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Negotiating memory: funerary commemoration as social change in emancipation-era Barbados

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ABSTRACT

Anglican church commemoration in Barbados is traditionally viewed as reflecting a wholly white, British history; however, beginning in the late eighteenth century, these spaces were circumvented as places of memory for the freed black community. As abolition and emancipation triggered greater integration of previously racially segregated groups on the island, funerary monuments provided the opportunity to negotiate memory, social structure, and community relationships, subverting dominant power hierarchies and tensions stimulated by race, religion, and marginalization. This paper will reconstruct narratives and counter-narratives in burial practice and monument use against the backdrop of abolition and emancipation to contribute to historical and archaeological understandings of historical processes of colonization and decolonization, relevant to Barbados and other colonies dependent on slave labour.

KEYWORDS

Commemoration;
emancipation; Barbados;
memory

Barbados is ... a vast burial ground: over the several centuries of the slave period, many thousands of people, slave and free were buried in this compact 166 square-mile island – Handler (1999, 13)

The Caribbean island of Barbados has been characterized as a great many things. To some, it was ‘Little England’, a perfect product of transferring English values, traditions, and religion abroad. To others, it was a concentration of heathens, devoid of all sense of British civility and decorum. It was a golden island of sugar; it was also hell on earth for many hundreds of thousands of enslaved peoples brought there to work through forced migration. It was the making of families, as well as the destruction of families. And, as Jerome Handler has justly described, the island was also a vast burial ground, because of the dense population and high mortality rates (Handler 1999, 13). The material evidence of this history (cf. Reilly 2015) is written on the tropical landscape in the form of commemorative monuments. The gravestones crowding the island, demarcating cemeteries, built into the walls of mills and pathways, or emerging in the middle of a field of sugarcane, do much more than record the names of wealthy British families who made Barbados ‘home’.

As critical players in the creation and negotiation of identity, community, and power, monuments were actively used, rewritten, created and destroyed – and this active

process of social change persisted during the period of abolition and emancipation that redefined Barbadian religious communities in the nineteenth century. The once symbol of 'Britishness' or 'whiteness' within bounded Anglican churchyards was later a practice to be taken up by the African-Barbadian population to subvert norms and carve a place in the religious and social landscape of the island. All of these narratives, large and small, can be explored through commemorative material culture, particularly monuments because of their importance in creating and maintaining social memory. This paper will examine monuments from the late eighteenth to early twentieth centuries to trace the ways in which commemoration was actively engaged by Euro-Barbadian families to rigidly maintain existing social orders, while African-Barbadian families altered existing practices, and social identities more generally, contributing to our understandings of this period of tension and transformation. Colonial churches have often been treated as having little potential for contributing historical and archaeological records relevant to challenging traditional narratives of the past or understanding the processes of colonization and decolonization from nuanced evidence created through active self-representation and resistance. This research argues that by tracing changing spectrums of invisibility and visibility, anomalies, and the micro- and macro-scalar contexts of commemoration, it is possible to decolonize cemetery studies and contribute new histories of struggle, resilience, and transformation of communities in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Slavery, religion, and death

Picturing Barbados as that 'vast burial ground' (Handler 1999, 13) owes a great deal to the British-Barbadian tradition of barring the majority of the population, enslaved Africans and African-descendants, from Anglican churches, and therefore excluding the dead from the primary British burial grounds. In the period leading up to emancipation, between 1817 and 1834, there were more than 59,000 slave deaths in Barbados. Sparse records impede calculations of slave deaths prior to this period; however, estimates are in the hundreds of thousands (Handler 1999, 13). The majority of these deaths would have been followed by interment on slave burial grounds, generally located close to slave villages on plantations.¹ As the sugar economy emerged in the 1650s, increasing reliance on huge quantities of slave labour, achieved through forced migration, violence, and abuse, was accompanied by fear, anxiety, and paranoia on the part of British inhabitants, complicating the relationship between black and white communities by denying religious conversion or education of enslaved individuals, based upon concerns that the theological and legal status of Christian slaves would lead to them being freed (Gerbner 2010, 59).² Ligon ([1673] 2011, 101), who visited Barbados between 1647 and 1650, recounted a slave owner's stance on the conversion of slaves, arguing that,

being once a Christian, he could no more account him a Slave, and so lose the hold they had of them as Slaves, by making them Christians; and by that means should open such a gap, as all the Planters in the Island would curse him.

