

## Tooth DNA reveals unknown origins of buried African slaves

Researchers have analyzed the DNA of ancient teeth to identify the regional origin of three African slaves buried more than 300 years ago on a former Dutch colony in the Caribbean.

The development could open the door to broadening the understanding of African American ancestry linked to the European trade in slaves, which often is limited by scant historical record keeping and incomplete genome and population data, according to the study, published online in the journal [Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences](#).

"I like to think of DNA as another type of archive, another type of record that we can use in order to understand the past," said the study's lead author, Hannes Schroeder, an archaeologist who studies ancient DNA at the Natural History Museum of Denmark.

When they were unearthed accidentally in 2010 during the construction of an office complex, the three skeletons in the Zoutsteeg area of Philipsburg, on the Dutch side of St. Martin, offered strong clues that they had not been born there. Paramount among them were front teeth that had been chipped and filed in patterns that were significant to African tribal cultures, a practice that was largely abandoned after enslavement, Schroeder said.

The dental patterns, however, were not enough to determine where the three likely came from in Africa.

**Read full original article:** [DNA from ancient teeth solves mystery of African slave burial](#)