UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

Persistence of the Spirit: Kongo and Conjure in the Antebellum South Carolina Lowcountry, 1700-1830

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

in History

by

Amber Withers

2020

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Persistence of the Spirit: Kongo and Conjure in the Antebellum South Carolina Lowcountry, 1700-1830

by

Amber Withers

Doctor of Philosophy in History

University of California, Los Angeles, 2020

Professor Brenda Stevenson, Co-Chair

Professor William Worger, Co-Chair

This dissertation examines how Central African populations exported to North America contributed to and shaped enslaved spiritual and religious life on antebellum plantations, specifically South Carolina conjure traditions. Beginning with a close analysis of ascension narratives of Christian Kongo kings, the succession of Dom Diogo in 1561 illustrates how the onset of Christianity created tension within the Kongo ruling elite early and often and how Kongolese traditional politics remained at the core of political and religious transformations within the region. From the sixteenth century to

the nineteenth century, Central Africans certainly brought with them a strong wherewithal of Central African religious and spiritual mores, even if deduced to its core forms. Central Africans disembarked in North America under extreme conditions of slavery contribute deep and highly complex structure and spiritual traditions in a new and constantly changing antebellum slave plantation society. In South Carolina, this dissertation examines the role of conjure in enslaved healing and religious life to illustrate conjure's direct links to its Central African predecessor. Previous scholars have argued that Bakongo identities were Catholicized or have offered overly complex definitions of conjure and its practices. Here, it is argued that conjure is a reproduction of Central Africa spiritual life in South Carolina. In conclusion, the preference for Angolan and Central African borne identities in such events like the Stono Rebellion of 1739 and the Denmark Vesey Conspiracy of 1822 further reinforces the value of Central African derived customs and spiritual efficacy operating within conjuring networks in South Carolina.

The dissertation of Amber Withers is approved.

Aisha Finch

Robin D. G. Kelley

Brenda Stevenson, Committee Co-Chair

William Worger, Committee Co-Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2020

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my dearly departed father, James A. Withers (1961-2015). I love you dad. Always. Asé. And to my mother, Anita E. Lynch, your love continues to show me how to be a better, stronger Black woman everyday. Thank you for every single sacrifice, it never went in vain. You are my heartbeat. Lastly, to the city that raised me, Inglewood, California, though your identity is ever changing, may the hearts of true Black and Brown champions always continue to rise.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I dedicate this early effort at intellectual work foremost to my Creator and Ancestors. To exist in this space and time, especially in the year 2020 is the most profound expression of their power and will especially because I have done nothing to warrant their daily interventions in my life. Yet, the ancestors made themselves known constantly, ultimately carrying me across this finish line. In my immediate ancestral lineage, I evoke the spirits of my dearly departed father James A. Withers and slain brother James Withers, Jr. as well as my great-grandparents Claudie Mae and Buford Hayes. Thank you all in particular for your continued patience, guidance, and protection.

I extend all the love in the world to The Hayes and The Withers family for choosing me as their loved one. I am grateful to a host of extended family for being a source of inspiration in innumerable ways. To my grandmothers Shirley Banks and Barbara Withers, every sacrifice for your family has never gone unseen. Thank you for your wisdom. To my mom Anita Lynch, I love you with every fiber of my being. Making you proud is my greatest honor. To my brother Glenn Lynch Jr., I love you and thank you for constantly challenging me in all the best ways. To my aunt and close confidant Mauricia Banks thanks for always being like a big sister and best friend to me. To my brilliant goddaughter Camauri Williams, I want you to know that you can be anything you want, but being good is the most important. To my best friend Darnisha Stephen, I love you and thanks for always standing by my side. To my friends Camille Lewis, Jalisa Holt, Morgan Cochran (and baby Ava), Jenae Baker, Whitney Stovall, and all of my loved ones who shared in my personal growth as an undergraduate. Special love goes to my Ubiquity, Inc. family, Uhuru Sasa! I am so grateful to Dana Hall, Shamette

Franklin, Jalisa Goodwin-Moon, Carrie Henderson, and all of my brothers and sisters in Nkiruka that I call family. To my close friends, my chosen family, Khadija Bilal, Kara Reeves, John F. Knight, Jr., Shaina Hatchell, Bailli Coles thank you for loving and befriending a soul like myself and allowing me to be all of myself at all times with no judgment. To my personal person, Jacob Bohrod, thanks for loving me so sweetly. Temet Nosce forever.