Theological concern had discouraged any treatment of slaves that might empower them; however historian Gerbner (2010) has argued that it was not until the aftermath of the 1675–1676 failed slave rebellion in Barbados, that hysteria and fear, reinforced by the isolation of the island, the degree to which slaves outnumbered the free population, and the

difficulties in controlling the island (limited by a tiny militia), led to the legal restriction of missionary activities on the island. An Act was quickly passed by the Barbados Council preventing the inclusion of slaves in religious meetings and conversions, until abolitionist pressures to ameliorate conditions for slaves in the nineteenth century influenced changes in the attitudes of the Anglican Church (Beckles 1990, 120; Dunn 1972, 104–106).

The majority of residents of Barbados were therefore segregated in death, as in life, from the places of burial and memory from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries. These historical circumstances have also undoubtedly influenced scholars working in the region who have previously looked exclusively at plantation burial grounds used to inter slaves to study funerary and commemorative practices of African-Barbadians, particularly prior to emancipation (cf. Brown 2016; Corrucini et al. 1982; Handler 1997, 1999; Handler and Lange 1978; Newton 2008). Plantation burials, although extremely rare in archaeological studies do provide the opportunity to examine the processes through which religion and cultural practices were transformed, in addition to experiences of mortality, and social organization within enslaved communities. Even so, they only reflect one context through which African-Barbadians engaged with the dead. For those who actively pursued Anglican conversion, spurred by a range of motivations and facing strong resistance, burial and commemoration in predominantly British-Barbadian burial grounds were no simple transference of cultural traditions to a new location but rather complex processes of actively consciously and transforming material traditions, with undeniable legacies in the long-term social structures and concepts of race in Barbados.

Anglican baptism and burial in African-Barbadian communities

Baptism of enslaved and freed³ people became more common in Barbados in the early nineteenth century; nevertheless, relatively few African-Barbadians were buried in the burial grounds attached to Anglican churches or chapels. In 1828, the island's rectors' responses to a London-based missionary society's survey regarding slaves and missionary activities stated that 'some slaves are interred in the parish churchyard, others in their usual burying places on the estates' (Society for the Conversion and Religious Instruction of the Negro Slaves in the British West India Islands London 1829 in Handler 1999, 14). In contrast to some parishes that worked on a case-by-case basis, the rector of St. Michaels, one of the largest congregations on the island, responded that in their parish, 'slaves are *always* interred in places set apart for that purpose on each plantation' (Society for the Conversion 1829 in Handler 1999, 14; emphasis added). The variation in policy reflects general confusion regarding the stance of the Anglican Church on the treatment of slaves and race, in addition to increasingly divergent attitudes of colonists. Urban churches appear to have maintained a more rigidly conservative approach even during emancipation, but it was often a reflection of both church leaders and influential members of the congregation, in addition to the degree of resistance. Although freedom for enslaved people to seek baptism increased exponentially in the 1820s and 1830s, under pressure of abolitionists and increasing religious recognition of the role of converting and educating slaves in preparation for emancipation, little is known about burial practices in these intervening years. Recorded burials in Anglican burial grounds certainly do not account for enough of the converted community, so plantation burial must have persisted well into the mid- to late-nineteenth century.

Given the poverty, instability, and persecution that most enslaved and 'freed' individuals faced during this period, it is unsurprising that few commemorative monuments can be confidently associated with them. However, when they are contextualized within broader commemorative practices within colonies and metropole, and relative to British practices and material traditions, monuments become rare records of self-representation and resistance to colonization. The first monuments erected to commemorate black individuals in traditionally white contexts would not have gone unnoticed in the relatively small congregations of pre-emancipation Barbados; these stones cannot, therefore, be understood separate from the statement they would have made and their long-term legacies for the ways in which Barbadian race relations developed. A focus on African-Barbadian families actively using monuments in Anglican churchyards to negotiate their identity and place within colonial society highlights the potential for new application of commemorative and memory studies in the Caribbean, and this period of history more broadly.

