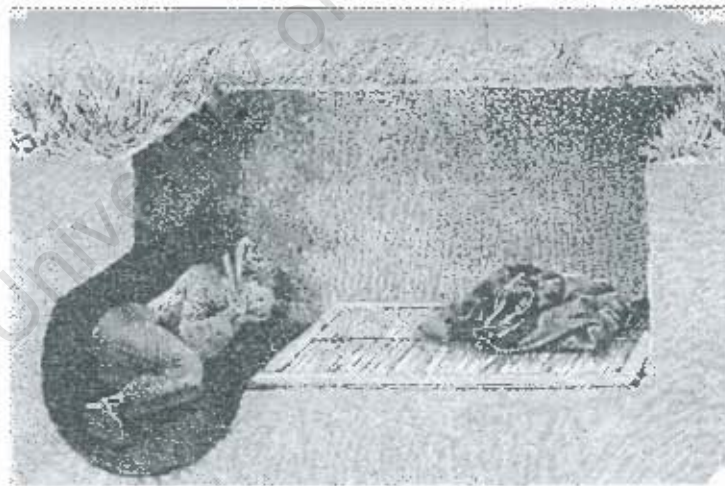


Figure 5.17. A Ronga in his grave, by C.I. Heaton¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁷ Ibid, p. 138

¹⁷⁸ Junod, Henri A. 1966: *The Life of a South African Tribe*, Vol. 1 Social Life, New York: University Books, p. 137.

¹⁷⁹ Junod.1966:138.

There is great variation in the positioning and orientation of the body among these groups. The Bavenda of the Limpopo region of Southern Africa bury their dead on their right side and in a northeast orientation, in contrast to the left side among other Bantu-speaking groups. While this body positioning and orientation is similar to the Prestwich Street burials, the Bavenda burial custom lacks the fundamental component – that of the ‘niche’ itself.¹⁸⁰ The Nyakyusa were interred in a sitting position, which is at odds with the niche burials from Prestwich. The Bathonga were interred on their left hand side¹⁸¹, in ‘flexed’ (foetal) position and did not face the inside of the niche (Fig 5.17) – all elements that are dissimilar to the Prestwich burials.

The inclusion of grave goods is also an attribute of Bantu-speaking burial practice. The Nyakyusa, for example, allowed for the inclusion of personal possessions, while the Bathonga, who “slept in their rugs”, permitted intermittent inclusion, so long as the items were not made of iron, which “is dangerous to the deceased as it does not decompose as quickly as the corpse. Copper and brass as well, as they do not even change color.”¹⁸² This is an important point of comparison, for if one discounts the clay and stone ‘balls’, there are no grave goods associated with the Prestwich Street niche burials.

KHOESAN BURIALS¹⁸³

Hundreds of graves of hunter-gather San people have been excavated in South Africa, mostly dating from between 12,000 and 500 years ago. Often the body was placed “in a

¹⁸⁰ Stayt, Hugh, 1931: *The Bavenda*, Oxford University Press, p. 162

¹⁸¹ Simon Hall, pers. comm.. Burials may have been positioned according to gender. Women were buried on their left sides, and men on their right sides. This may be generally applicable in the East Bantu-speaking world.

¹⁸² Junod, 1966:140

¹⁸³ This is a catch-all phrase for two different groups of indigenous people at the Cape – the pastoralist Khoe (Khoekhoen) and the hunter-gather San peoples.

sitting or fetal position and buried ...in a shallow grave or ant-bear hole."¹⁸⁴ In the last 2000 years, the pastoralist Khoekhoen "introduced a variation on the same theme by piling stones onto the grave and sometimes leaving the bones of sheep and cattle and branches of trees on the cairn."¹⁸⁵

Pre-colonial graves in Namaqualand were analysed in the 1920s and it was confirmed that people were buried sitting upright in a circular grave shaft "in a squatting position, sometimes with articles like a digging stick. A long stone was placed in an upright position in the centre of the grave shaft and stones were arranged neatly around it with an upward slope...At the base of some of the shafts there was a small cavity or niche, hollowed out."¹⁸⁶ In such cases the body lay on its side rather than in a sitting position. With two exceptions, it was reported that all the bodies faced east. This niche style, the inclusion of grave goods, the sitting position of the body, and the general easterly orientation, are all dissimilar to the niche clusters under investigation in this study.

Thus, while there is some overlap of burial style characteristics of Khoekhoen, Bantu-speaking peoples and the Prestwich Street niche burials, there are important differences in the grave structure, the body placement, orientation, and presence of grave goods. While the niches are suggestive of the Bantu-speaking world, this general ethnographic review suggests that the niche burials do not have their cultural roots in the Bantu-speaking or KhoeSan worlds.

¹⁸⁴ Deacon, Janette, 'Summary of 18th and 19th Century Khoekhoe and San Burial Practices', Report compiled for the University of the Western Cape Institute for Historical Research, p. 2

¹⁸⁵ Deacon, p. 2.

¹⁸⁶ Laidler, F.W. 1929. Burials and burial methods of the Namaqualand Hottentots. *Man* 29:151-153.

ISLAMIC BURIAL CUSTOM

As was outlined in Chapter Two, celebrations of the end of Ramadan and the Prophet's birthday were being held in the homes of free blacks in Cape Town by 1772¹⁸⁷. By the 1790s, regular Friday prayers were being conducted in the stone quarries at the foot of Signal Hill, which is just adjacent to the Green Point burial grounds. Towards the end of Dutch control of the Cape, the first piece of land for a '*Javaansche begraafplaats*' (Javanese, or Muslim, burial place) was granted to Imam Frans of Bengal in 1805, although it is certain that Muslims buried their dead on the slopes of Signal before that date.¹⁸⁸

Islam clearly outlines the procedures for burying a member of the faith. A cavity is dug into the side at the bottom of a grave shaft, and the body must be placed on its right side with the eyes of the dead facing in the direction of Mecca (Figs. 5.18 and 5.19), the direction Muslims face for daily prayers. This direction is called '*Qibla*'. A stone or handful of mud can be used to support the head and body in the correct orientation. Wooden boards are used to seal off the niche from the shaft.

¹⁸⁷ This date is from the earliest documentation, although it can be assumed that celebrations were held in private as the religious meetings were tightly controlled by the VOC authorities during the 18th century, and freedom of religion was not respected during this time.

¹⁸⁸ See Achmat Davids, 1985. *The History of the Tana Baru*.

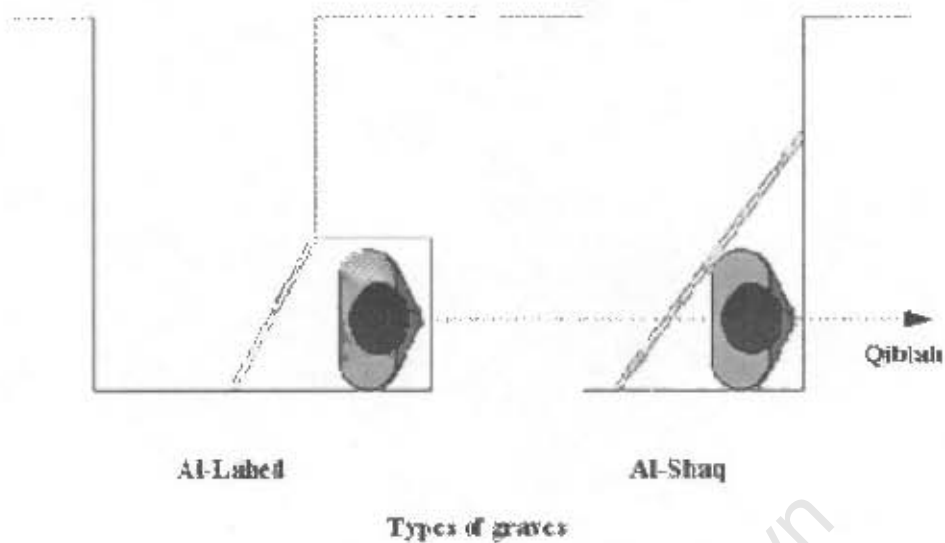


Figure 5.18. Al-Lahed (Lahd) and Al-Shaq style interments.¹⁸⁹ The Al-Lahed is the carved out 'niche' style, and the Al-Shaq is a basic right side burial.

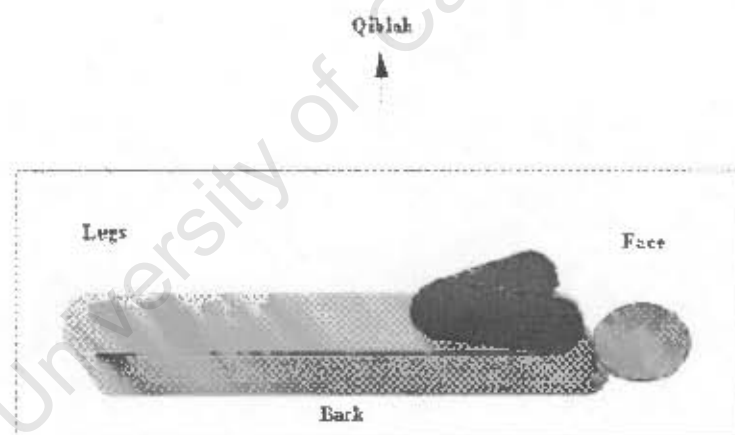


Figure 5.19. Placement of the body in Islamic burial custom.¹⁹⁰ The deceased inside the grave, lying on right side, facing the Qibla.

¹⁸⁹ http://www.muslimshroud.com/Janaza_Burial.html

¹⁹⁰ *ibid.*

There are many sources that give the same information on Islamic burial custom, but with some variation. In one case, it is stated:

"It is necessary...to bury the corpse in a large cemetery. It must be buried near (the graves of) *salih*s (pious Muslims)...*The grave must be far away from the graves of sinners and fajirs and, especially, from the graves of disbelievers and renegades.* The grave must be deep so that water will not leak into it, scent will not ooze out of it, and beasts will not be able to dig it up. It must be equal to the corpse's height in length, and its width must be half its length. The grave's length must be perpendicular to the direction of *qibla*...A *lahd* is a niche dug on the *qibla* side of the grave and all along the grave. It must be large enough to receive the corpse in width and depth, after the grave has been dug. The corpse is put on its right side in the *lahd*...with its face towards the *qibla*...The corpse's face is turned towards the inside of the *lahd*, and earth and sun-dried bricks are put behind it. Then the grave is filled with earth. It is not permissible to reopen the grave to turn the corpse towards the *qibla* if it has been placed the other way round. For, it is haram to reopen a grave. It can be reopened to take something left in the grave. The ends of the shroud are undone in the grave."¹⁹¹

According to another set of guidelines, while the *Al-Shaqq* (a simple trench) type of burial can be used, the *Al-Lahd* (niche) is the preferred style:

"A *lahd*-type grave is one in which, after you have dug the basic trench, you dig out a place for the body at the bottom of the side which faces *qibla* so that the body is protected by an overhang. This should be done provided that the earth is firm enough and will not crumble or cave in. This was how the grave of the Prophet was dug, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. [This is based on the tradition, "The *lahd* is for us and the *shaqq* for others and because Allah Almighty chose it for His Prophet. If the ground is too soft or sandy, then the *shaqq* is better]."¹⁹²

¹⁹¹ http://www.hizmetbooks.org/Endless_Bliss_Fifth_Fascicle/Bliss-5-Chapter-16.htm

¹⁹² <http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/ABewley/Page39.html>.

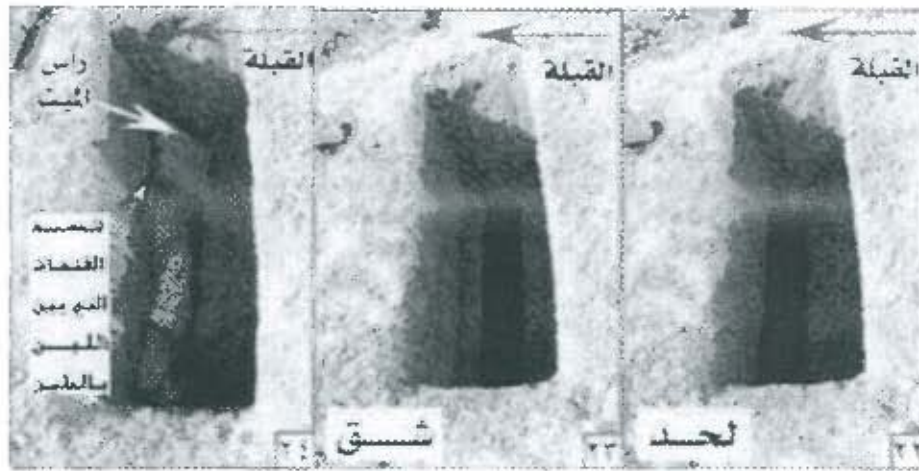


Figure 5.20. Photographs showing (from right to left) the Al-Jahd and Al-shaqq type burials in a Middle Eastern country. The first frame shows the interment of a body into an Al-lahd burial, including sealing the niche from the shaft with wooden planks.

Islamic burial guidelines also offer advice on how to treat the body and place the body in the grave:

*"and after the dead body has been lowered into the grave the ties of its shroud should be unfastened and its cheek should be placed on the earth and an earthen pillow should be placed under its head and some unbaked bricks or lumps of clay should be placed behind its back so that the dead body may not lie flat on its back"*¹⁹³

As discussed above, clay features were integral components of many of the Prestwich burials. 'Pillows' were shaped for the head to rest on, and lumps of clay were moulded into balls and placed along the dorsal aspect of the bodies. According to Islamic guidelines, these were used to keep the body from slumping on its back, in order for the eyes of the dead to face the inside wall of the niche. 'Believers' wait for final judgment in their niche, and will

¹⁹³ " <http://www.al-islam.org/laws/al-khul/12.htm> My emphasis.

have to answer five questions. Their answers will decide if they will remain in a mortal, private hell, or if the "window... will be opened on the right side of the grave"¹⁹⁴. The inside of the niche is considered the window to Paradise.

Additionally, the guidelines state that where the ground is 'soft or sandy', an *Al-Shaqq* type burial is acceptable.¹⁹⁵ The Cluster 2 burials were interred primarily in the upper sandy layer, or just at the interface of the sandy and clay layers, where the softer and shifting soils did not allow for a distinctive niche to be carved. In this cluster, *the Al-Shaqq* type burial dominates. Moreover, the prevalence of clay balls and stones in this cluster were used to keep the body upright in the *Al-Shaqq* type graves.

Niche Orientation

Among the Prestwich Street niche burials there is clear variability in the orientation of the graves (see Fig. 5.10). Burials axially oriented to the northeast or north means that the body is not positioned so that the eyes face *Qibla*, but instead are gazing to the west/northwest, which is the opposite direction from Mecca for those living at the Cape. There are several possible reasons for this.

The variability in niche orientation may be based on a subjective interpretation of Islamic prayer versus burial guidelines. The exact direction of Mecca may have been a matter of best estimation. Additionally, various Imams over generations may have interpreted an orientation towards Mecca differently for burial practice, where *the axial alignment of the body* towards Mecca (rather than the *eyes facing Qibla*) was considered legitimate.¹⁹⁶ This might explain the divergence between Cluster 3 where bodies are oriented to the south (the eyes

¹⁹⁵ <http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/ABewley/Page39.html>.

¹⁹⁶ Shaheed Mathee, Center for Contemporary Islam, UCT, pers. comm..

do look to/face Mecca in the east) and Clusters 1 and 2 where the bodies are oriented to the north/northeast towards Mecca (but the eyes look to/face west, away from Mecca).¹⁹⁷

Another possibility is that orientation has been defined by the burials of revered local religious leaders. Many Imams were interred from an early period along the slopes of Signal Hill (where the kramats at the Tana Baru are located today). The niche burials in the Green Point area may instead have been positioned *facing* towards this localized center of spiritual significance, a directive that would have been a subjective interpretation of the burial canon. There is precedent for this possibility, as the three niche burials at Cobern Street were oriented north or northwest with the individual facing towards Signal Hill. However, several of the Imams enshrined in the kramats on Signal Hill are themselves oriented to the northeast (Tuan Saheed Alawie who came from Yemen) and East (Abdullah ibn Kadi abdu Salaam (Tuan Guru) from Tidore in the Trinite Islands).¹⁹⁸

This variability in religious interpretation can even be found on the current Islamic website for the Council of Muslim Theologians in South Africa which states, "It is preferable to make him lay on his right side facing Qibla, i.e. *the head facing towards the east and the legs facing towards the west (for South Africa) and his face facing towards Qibla.*"¹⁹⁹

Gerdien Jonker emphasizes that while Islam offers overarching principles for burial

¹⁹⁷ The subject of orientation has been a contested issue among mosques in South Africa, and in Cape Town in particular. (Shaheed Mathee, Center for Contemporary Islam, University of Cape Town, pers. comm). Even through the 1960s a debate raged around the exact direction of Mecca! So considering that the labouring classes and slaves in the 19th century were hindered by a lack of cartographic resources, as well as possible difference in interpretation, it is perhaps not surprising that this variability in orientation exists.