I have been enrolled in school since I was five years old. This dissertation is a product of twenty-five years of a love for education and, though it is not perfect by any means, it represents a lot of heart and dedication that was placed in to me by motivating teachers. I have to extend all gratitude and power to the *good* educators who have and continue to work in the Inglewood Unified School District. Many thanks to my educators at Bennett-Kew Elementary, Monroe Magnet Middle School, Morningside and City Honors High School. I remember every teacher who spoke life in to me, and every good teacher I encountered cultivated my potential and constantly pushed me to strive for something more. As a little Black girl, who knew very early on that she was good at school, it meant the world to me to have teachers who always welcomed my ideas and interests with open arms. I would be remissed not to name some of them and their contributions: Mrs. Shields, my kindergarten teacher, Ms. Russo, my first grade teacher, Herschelle Watkins (RIP) my third grade teacher. Thank you Ms. Watkins for picking me up on the way to school when my mom could not get me there and for teaching me early on the value of hard work academic work. My fourth grade teacher Mrs. Kelly McGowens and fifth grade teacher Mr. Fred Evans. Mr. Evans recognized my love of Egyptian history and gave me all the resources to bury my head in books for days on

end. Middle school was an interesting period academically but I have to give thanks to my sixth grade history teacher Jennifer Withrow. Ms. Withrow was the first teacher to tell me that I could go to college and she made me believe it. Thank you to my high school teachers, Mr. Charles Michael Cain, Ms. Jennie Linder, and the most thorough history teacher ever Mr. Christopher Berry for telling me to “speak truth to power.” As long as I continue to live, I promise to do just that.

The decision to attend Howard University for higher education was wrought with challenges of negative perceptions about the value of an HBCU education. I made a choice to attend a Black college when it was not popular, and I thank God that I did. The African-centered education I earned at Howard University gave me a sense of self and access to knowledge that does not exist elsewhere. I must also acknowledge that I began my higher education at the peak of the financial crisis in 2008 and fought tooth and nail every year to finance my education. I had never been on a plane or travelled outside of greater Los Angeles, so when I arrived in Washington, D.C. with only two weeks worth the clothes, a blanket, and a dream, I was more than scared about my future. However, once I arrived on the campus of Howard University and was lovingly received by my cousins, Dr. Tritobia Benjamin and Bernetta Powell, I knew that I would eventually be all right. Dr. Benjamin (my dearest Toby) thank you especially for supplying all my needs my freshman week so I would not go without the basic necessities. I came to college with next to nothing and you supplied every need. I can never say thank you enough for that gesture of kindness cousin. I also thank my cousin Bernetta and Uncle Mr. Powell for literally feeding my friends and I on holidays, and reminding us that when you graduate from Howard that you can do anything.

I thank the mentors I gained in professors at Howard University. Special thanks to Ms. Crystal Evans, Dr. Edna Greene Medford, Dr. Quito Swan, Dr. Charles Johnson, Dr. Margaret Crosby, Dr. Ana Araujo, Dr. Valethia Watkins, Dr. Gregory K. Carr, and Dr. Andreas Woods and Dr. Mario Beatty, the first Black Egyptologists I ever had the pleasure to know existed. Lastly, thank you Dr. Jeanne Maddox Toungara for your continued mentorship and for literally holding me up at one point as I wept in frustration throughout this PhD journey. Dr. Toungara worked closely with me to prepare my graduate school applications and inspired me to pursue a Ph.D. at UCLA, her alma mater. I still aspire to be as great a mentor (and scholar) as these wonderful intellectuals were and are to me.

As an undergraduate student worker, I was fortunate to work in the Howard University Division of Fine Arts, Theatre Arts department. I must give special commendation to the Black artistic genius cultivated in that sacred space. Watching Black students train in the arts inspired my own work in field of history and the talent and work ethic borne in to those students is aspirational. Many thanks and blessings go to Mrs. Thelma Paige-DeNeal and Mrs. Janet Johnson, the administrative heartbeats of the Division and beloved in my heart.