A commemorative study of Barbados

Commemorative practices, which not only reflect but were used strategically to construct and negotiate identities, relationships, and experiences in the colonial era, provide the opportunity to explore the ways in which people in Barbados reacted and contributed to transformations in social structures, race, and mobility, particularly in the period following emancipation. Throughout the Caribbean, historical and archaeological examinations of burial rites remain focussed on highlighting processes of creolization in the funerary practices of enslaved people in the context of unmarked plantation burial grounds (Brown 2008; Crain et al. 2004; Handler and Lange 1978). Blouet (2013) and Finneran (2013) have recently considered commemorative monuments as part of the process through which creole identities and cultures were developed, in St. John (Virgin Islands) and Barbados, respectively. They highlight changes in commemorative practices, motivations and strategies and the potential to contribute new understandings of family structure and identity throughout the colonial period, however the focus is on European and European-descendant communities. With this in mind, this research sought to trace changes in funerary commemorative practice as contributing to the processes through which previously segregated communities negotiated integration, religious reform, and social relationships (Cook 2016a). The period of abolition and emancipation, critical to understanding colonial and post-colonial history, continues to challenge scholars to counter European-dominated narratives and biases in textual and material records. In considering the role of cemeteries in short-term memory construction and long-term cultural processes, the interconnected nature of the development and negotiation of British, African and Creole family identity and community heritage can be studied in unprecedented ways. However, systematic, large and cross-cultural comparative work is necessary to be able to understand the complex transformation of family self-representation, engagement in society, connection to place, and concepts of race, status, and religion contribute to emerging Atlantic studies of cultural interaction, global connection, and local resistance and agency.

Methodology

A large dataset of church and plantation monuments was collected through archival research and archaeological fieldwork, to capture the widest temporal range possible and include all of the parishes on the island, including rural and urban settings. Previous records of monument inscriptions were published in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Lawrence-Archer 1875; Oliver 1915; see also Thorne n.d.).⁴ Archaeological fieldwork was carried out to increase the temporal breadth and level of detail regarding material culture available for analysis. This work targeted the same Anglican churches visited by Lawrence-Archer and Oliver with the intention to not only add detail to existing records but also to record rates of loss and add monuments that were previously ignored or had been erected following the previous publications, documenting 1,630 monuments in 16 churches and churchyards.⁵ This included 580 monuments that had not previously been recorded, in particular expanding the data available to explore post-emancipation Barbados and marginalized histories. The temporal breadth of this study, from the middle of the seventeenth century through to the middle of the twentieth century was critical to framing the cultural context in which African-Barbadians began commemorating their dead in Anglican churchyards before emancipation, and the ways in which traditions were transformed after emancipation as black communities fought for and achieved greater rights, freedoms, and equalities.

Pre-emancipation commemorative practice

In 1816, a modest, flat stone erected in St. Andrew's Parish Churchyard signaled the transformation that the Anglican congregation of Barbados was undergoing:

A Friend causes
this Stone
to be erected to the memory of
Jane Ann Thompson
Free Coloured Woman And

her three Infant Children As a
mark of Esteem

...

Who departed this Life
January the 27th 1816
Aged 35 Years.

Very little is known about Jane Ann Thompson, but her status as a free coloured woman in the early nineteenth century placed her in a liminal place within society, neither black nor white, and free only relative to slavery, but without the rights and freedoms of white citizens. And yet, she was free to join the Anglican Church, and was clearly baptized prior to her death in 1816. Records suggest that Jane Ann Thompson owned property on James

Street, in Bridgetown in 1808, according to St. Michael's Vestry Levy Books (Handler et al. 2007, 86). It is not known who her friend was that caused this monument to be erected, but their decision to commemorate her status and racial background was a rare one.

This is our first window into pre-emancipation black commemoration; however, it does not stand in isolation. Similarly, Agnes Ann Bannister, a free woman of colour, commemorated the death of her 10-year-old son, George Francis (d. 1816), with a low flat vault erected in St. John's Parish Church (Figure 1). In the same year, she had acquired slaves from Joseph William Jordan in St. Michael (Handler et al. 2007, 10), suggesting she had achieved a level of wealth, status, and independence that provided the financial and social resources to acquire burial and commemoration for her son in a colony that was still extremely rigid in colonial and racial boundaries and segregation. Overall, commemorative monuments that can be confidently assigned to free persons of colour during this period tend to be sporadic, inconsistent and often unique events. Analytically, they therefore present a significant challenge for historians and archaeologists; however, some patterns do emerge. Although they are simple, they tend to conform to typical British-influenced fashions and styles of the period.

Despite the limited number of black monuments during this period, commemoration almost exclusively represents free women and/or their children, possibly underlining



Figure 1. Monument commemorating George Francis, 'the son of Agnes Ann Bannister free Woman of colour' who died in 1816 at the age of 10.

the role of relationships with white males (as companions and fathers of children) in accessing this type of material culture and convincing originally reluctant church leaders for approval. Many of these early monuments to free persons are also located in rural parishes, despite their businesses and property being largely in the towns. Based on records from the Society for Conversion in the 1820s and overall baptism rates, these parishes appear to have been (relatively) more inclusive and to have started integrating black families into their predominantly white congregations earlier. However, given that most of these individuals lived in urban centres, it would have meant that attending church and visiting graves would have required a much more substantial trip than attending more local churches, dislocating the living from the dead and re-structuring mourning practices.