¹⁹⁸ <http://library.thinkquest.org/C0120708/kramats/bo-kaap.htm>

¹⁹⁹ http://www.islamsa.org.za/library/pamphlets/burial_guidelines.htm. These particular burial guidelines would be appropriate for the Johannesburg Muslim community, which is where the Council is located. The confusion lies in applying this to 'South Africa' in general, as they have done on this website.

procedures, it also “leaves space for local expressions”²⁰⁰. Jonker states that death forms the starting point for the awareness of a common past and acts as a basis for solidarity in the present. Muslims are buried *into* a tight social fabric, and the act of burial serves to strengthen the ties of community: “In Muslim countries (burial grounds) form the secret source from which social life and collective memory take their point of departure...*Those who rest in foreign earth form a community of siblings and refugees.*”²⁰¹

Many researchers, while acknowledging the episodic arrivals of Muslim political exiles as well as convicts, contend that the Muslim community in Cape Town has its “collective origins” in the final decades of the Dutch period.²⁰² Islam has its origins as an urban-centered religion in the Cape context, and a sudden growth of Islam occurring after 1770 led to a boom in religious adherents during the post-1808 period (after the abolition of slavery).²⁰³ The urban Muslim community included the “creole-dominated slave population and acculturated free blacks”²⁰⁴ that collectively developed “syncretic cultural practices.”²⁰⁵ The practice of Islam was not impervious to change, and much research has been done on the evolution of creolized ‘Muslim’ ritual at the Cape.²⁰⁶ This point is potentially critical in an interpretation of the variation of niche burial styles at Prestwich, which is underpinned by the complexities of acculturation and creolization during this period.

²⁰⁰ Jonker, Gerdien, 1997. ‘The Many Facets of Islam: Death, dying and disposal between orthodox rule and historical convention’, in *Death and Bereavement Across Cultures* Routledge Press, p. 144.

²⁰¹ Jonker, 1997:162. My emphasis

²⁰² Bank, 1991:112. Bank references Shell and Davids here, whose opinion concur on this point.

²⁰³ See Rhoda’s work on the Muslim communities at the Strand, Western Cape.

²⁰⁴ Bank, 1991:112

²⁰⁵ Bank, 1991:113

²⁰⁶ See Achmat Davids for a discussion of ‘Ratiep’ and ‘Calliphat’ rituals, which he describes as a synthesis of animist and Islamic custom. Also see John Edwin Mason, ‘Some Religion He Must Have: Slaves, Sufism and Conversion to Islam at the Cape’, Paper given at the SERSAS Fall Conference, Oct 15 -16, 1999, Savannah GA, USA.

Islamic burial custom emphasizes that Muslims should not bury in the same area as “sinners and *fajirs*...disbelievers and renegades.”²⁰⁷ This is an important point given the sprawling burial milieu into which the niche burials were inserted which was filled with ‘disbelievers and renegades’. The Muslim community may have attempted to bury in isolation, within the legislated religious intolerance at the time and they probably had very little choice in the location of their burials in the early 18th century. As outlined above, there is variability in the tightness of the niche burial clusters. From this spatial patterning, the community’s success in commanding space and having others respect that spatial integrity must have varied. Consequently, Cluster 3 shows a limited control, whereas Cluster 2 and Cluster 1 are much tighter and standardized. Additionally, Cluster 1 in particular was undisturbed by any other later burials.

It is important here to comment on the occurrence of sub-adults in Cluster 2. These burials were primarily in the sand layer, or just at the interface between sand and clay. There was no strong definition of a niche structure or shaft among the sub-adults, however they generally had multiple clay balls or stones placed along the dorsal aspect of the body. In Islamic burial custom, it is normal to have an area of the burial ground demarcated for sub-adults, particular those who have not yet reached puberty.²⁰⁸ Burial preparation for children require less effort, as pre-pubescent children are sinless and would have gone straight to God at their death. The niche, and ‘window’, that may or may not have opened to Paradise is clearly redundant. The clay balls or stones would have helped to keep the body propped up in the sand on their right sides, but any additional burial features would have perhaps been considered superfluous. It is important to note that the sub-adults in Cluster 2 is a discrete group located near the adults in Cluster 1. This particular niche episode, therefore, possibly hints that the community could

²⁰⁷ http://www.hizmetbooks.org/Endless_Bliss_Fifth_Fascicle/Bliss-5-Chapter-16.htm

²⁰⁸ Shaheed Mathee, Center for Contemporary Islam, UCT, pers. comm.

command enough influence to control separate, but contemporary clusters in the burial ground for both adults and sub-adults.

It is safe to assume that the niche burials were contemporary with the surrounding growth of the Prestwich Street cemetery. It is possible that the Prestwich Street niche burials are an earlier 18th century expression of Islam in Cape Town, sometime before the Muslim populace began to inter their dead on the slopes of Signal Hill. As Islamic law requires that the dead be carried to the burial ground, it can be inferred that this burial area was close to the homes of Muslims.

Reliable numbers for the Muslim community do not exist for the 18th century, but by 1799 the Muslim community felt secure and confident enough to petition to the Burgher Senate to build a mosque, and the 1805 land grant for their separate burial ground merely 'formalized' an area of Signal Hill where they had been already been burying members of their community for years. A tally of 2,167 free Muslims people was given for the 1825 Cape population census²⁰⁹. In the same year, Cape imams submitted a total figure of 1,268 Muslim *slaves*, although this number may be an underestimation.²¹⁰ By 1842, according to the Municipal census, there were 6,435 Muslims in Cape Town, "over one-third of the town's population."²¹¹

It is probable that as a result of general population growth, the burial grounds in Green Point were heavily used by many groups of people during the last twenty to thirty years of the 18th century. The Muslim community would have felt this negative encroachment on an area that they had demarcated, sanctified and 'formalized' for themselves as 'believers'. It is not

²⁰⁹ Elphick, R & R Shell, 'Intergroup relations: Khoikkhoi, settlers, slaves and free blacks, 1652 – 1795', in *The Shaping of South African Society, 1652 – 1840, (2nd Edition) p.125.*

²¹⁰ Shell, 1994:356. The total number of Muslim slaves was broken down by sex: 846 males and 422 females.

²¹¹ Shell, 1994: 357

known what visual clues there might have been that were erected on the surface to demarcate their 'pockets' in the burial ground.

The archaeological record suggests, therefore, that the community had some success at commanding space in the cemetery and variability in the definition of niche clusters consequently may have chronological implications and may reflect a sequence between the clusters. The issue of encroachment is important as far as it reflects the power of this Muslim community to retain spatial integrity.

I therefore suggest that Cluster 1 (with Cluster 2 being a possible extension for sub-adult burials) is the youngest episode of niche burials, and Cluster 3 represents the oldest episode of niche burials. A clear change in axial orientation of the body occurs between the burials in Cluster 3 (south) to Clusters 1 and 2 (north/northeast). The standardization and uniformity in spatial distribution and orientation in Clusters 1 and 2 is in direct contrast with the dispersed state of niche burials in Cluster 3. This may indicate that the suggested relative sequence of niche burial clusters reflects the increasing ability of the Muslim community to command and retain the spatial integrity of their burial areas, even in the face of encroachment and overcrowding. This inferred power was formally acknowledged in 1805 when the Muslim burial ground on the slopes of Signal Hill was officially recognized.

SPATIAL PATTERNING OF DENTAL MODIFICATION BURIALS

I now return to those individuals with evidence of dental modification. Dental modification was practiced in the pre-Columbian Americas, Asia, Oceania and across most of Africa, but is not known to have been practiced at the Cape by the indigenous Khoesan peoples, although the practice has been observed in other areas of southern Africa (e.g. Namibia and Angola)²¹². There is strong evidence for the practice of incisor removal among Early Iron Age (300 – 900 CE) human remains recovered in the Northern, Northwest, Mpumalanga and KwaZulu/Natal provinces of South Africa.²¹³ The history of this practice at the Cape is therefore based upon the practice being brought in from elsewhere. Modification can take the form of filing, chipping, inlay, ablation (the intentional removal of teeth), tattooing, staining, or carving patterns or designs on the anterior face of the teeth. This modification was meant to be seen by others and clearly made a statement about the social/cultural rank or status an individual.²¹⁴

The Prestwich Street human remains have not been directly examined by bio-anthropological specialists.²¹⁵ Therefore, the description and analysis used for this study is based on field observations of dental modification (primarily filed teeth) noted during exhumation. In cases where there was any doubt about types of dental modification such as a chipped tooth, or 'possible notch', for example, these individuals have been excluded from

²¹² See Van Reenan 1978a, 1985, 1986, and Wifred Dyson Hambly 1934, 1937.

²¹³ Morris, AG. 1993a. Human remains from the Early Iron Age sites of Nanda and KwaGandaganda, Mngeni Vally, Natal, South Africa. *Natal Museum Journal of Humanities* 5:83-98.

²¹⁴ See Jacqui Friedling's work on the continuing practice of dental modification at the Cape, in her MSc on the 'Cape Flats smile', Dept of Anatomy, University of Cape Town This may have implications for identity creation, and even possible threads of cultural continuity in a historical perspective? Also see Alan Morris, 'Dental mutilation in southern African history and prehistory with special reference to the 'Cape Flats Smile'', *Journal of the South African Dental Association*, 53:179-183, April 1998.

²¹⁵ Due to the SAHRA verdict.

the study because this level of identification would need the direct confirmation of a bioanthropological specialist.²¹⁶ Thus, I have only been able to plot the distribution of the *total number* of identified burials with dental modification, but have discriminated between patterns in the spatial distribution data. I have made general comments on the range of dental modification patterns based on the on-site photos and field notes, but again, it will be necessary to crosscheck with information with the actual remains.

Additionally, although ablation was noted, it is archaeologically difficult to distinguish between this form of modification in the field, and natural or accidental pre-mortem tooth loss.²¹⁷ These individuals will also not be included in the sample. There may, therefore, be a much larger sample of individuals with dental modification but this will only receive attention once there is direct access to the remains. In this sub-sample there are 49 individuals (3.8%, n = 1272) with dental modification, and *at least* seven different styles of dental modification have been noted (Table 5.9).²¹⁸

²¹⁶ This is obviously not ideal, but these are the parameters of research as defined by the South African Heritage Resource Agency in September 2005.

²¹⁷ Morris, AG. 1989: Dental Mutilation in historic and prehistoric South Africa, *Quarterly Bulletin of the South African Library*, Vol. 43(3):132-134.

²¹⁸ There are also several site forms (individual forms) that are missing survey point information, and have not been included in the database, and have not been plotted. I do, however, use photos of these individuals (Nos. 1036 – 1038) in this section.

Table 5.9. Individuals with dental modification in Prestwich Street burials

Individual	Age	Orientation	Coffin	Shared Burial	Pattern*
7	adult	unknown	No	none	I. filed incisors
23	adult	W	No	none	I. filed incisors
115	adult	W	no	double	I. filed incisors
138	adult	NW	no	none	I. filed incisors
283	adult	N	no	none	I. filed incisors
294	adult	W	yes	none	I. filed, rounded
332	adult	E	no	none	VII. wave-like pattern
372	adult	W	no	none	I. filed incisors
373	adult	W	yes	none	I. filed incisors
428.1	adult	E	no	double	I. filed incisors
428.2	adult	W	no	double	I. filed incisors
440	adult	W	no	none	I. filed incisors
531.1	adult	E	no	double	I. filed incisors
563	adult	W	yes	none	I. filed incisors
582	adult	W	no	none	I. filed incisors
602	adult	W	yes	none	I. filed incisors
848	adult	NE	no	none	VI. Inlay?
874	adult	W	no	none	I. filed incisors
910	adult	SW	no	none	I. filed incisors
971	adult	NW	no	none	II, III wedge
972	adult	W	no	none	I. filed incisors
975	adult	W	no	none	I. filed incisors
986	adult	NW	no	none	I. filed incisors
1006	adult	W	yes	none	I. filed incisors
1009	adult	W	no	none	II, III wedge
1029	adult	W	no	double	II, III wedge
1031	adult	W	no	none	I. filed incisors
1035	adult	W	no	triple	I. filed incisors
1039	adult	E	no	none	I. filed incisors
1055	adult	W	no	double	I. filed incisors
1056	adult	W	no	double	I. filed incisors
1057	adult	W	no	none	I. filed incisors
1061	adult	W	no	none	I. filed incisors
1068	adult	W	no	double	II, III wedge
1069	adult	W	no	double	II, III wedge
1083	adult	W	no	none	I. filed incisors
1084	adult	W	no	none	I. filed incisors
1093	sub-adult?	W	yes	none	I. filed incisors
1109	adult	W	no	none	I. filed incisors
1111	adult	W	yes	double	I. filed incisors
1126	adult	W	yes	none	I. filed incisors
1135	adult	W	no	double	I. filed incisors
1143	adult	W	yes	none	VI. Inlay?
1195	adult	N	no	none	I. filed incisors
1216	adult	SE	no	none	II, III wedge?
1225	adult	W	no	none	IV, V Notched
1228	adult	W	no	none	I. filed incisors
1237	adult	W	no	none	I. filed incisors
1267	adult	W	no	double	I. filed incisors

Interments of individuals with dental modification at Prestwich Street tend to respect certain areas of the burial ground (Fig. 5.21). There is little overlap between niche burial clusters and burials with dental modification. Additionally, there are large areas with no burials of either niche burial style or with dental modification.

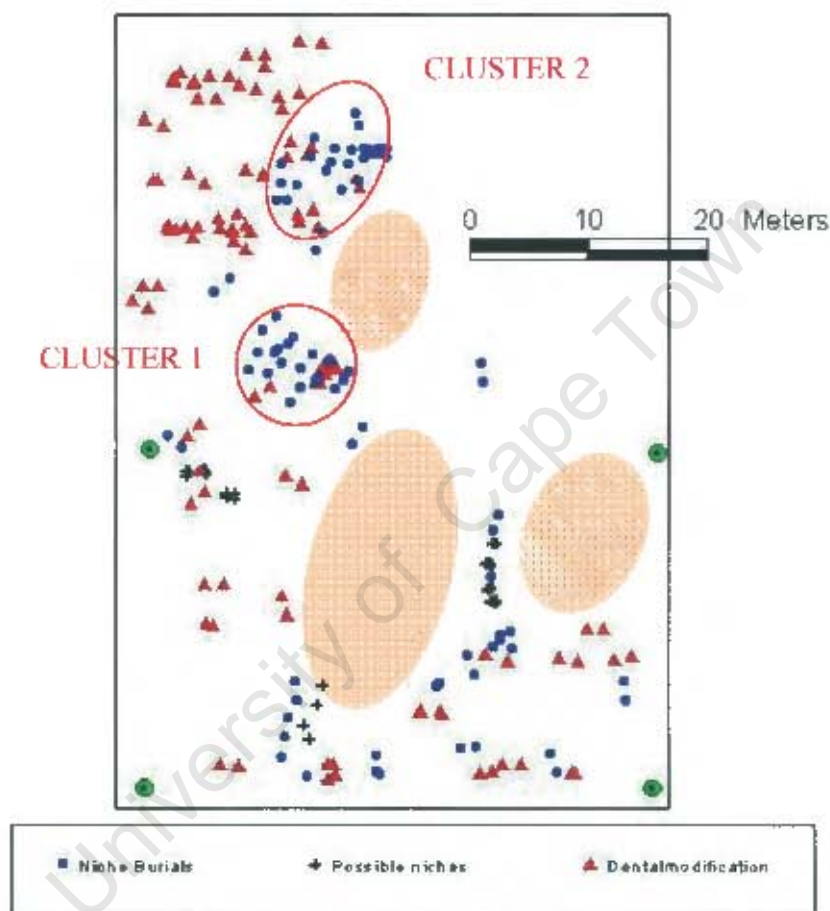


Figure 5.21. Distribution of individuals with dental modification. Niche burial clusters 1 and 2 are circled. Note areas where there are 'holes' highlighted (i.e. an absence of niche burials or dental modification).

There is a denser distribution of dentally modified individuals in the northwestern section of the site (Fig. 5.22). There is only one case of overlap between the graves with dentally modified people, and the niche burials. Furthermore, there are only two individuals with dental modification in niche burials, one each in Cluster 1 and 3 (No. 848 and 283 respectively). In the same area, there is clear stratigraphic evidence for a burial with

modification above a niche burial in Cluster 2. It is impossible to say if this means that *all* the dentally modified individuals were interred after the niches in Cluster 2. The overwhelming evidence points to the individuals with dental modification as being a separate episode from the niche burials.

36 individuals, or 73.4% of the dental modification sub-sample were oriented to the west (Fig. 5.22). Among these 36, there were nine individuals in coffins.