I owe a debt of gratitude as well to Deacon John Wilson of West Angeles COGIC Church for identifying my talents as teacher very early and giving me my first classroom of students to teach at the age of nineteenth. Working with high school students in my s free time gave me the opportunity to refine my delivery and gain skills that I used in my college classrooms. The support and love of the West Angeles Enrichment Program staff and colleagues like Nicole Johnson, Erica Copeland, LeNese Burks, Cherylnn

Pope, Cymone Mack, Christina White, and Sierra Williams, and so many others went far in that regard. Thank you all for all the support and love over the years and may God continue to move in and through you (us) all.

At UCLA, I quickly realized that I was going to need support to help balance out the intellectual trauma of graduate school. To my sister Dr. Araceli Centanino, thank you for being a rock throughout all of our years in scholarship and loving. Since day one, we knew we could do it as long as we had each other. And we did! Furthermore, I would not have continued my program if my sisters Dr. Amirah Saafir and Dr. Yatta Kiazolu did not decide to enroll at UCLA. I thank God everyday that we have each other and that we became doctors together. I also have to thank my friends in scholarship Antwann Michael, Madina Thiam, Thabisile Griffin, and Janice Levi. You all showed me that friendship and scholarship *can* create a beautiful marriage. Lastly, thanks to Dr. Selah Johnson for being a great colleague and sharing advice with me on how to navigate graduate school as well. To my dissertation committee, I extend my eternal gratitude for intellectual and non-academic lessons alike especially to my co-chairs Dr. Brenda Stevenson and Dr. William Worger for their incredible support and guidance throughout this writing process. Lastly, to my psychological counselor in CAPS, Dr. Ashley Bradley, many thanks for your overall mental health support in the last year of writing.

In travel for my research, I must give thanks my host families and the brilliant people I met along the way in South Africa and Tanzania. Special love goes to my brother Rushawn Walters and sister Ranita Harris or the friendship in Tanzania, especially in the wake of losing my father and being thrust in to study so soon after loss. Also, I send much appreciation to the one archivist that assisted in me in Portugal at the

Archivo Torre Do Tombo. Thanks for actually *seeing* me when others did not. I also send gratitude to Dr. Mkamburi Lyabaya (aka Mwalimu) for accepting me into the language immersion study trip last minute and being such a great guide into studying the Swahili language. Gratitude is also extended to all sources of funding granted to support this research project. Lastly, peace to all the dj's and podcasts that helped

I cannot begin to close these acknowledgements without recognizing that this dissertation was completed in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic and the 45th Presidential administration, one of the worst periods in American history. Almost 250,000+ people have lost their lives in this public health crisis with a disproportionate impact on communities of color. My ability to write, research, and think in the safety of my home, was in part, made possible by the countless essential workers in food service, healthcare, transportation, delivery, and other industries whose labor upon which society rests. This acknowledgement is not made to further the hero narrative which seeks to normalize the disproportionate harm they face, but instead a gesture toward recognition of their humanity and the value of their life apart from their labor.

I also want to extend forgiveness to every person who passively or actively worked against me on this academic and personal journey of growth. For every naysayer, from elementary to graduate school, I thank you for your efforts and for giving me the fuel to finish. Your names will certainly go unmentioned here but may God continue to work on you and your spirit. In all, I am so grateful that I fulfilled my last promise to my dad, whom I know is watching over me always. Again, this one is for you and mom. Rest easy until we meet again.

Amber Withers

Education

Ph.D. Candidate History, University of California Los Angeles,

Dissertation: Persistence of the Spirit: Kongo and Conjure in the Antebellum South Carolina Lowcountry, 1700-1830

Research Fields

African, African Diaspora, African-American History, African American popular culture

M.A. History, University of California Los Angeles, 2014

B.A. History, Howard University, 2012

Fellowships/Awards

Eugene V. Cota-Robles Fellowship for History 2012-2013

UC-HBCU Initiative Fellow 2012-2020

International Engaged in Social Sciences Mentorship Program-South Africa 2012

UCLA Graduate Student Mentorship Program-Fowler, Getty-Los Angeles 2013

Graduate Student Mentorship Program-Portugal 2014

African Center for Outreach and Educational Programs-Tanzania 2015

Publications

Withers, A. "'Without Holiness, No Man Shall See The Lord': A Gender Perspective On The Life of Amanda Berry Smith in Liberia," The Howard University Journal of Research, 16 (abstract), 20-22