Finally, there is also a lag in the emergence of commemoration amongst the freed community; many of the families that established themselves and acquired wealth and stability prior to emancipation do not begin commemorating their dead until much later periods. This was perhaps influenced by the position and inclusion of African-Barbadians within congregations, as well as the growing economic and social stability that was being achieved throughout society in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The Belgraves, for instance, had achieved the status of free persons of colour in the late eighteenth century. By the early nineteenth century, they had built up a large portfolio of property, including Adventure Plantation (approximately 144 acres and 99 slaves), Graeme Hall Plantation (243 acres, 130 slaves), Sterling Plantation (218 acres, 166 slaves), and properties in Bridgetown (Handler et al. 2007, 13). Despite attending the Anglican Church in the eighteenth century, including marriages recorded in the 1770s and 1780s, they did not start erecting monuments to their dead until the late 1830s; this was limited by economic constraints but also potentially by the clergy, who authorized commemoration. The death of Sarah Catherine Belgraves (d. 1838) was commemorated with a white marble monument, set into a low vault. This was followed by a sequence of commemorative events erected in a row of plots until the turn of the twentieth century, including a double and single vault, and monuments set on top. The move from a solitary monument, to more explicit grouping of monuments, and expanding size and impact show a move to solidify commemorative traditions within the family. The reasons why the Belgraves decided to invest in commemoration at this time is unclear. Emancipation may have created more opportunities to be included in their congregation, or perhaps in the tensions and uncertainty of this period of transition, permanent commemoration was viewed as a means of asserting the position that they had worked hard to construct for themselves, within their church community, within Bridgetown, and on the island in general. Nevertheless, the island was far from a safe and inclusive place – only a few years before, another Belgrave (likely a more distant relation) had been beaten to death by a white man (Handler et al. 2007, 14). Whatever the case may be, the Belgraves' and other families practices of commemoration remained sporadic and difficult to account for much of the twentieth centuries. These cases do highlight that the choice to commemorate was indeed a choice, and that the resulting commemorations drew on existing forms at the time, but increasingly sought to create a visual impact within the churchyard. They also demonstrate the maturing of commemorative traditions, starting with relatively isolated commemoration before developing into a more stable and organized tradition.

Post-emancipation commemoration

A monument erected in St. Mary's churchyard in Bridgetown, also commemorating an individual who had been freed from slavery in the early nineteenth century, stands in stark contrast to the modest Thompson and Bannister grave markers, dating to just over 50 years earlier. Samuel Jackman Prescod's (d. 1871) elegant stone monument ([Figure 2](#)), inscribed on all four sides, with a detailed iron rail enclosure is amongst the most elaborate in the churchyard. It also commemorates the first person of African descent to be elected to Parliament in Barbados, in 1843. The son of Lidia Smith, a free coloured woman, and William Prescod, a white planter, Samuel was the founder of the Liberal Party, a newspaper editor and judge. According to his monument, 'he administered even-handed justice without reference to class or condition', 'never swerving from [his] principles' as a 'courageous and uncompromising advocate ... of the anti-slavery cause'. The commemorative inscription details his extensive achievements, attests to the status and wealth that he accrued during life, as well as the position that he managed to achieve in his community, despite facing racism and discrimination throughout his career. The inscriptions alone attest to the sea of changes that had occurred in Barbados in the nineteenth century, making the lives and experiences of Jane Ann and Samuel Jackman seem quite distant from one another. And yet, subtle references to ongoing discrimination and inequalities document the ongoing social and structural legacies from the age of slavery, pointedly expressed in previously exclusively white landscapes.



Figure 2. Monument commemorating Samuel Jackman Prescod (d. 1871).

Significant changes are evident, however, both demographically and socially. The white population, which was proportionately higher than in other British Caribbean colonies (approximately 8% in 1891, compared to 2% in Jamaica and 1.64% in Guyana), dropped steadily, particularly amongst the ‘poor whites’, primarily the remaining descendants of English, Scottish, and Irish indentured servants of the seventeenth century (De Barros 2014, 7). An increase in mortality rates following emancipation also meant that the coloured and black community, almost completely made up of individuals who had been born on the island, was also in decline due to structural poverty and poor health and sanitation infrastructure. As the newly emancipated exercised their power by attempting to control their home and work lives (despite ongoing inequalities), the African-descendant population was blamed for the population decline, with accusations including lack of civilization, morality, motivation, and poor mothering (Hall 2002, 338; Holt 1992, 309; part of wider colonial concerns with race and inferiority, cf. Ernst 1999, 4; Marks 1997, 210; Roberts 2009, 50–51). As a result, it was not until the early twentieth century that reforms made a significant impact on mortality. These experiences undoubtedly influenced experiences of death and commemoration, and the choices made if and when to erect monuments.