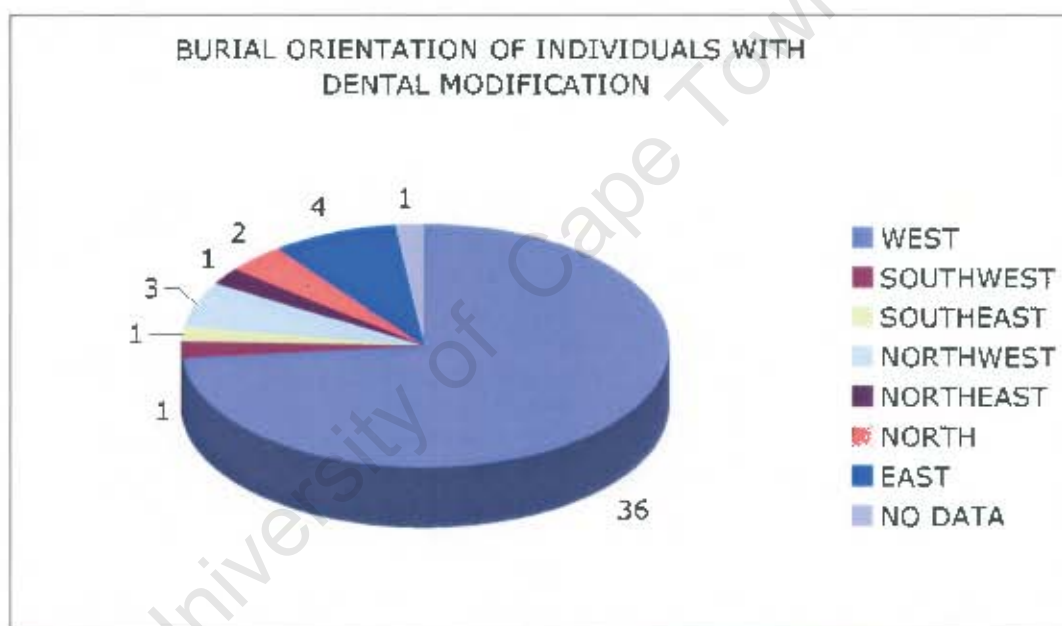


Figure 5.22. Orientation of burials of individuals with dental modification

The overwhelming majority of dentally-modified individuals (41, or 83%) were buried on their backs (supine position). The majority of the burials were oriented to the west, with some variability in the others. Among those that were not on their backs, 3 individuals were on their left sides in a flexed position, 2 individuals are in niches, 1 individual was on his front, and 2 data forms had unrecorded observations of the position of the body. Twelve individual, or 24%, were buried in shared grave shafts with two or more people. Only two

individuals (No. 1084 and 1126) had associated grave goods: one bone button and two copper buttons, respectively.

Nearly 100% of individuals with dental modification are adult. There is no data on sex profiles. There is one case (No. 1093) in which direct analysis is needed to clarify the exact age, as the site record form is unclear whether this person was a small (in stature) adult, or a juvenile. Either way, it can be assumed that Individual 1093 had reached puberty, a rite of passage that modification of dentition symbolically marks.

University of Cape Town

DENTAL MODIFICATION PATTERNS

There are a variety of dental modification styles that focus exclusively on the incisors. The patterns identified among the Prestwich Street burials are clearly complex and that complexity will only become fully evident with direct analysis (See Table 5.8 for details).

Pattern I. Pointed Incisors

The maxillary and mandibular incisors are sharpened to points by filing the teeth mesially and distally. Variation is evident in the degrees of 'pointedness' from an obtuse angle (Fig. 5.23) to acute maxillary points. There is also further modification in which the mandibular incisors may also be filed in addition to the maxillary incisors (Fig. 5.24).

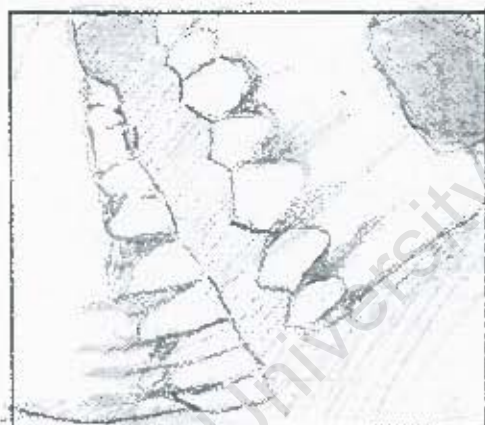


Figure 5.23. Maxillary filing to obtuse angle

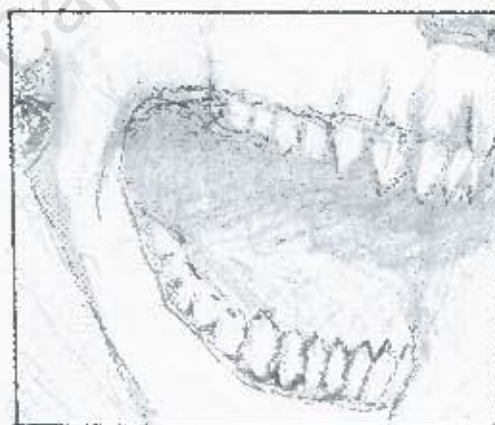


Figure 5.24. Individual No. 1006. Both mandibular and maxillary filing to acute points

This pattern has been ethnographically recorded among the Maconde of Tanzania, the Yao of Malawi and Mozambique, the Makua of Mozambique, and peoples in Angola and the Congo.²¹⁹

²¹⁹ See Glenda Cox for detailed ethnographic review of dental modification.

Patterns II and III. Wedge Shaping

The maxillary (and in some cases mandibular) central incisors are filed or chipped mesially (Pattern II) forming an inverted "V"-shaped gap. The lateral maxillary incisors on Figure 5.25 are chipped distally, and a second 'V' occurs between the lateral incisors and the canines.

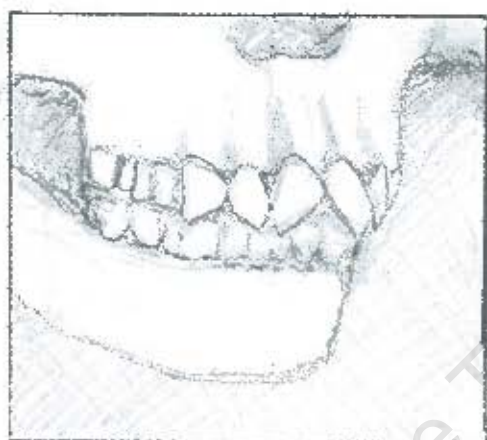


Figure 5.25. Individual No. 1036. Mesial filing of central maxillary incisors forming maxillary pattern of inverted V-shape gaps

This pattern has been reported on one of the shipwreck victims of the *Pacquet Real* that sank in Table Bay in 1818 en route from Mozambique to Brazil. Three individuals from the Cobern Street burials also had this style.²²⁰ It has been ethnographically observed in groups from Namibia and Angola through to West Africa.²²¹

The inverse of Pattern II may also be present among the Prestwich burials but this will need further physical analysis. The inverse (Pattern III) is distal filing of the central maxillary incisors forming inverted 'V'-shaped gaps between the lateral incisors. One individual from the Cobern showed this pattern, which is considered "unique, compared to the other skeletons recovered at the Cape."²²²

²²⁰ Apollonio 1998:67

²²¹ Cox, 1995:15

²²² Apollonio, 1998:68

Patterns IV and V. Notches (Rounded, Rectangular)

Figure 5.26 shows rounded chips removed from the central and lateral maxillary incisors, with an inverse mandibular pattern. In the 1880s, Livingstone described a woman in Malawi with rounded chips removed from central maxillary incisors.²²³



Figure 5.26. Individual No. 1225 (drawn from photo taken while being exhumed) Rounded notching of maxillary and mandibular incisors (Pattern IV)

There are other variations of 'notching' that has been ethnographically observed. The removal of rectangular or square notches have been recorded among the Wanyemba from central Angola as well as groups in Mozambique and Malawi.²²⁴ The Fort Knokke sample has occurrences of both rectangular and rounded notching, but these patterns were not found in the Cobern Street burials.²²⁵ Both patterns have been observed in the Prestwich sample.

²²³ Livingstone 1880

²²⁴ Cox, 1995:15

²²⁵ See Cox 1995 and Apollonio 1998.

Pattern VI. Hollowing/Inlay

The first recorded observation of this pattern at the Cape was from an individual unearthed near the former Gallows Hill in Green Point. This is described as "chips...removed from the front of the incisors, hollowing them out without altering the outline of the tooth."²²⁶ Prestwich provides the second observation of this style (Fig. 5.27).

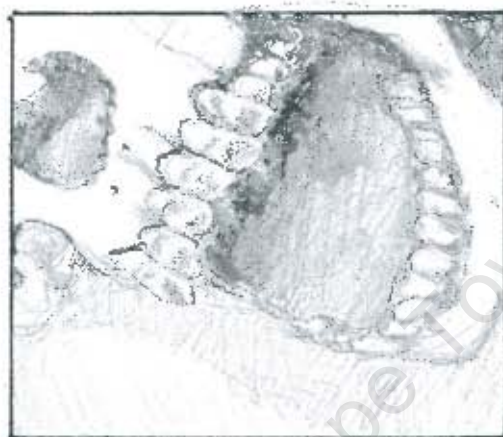


Figure 5.27. Individual No. 1143. Hollowed-out maxillary incisors

In addition to 'hollowing out' the anterior face of the incisors, there is also additional chipping or filing applied to the teeth. This pattern is found on Individual No. 1143 which is a west-orientated supine burial. It also may occur in a niche burial in Cluster 1 (Individual No. 848), however, this would need to be confirmed by a specialist. The hollowing out of teeth to fit metal or jewel inlays is practiced in various parts of the world. Inlays of gold were popular in South America²²⁷, brass and wire were "plugged" into teeth among the indigenous tribes of Borneo.²²⁸ Significantly, Cox concluded that, "Inlays are not found in African patterns of alteration."²²⁹ No actual 'inlay' material was recovered with the Prestwich Street burials.

²²⁶ Morris personal observation, in Cox 1995:20

²²⁷ Cox, 1995:12

²²⁸ See *British Dental Journal*, Volume 191, No. 2, July 28, 2001

²²⁹ Cox, 1995:12.

Pattern VII. Decorated

This pattern is similar to that recorded at the African Burial Ground in New York²³⁰. In both cases, the individuals had 'wavy lines' running across the incisors (Fig. 5.28). This pattern is unique among human remains discovered at the Cape, and until this study, this pattern has not been recorded in a South African context.



Figure 5.28. Decorated maxillary and mandibular incisors

As noted above, the northwestern corner of the excavation site is where the densest distribution of dentally modified individuals were found. Based on the Islamic guidelines for burials, it would seem as though the Muslim community ideally would have had to abandon this burial ground rather than share it with sinners and unbelievers. The implications of this may concur with the historical documentation, if one assumes that most of the dentally modified individuals are Africans.

²³⁰ The African Burial Ground remains also include a wide variety of dental modification – eight patterns in total, from twenty-three individuals: “To date, researches have identified at least eight styles of such modification- ranging from a pointed pattern...to a wedge shaped affecting the central maxillary incisors...to a wave-like pattern demonstrated in the anterior teeth. Twenty-three individuals of the 160 with observable dentitions exhibit culturally modified teeth. All are adults, with men predominant (15 of the 23). Medford, Edna Green, W. Perry, S. Carrington, L. Heywood, F. Jackson, R. Kittles, J. Thorton, (Howard University), ‘The Transatlantic Slave Trade to New York City: Sources and Routing of Captives’, Paper written for the Symposium: Archaeology, Bioanthropology & African Identity in the Diaspora: Theoretical and Methodological Advances, World Archaeological Congress 4, University of Cape Town, 10-14, 1999, p.10.

From the beginning of the VOC period at the Cape the import of black Africans was sporadic and the numbers were low, and perhaps not great enough to support the continuity of prior identities. It is likely that the identities of many arrivals to the Cape in the 17th and 18th centuries were overwhelmed by the dominant cultural mores of the Colony. The majority of slaves from East Africa were brought to the Cape towards the end of the 18th century and the numbers were augmented after 1808 by the capture of 'Prize Negroes.'

Robert Ross states that in the 1760s the majority of imported slaves were still arriving from mainland or island Asia, but after 1767, when a prohibition was enacted against the importation of Asian slaves to the Cape²³¹, foreign slavers would have heard about this and rushed to fill a need. This is supported by the documentation from the Simon's town ship logs which note a significant increase in foreign slavers carrying African slaves putting into Table Bay:

"From the mid 1780s onwards, there was a considerable number of ships which sailed from one of the East African posts to the Caribbean or Brazil...Between April 1783 and December 1793 at least 60 ships on such a journey entered one of the Cape harbours for a longer or shorter period, and were thus certainly able to sell slaves."²³²

The influx of African slaves continued through the period after emancipation when 'Prize Negroes' were 'saved' by the British from illegal slaving vessels and conscripted into a fourteen-year 'apprenticeship' with Cape burghers. This is supported by Glenda Cox's isotopic analysis on the *Pacquet Real* shipwreck victims who drowned in Table Bay in 1818 en route to Brazil from Mozambique. This episode occurred after the anti-slave trade

²³¹ Ross, Robert 1989: 'Last Years of the Slave Trade to the Cape Colony,' in *The economics of the Indian Ocean Slave Trade*, p. 212. The prohibition, in official Company regulations was supposed to control unauthorized use of shipping space on Company ships. But Ross contends, "more importantly it was a result of a panic in Cape Town after Buginese and Sumatran slaves had murdered a company official and run loose for some weeks on the slopes of Table Mountain." Shell contests this view, in support of the decision being an economic one.

²³² Ross, 1989:212

campaign had begun (1808), when the capture of 'Prize Negroes' accelerated. The dental modification styles are consistent with those of Mozambican groups and the isotopic work on the *Paquet Real* shipwreck victims shows that the slaves diet changed a short time before their death.²³³ There is documentary evidence for East African slaves with filed incisors living at the Cape, as illustrated by this 1827 advert for an absconded slave "with sharp pointed teeth" (Fig. 5.29).²³⁴

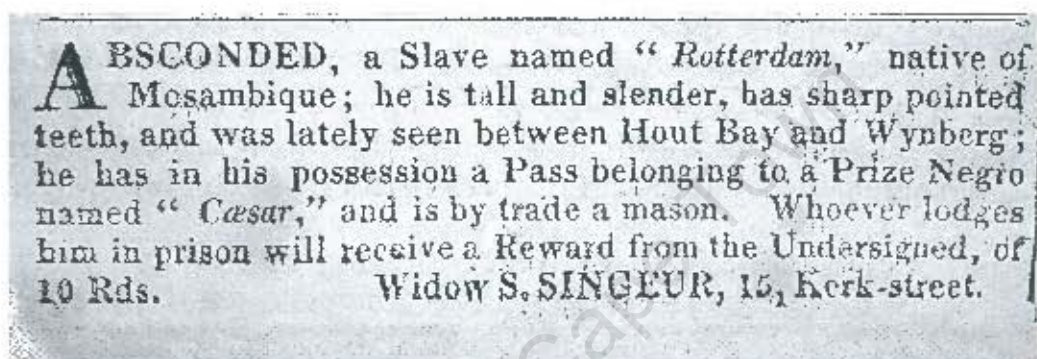


Figure 5.29. 1827 Public announcement for an absconded East African slave²³⁵

The greater number of African slaves at the Cape from the 1780s may have coincided with (and indeed would have played a role in) a relocation of Muslim burial grounds. It is notable that even if the dental modification episode was after the niche burial episode, the dental modification burials still respect the niche burial space (Fig. 5.22). This suggests that

²³³ The Vergelegen slave's diet was similar to that of the *Paquet Real* slaves (C4 plants during childhood) but strontium isotopes indicate a different environment, suggesting that the Vergelegen slave may have come from Madagascar rather than East Africa. Sealy, J., A. Morris, R. Armstrong, A. Markell, C. Schrire, 1993: 'A Historic Skeleton from the Slave Lodge at Vergelegen', in *Historical Archaeology in the Western Cape: South African Archaeological Society Goodwin Series 7*: 84-91.

²³⁴ Cape Town Gazette, 1749. From Jackie Loos.

²³⁵ Also see Handler, J.S. 1994: 'Determining African Birth from Skeletal Remains: A Note on Tooth Mutilation', *Historical Archeology* 28(3): pp. 113-119, which correlates dental modification with imported slaves or runaways.

there was some sort of surface marker flagging the area as one with Muslim burials. A simple marker is allowed under Islamic burial custom:

It is permissible to place tombstones over graves. It is not permissible to inscribe...blessed names, poems, eulogies, the word 'Fatiha' or to put the dead person's picture on the stone. Such things are bad customs, though they have been done for years.. They (savants) said that it is permissible to write the person's name and the date of his death on the tombstone.²³⁶

The modified teeth of the two individuals in niche burials (Nos. 283 and 848) are important cultural attributes. Filed incisors is a common pattern of dental modification among African groups, and this may suggest that Individual No. 283 converted to Islam after arrival at the Cape. The hollowed-out or 'inlay' style of No. 848 is not known in Africa and is rare on skeletal remains found at the Cape. This person may have come from another region of the VOC trading and slaving world with this 'inlay' style of dental modification intact.

²³⁶ http://www.hizmetbooks.org/Endless_Bliss_Fifth_Fascicle/Bliss-5-Chapter-16.htm. There is much debate in the Muslim world and subsequent variability around the marking and enclosing of burials.

SHARED BURIALS

Another aspect of individuals with dental modification at Prestwich Street is that there seems to be an association between some individuals with dental modification and shared burials (two or three people buried together in the same grave shaft). On archaeological grounds it is clear that these shared burials were not from disturbance but do reflect a single burial event.²³⁷

Thirteen individuals of twenty-two shared burials (59%) from the total individual sample had dental modification (Table 5.10).