Christianity and the Anglican Church, previously a marker of ‘whiteness’ (Twine and Gallagher 2014), were also transformed by emancipation. Between 1812 and 1817, 2,600 people were baptized in the Anglican Church, according to a survey by the Colonial Office, but these were primarily the children of the white population (Newton 2008, 89). Very few African-Barbadians, whether free or enslaved, were baptized before 1834, and even fewer actually attended due to racial segregation and unwelcoming white parishioners. Their marriages and burials in the Anglican Church were extremely rare (Newton 2008, 90). During and following emancipation, Christian teaching was deemed critical to preparing the African-Barbadian population to be freed persons in a British colony, particularly by instilling morality as well as skills like basic literacy. Parish church populations and baptism rates increased drastically (Figure 3). Estimates based on church records suggest

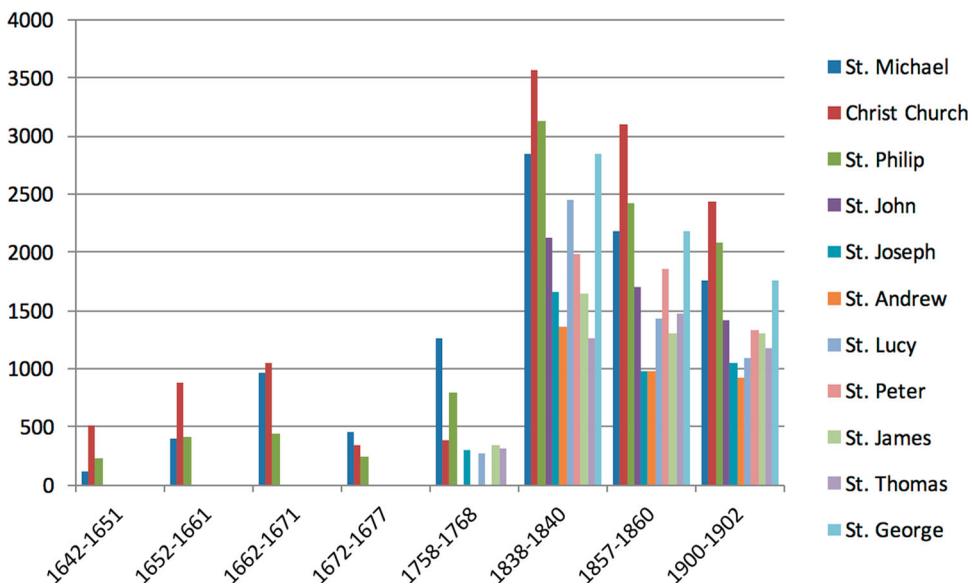


Figure 3. Total baptisms record in Barbadian parish church records between 1642 and 1902.

an increase in the African-Barbadian congregation from 3.9% ($n = 143/3,691$) of baptisms between 1758 and 1768 to at least 65.4% ($n = 16,245/24,852$) of baptisms between 1838 and 1840. These figures, particularly for 1838–1840, certainly underestimate African-Barbadian baptisms and overestimate attendance/participation, but nonetheless highlight the dramatic proportional shift of the congregation immediately following emancipation. Many African-Barbadians sought Christian conversion for the practical benefits and social respectability it could bring, including legitimating the status of children born out of wedlock for which there was persistent stigma and providing a venue for social interaction (Handler 1974, 165–166; Newton 2008, 91). Conversion also often created opportunities to gain positions of power and respect within the community through participation, networking, and occasionally employment as wardens, maintenance workers, and administration. While parts of Christianity were adopted, where deemed useful, less appealing aspects that clashed with existing cultural practices were often resisted, including family structures and views of polygamy and illegitimacy, and the Sabbath (and the resulting ban on Sunday markets and dances). Moreover, relative to many Caribbean and American contexts, the Barbadian Anglican church remained largely unchanged by African culture post-emancipation, due to a history of intensive planter control of religion, the Anglican church, and the regulation of slavery (Erskine 2014, 153).

Parish records also indicate an increase in the frequency of African-Barbadian Christians that were buried in churchyards (Figure 4). However, the burial rates remain low given the high post-emancipation mortality rates reported during this period for African-Barbadians. Burial on private property likely persisted into the second half of the nineteenth century and may have followed similar traditions of earlier slave funerals. Burials that did take place in Anglican churchyards would have had to conform to Anglican practices and expectations, including Christian ceremonies, the use of coffins, and the discouragement of leaving grave goods or offerings, such as food, personal belongings, or traditional cultural objects. Most of the Christian ceremonies that are recorded during this period were delivered by assistant curates, in contrast to many of the ceremonies of the white population that were typically presided over by the parish priest, demonstrating a difference in the status and position of the newly integrated, emancipated black population. It is likely that some churches may have also segregated burial grounds, or at the very least

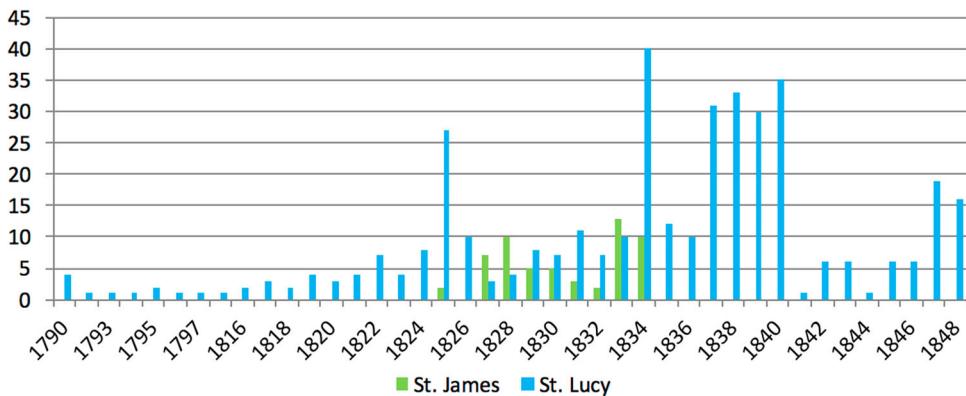


Figure 4. Total burials of African-Barbadians recorded in St. James and St. Lucy, 1790–1848.

maintained the practice of reserving prime plots close to the church for the higher echelons of the church congregation. These quiet, reserved, and in many ways downplayed, Christian funerals would have stood in stark contrast to the ceremonies conducted in slave cemeteries, though they may have been followed by singing, hand clapping, shouting, drumming and other traditional practices at home (Erskine 2014, 143–144). For many, the preference for churchyard burial reflects the perception that Christian burial within Anglican churchyards as a privilege of being a freed person, and these events were opportunities to solidify connections to and positions within the Church, as well as wider social networks, as baptism, marriage, and participation in church affairs.

Commemoration practices amongst the African-Barbadian Anglican community in the emancipation and post-emancipation era are even more difficult to reconstruct. The rarity of references to race on monuments, and the inaccessibility of costly stone monuments for most, means that it is extremely difficult to characterize early commemorative practices amongst the newly emancipated. It is possible that the lack of permanent grave markers in previous funerary practice limited the need for this form of commemoration of the dead following emancipation; however, given the evidence for commemoration amongst free African-Barbadians during the era of slavery, a lack of precedence cannot account for the patterns entirely.

Funerary commemoration likely became increasingly popular with the rise of literacy and financial stability amongst this community, but also the increased inclusivity of the churches and society more generally. Temporary markers may have been used in the place of more expensive alternatives. Small wooden crosses are still prevalent in the churchyards of Barbados and were used in the nineteenth century, creating places of memory for the living, but they do not have the longevity of materials like stone and metal. The stone markers that can be linked to African-Barbadians in the mid- to late-nineteenth century were, however, strongly influenced by existing monuments. Where monument styles and materials were out of reach, there is evidence of modifications to create the same effect without the financial investment. This is particularly clear in the use of poured concrete monuments, that were inscribed while wet and then erected once set. Coral stone covered in plaster was also a popular choice that achieved the look of carved stone without the high cost, and there is an increase in use of this material from the middle of the nineteenth century through the twentieth century. Prefabricated cement blocks and other commonly available building materials have also been used to build plot enclosures reminiscent of more traditional stone structures. The resulting commemorative traditions of this new influx to the Anglican Church do not, therefore, represent a revolutionary shift in the same way that thousands of new parishioners overwhelmed small churches. Rather, the monuments demonstrate a strong link to existing Christian commemorative practices, with modifications to fit the needs and resources of African-Barbadians during the social, economic, and political struggles that followed abolition and emancipation in Barbados.