Table 5.10. Correlation of dental modification and shared burials

Burial Style	Dental Modification	Total Shared Burials
Double	None	4
Double	Yes	6
Triple	None	1
Triple	Yes	1

This relationship was also evident at the Cobern Street excavation, where two of the six individuals with dental modification were buried together and a maxillary abscess caused by the dental modification on Burial 20B caused an infection that was no more than six months old at the time of death.²³⁸ This suggests that this person (and partner) were recent arrivals at the Cape, and may have died aboard ship, or just after arrival. There is a suggestion that dental modification and shared burials are spatially associated (Fig. 5.30).

²³⁷ See Alan Morris, 1981. 'Some thoughts on double burials', *The South African Archaeological Society Newsletter*, Vol 4, No. 2.

²³⁸ Morris, A.G & Phillips, V 1997: 'Dental Health and Dental Practices Amongst the People of Cobern Street', Paper presented at the 27th Annual Congress of Anatomical Society of Southern Africa, Cape Town.

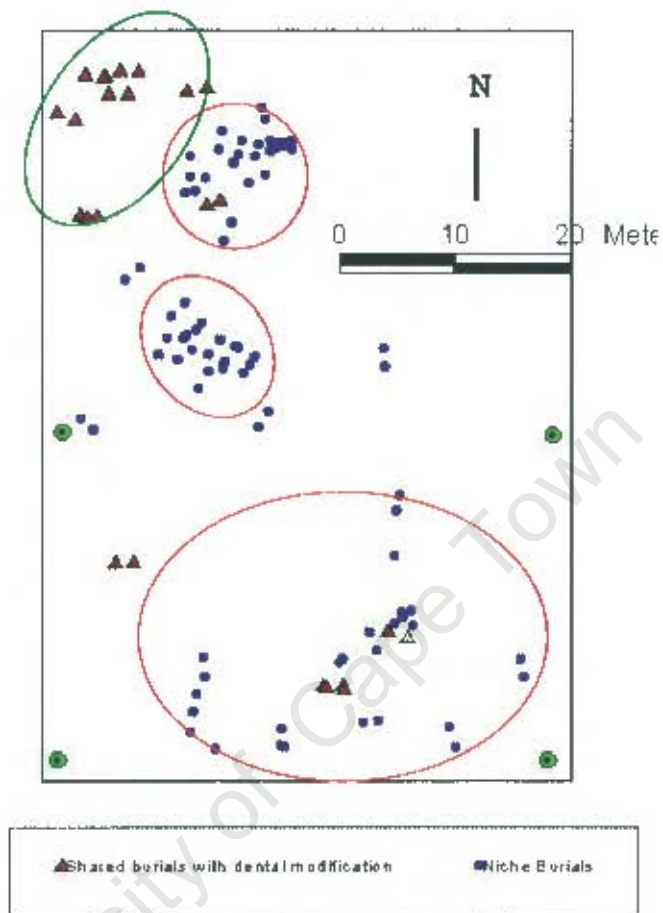


Figure 5.30. Distribution of individuals with dental modification in shared burials. Symbols represent 'head' and 'feet' of each individual. Note distinctive west-east orientation of shared burials, and clustering in northeast section of site (circled in green). Niche burial clusters circled in red.

CULTURAL MATERIAL AND GRAVE GOODS

It has already been noted that most archaeological material from the historic period of the Cape Colonial period comes from historical dumps, and distilling any specific or personal information from this material culture is challenging. Martin Hall, in his extensive work on the archaeology of the underclass, has stated,

“But despite the abundance of most of those sites that have been excavated, there remain problems in seeing the evidence for underclass life in colonial southern Africa through the archaeological lens. There are very few traces of ethnic identity in those ‘small things forgotten’ in places like the back yard of Bree Street or the outbuildings of Vergelegen: a few unusual pot sherds, a handful of cowrie shells, a few alien coins. Overwhelmingly, the material culture used by the underclass was the material culture of their masters, passed down when no longer fashionable, bought in cheap job lots, or, perhaps, stolen when the opportunity arose.”²³⁹

However, material culture, uncovered in association with a burial, can contribute to a direct and intimate glimpse into the essence of the *individual*, in contrast to the more anonymous scale of a dump or a random domestic assemblage. It follows that an analysis of large numbers of grave goods from many burials may suggest community or societal patterns. Therefore, the Prestwich Street burials provide opportunities for cultural material to be *directly associated* with individuals from the labouring classes. This personalization of the archaeological record may potentially highlight attitudes towards, and transference of, the value of objects between socio-economic classes and different cultures. The overall impression of the grave ‘goods’ from the Prestwich Street burials, however, is that they are

²³⁹ Hall, M & Markell, Ann (eds), 1993: Historical Archaeology in the Western Cape, The South African Archaeological Society Goodwin Series Vo. 7:3-7, p. 5

quotidian and mundane objects, such as personal adornment (beads, rings, buttons) rather than objects which have special symbolic meaning relating to their specific selection and placement in the context of funereal practice.

There were a total of 115 burials with associated cultural material. Of this number, approximately 45% were in coffins. The overall impression of this sub-category is that the burials have a westerly orientation, and all were contained in the upper sandy layer. The categories of cultural material are not mutually exclusive, for example, both coins and buttons could have been associated with the same burial (See (*) Total, in Table 5.11).

Table 5.11. Cultural material from the Prestwich Street burials

ARTEFACT	NO. OF BURIALS	% OF TOTAL BURIALS WITH GRAVE GOODS	% OF TOTAL INDIVIDUALS (1272)
BUTTONS	62	53.9%	4.8%
BEADS	16	13.9%	1.2%
COINS	14	12.1%	1.1%
RINGS	12	10.4%	0.94%
TAGS	5	4.3%	0.39%
PIPE STEM	4	3.4%	0.31%
PIPE BOWLS	3	2.6%	0.23%
SHACKLES	2	1.7%	0.15%
POTTERY	2	1.7%	0.15%
GLASS MARBLES	1	.86%	0.07%
SILVER CUFFLINKS	1	.86%	0.07%
SCABBARD TIP	1	.86%	0.07%
KNIFE	1	.86%	0.07%
BUCKLE	1	.86%	0.07%
THIMBLE	1	.86%	0.07%
TINDERBOX	1	.86%	0.07%
IRON KEY	1	.86%	0.07%
TOTAL*	128	111%	9.8%

This sample is a minimum number. There were many other individuals with green copper staining of (*inter alia*) lumbar vertebrae, crania, fingers, ribs, ulnas and innominates. These stains indicate the presence of artefacts such as jewelry, shroud pins, buttons or coins that have since disintegrated, decomposed or have become lost in grave disturbance.

Other artefacts normally found at pre-colonial sites, such as grindstones with ochre staining, fragments of pottery, and ostrich eggshell beads, were also recovered at Prestwich Street. These are indicators for Khoekhoen or San domestic sites or graves that were no longer intact or identifiable, and were most likely destroyed during the historic interment period. Additionally, there were the remains of a shell midden in the southwestern quadrant of the site, which could also be pre-colonial in age.

BUTTONS AND RINGS

The most common artefacts in the sample were buttons made of copper. Bone backings, brass, mother of pearl and silver buttons were also recovered. There is no clear patterning of these objects although copper rings tend to cluster in the northeast section of the excavation, possibly due to greater density of burials in that area. Buttons are more generally dispersed (Fig. 5.31). These objects tend to fall outside the areas of the niche burials, particularly niche burial Cluster 1.

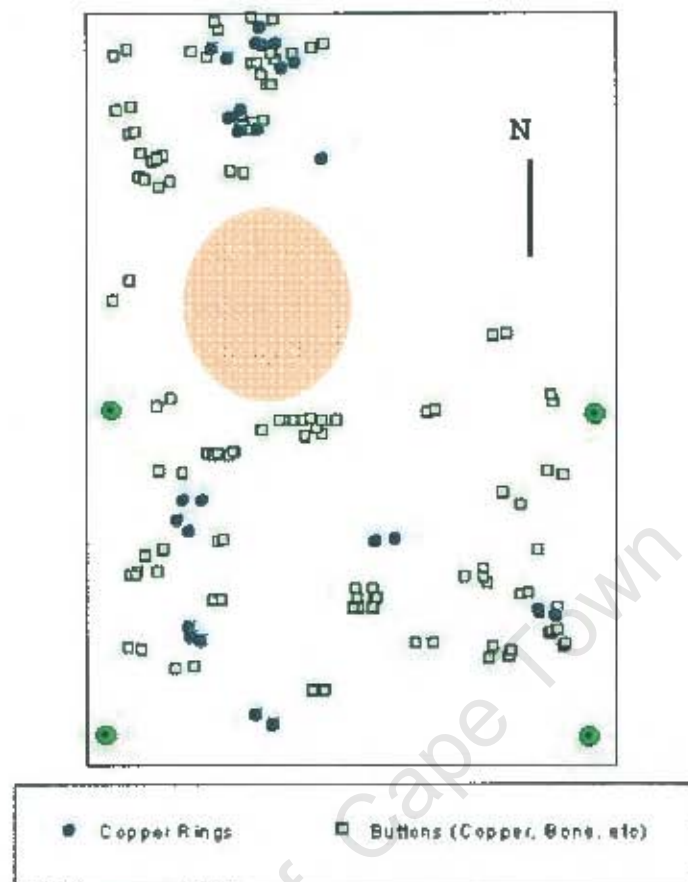


Figure 5.31. Distribution of burials with copper rings and buttons. Area of niche burial Cluster 1 is highlighted in red to show that none of the grave goods occurred in that area.

As mentioned in Chapter One, there was an attempt in the 18th century to control the social hierarchy through visible symbols, as dictated by the Batavian sumptuary laws. Clothing played an important role in this. Slaves were to dress in the 'plainest' of clothes. While there were certainly burials (both with and without coffins) where no evidence of clothing has remained, the occurrence of jewelry and buttons reflects a diversity of clothing and adornment worn by the people buried here.²⁴⁰

²⁴⁰ However, a more detailed analysis may indicate that such items were used in ways not intended by their original function, and suggest the objects had been culturally or symbolically reconstituted.

During the 18th and 19th centuries, buttons for uniforms were cast with insignia. Such buttons have been recovered from the Prestwich Street burials, namely one from the 'Royal Sappers and Miners' (No. 1147), which is the construction corps of the British army who supplied engineering support to the British Armed Forces (Fig. 5.32).



Figure 5.32. Royal Sappers and Miners button, Individual No. 1147

The name of the corps underwent several changes, and in 1787 the 'Royal' was granted as a prefix to the engineers. But it was not until 1812 that the corps was officially renamed 'Royal Sappers and Miners.'²⁴¹ The button found at Prestwich Street has this insignia and must date from 1812, and its presence at Prestwich Street could even be later. However, it is not known if the owner of the jacket (the British army engineer) was actually the wearer of this jacket at the time of death or burial. The button was found in the northwest quadrant of the excavation, near the dental modification cluster. Assuming these dentally-modified individuals were Africans, and possibly Prize Negroes, this button may further buttress a

²⁴¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_Engineers

working hypothesis of a British period (c. 1800?) burial events in this section of the burial ground.

COINS

Fourteen burials are associated with coins, representing 1% of the total 'Individual' sample (n=1272) (Table 5.12). Coins were soaked in a 6% formic acid solution and cleaned with small brushes. Many of the coins were in such poor condition that no markings remained, and could not be dated.

Table 5.12. Burials with coins at Prestwich Street

INDIVIDUAL	AGE	ORIENTATION	COFFIN	CARTWHEEL (1797)	VOC COINS	OTHER	DATE(S)
102	Adult	W	Yes	1	1	jetton	1797
167	Juvenile	W	Yes	0	0	jetton	
285	Juvenile	SE	Yes	2	0		1797
322	Adult	NW	no	2	0		1797
569	Adult	W	yes	2	1		unknown
653	Adult	W	yes	2	0		
664	Adult	E	no	0	17		Late 1600s
736	Adult	W	yes	2	0		
740	Juvenile	W	yes	0	1		
981	Baby	W	yes	0	0	1 (Mughal)	
1005	Adult	NW	yes	0	1		Late 1600s
1020	Adult	W	yes			Unknown*	
1182	Adult	W	yes	0	1	Unknown*	
1199	Juvenile	W	yes	0	1	Unknown*	
1248	Adult	W	yes	0	8	2 (Mughal) 1 jetton	1786 (VOC)

*face of coin too worn to discern markings

Overall, coins are generally associated with coffin burials, or those in supine position, oriented to the west (71%). There are no burials with coins in the first third of the site closest to the southern town end and Alfred Street (Fig. 5. 33).

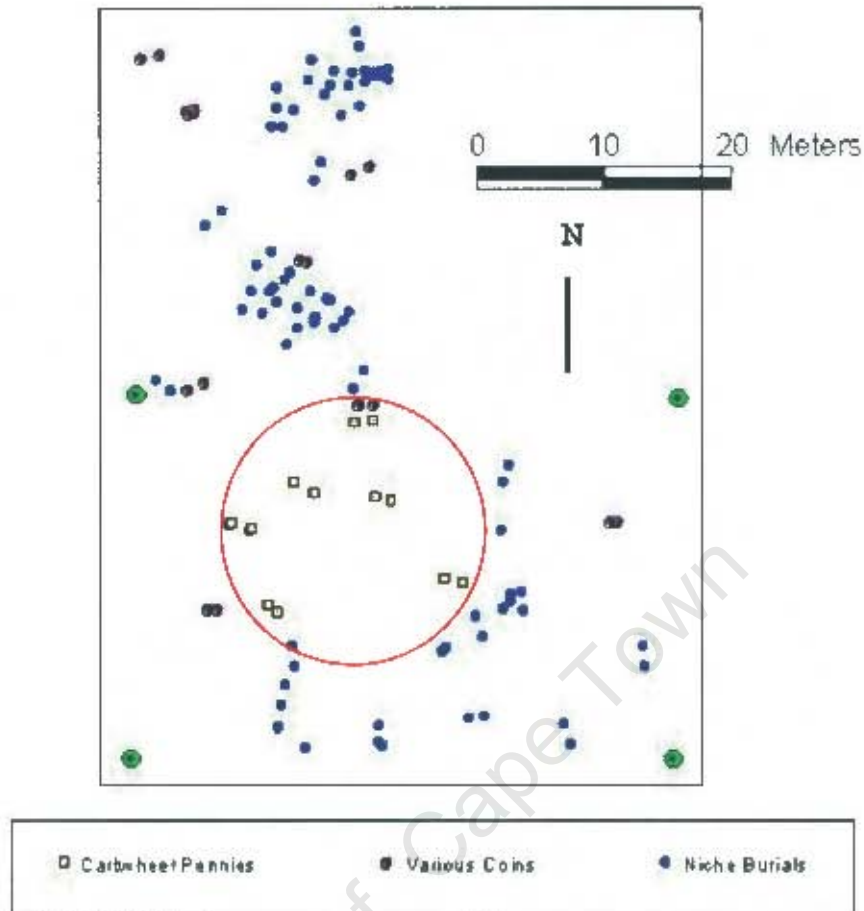


Figure 5.33. Distribution of burials with coins. Clustering of Cartwheel pennies circled in red.

In the Christian tradition, coins were often placed over the corpses' eyes, and were intended to be used to pay the ferryman across the mythical River Styx. Six burials had Cartwheel pennies associated with them. Of these six, five had observable traces of coffin nails. One of the coffin burials was a juvenile and orientated southeast, while the adults were orientated west.

The Cartwheel penny was the first copper penny minted in England from 1797 (Fig. 5.34). The burials with these pennies tend to cluster in the center of the site while 'other' coins are more dispersed throughout the site. Two of the adult burials had only one Cartwheel penny each. Two cartwheel pennies were recovered in each of the other four burials.



Figure 5.34. 1797 Cartwheel Penny, Britain

It seems as though some of the burials only had one coin to place over an eye, rather than covering both. As one would expect with the process of body decomposition, the coins fell out of the eye sockets and were found in various other locations. Individual No. 653, for example, has copper staining on the mandible and ribs (location of the penny upon excavation). Copper staining had marked the coin's slow path from eye socket to shoulder. Two of the burials still had the pennies in place in the eye sockets and this had actually preserved some of the eyelids and surrounding skin (No. 736).

Several burials also included jettons, or counters. Jettons are thin brass pieces originally intended as mathematical aids. The majority of jettons were manufactured in Nuremberg, Germany and they were popular in the 16th - 18th centuries.²⁴²

²⁴² Hume, Ivor Noel. 1969: *A Guide to Artefacts of Colonial America*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, p. 171.

Of the nine burials with other coins, eight burials were coffin burials oriented west. These included one baby and three juveniles.

One of the adults (No, 1248) had ten coins and a jetton that must have been in a pocket or satchel. Two coins in this stash were Mughal coins from the reign of Mughal Emperor Alamgir II of India, which is a silver ruppee struck in Arcot between 1759 and 1806 (Fig. 5.35).



Figure 5.35. Mughal Coins, struck in India, late 18th - early 19th centuries, from burials No. 1248 and 981.