Commemoration as heritage practice: contemporary memory

Understanding commemoration within the frameworks of colonization and de-colonization, however, does not end with emancipation, or even with independence. In more recent periods, the shift to recognize and celebrate the heritage of slavery and

emancipation in Barbados, similar to elsewhere in North and South America, has included the practice of commemoration or re-commemorating African-Barbadians and their contributions to the island's history. The monument of Adam Straw Waterman, for instance, highlights the pragmatic use of a poured concrete monument that parallels the style of Euro-funerary slabs, typically of marble and other carved stone (Figure 5). Dating after 1887, the simple monument was later updated with a small block of coral stone and long inscription on a metal plaque that highlight Waterman's achievement as a talented and prolific stone mason, and his 'reputation for his sensitive work with sawn coral stone'. This material statement not only references Waterman's trade and talents, but also a longer history of using carved coral stone to subvert traditionally British material culture and make statements within significant venues for creating and negotiating memory and social relationships. Contemporary heritage practice, when viewed within the temporal context of the development of commemoration in Barbados, can be understood as the most recent development in using funerary monuments to communicate and negotiate the racial, religious, and political tensions at the core of the island's history. However, the promotion of more diverse narratives and the transformation of heritage landscapes in the Caribbean remains complicated, under-studied, and often difficult to assess in terms of success or impact (Best 2017).

The global, revolutionary social, economic, and political changes in the twentieth century are, in many ways an extension or continuation of previous memory practices and traditions that are rarely included in archaeologies and histories of cemeteries. However, when reconnected, contemporary practices develop our understandings of long-term social practice in addition to challenging contemporary communities to recognize the legacies of colonialist institutions and perspectives (see also Aldrich 2009 for similar discussion regarding memory and museums). In this case, the transformations of infrastructure, political structures, and economy in Barbados accompanying independence from the British Empire had dramatic implications for the experiences of every social group on the island. As social



Figure 5. Two monuments erected to the memory of Adam Straw Waterman (d. 1887) in St. George Parish churchyard. Left: a poured concrete tablet (c. 1890s), right: the coral stone and metal plaque that was added more recently.

relationships were gradually renegotiated, new communities were forged, and economic positions shifted, so too did material narratives of heritage and the past. Analysis of commemorative events, then, provides a rare context within which to explore the relationships and heritage practice of different communities in the context of changing power structures, and their reactions and experiences, through the ways that they created material culture and memory. Later in the twentieth century, as the economy shifted from its traditional reliance on sugar to tourism, monuments were further re-written and modified through new commemoration of the long dead to create historical narratives that would be of interest to visitors. The shifting relevance of commemorative inscriptions, the emergence of new styles of commemoration, and the modification of existing monuments, or even the filling in of blanks in the commemorative record, all reflect this dynamic period of Bajan history and practice because they were relevant sites for negotiating the history of inequality and marginalization, identity, and memory.

Discussion

Large, systematic analyses of monuments and cemeteries that contextualize trends with more detailed microhistories of individuals, families, and material traditions make it possible to recognize the ways in which much more diverse, small-scale choices and experiences created dynamic commemorative patterns that challenged and subverted colonial norms. The commemorative practices of the Thompsons, Bannisters, and Belgraves explored in detail, as moments that punctuated and defined changing social and memory practices, do more than create a sense of humanity and lived experience in historical narratives; they reveal tensions in colonial and post-colonial social structures, and they highlight acts that resisted and challenged inequalities. While there were many continuants from the first two centuries of British colonialism in Barbados, the nineteenth and twentieth centuries saw an intensive transformation of practices largely related to abolition and emancipation. After nearly 200 years of segregated burial of British- and African-Barbadian communities, the push towards abolishing the slave trade, and then the institution of slavery altogether, increased the rates of religious conversion and education for African-Barbadians, redefining memory practices and uses of material culture in commemorating the dead. The impact of black monuments in previously exclusively white landscapes, the ways in which black families established and solidified traditions throughout the nineteenth century, and the modification of those material records in twentieth and twenty-first century heritage practice are critical to understanding memory, tradition, and social identity in Barbadian history.

These frameworks for creating and negotiating social memory and relationships in Barbados contribute new understandings of the complex processes through which new places were transformed into homes and empires, foreign landscapes were given meaning through memory and material culture, and cultural tensions were experienced and mediated. This archaeological case study of colonial Barbados, and the islanders' relationships to religion, race and power, moves away from emphasizing plantation slave cemeteries in African-Barbadian funerary practice to recognize alternative contexts that were critical to the processes through which memories, social structures, and landscapes were constructed and resisted. Seventeenth-century British colonists established precedence, but eighteenth- and nineteenth-century white planters used the profits of

sugar to fund increasingly elaborate commemorative practices that tied their names to places, materializing their power, status, and race-based politics. Segregation of burial grounds and memory practice on the island began to dissolve in the late eighteenth century but it was not until the middle of the nineteenth century that the African-descendant population of Barbados utilized Anglican funerals and commemoration to create new relationships within the secular and religious landscapes of the island as a means of negotiating new positions and social structures on the island. From a position of extremely restricted geographies, where movement, residence, and burial on the island was controlled by slave owners, to increasing freedoms on the island, commemorative practices were actively employed to establish and negotiate relationships to landscape, narrating new locales with memories, stories, and material claims in the form of monuments. The twentieth century saw the re-writing of these histories in the context of heritage practice and the pressures of tourism. These geographies of memory and the dead in colonial and post-colonial contexts affirm the significance of commemorative material culture in both creating and studying Atlantic histories.