Figure 5.36. VOC coins and jetton from Individual No. 1248

Given that the British only took over the Cape in the early 19th century, this may in fact narrow the coins date of entry to the Cape to after 1795, towards the end of the coin's production period. The other coins were early VOC coinage, from the late 1600s as well as several late VOC coins from 1786 (Fig. 5.36). This later date of the VOC coinage coincides with the minting of the Mughal coin, and perhaps narrows the entry of these coins to the Cape to the turn of the 19th century. One other Mughal coin was recovered from the grave shaft of a baby in a coffin (No. 981). Coins from a burial of unknown provenance (i.e., not marked on site record form, but labeled No. 472) include two VOC coins from the late 17th century, and six small silver coins (or counters?) with 18th century dates (1727, 1733, 1736, 1737 and 1739.)

Coinage can be a problematic method to date an archaeological site or feature because coins can be in circulation for decades before they enter the record. A coin may even represent a 'prized belonging', or an heirloom and, therefore, can be 'curated' well beyond an average circulation. Coins are dateable objects with respect only to the date of minting.

The satchel recovered with Individual No. 1248, for example, had both VOC coins dating from 1688 and Mughal coins from the late 18th or early 19th century (Table 5.13). This means that the dates of the earliest coins must be ignored, and the Mughal coin that was first struck in 1759 is the *terminus post quem*. This particular case is advantageous because it narrows the chronology by eliminating the VOC coins as a marker.

Table 5.13. Dateable Artefacts from the Prestwich Street Burials

DATEABLE ARTEFACTS	DATE RANGE
Early VOC coinage	Late 1600S (1688), 1733
Mughal coins	1759 - 1806
Cartwheel pennies	From 1797
Royal Sapper and Miners button	From 1812
Hawker slave tags	From 1809

Although the coin sample is small, the coins plus the Royal Sapper button emphasize a late 18th to early 19th century date (Table 5.12). This obviously does not represent a date for the whole of the Prestwich Street burials, but is of interest that the available chronological markers emphasize the British period at the Cape.

I used the occurrence of coins to test possible temporal direction within the Prestwich site, hypothesizing that the oldest burials would be closest to town (the south end of the site, bordering on Alfred Street) and younger as one moves north. This hypothesis however, does not hold. The youngest coins (the Cartwheel pennies of 1797) are clustered in the middle of the Prestwich erf, and are among the closest to the old town boundary of Buitengracht.

This underscores the notion of a 'patchwork' of burial clusters, where some certain parts of the burial ground were marked and exclusive. The development of the burial horizon was not in the form of an advancing 'burial front' but was spatially complex. Furthermore, the notion of directionality in a burial front assumes that corpses were being brought from town, but the seashore side (east) certainly saw the arrival of shipboard deaths and shipwreck victims. My burial sample (n=276) which shows strong clustering, however, is only a small part of the larger Prestwich sample, which may possibly have some degree of directionality among the 'anonymous' mass of burials.

BEADS

Beads were found in sixteen burials, although one of these must be discounted from the analysis as it was most likely a component of the shaft fill and therefore not directly associated with the individual (No. 501). Most of the beads are associated with adults (Table 5.14). Fourteen of the burials had glass beads, and Individual No. 1048 had beads made out of fish vertebrae that were dyed in multiple colors.

Table 5.14 Occurrence of beads associated with Prestwich Street burials

Individual No.*	Age	Orientation	Glass Beads	Other	Burial Type**
2	unknown	W	61		Individual
22.1	adult	W	102		Double
74	unknown	W	50		Individual
246	adult	W	51		Individual
493.1	adult	N	144		Double
552.3	adult	SE	192		Triple
599	subadult	W	6		Individual
682	adult	W	142		Individual
1001	adult	E	104		Double
1022	adult	W	112		Individual
1048	adult	E	0	51	Individual
1050	baby	NW	12		Coffin
1134	adult	W	377		Double
1247	adult	W	1		Individual
1248	adult	W	76		Coffin

* For the purpose of data analysis, '.1' and '.3' represent particular individuals within a shared burial. 552.3 is known as '552C' on the site forms and was the third individual, after 552A and 552B, disinterred from the shared burial

** 'Individual' denotes a supine position with no trace of coffin

Of these fifteen with beads, there were five shared burials (double and triple), two coffin burials and eight conventional burials in supine position.

In five burials, (Individual nos. 74, 246, 682, 1022, and 1055) beads were found around the neck. In one case (No. 1248) a possible necklace was in a pouch with several coins and was not worn as adornment on the body at the time of interment.

In at least four cases (Individual nos. 22A, 552C, 1001, and 1134), the beads were found around the person's midsection (waist) (Fig. 5.37). It is significant that all of these four individuals were in shared burials. Individual No. 1134 also wore beads around the neck.



Figure 5.37. Beads found at mid-section of Individual 1134, and presumably worn around the waist. The beads were strung in no particular order during cleaning.

It is notable that the *partner* of No. 1134 (found with beads around the mid-section) had filed teeth. This may be evidence of a woman and a man buried together. In the Bantu-speaking world, it is common practice for a woman from birth to wear fertility belts, which can be made of beads, around her waist. Chris DeCorse makes the following observations on the symbolic meaning of beads in a West African (Bantu-speaking) context:

Beads had a ceremonial role in African culture at each stage of life: birth, puberty, initiation, marriage, procreation, old age, death and entry into the community of ancestors and spirits. They also were believed to have protective properties (especially for children) and an ability to infuse the wearer with spiritual power. The use of beads around females' waists is one of the most widely occurring practices, but the specific ritual and socio-cultural contexts vary substantially.²⁴³

²⁴³ DeCorse, C.R 1989: "Beads as Chronological Indicators in West African Archaeology: A Reexamination." *Beads: Journal of the Society of Bead Researchers*, 1:41-53

Unfortunately, in two of the other four shared burials the crania are missing and any information on dental modification has been lost, but they can still be sexed on other criteria. Only one (No. 246) of the thirteen individuals may have had 'decorated' teeth. This individual was not included in the dental modification sample because it closer analysis is required to determine if this was a pathological feature or indeed a deliberate modification.

From the evidence of association between beads, shared burial and dental modification, I surmise, that those people buried with beads were most likely Africans who arrived at the Cape from other regions of the continent during the slave trade. Dental modification, as stated above, was not practiced at the Cape and is an identification marker for individuals arriving from East Africa (primarily) and possibly beyond. There is as yet no documented evidence that second generation African slaves at the Cape continued the traditions of their homelands such as dental modification. The shared burials may speak to a high rate of mortality as a result of conditions on ship voyages, contagious disease or illness soon after being brought to the Cape. The shared burials may reflect people who were potentially closely related in life, either through kinship, marriage or 'shipboard bonding' and who died at the same time from the same cause, such as a shipboard epidemic. Only bioanthropological tests could confirm or refute this hypothesis.

At the African Burial Ground in New York, eight individuals (less than 2% of the total sample) were interred with one or more beads. The Howard University team contends that:

"the African Burial Ground waist beads as well as the child bead necklace suggest that the expressive roles beads played in African-New Yorker culture remained African and hence represented an African cultural continuum. The configuration of strung beads

suggest special ritualistic burials for esteemed persons and reflect the endurance of beads as part of a valued system of African mortuary practices."²⁴⁴

However, this is not necessarily the case. As noted above, beads can be worn through life as a statement about reproductive status. They do not necessarily mean a 'special' ritual of an 'esteemed person'.

Although it is highly speculative to speak of an unchanging 'cultural continuum' of ethnic tradition in any colonial context, it may be possible that some African customs and traditions endured more intact in New York, due to sheer numbers of African slaves. However, it is unlikely that beads retained a 'sustained' symbolic meaning at the Cape after the first generation, perhaps due to a more rapid process of cultural assimilation for cultural groups who arrive at the Cape in low numbers. What is more plausible is that the people with beads at Prestwich Street were recent arrivals and rather than representing any 'continuum' of African culture or tradition, these burials may represent episodic fatalities of the slave trade, where we have records for example, of slaves in Table Bay 'dying of thirst'. The beads adorning the bodies are symbolic of the cultural substrate from which they came. While the symbolism of beads meant little in the overall colonial context of Cape Town into which they were brought, that is not to say that the symbolic nature of such objects could not have been culturally reconstituted, and imbued with new meaning. Future research on the patterns, use and symbolism of these particular beads would be of some value in complementing the study of social identity of the labouring classes in historic Cape Town.

²⁴⁴ Medford, Edna Green, W. Perry, S. Carrington, L. Heywood, F. Jackson, R. Kittles, J. Thornton, (Howard University), 'The Transatlantic Slave Trade to New York City: Sources and Routing of Captives', Paper written for the Symposium: Archaeology, Bioanthropology & African Identity in the Diaspora: Theoretical and Methodological Advances, World Archaeological Congress 4, University of Cape Town, 10-14, 1999, p. 12.

A specialist study of these beads would reveal their point of origin and manufacture, and use.

TAGS, TOKENS AND SHACKLES

Slave tags and tokens were artefacts of urban slavery, used both in South Africa and the United States were artefacts of control, although manifested in slightly different ways.

The tags and tokens were recovered in five burials along the western side of the site. Four of the individuals were adults oriented west, and one was a sub-adult oriented northeast (Fig. 5.38).

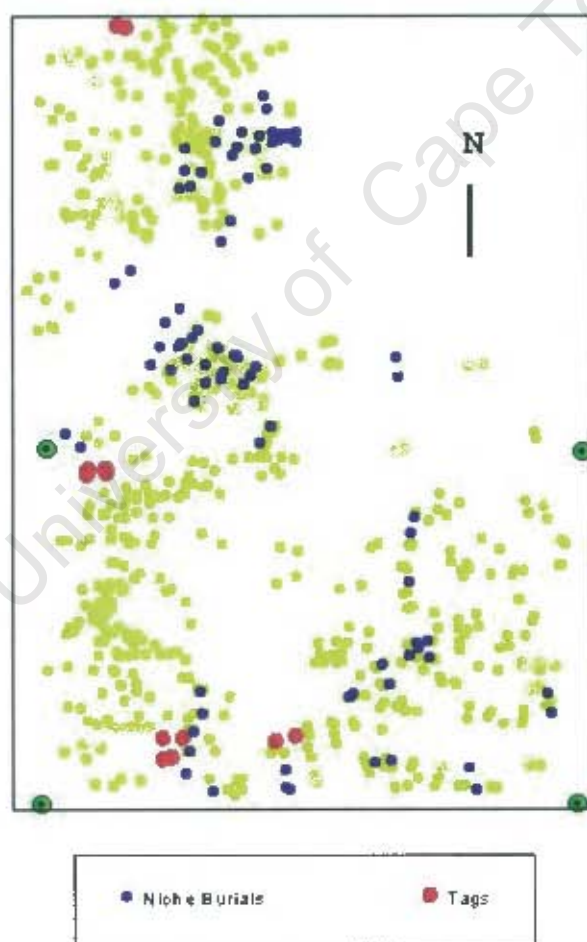


Figure 5.38. Distribution of burials with tags and tokens, and niche burials clusters are marked for spatial comparison

Three of these burials are highly disturbed. Two of these burials were adults in coffins (Table 5.15). The sub-adult was in a possible niche burial.

Table 5.15. Prestwich Street burials with tags or tokens

Individual	Age	Orientation	Burial Style	Tags/Tokens
18	sub-adult	NE	niche?	1
239	adult	W	coffin	2
247	adult	W	supine	1
391	adult	W	coffin	1
1002	adult	none	supine	1

In Cape Town, the individual householder was responsible for the passes of his or her slaves and this is reflected in the unique handmade tags (Figs. 5.39 and 5.40) and tokens (Fig. 5.41). Tokens are plain and unnumbered and tags are numbered with holes through which to string them. The tags and tokens are the first artefactual evidence to be archaeologically associated with slaves uncovered in Cape Town.



Figure 5.39. Lead hawker slave tag No. '182', found with Individual 1002



Figure 5.40. Lead hawker slave tag No. '266', found with Individual 247



Figure 5.41 Lead tokens found with burial No. 239

As grave goods and adornments are prohibited in Islamic burial custom, it is possible that this tag was not directly associated with this individual. There is no noted disturbance of the grave on the site record forms, so the tag was either a meaningful inclusion (and anti-orthodox), or the grave was somehow disturbed at a later date. This disturbance, however, was not archaeologically detectable.

Two individuals were also found with heavy iron shackles around their legs (Nos. 617 and 956). One individual had both legs shackled (Fig. 5.42) while the other had only one leg shackle. It is not known if these people were convicts, exiles, slaves, or others whose indiscretions led them to their final moments of life on Gallows Hill.



Figure 5.42 Two iron shackles on Individual No. 617

At the Cape, domestic slaves were a distinct group from the urban slaves who belonged to “bakers, butchers, boardinghouse keepers, tapsters, and firewood collectors, the leading

service occupations of the early Cape.”²⁴⁵ Despite the ubiquitous sight of male slave labour in urban service, the VOC was anxious about slave mobility and controls in the form of a pass system, were soon put in place in the 18th century. Robert Shell suggests that slaves had to have a lead token to leave town and also there was a *plakkaat* that they had to have a numbered tags on their person to be a hawker in town.²⁴⁶ The economic competition between urban slave owners and poor free Europeans without slaves led to fierce rivalries, and complaints about the urban service slaves continued into the 18th century:

“In 1794, the penultimate year of Dutch occupation, urban slave hawkers were only allowed to sell “eatables,” nothing else and by January of 1808, all hawking by slaves was forbidden. After 1809, slaves could no longer act as “coolies” or porters unless registered by the Fiscal (the official charged with the slaves welfare), who issued to the slave a numbered ticket to be worn on the head, “so that everyone may see the same”.²⁴⁷

The inclusion of hawkers tags effectively dates these particular Prestwich burials to 1809 and later (Table 5.12).

²⁴⁵ Shell, 1994:141

²⁴⁶ Robert Shell, pers comm.

²⁴⁷ Shell, 1994:172

SHELLS

"Why do they put shells on the graves?"

"The old people say they are like petals of the sea."

- 'Forgiveness', South African film, 2004

There are twenty-seven burials at Prestwich Street with 'associated' shells that appear to have been placed in a deliberate fashion with the individual during interment, either on top of the coffin, or in cases where there were no coffins, directly on top of the individual. These burials cluster in the southwest corner of the site (Fig. 5.43).

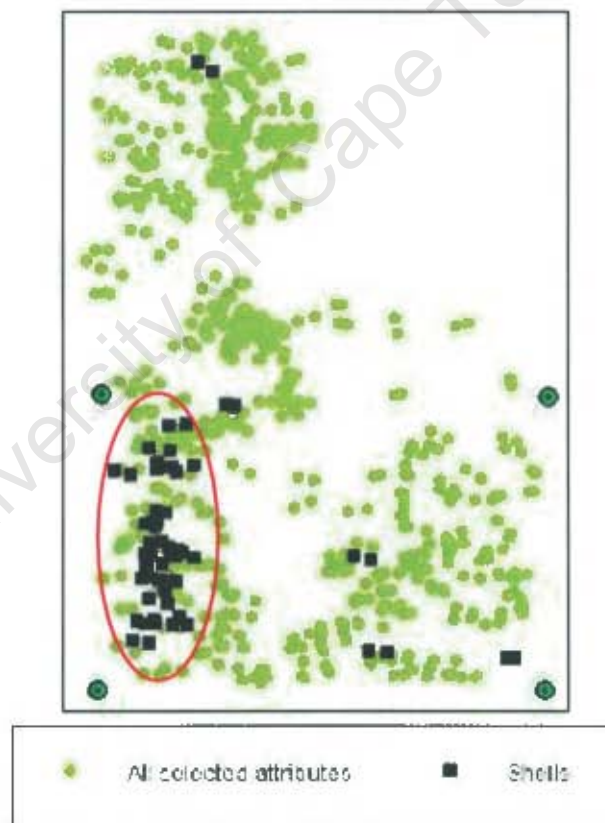


Figure 5.43. Distribution of burials with 'associated' shell

It should be noted that there was evidence of a pre-colonial shell midden in this section of the site. Consequently, there is a danger that what seems to be a formal association of shell

occurrence of what seemed to have been deliberately placed shells.²⁴⁸ The sand layer was part of the shore dunes, and was therefore interspersed with natural storm debris (and also perhaps remnants of Khoekhoen or San shell middens). However, the deliberate inclusion of shells seems possible on the basis of their clustering, and position on the body that suggests the shells were thrown in on top of the coffins during burial and that this may have been a formal practice. Moreover, there are numerous surrounding burials that do not have any shell.

Scutellastra argenvillei (limpet) was the most common shell found, although *S. tabularis*, *S. barbera*, *Cymbula granatina* are also represented, as well as several whelks, and mussels. Pebbles or small stones also seem to have been deliberately placed, and may have been used *in lieu* of shells.

These burials stretch linearly along the southwestern side of the Prestwich site. The majority (18 burials or 66.6 %) are coffin burials and oriented to the west. Another important characteristic is that these individuals had no other associated grave goods, save a copper stain on the ribs of Individual No. 71, one of four individuals oriented east and not buried in coffins. The absence of grave goods suggests these people wore the plainest of clothes and had no adornment, which may reflect a low socio-economic stratum.

There are four other burials on site with associated shell (Fig. 5.43). There is no discernable pattern or clustering with these burials. One of these is a 'unique' individual (No. 1048) who was buried with a diverse range of grave items, including dyed fish vertebrae beads (51), copper buttons (13) and rings (7), a knife, pieces of material, rope, and a piece of quartz (addressed in next section).