Reflecting on scholarship, the results of this research challenge our preconceived notions of the contexts and methodologies that will decolonize Atlantic studies by recognizing and addressing more diverse and complex voices, narratives, and experiences. The hyper-visibility of black history in contemporary social sciences and humanities, challenged by ongoing invisibilities in traditional historical records (Adams 2011, 3–5) supports a focus on slave burial grounds, which have been studied extensively, while there have been extremely limited opportunities for the large-scale study of post-emancipation funerary practice, restricting understandings of racial, religious, and social tensions during this critical period (Blouet 2013; Brown 2008). New members of Anglican congregations faced ongoing discrimination that discouraged some from seeking burial in these churchyards. Nevertheless, the late eighteenth century saw increasing rates of burial and commemoration of African-Barbadians. This represents a major transformation in the experiences of funerals and commemoration of the dead from slavery to post-slavery Barbados, and more importantly, transformative shifts in social power, race, and heritage. The complexity of the ways in which memory, historical records, and material commemoration at once replicated earlier traditions and also modified them to suit vastly different social settings and understandings demand further research and attention. Anglican churchyards and commemoration provide a rare venue in which British- and Afro-Barbadian communities interacted and negotiated social identities and structures through self-representation and material culture, reacting to past and present contexts materially reflected by cemeteries as palimpsests. The recognition of the long-term ramifications of changing commemorative practices and the active role played by monuments erected by living communities reacting to and challenging colonization and decolonization processes complicates scholarship on memory and material culture. However, more importantly, it provides the opportunity to trace resistance and subversion of 'colonial' material culture through this rare record of self-representation from a period in which too many voices remain invisible.

Notes

1. Ethnohistory has suggested that slaves were left to their own devices for burial, beyond restrictions of time of day, music, singing, and Obeah (Handler and Bilby 2001; Olmos and Paravisini-

Gebert 2011, 155; although these laws were rarely enforced Newton 2008, 89). Archaeological investigations in Barbados have sought to fill in the gaps in the historical record, primarily through the excavation of Newton plantation's slave cemetery (Handler 1999, 13). Burials here involved shallow graves dug into uncultivated land and limestone bedrock, occasionally including the natural or artificial mounding of soil. Some burials included wooden coffins and grave goods, but this was not universal. Grave goods included food and drink, pottery, containers, cloth and mats, gold dust, beads and shells, jewelry, including rings and bracelets, knives, pipes, and tobacco, bearing similarities to grave goods common in West African cultures (Handler 1997, 102) but also British objects (Brown 2016).

2. This however was not universal in colonial slave communities; rather, 'by refusing to admit slaves into their churches, the English planters differed markedly from contemporary French, Spanish and Portuguese slave owners' (Dunn 1972, 249). Spanish slave owners, for instance, encouraged slaves to be converted to the Catholic faith prior to their departure from Africa and even British Virginia and South Carolina allowed modest missionary activities (Bennett 2003; Brown 2006, 75).
3. Similar to many slave labour-based society at this time, this status was granted by Acts of Legislature for 'good conduct' at times of rebellions; by will/deed as a gift by their owners for good service; to the old and infirm that plantation owners no longer wanted to support; to illegitimate offspring with enslaved women; and finally, to the children of free mothers (Beckles 1990, 85–86; Dunn 1972, 252–255).
4. Lawrence-Archer (1875) selectively recorded monument inscriptions, descriptions and genealogical annotations throughout the British West Indies, including 190 monuments from 11 churches and 3 plantations in Barbados, targeting the highest ranking families or most interesting inscriptions, and therefore ignoring monuments commemorating African-Barbadians. Oliver (1915) focussed exclusively on Barbados, resulting in a much larger and more complete record of monuments on the island. Oliver includes 1,472 monuments in his publication, from Anglican churches and plantations with known commemorative monuments.
5. These data are available as an open access, digital database, including photographs, inscriptions, monument records, and maps (Cook 2016b).

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