²⁴⁸ Tim Hart, Archaeology Contracts Office, UCT. Pers. Comm.

Marine shells have been formally associated with burials in many cultural traditions. Among the Atlantic Bantu-speaking groups, there is a strong association with water, ancestors and fertility. This may also be reflected at the African Burial Ground in New York City where 235 seashells were uncovered from 12 burials²⁴⁹. That shells mark an African presence or are evidence of direct African cultural transference has been a hypothesis put forth by archaeologists working on that particular site: "The African Burial Ground's proximity to the Collect Pond suggest a metaphor for water which in traditional western central African religious practices is a component of spirituality."²⁵⁰ At prehistoric archaeological sites in South Africa (e.g. Klasies River Mouth), shell ornaments were observed to be associated with burials.²⁵¹ In towns throughout the Western Cape, shells are still used to decorate the surfaces of burial plots in contemporary towns along the coast, for example in Paternoster, as well as inland areas, such as Clanwilliam.²⁵² Physical analysis of this group may test for a common origin and help decide whether the shell burials at Prestwich Street are in fact a discrete and meaningful cluster.

STONES

There were two categories of stone recovered from the Prestwich Street burials – grinding stones with ochre staining, and one piece of quartz associated with burial No. 1048 noted above. The grinding stones and stones with ochre were most likely associated with the now obliterated Khoekhoen or San sites in the area.

²⁴⁹ Medford et al, p.12

²⁵⁰ Medford et al, p.12

²⁵¹ See Hall and Binneman, SA Bulletin 1997, also Lyn Wadley

²⁵² These particular cemeteries have served the 'coloured' communities, and further research into symbolic meaning underpinning shells and associations with death would be quite interesting. Could this be a manifestation of a degree of 'cultural continuum' from indigenous traditions?

The inclusion of stone in a burial may have a symbolic meaning about the status of that person in life. Pieces of quartz were also found at the African Burial Ground in New York, and it has been posited that

“quartz and other crystals when found in both African and African-American sites are usually suggestive of religious practices as charms, or part of a conjurers kits, and were most often part of a bundle used in curing and conjuring rites.”²⁵³

The piece of quartz from No. 1048 at Prestwich Street is interesting when considered in the context of the ‘package’ of other cultural material of fish vertebrae beads, multiple copper rings and buttons, shells, knife. This unique individual may indeed have had a special cultural position in his/her community, such as a diviner or shaman.

DISCUSSION

It has been shown, mainly through archival documentation, that the underclass, or ‘labouring classes’, of Cape Town were formed by diverse peoples from across the globe. Under the control of the VOC economic and class system, their general position of disenfranchisement has been difficult to ‘read’ in the archaeological record, as material signatures have been ephemeral, particularly when searched for in the mundane artefacts of historic dumps and domestic middens. The archaeology of burial, however, has the ability to provide an intimate glimpse into the essence of an individual who had lived as part of the silent and anonymous underclass. From burials and human remains, meaning, conditions, and expression of the cultural and social milieu may be inferred, indeed, “data on mortuary

²⁵³ Adams 1993; Leone and Silberman 1995; Patton 1992; Singleton 1995; Singleton and Bograd 1996, in ²⁵³ Medford et al, 1999.

practices have played a central role in the study of social, cultural, chronological, ethnic and racial problems.”²⁵⁴

There is perhaps an expectation that there is little structure in the burial of the underclass at Prestwich and that the burial ground would be an anonymous and homogenous mass of graves. This was the impression in initial archaeological observations at Prestwich Street. In the burial sample I have discussed this does not appear to be the case. There is formal structure, variability as well as spatially discrete clustering of burial styles and grave goods. Clusters tend to respect each other, which may reflect spatial negotiation between various groups burying their dead. As has been noted, chronological control of the burial ground is difficult and even if some of clusters are solitary burial ‘events’ (e.g. shipboard death on one slaving vessel) in contrast to spanning many months or years, clusters nevertheless respect the integrity and exclusivity of other burial clusters. This variability in death captures some of the heterogeneity of the ‘underclass’ in life.

I suggest that the niche burials reflect Islamic religious and cultural practices that were not necessarily formally sanctioned under VOC authority. These niche burials are evidence of a strong sense of community and continuity among Muslims at the Cape. It would be consequently Euro-centric to refer to these burials as ‘informal’, because these burials are structured within a ‘formalized’ Islamic worldview. The spatial distribution of discrete ‘clusters’ of niches, furthermore, has chronological implications, perhaps reflecting the Muslim community’s increasing power to command discrete areas of the burial landscape through time. These isolated islands of burial amongst a ‘sea of infidels’ and unbelievers

²⁵⁴ Chapman R. and K. Randsborg, ‘Approaches to the archaeology of death’ in *The Archaeology of Death*, Chapman, Kinnes and Randsborg (eds), Cambridge University Press, 1981. p. 2.

would eventually have fallen away when a dedicated burial ground on the slopes of Signal Hill was granted.

Dental modification provides evidence of another set of foreign arrivals and identities at the Cape. The seven identified patterns of dental modification suggest variability of peoples and customs within the overarching African 'group'. Beads and shared burials were often associated with dental modification, and as a 'package', these attributes make a strong case for these individuals to have been recent arrivals to the Cape, and most likely African slaves. Some shared burials may be females and males buried together. It was also common to see a juvenile buried with an adult. These burials also show patterning, and may reflect an episode when greater numbers of African slaves (or 'apprentices' after 1808) were brought to the Cape.

In attempting to analyse grave goods, one has to be careful to discriminate between the 'mundane' items from the sacred or symbolic. A collection of coins in an individual's pocket may simply mean that the person died with his or her weekly wages. A string of glass beads may simply indicate what an individual wore around the neck on a daily basis. Death and the act of burial does not necessarily change the meaning of things.²⁵⁵ The inclusion of tangible objects in graves, however, may also represent life-long aspirations, an occupation, symbolic representation of various relationships, a prized possession, or an indication of how the living perceived the dead. Nicholas Thomas makes a case for the 'mutability of material objects' in his exploration of the "indigenous appropriation of European things."²⁵⁶ Although the individuals at Prestwich Street are not all indigenous to the Cape, in the sense

²⁵⁵ See Nicholas Thomas, *Entangled Objects: Exchange, Material Culture, and Colonialism in the Pacific*.

²⁵⁶ Thomas, Nicholas 1991: *Entangled Objects: Exchange, Material Culture, and Colonialism in the Pacific*, Harvard University Press, p. 88

that Thomas means, the principle still stands. He contends that tangible objects and trade must be contextualized culturally – what may be considered worthless in one culture (or social strata) may hold great value for another.²⁵⁷

In this chapter, the data has shown unambiguous variability in the cultural attributes of the Prestwich burial horizon. The niche burials serve as a benchmark for patterning among the burial sub-categories of dental modification and grave goods, as the niches (particularly Cluster 1) are spatially respected by other burials. The social and cultural implications of spatial patterning and distribution of the Prestwich Street burials will be explored in the final chapter.

²⁵⁷ The Cobern Street burials, just a block north of Prestwich, included such ‘special’ objects as a silver snuffbox and needle case. Some researchers (Apollonio) have speculated that Cobern Street Burials represented a slightly higher economic echelon of the ‘underclass’ than in other areas of the burial horizon. I contend that the artefacts from the Cobern Street burials do not necessarily represent an increasing trend in economic mobility of the underclass at the Cape, nor a temporal differentiation, with Cobern burials being later and somehow ‘wealthier’ than Prestwich. Rather, the perceived value of an object resulting in its inclusion in a grave is a manifestation of a complex process of ‘perceived value’, as well, perhaps, an expression of resistance, where an object is infused with meaning informed by a recognition of oneself or one’s community in juxtaposition to the dominant class.

CHAPTER SIX

IMPLICATIONS OF PRESTWICH STREET BURIAL PATTERNING FOR CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN 18TH CENTURY CAPE TOWN

"Roles should always be considered as fluid and amorphous, open to manipulation in very subtle ways; institutionalized roles may constrain or enable behaviour but peoples adherence to them may be variable. Thus identities symbolized in death are the results of many different forces acting upon them." Pearson, 1999:33

In this sixth and final chapter, I will evaluate the spatial distribution of burial style, dental modification and grave goods and discuss preliminary ideas concerning implications for cultural identity and change among the 'underclass' at the Cape. I compare Prestwich Street with the African Burial Ground in New York as similarly contested burial sites, but with dramatically divergent outcomes. I conclude by outlining future research would assist in reconstructing the lives of the undocumented and anonymous 'underclass'.

The burial sample investigated in this study (n=276) is only 21.6% of the 'Individual' category (n=1272). The estimated total for the entire Prestwich Street sample is 2500 individuals made up of an additional 1,300 in 'Groups', 'Shaft Fill', and 'Pick-up' categories. My sample shrinks to 11% of that estimate.

In contrast to the Cobern Street burial sample where only 121 individuals are represented, the value of the Prestwich Street sample is the sheer weight of numbers.²⁵⁸ The large sample size of over 2500 individuals provides an opportunity to 'see' formal differentiation in the

²⁵⁸ Apollonio et al, 1998:1

record. Additionally, the spatial extent of the Prestwich Street excavations has provided the opportunity to identify 'edges' and boundaries in burial styles, even though the absolute edges of this burial ground are still unknown. Even within my relatively small sub-sample, I have been able to show variability and patterning in burial style which may be functions of cultural change, or statements of identity imposed upon the colonial landscape.

The value of researching burial practices, according to Michael Pearson, is that "they provide detailed contextual explorations of symbolism" which may be "political events in which status is not simply reflected or represented but is actively constituted...as idealized representations of social structure actualized in everyday contexts."²⁵⁹ He goes on:

"The dead do not bury themselves. If graves are in any way an index of social status it is the social status of the funeral organizers as much as the social status of the deceased that is involved...We should recognize that identities forged through funerary rites are composed not of roles but of cultural practices...Status is thus not so much a role to be reflected in mode of burial and associated grave goods but a panoply of practices which are historically situated and open to manipulation. Secondly, concepts of honour and sacredness may be far more important than wealth and ownership in organizing societies' values."²⁶⁰

He underscores the processes of negotiated 'formalization', and variability in the conceptualization and treatment of land as sacred space. As this study has shown, cultural diversity can indeed be identified in the archaeological record of burial. However, 'formalization' in burial or mortuary practice must be set against varying scales of historical processes. There is a danger of 'flattening' the Prestwich Street clusters, for example, into events, and more importantly, processes, of equivalent scale.

²⁵⁹ Pearson, 1999: 23

²⁶⁰ Pearson, 1999: 84

Certain patterns or clusters of burials may suggest formalized statements of identity but equally clustering may reflect a shorter term or expedient burial event. Forty shipboard deaths of dentally-modified individuals, for example, or fifteen European military who died within a short period of time from the same virus, are both episodes where a short term event may 'look' like a discrete cluster based on a cultural identity and do not reflect any significant degree of negotiated 'formalization' of the burial landscape. This would, I suggest, contrast with the Muslim niche burials clusters, for example, that may reflect longer term and more enduring historical process. It seems, however, that even though the dental modification burials may be of a shorter term, expedient scale, they still spatially 'respect' the niche cluster boundaries. To indulge an African music metaphor, the Prestwich Street burial ground is 'polyrhythmic' in pattern and complexity, and has multiple burial 'tempos' occurring simultaneously in the chronological scale.

In tandem with temporal scale, *spatial* scale must also be considered in the analysis of mortuary practice. At Prestwich Street, two spatial scales are immediately relevant; the first being at the societal level of 'formal' and 'informal' burial grounds (inter-class) and secondly, *within* these respective burial grounds (intra-group/intra-class). In her chapter in *The Archaeology of Death*, Lynne Goldstein emphasizes the importance of spatial distribution in burial analysis:

"Because mortuary practices are reflections of inter-personal and inter- and intra-group relationships, as well as a reflection of the organization of the society as a whole, examination of the spatial component can yield information on at least two broad levels; (1) the degree of structure and spatial separation and ordering of the disposal area itself may reflect organizational principles of the society as a whole; and (2) the spatial relationship to each other of the individuals within a disposal area can represent status differentiation, family groups, descent groups, or special classes,

dependent upon the correlation of these spatial relationships with other dimensions of study.”²⁶¹

Inter-group dynamics and class dichotomy in early Cape colonial society were blatantly apparent in spatial terms on the burial landscape. Burial was a physical manifestation of symbolic ‘inclusion’ and ‘exclusion’ as controlled by the dominant religious and political system. VOC and Dutch Reformed Church cemeteries were formalized by defining an enclosed space with walling and the use of gravestones to mark burials. The DRC inscribed land usage with spiritual meaning, and the result was a religious geography that defined place in life by placement of body in death.²⁶² Spiritual inclusion and exclusion were physically manifested in ‘bounded’ and ‘unbounded’ burial grounds. Formal burials were first associated with the Church graveyard and expanded to include the ‘bounded’ interment grounds of the VOC Militia and DRC on the outskirts of town, and later, the various Christian denominational cemeteries. The ‘unbounded’ ground beyond the town’s limits (as well as beyond the enclosed VOC and DRC cemeteries) was the space where marginalized classes were both *being* buried under VOC authority (e.g. slaves, those executed at the Gallows, etc) as well as communities burying their own (e.g. Muslim niche burials). The current activities of contract archaeologists in Green Point reflect this formal distinction – remains in the formal cemeteries where exhumed and relocated at the end of the 19th century, while the ‘informal’ anonymous remains were ‘left behind’.

This spatial division soon experienced a telescoping effect of ‘formalization’ – the ‘unbounded’ land in Green Point began to be claimed, and in some instances consecrated, by

²⁶¹ Goldstein Lynne, ‘One-dimensional archaeology and multi-dimensional people: spatial organisation and mortuary analysis’, in Chapman, R., I. Kinnes & K. Randsborg (eds), 1981: *The Archaeology of Death*, Cambridge University Press, p. 57.

²⁶² Mytum, 2004:79

various cultural groups, and thus episodically 'formalized' the space the VOC (and British) had been legally defined as informal. These 'informal' burials filled up the ground in-between VOC structures and cemeteries, and the nebulous burial horizon no doubt extends even beyond the boundaries of the Green Point Burial Precinct as outlined by the South African Heritage Resource Agency.²⁶³

It has been noted that a Christian stylistic class dominates the total burial sample at Prestwich Street. This corresponds to the hierarchical control of VOC power over religion and culture at the Cape, and the generalized enforced control over the act of burial. Consequently, this dominant culture forced many secondary identities and cultural traditions to assimilate or at least to be submerged and erased in death by the corporate burial style. This predominant burial style has yet to be analysed.

The underclass, however, cannot be seen as merely a homogenized mass and Prestwich Street has shown that to describe the mode of burial in VOC-administrated Cape Town as simply segregated between the formalized 'haves' and circumscribed 'have nots', ignores the complexity within the 'informal' burial ground. The archaeological record shows discrete clusters that may have true temporal fortitude (as opposed to cluster 'events') and suggest there were processes of negotiation in place on the 'informal' burial landscape, as certain groups vied for and controlled (or respected) space. The agency involved in spatial politics of death is crucial to understanding social identity and status of the labouring classes of 18th century Cape Town, as reflected in the burial style. Who was doing the burying? Who controlled the burial, and did this reflect social status and identity of the person(s) in life?

²⁶³ See map in Appendix I.

The shared burials of those individuals with dental modification in the Prestwich Street sample do not necessarily signify a sustained African custom at the Cape (assuming that these individuals are African). First and foremost, there is no documentation for a tradition of shared burials in the ethnography of the Bantu-speaking world and in fact, it is culturally unimaginable for women and men to share the same grave shaft.²⁶⁴ Instead, these burials may reflect a small scale event – a decision by the slave runner or ship's captain to dispose of prize negroes who died just before or during a refreshment stop at the Cape in a terrestrial burial ground, rather than throwing them overboard (as they most likely would have done while at sea).

It is also possible that fellow captured slaves buried their own, but this would have been subject to negotiation with the town gravediggers who may have protested the appropriation of their livelihood (if slaves usurped their jobs, even sporadically²⁶⁵). However, there is no documentary evidence of complaints filed by Cape gravediggers against slave-runners for dead 'cargo'. I can only speculate that either the grave diggers were indeed paid, or they may have decided to allow Africans to bury their own, especially if they had died of illness or disease.

The newly entrapped slaves would have been highly conscious of kinship ties, and even if there were no immediate relations, 'shipboard bonding' formed surrogate familial ties. The shared burials may reflect a fragment portion of an original kin bond that survived capture and transport.

²⁶⁴Simon Hall, pers. comm. In Bantu-speaking society, the burial of man and woman are spatially distinct. Women and children, however, can be buried together (Morris, 'Some Thoughts on Double burials')

²⁶⁵ There is precedent for formal complaints to be lodged by gravediggers in this regard. See page 39 for description of complaint filed by Adolph Bergers in 1715 against burghers who were burying their own dead slaves.

If death is not attributable to the period of transport, then these people may have died within a few months or years of arriving at the Cape. It may be that upon arrival at the Cape sick slaves died within a short time of each other. In these cases, shared burials would have been the most cost-effective way for the slave owner, who was no doubt unhappy about the loss of 'property' and cash, to dispose of the bodies. The agency and authority involved in shared burials are keys to understanding if it was merely a matter of economy, or a small-scale event. This sets up interesting tests for the physical analysis of the remains.

In contrast, Thomas Bowler's painting from the 1850s (Fig. 6.1) illustrates a group of Muslim men walking out onto the Green Point common to perform a burial. This is potentially a very different circumstance from a slave owner who hires a gravedigger to dispose of a dead slave, or the expedient burial of small pox or shipboard casualties, where personal and cultural connections were attenuated. The power to command a space for Islamic burials in this 'wasteland' is substantiated by the integrity of these burials (particularly in Cluster 1), and the fact that burials of different styles and content appear to 'respect' this boundary. I have also suggested that the niche burial clusters may reflect a sequence and a longer-term process in the development of the local Muslim community.



Figure 6.1. 'Muslim Procession to Green Point', by Thomas Bowler, c. 1850s

In the early to mid-18th century, the Muslims buried members of their faith beyond the established DRC and VOC cemeteries. The details of their burial customs (the carved niches, the clay features and stones) were kept, quite literally, underground. In this way, overt demonstration of religious and traditional practices that were prohibited by the VOC were either surreptitious events, or the authorities turned a blind eye to the Muslim burials. These burials were surely noticed, however, and simply allowing this burial ground to exist before the 'formalizing' of the Islamic Burial Grounds on Signal Hill starting in 1805 is a recognition, and respect, of this community.

The overwhelming number of burials at Prestwich Street, however, are 'anonymous' – that is, they are without cultural attributes which may reflect a personal or social identity in the burial record and this in and of itself 'speaks' to an identity embedded and imposed by within the dominant culture. While these persons may have had unique identities in life - in language, in custom, or religious beliefs - conditions of their lives and deaths were effectively erased in death by a generic and corporate burial style. The Vergelegen slave, for example, arrived to the Cape possibly from Madagascar. Her burial in a coffin, denoting Christian custom, is a reflection that her identity (regardless of degree of assimilation or resistance) was subsumed and erased in death by the dominant cultural practice. On a socio-economic level this translates to an inability of these people to enact control over their burials, and their lives. It furthermore points to the process of Creolization and a growing Cape-born 'underclass' born into the VOC cultural (and later British) and societal mores.

My results are broadly summarized in Figure 6.2 and suggest that cultural and material variability in my Prestwich Street burial sample. The 'underclass' is not a homogenous 'anonymous' mass. Discrete cultural traditions, and possible dates are suggested for these burial episodes.

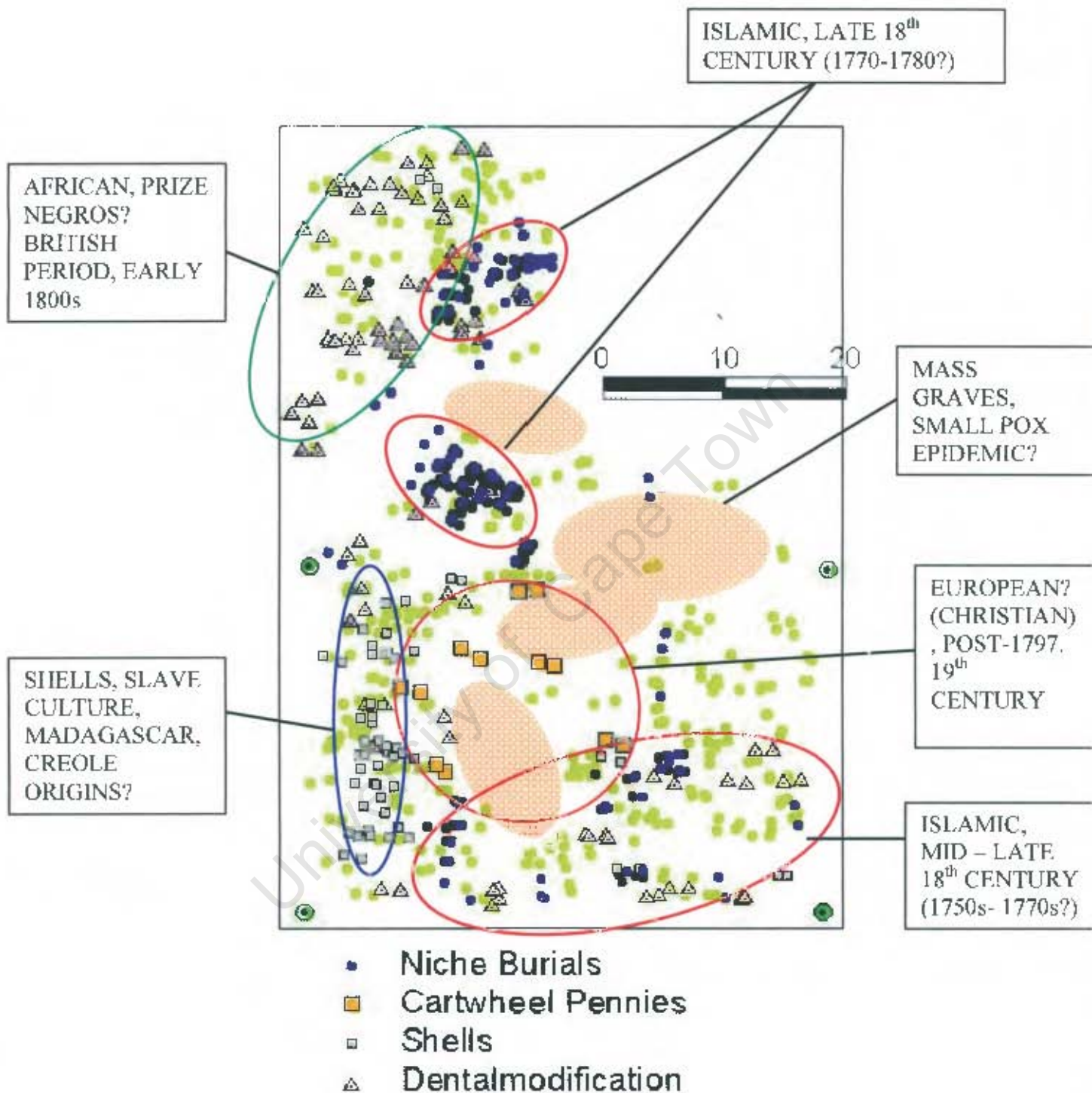


Figure 6.2 Prestwich Street burial patterning and implications for social identity and chronology at the Cape.

There are also several suggestive 'holes' highlighted in red. These areas are not devoid of burials, but contain no burials with the specific attributes under discussion here. The area marked 'mass graves' is one that is especially dense with groups of 2 to 5 individuals in the same grave shafts.²⁶⁶

It is notable that while dental modification can identify Africans, and niche burials reflect Islamic tradition (and may account for dominant origin in the Indonesian archipelago), there has been no distinctive cultural attribute to define and identify people from Madagascar and the Mascarenes. We know that large numbers of slaves from Madagascar were brought to the Cape, and we can assume that they are included in the 2,500 + burials at Prestwich Street. Isotopic analysis may be able to discriminate between environments of origin, and these chemical signatures could 'fill in the gaps' where distinct identity is erased in the material culture of the archaeological record and could also test some of the identities that are more specifically discussed in this thesis.

Comparative Colonial Burial Grounds of the 'Underclass' – New York and Cape Town

While the Green Point 'informal' burial ground and the African Burial Ground (ABG) were both created by the forces of global commerce and slavery, the organization of burial at the ABG was very different Prestwich Street. This is due in part to differences in demographics and numbers arriving to the New York and Cape settlements.

²⁶⁶ Many of the individuals in 'mass' burials have articulated remains and fell in the 'Individual' category. While these burials are indeed 'shared burials', I did not address these in my sample for the simple fact that I did not look at 'shared burials' as a selected burial style. It was noted during excavation that there may be an association between dental modification, beads and shared burials so I analysed these categories (dental modification and grave goods) instead. The individuals in the 'mass graves' noted above did not have any dental modification or grave goods, and thus were not included in my sample.

Michael Blakey of Howard University advances the idea that the archaeological data from the ABG in New York offers glimpses of the prevailing customs of the African diaspora during the colonial period. He states:

“The study reveals, for instance, a cemetery whose burials are remarkably uniform, with more than 90 percent of the remains placed in coffins, shrouded, and laid out with head-to-west orientation. All were placed on their backs, and most were individual burials. The sameness suggests that the ethnically diverse Africans shared agreed-upon traditions that had been created by drawing on the similarities of many African customs and adapting to the circumstances they found in New York.”²⁶⁷

The general burial standardization in the ABG sample may be representative of two (perhaps overlapping) circumstances – where the style and manner of mortuary practice may have been imposed by colonial authorities, or may reflect a community that had the power to communicate with each other, even while enslaved. A common region of origin, West Africa, may have played a role in this, as well as the large numbers of arrivals, which would have helped to resist complete cultural assimilation into the dominant mores. This is in direct contrast to the Prestwich Street burial ground, where the diversity of cultures, class and religion from across several continents never amalgamated as a coherent community or standardized ‘entity’ (as reflected by the disparate spatial layouts of Prestwich Street and the ABG).

New York City instituted a policy of racially segregating its dead in 1697 when it “ordained that people of African descent, free or enslaved, could no longer be buried in the recently chartered Trinity Church’s cemetery”²⁶⁸. That a separate burial ground existed for African

²⁶⁷ Blakey, p.183

²⁶⁸ Cantwell, Anne-Marie, diZerega Wall, Diana. 2001: *Unearthing Gotham: The Archaeology of New York City*, Yale University Press, p. 279.

slaves in New York expresses boundaries of 'other-ness' based on racial identification, rather than class and religion as in Cape Town.

Burial segregation in the U.S. may have expedited the creation of a common 'black' identity. Researchers hint at the importance of the New York burial ground to the slave community as 'sacred space' and as a meeting ground: "a funeral at the secluded burial ground might have been one of the few occasions when the enslaved came together as a people, away from the watchful eye of the dominant European community."²⁶⁹ It was here during rituals that included burial at night, that ties to a black community were strengthened, but also that ties to the African homeland were remembered and acknowledged.

What both Prestwich Street and the ABG share is cultural heterogeneity of the deceased, but at varying scales. At the ABG this diversity is in the range of inter-West African groups (i.e. Ibo and Fulbe) but also the inclusion of indigenous peoples and Europeans. The fact that American Indians are most likely present as well as "American soldiers of both African and European descent (and) some American prisoners of war who had died in (British) custody," has been glossed over in many of the publications on the ABG, favoring instead a dominant African-American theme of 'roots' archaeology: tracing slaves back to an African origin and identity²⁷⁰

What the overall 'patchwork' of Prestwich Street burials tells us, in contrast to the linear ABG burials, is that *no* overall agreed-upon burial tradition existed among the lower social strata in Cape Town except in potentially mutually exclusive episodes. The pluralism of Cape society is more apparent.

²⁶⁹ Cantwell and diZerega Wall, 2001:279.

²⁷⁰ Cantwell and diZerega Wall, 2001:280-281.

Despite their differences, what the ABG and Prestwich Street both represent is the marginalization of the 'underclass' in unbounded burial grounds on the periphery of the settlement. The seminal difference is that archaeology and physical anthropology have been valued as 'tools' to greater knowledge with the ABG sample, and the material has been laid open for transparent research. While some may argue that it is an injustice to the 'minorities' in the ABG by favoring a West African theme, at least there has been the opportunity to fully analyse the remains and an acknowledgement of the reconstructions that have ensued.

In Cape Town, the contestation over the Prestwich Street remains has resulted in a ban on physical analysis, and has allowed a misrepresentation of these burials to take hold. These individuals may be claimed, manipulated and remythologized as dictated by the fickle political climate since there has been no empirical evidence presented (as yet) which may suggest real identity and social diversity. The current process of 'memorialization', is in effect, memorializing the old paradigm of a homogenized, 'anonymous' mass of the underclass.

Politicizing 'Prestwich Place'

"I went to school at Prestwich Street Primary School. We grew up with haunted places; we lived on haunted ground. We knew there were burial grounds. My question to the City is, how did this happen? As a Muslim, I am glad that careful archaeological record of direction of graves is recorded. Muslims are connected through common beliefs and obliged to rebury their community members. We need to take responsibility for reburial – all of us – and some of us feel a strong personal obligation. We have a lot of work to do." [Zuleiga Worth, 29 July 2003, Public Consultation meeting on the Prestwich Street burials.]

Spatial politics, particularly in a former colonial or oppressed populace is a highly charged and emotive issue. Nations that have been impacted and deeply wounded by human

ideological atrocities based on 'race', such as genocide, ethnic cleansing, pogroms, slavery, apartheid, segregation, have a particular reverence for human remains. Burial grounds become imbued with the profound pain or anger of the living, a popular memory of trauma transferred onto landscapes of death that are reified or remythologized after political change, to fit into the new narrative of 'healing'.

Geographers Tan Boon Hui and Brenda Yeoh, through their work on situating burial landscape as a contested space within broader socio-political developments, contend that:

"Priorities that immigrant and indigenous groups of different faiths accord to places for the dead are the perspectives of the colonial state which shape and control urban form and structure through successive measures of urban regulation. The clash of priorities is often resolved through a complicated process of conflict and negotiation among individuals, groups and the state: on the one hand, "dominant" groups construct the burial landscape as a site of control; on the other hand, the 'subordinate' groups may also use it as a site of resistance to resist exclusionary tactics and to advance their own claims."²⁷¹

They go on, referencing A.J Christopher and his work on racial segregation of cemeteries in Port Elizabeth under apartheid:

"The explicit function of burial grounds is to house the dead. In the spatial and temporal ordering of places of burial as well as the ritual practices associated with it, however, burial spaces become transformed into sacred landscapes; the burial site becomes an emotionally highly-charged site, not only for the families concerned, but also at times for the ethnic and cultural group concerned."²⁷²

²⁷¹ Boon Hui, Tan and Brenda Yeoh, 2002: 'The "Remains of the Dead": Spatial Politics of Nation-building in Post-War Singapore', in *Human Ecology Review* Vol. 9, No. 1, p.1

²⁷² Tan and Yeoh 2002:2

In this era of post-Truth and Reconciliation Committee disclosure, and public cleansing of conscience, the communities which were most affected by the policies of the former regime have opted to flex authority over an archaeological record of human remains and 'heritage' they have claimed is 'theirs'. This claim has become highly political and contentious and archaeologists and the 'community' (or at least those who claim to speak for the 'community') find themselves in a very antagonistic public debate over claims to the past, and who may speak for and represent the 'heritage' of the underclass.²⁷³ Archaeologists believe that their research (such as this study) has the potential to open up alternative histories and to reconstruct knowledge of origins and identities that were neglected or deliberately distorted in the effort to bolster the identity of Europeans at the expense of others.²⁷⁴

The focus in public debate has been not on *whom* the individuals buried beneath the streets of Green Point were, but instead what these remains now symbolically represent. The meaning of a 'body' has shifted dramatically in the current political climate, and human remains are being treated as "a site of cultural consumption, a surface to be etched, inscribed and written on."²⁷⁵ In this approach, the body is significant in terms of social systems and the discourses which construct it.²⁷⁶ Now, if we consider the 'body' as an archaeological 'site', this has critical implications for scientific research in this country. Sian Jones has contended that archaeological knowledge "is not only appropriated at an abstract level

²⁷³See Christian Ernstens MPhil thesis, 'Stylizing Cape Town: Problematizing the Heritage Maanagement of Prestwich Street'. Center for African Studies, UCT, 2006. Also see Julian Jonker's paper for UWC History Seminar: 'Silence of the Dead, Preswich Place and the the Ethnicity of Memory and Recognition (And Preliminary Notes of the Archive and the Phantom).

²⁷⁴ Blakey, Michael, 'American Nationality and Ethnicity in the Depicted Past' in *Politics of the Past*, Gathercole P and Lowenthal, D (eds) pp 38- 48 London: Unwin Hyman

²⁷⁵ Pile and Thrift 1995, in Synnott, Anthony 1993: *The Body Social: Symbolism, Self and Society*, London: Routledge.

²⁷⁶ See Turner 1992 and Foucault 1977 for theoretical foundation on social systems, knowledge and discourse.

within nationalist and ethnic ideologies, but at a more pragmatic level it is being used in the determination of land claims and the ownership of cultural heritage."²⁷⁷

Reconstructing knowledge of origins and identity: Death of the Past?

*"As archaeologists have long been aware, past, present and future are indelibly linked. Therefore it should come as no surprise that individuals, communities and nations continue to forge ever changing identities, memories and spaces of their own invention, instigated by expediency, desire and political will"*²⁷⁸.

Archaeology has a responsibility to those constituencies whose history is uncovered, and to assist the engagement with these communities. However, there is a feeling among some archaeologists that the discipline must be separated from its social practice – that it is 'beyond the data', thus beyond the scope of the work²⁷⁹. Lynn Meskell counteracts this contention, stating:

*"The South African context makes it painfully and patently obvious...that indigenous and non-indigenous people share a history, if not a shared view about the normative consequences of that history. As such, we are impelled to take responsibility for the way that the cultural norms, practices and institutions we inherit have been marked and shaped by a particular history."*²⁸⁰

Archaeological and heritage sites can hardly be exempt from the political transformations in this post-apartheid period in South Africa. The current cross-disciplinary forces working towards the upliftment of previously disadvantaged groups have, in some instances,

²⁷⁷ Jones, Sian. 1997: *The Archaeology of Ethnicity*, Routledge Press, p. 136

²⁷⁸ Meskell, Lynn, 2005: 'Recognition and the Potentials of Postcolonial Liberalism for South African Heritage', Department of Cultural and Social Anthropology, Stanford University, p. 1

²⁷⁹ Huffman, T.N. 2004: 'Beyond data: The aim and practice of archaeology' *South African Archaeological Bulletin* 59:66-69

²⁸⁰ Meskell, 2005:2

stymied research of the very systems that are prioritized. However, in the promotion of archaeology's social practice, when this occurs, there has sometimes been a tendency to 'back off' from asserting empirical research into politically sensitive circumstances, particularly when dealing with human remains, as is the case at Prestwich Street. This insecurity is rooted in the legacy of typology, scientific racism in the face of affected communities seeking to be 'grounded' and grasping for 'roots' and identity.²⁸¹

Without some vital public relations and social interfacing, a precedent has been set that important heritage resources can be 'claimed' by various constituencies and potentially lost to a collective shared and common national patrimony. It is unrealistic to work in the discipline without considering current political and cultural complexities. To not do so, would be comparable to working in a vacuum. It is essential to confront the issues arising from archaeology's poor public image and visibility, and so logically one would have thought that a contribution by archaeology to the detail of the labouring classes of Cape Town would have been welcomed.

A great misunderstanding persists in the public domain of what archaeology *is and can do*, and how it is *taught*²⁸². This issue has come to a head currently, as heritage has become big

²⁸¹ See Alan Morris's article, '*Discussing Race in a Racist Society*' for a discussion of typology and apartheid, as well as Legassick and Rassool's (2000) '*Skeletons in the Cupboard: South African museums and the trade in human remains 1907-1917*' which saw itself as 'outing' the archaeology establishment for the sins of the past, and put forth a demand that museums account for the human remains in their collections. However, as Alan Morris writes in his response to the publication, the collection of African human remains in the 19th and early 20th centuries was 'a colonial reflection of the European scientific establishment' and what Legassick and Rassool uncovered is hardly 'a conspiracy'. *Skeletons in the Cupboard* was criticized for not outlining a progressive way forward and not considering the advances in physical anthropology or differentiating between it and the field of archaeology. The damage that was done to the relationship between the public and archaeologists is not, thankfully, irreparable.

²⁸² The misconceptions of archaeology are not just confined to South Africa. These are issues that have arisen in other countries with similar legacies of colonization and disenfranchised indigenous groups – the U.S and Australia merit significant attention due to policy and legislation which has arisen from this interface. However, South Africa is a unique case as a result of its particular history and recent transformative events.

business the world over. Countries, particularly developing ones, vie to outdo others with their 'heritage' sites with the stamp of UNESCO approval, in order to entice tourism capital. Archaeology is one of the main specialist fields able to literally uncover the significance and value of a site. While stereotypes of 'white men digging', 'trophy-hunters' and 'grave robbers' is still very much entrenched in the popular perception, archaeologists are also 'needed' to legitimize sites and are central to the assessment route developers must follow. But this is not a problem specific to South Africa. The image of archaeology particularly in an indigenous or formerly disadvantaged perception is a contentious issue:

Archaeologists have been variously portrayed by Native American activists as callous, self-serving, greedy, ruthless, and racist. Activists have effectively exploited the emotional appeal of their cause to the general public with the aid and abetment of the media. Archaeologists, on the other hand, have typically found themselves backed into defensive positions, often having to explain the basic tenets of archaeological inquiry as well as the differences between professional archaeologists, museum curators, hobbyists, collectors, looters, pothunters and antiquities dealers to legislators and journalists - all usually in five minutes or less. Archaeologists generally have not fared well in these situations- much to the delight of the activists. In fact, the explanatory difficulties faced by archaeologists clearly point out weaknesses in the way the discipline has interacted - or more appropriately, not interacted - with the public over the years. In their efforts to provide simple and succinct fare for the public, journalists have further blurred the distinction between artefact collectors and professional archaeologists...If nothing else, archaeologists should now be more cognizant of the need for professionalization of the discipline."²⁸³

If archaeologists can move 'beyond the data' and use opportunities for positive public relations, a constructive relationship with communities may be brokered. The value of research may be able to be communicated in a way that would engage the community, and

²⁸³ Mallouf, Robert J, 'An Unraveling Rope: The Looting of America's Past' in the Repatriation Reader, p.68

like the ABG, would be able to complement the cultural analysis with the physical analysis of the remains and honor these lives by helping return to them more fully their forgotten past.

→ *What does it mean to "give the past back to the people?"

In spite of the less than ideal circumstances under which the Prestwich Street material was initially excavated and recorded, this study has achieved its aim of taking a cultural approach to the Prestwich Street burial record and provides some resolution that indicates degrees of heterogeneity in the labouring classes. The Prestwich Street burials represent a unique opportunity for 'democratic archaeology' in the new South Africa where the lives of the marginalized and disenfranchised of early Cape Town can be honored.

However, the analysis of the cultural material has raised many more questions, created working hypotheses and implications that can only be tested, modified and answered by a full physical analysis. In this concluding section, I will make the case for a dual approach to the analysis of the remains of the 'underclass' of Cape Town.

Future Research Directions

In contrast to the current situation where the South African Heritage Resource Agency has placed severe restrictions on scientific research, such limitations on physical anthropological or anatomical research were not imposed on Howard University in the United States. Archaeologists and bioanthropology specialists were permitted to undertake a complete interrogation of the African Burial Ground remains in the late 1990s. In their paper presented to the 4th World Archaeology Congress at the University of Cape Town, 10th - 14th January 1999, the Howard University team emphasized that determining who these seventeenth-century African-New Yorkers were, using archival and historical records alone

was a “daunting task.” Documentary evidence, specifically shipping records, “rarely delineate ethnic origin”, nor is there “specificity as concerns ports of call.”²⁸⁴

Cultural material analysis of the burial record is critical in filling the absence of documentary material, especially in a colonial context where the forced movement of enslaved people resulted in newly negotiated and reconfigured identities. It may be argued that people had cognitive options: to keep alive their own cultural mores, or to assimilate to their new circumstances. Sian Jones has argued that “ethnicity is self-defined”, and thus is not a ‘given’. However, ‘constructed identity’, while crucial, is only one side of the story.

Genetic ancestry can be traced back to familial roots and this was a goal of the ABG project, and made mitochondrial DNA testing an imperative methodology:

“...Genetic testing using mitochondrial DNA to trace the ancestry of bone samples for the African Burial Ground, revealed general affinities to West African populations. Mitochondrial DNA is maternally inherited and thus can be used to trace maternal lineages over time. The mtDNA sequence data generated from thirty-four skeletal samples were compared to published data sets... Of the 34 sequences generated, three have not been observed in any specific population, but were closely related to other West African mtDNA sequences. Twelve of the mtDNA sequences have been observed in specific West African groups. These groups are the present day Benin (n=4), Fulbe (n=5), and Niger (n=3) populations.”²⁸⁵

Genetic coding and isotope analysis may suggest answers to the questions of diet, health and geography, but cultural attributes such as burial style and the inclusion of grave goods

²⁸⁴ Medford et al, p.1

²⁸⁵ Medford et al, p.2

may suggest a worldview, social stratification and identity construction. Together they suggest a more complete picture of the life of an individual. The greatest distinction between physical and cultural interrogation of human remains is that bones and tissue will convey information about *how the individual had physically lived*, but cultural burial practices relay information about *community*: “The dead do not bury themselves but are treated and disposed of by the living. Archaeologists seek not only to document ancient rituals by recovering the evidence of past funerary practices but also attempt to understand them within their historical contexts and to explain why they were enacted in the ways that they were.”²⁸⁶

This study has combined excavation and primary research with a multidisciplinary approach (history, archaeology and ethnography) to arrive at a point that lays a strong foundation for future physical assessment. This analysis of the cultural material from the Prestwich Street burials has set up questions which, until such time that physical analysis can be undertaken, will remain dormant. I highlight some of these future research possibilities in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1 Questions arising from the analysis of Prestwich Street burials cultural attributes and corresponding bioanthropological tests

CULTURAL QUESTION	PHYSICAL TEST
General age and sex profiles, physical health conditions of entire sample	ANATOMICAL
Niche burials – dominant origin?	ISOTOPES/DNA
Niche burials – Cape-born sub-adults	ISOTOPES
Niche burial & dental mod – African origin? (Muslim convert?) Male?	ANATOMICAL/ ISOTOPES/DNA
Dental Modification – heterogeneity in African sample?	ISOTOPES/DNA
Dental Modification – All male?	ANATOMICAL
Burials with beads – All women? African?	ANATOMICAL/ ISOTOPES/DNA
Shared burials – male and female? If there is a child, is it related to either?	ISOTOPES/DNA
	ANATOMICAL/DNA

²⁸⁶ Pearson, 1999:3

Burials with shell – dominant origin?	ISOTOPES/DNA
Burials with coins – Cape born? Common origin?	ISOTOPES
Mass burials – dominant origin?	ISOTOPES/DNA
Burials with military insignia button – European?	ISOTOPES/DNA
Tags, tokens, shackles – all Male?	ANATOMICAL
Coffin burials – dominant origins?	ISOTOPES/DNA
Shaft fill near prehistoric artifacts – Khoekhoen signatures?	ISOTOPES/DNA

On an inter-group societal scale, basic age and sex profiles would inform on the general mortality profiles for the labouring classes compared with the dominant class, to further a comprehensive understanding of possible health discrepancies between the classes. On an intra-group level, tests may also discriminate between a 'short-term event' and 'historical processes', thus providing some chronological control to the sample.

And finally, the interrogation of the cultural material of burials moves away from the archaeology of the mundane in historic dumps, which provides little insight to the essence of the individual, to glimpses of particular life histories. Is the individual with the beads around her waist a female 'Prize Negro'? Is her partner with the filed incisors a man? Was the supposed 'diviner' with his package of fish vertebrae beads, quartz, shell, rope and a knife a Cape-born local, or from East Africa or the East Indies? Who was the person with the Mughal coins from India? Where did the Islamic 'convert' with filed incisors in a niche burial grow up? Do the people in coffins with coins have a dominant geographical origin (as do those with 'associated' shell in the graves?) reflecting these particular mortuary 'practices'?

Prestwich Street has opened the largest window yet into the extensive Green Point informal burial horizon, and has shown spatial and chronological complexity and cultural

heterogeneity. The significance of the site lay not only in the size of the sample, but also for the unique finds it has yielded. Among these are rare occurrences of certain dental modification patterns (Pattern VI. Hollowing/Inlay, and VII Decoration), slave hawker tags and tokens that may not only reflect the individuals lot in life, but together with the other dateable grave goods such as coins and buttons, helped to narrow the chronology and suggest burial events during the British period. And most importantly, the Prestwich Street burials have revealed historic process in the growing Islamic presence at the Cape. The extraordinary niche burials are possible indicators of strengthening confidence and cohesion of the Muslim community during the VOC period. Overall, the Prestwich Street burials have provided greater resolution of the complexity and diversity among the labouring classes of historic Cape Town.

The 'rediscovery' of a vast 'informal' burial ground in Green Point, Cape Town has inserted this previously forgotten landscape into debates over the relationship between the past, the public, and the archaeologist. These burials represent a unique opportunity to holistically 'acknowledge the lives' of a diverse populace, people who had cultural origins in many parts of the VOC world. It is the opinion of this author that those who constituted a pluralistic Cape Town and whose identities were previously erased from historical consciousness have not been afforded the dignity to have their full story, their 'hidden histories', finally told. The analysis of some of the cultural attributes of burials presented in this study is only a beginning.

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APPENDIX

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PRESTWICH STREET CHRONOLOGY OF BUREAUCRATIC EVENTS*

*ALL DOCUMENTATION STORED AT UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN ARCHIVES

Human remains were discovered at the 'Prestwich Place' construction site in May 2003 and a permit for rescue excavation was issued by the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA). An initial three-week salvage operation was supervised by the Archaeology Contracts Office, UCT. A sixty-day public consultation process was to run concurrently so that the remains already exposed could be removed to a safe place. An intensive public awareness campaign was then launched. Following a public meeting held on 29 July 2003, a call was made to stop excavations by a group concerned citizens group calling themselves initially 'Hands Off Prestwich Place'. Amendments to the permit were made, requiring 'an interim cessation of work on the site, until 18 August 2003. SAHRA subsequently extended this interruption of the permit until 31 August 2003.

Working groups were established to assist the public consultation process. Initially, the Cultural Sites & Resources Forum facilitated the process, the responsibilities of which were later taken over by SAHRA. There were eight focus group meetings between August 2003 and May 2004.

On 12 Sept 2003 the 'Hands Off Prestwich Place (Street) ad hoc Committee' lodged its first appeal with SAHRA. This appeal was overruled by the Archaeology, Palaeontology, Meteorites, Objects and Burial Grounds Permit Committee of SAHRA on 18 November 2003. Salvage operations recommenced 5 December 2003 and continued until 4 January 2004, when the excavation was shut down for the second time. A second appeal was lodged by the 'Prestwich Place Project Committee' (Hands Off Prestwich Ad-hoc Committee).

On 21 April 2004, a 'cleansing ceremony' was held to relocate 700 remains from Prestwich to the storage facility in Woodstock (see description in Introduction section of this thesis).

The second tribunal hearing was held at the Nelson Mandela Gateway at the V&A Waterfront on 20 May 2004. A ministerial decision was then made to uphold SAHRA's decision. SAHRA subsequently issued a Record of Decision to begin the second phase of the

excavation on 6 August 2004. It was yet unclear if physical analysis of the remains would be permitted.

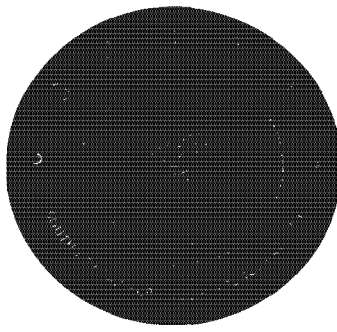
The second season of salvage operations commenced on 5 October 2004 and was completed on the 2 March 2005.

The Prestwich Place Ad Hoc Committee held informational meetings at the District Six Museum in October 2004 and February 2005, calling again for the cessation of excavation.

Appeals over the course of the year (2005) were made to SAHRA on the part of the scientific community for access in order to undertake basic anatomical analysis of the remains.

SAHRA held additional working group meetings with the various constituencies. A meeting on the 17 September 2005 (see letter that follows) has formally denied access to the remains for this purpose, but has allowed analysis of the cultural remains.

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SOUTH AFRICAN HERITAGE RESOURCES AGENCY

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9/2/018/0206

P Buthelezi

21 September 2005

Ms Erin Finnegan
79 Struben Road
Observatory
7925

Fax: (021) 462 6355

Dear Ms Finnegan

PRESTWICH PLACE: COUNCIL'S DECISION ON BASIC ANATOMICAL RESEARCH ANALYSIS

First and foremost let me thank you once more for being able to attend our last week meeting that preceded our Executive Committee meeting on 17 September 2005. Your contributions and willingness to understand the holistic approach that the South African Heritage Resources Agency follows in dealing with such matters is indeed highly appreciated.

As you are aware, the South African Heritage Resources Agency is the body that was established to manage the national estate. As such, it becomes important to engage with the interested and affected parties such as yourself. My organization values the contributions received thus far. Your comments and views have been brought to the attention of the Executive committee members of Council.

It is appropriate to inform you that at the same meeting of 17 September 2005, one of the issues discussed was the appeal relating to basic anatomical analysis of the human remains from the site, Prestwich Place, bounded by Prestwich, Napier, West and Schiebe Streets in Green Point.

In making its final decision, the Executive Committee considered a number of principles. These are as follows: -

- a) The legislative mandate of the South African Heritage Resources Agency to document as much information as possible about heritage resources of the country;
- b) The need to solicit comments and co-operate with stakeholders including religious leaders, community organizations' representatives, academics and professionals;
- c) The need to balance the above with the requirements of the legislation to take into account the aspirations, concerns and sensitivities of local communities; and
- d) The need to encourage dialogue and public participation processes in handling matters such the Prestwich Place.

Having discussed the matter, the Executive Committee made the final decision as follows: -

- e) The Executive Committee passed a resolution not to accede to the appeal and that it will not approve basic anatomical research of the human remains exhumed from the Prestwich Place site. In balancing the matter at hand, it was decided that the cultural remains may however be studied.
- f) The Executive Committee encourages and requires full detailed on-site documentation of any human remains found at any sites in the core area of Green Point as designated by provisional protection.
- g) Finally, the Executive Committee endorses the usual public participation as part of this process with interested and affected parties that will terminate after 60 days. It is envisaged that this process will set up a dialogue on further approaches to kinds of suitable research or analyses.

The matter is considered closed.

I thank you.


PHAKAKAMNI BUTHELEZI
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