Withers, A. "…Shine Your Light for the World to See: Mos Def, Hip-Hop, and the Black Radical Tradition." Amistad Journal, Spring 2011, 100-108. [Available upon request]

Academic Service

Senior Academic Coordinator, West Angeles Education and Enrichment Program 2010-2020

Museum Educator, Hammer Museum, Westwood, CA 2017-2018

Ufahamu: A Journal of African Studies, Editor, UCLA 2014-2016

Teaching Experience

Graduate Student Instructor UCLA Center for Community Engagement 2017-2020

Adjunct Professor Cal State Long Beach Department of History 2018

Courses: African History Since 1800

Teaching Associate UCLA Department of History 2014-2017

Courses: Black Magic: African American Religious Traditions in the Diaspora; Western Civilization: Ancient Civilizations to ca. A.D. 843; Religion, Occult, and Science: Mystics, Heretics, and Witches in Western Tradition, 1000 to 1600; African History Since 1800

Teaching Assistant UCLA Department of History 2013-2014

Courses: World History to 500 CE; Recent African American Urban History: Funk Music and Politics of Black Popular Culture; African History Since 1800(Online)

Professional Affiliations

American Alliance of Museums

American History Association

Association for the Study of Classical African Civilizations
African Studies Association
Phi Alpha Theta National History Honor Society, Zeta-Gamma Chapter

Invited Speaker

UC-HBCU and CSU Pre-Doctoral Student Panel (Moderator) July 2013
Equality, Inclusion, and Diversity Day Panel, "Navigating the Academy" (Moderator) Sept. 2013
UCLA Cultural Affairs Commission Panel, "Analyzing the Glamorization of Drug and Alcohol Drug Use in Hip Hop" (Moderator) Feb. 2014

Related Civil Service

Urban African-American Culture Expert, County of San Diego Office of Assigned Counsel 2014

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Amber Withers is a graduate of Howard University in Washington, D.C., where she received her B.A. with honors in History in 2012. Upon graduation, she traveled to South Africa as a participant in the inaugural cohort of the International Engaged Social Science Summer Mentorship Program through the University of California- Historically Black Colleges and Universities (UC-HBCU) Initiative Program. In Fall 2012, she began graduate studies at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) pursuing a doctorate in History. While at UCLA she received support from UC-HBCU Initiative Fellowship and Eugene Cota-Robles Fellowship. As a student, she worked as a Graduate Student Instructor in the Center for Community Engagement and participated in various on and off-campus non-profit initiatives. She has taught Africa Since 1800 at California State University, Long Beach and course within her field of African-American religious studies at UCLA. Beyond the classroom, she prides herself for her work in reaching underprivileged high school students from her native Crenshaw and South Los Angeles District.

Introduction

"The inhabitants are pagans…They worship whatever they please, regarding as the most important gods the sun, male element, and the moon, female element."[1]—Filipo Pigafetta, *Description du Royaume de Congo*, 1591

"Intimately connected with their ignorance, is their superstition. They believe in second-sight, in apparitions, charms, witchcraft, and in akind of irresistible Satanic influence. The superstitions brought from Africa have not been wholly laid aside."[2]—Charles C. Jones, *The Religious Instruction of the Negroes In the United States*, 1842

Explorer Filippo Pigafetta's observations of Bakongo religious life in the sixteenth century reflected a common issue of conversion amongst many missionaries in the BaKongo region.[3] Bakongo people remained bound to customary beliefs, even as Christianity became an impending threat to tradition. Pigafetta's observations were evidence of he and others inability to convert Africans to Catholicism during Portuguese occupation. Nearly three centuries later, Charles C. Jones' observations of enslaved life in the South mirror similar exhibitions of resistance to Christian influence. Planters and religious zealots had the same frustrations about Africans in South Carolina. Charles C. Jones observations of African-American's relationship to superstition, amulets, charms, and sacred religious traditions illustrate an arc of Africans, on both continents, and their inability to relinquish ties to African religious traditions. This dissertation seeks to examine the role of Kongo religious beliefs and cosmologies on early South Carolina

[1] Filippo Pigafetta and Duarte Lopes (Trans, and annotated by Willy Bal), *Description du Royaume*, pg. 645
[2] Charles C. Jones, *The Religious Instruction of the Negroes In the United States*, pg. 128-129
[3] Georges Balandier, *Daily Life in the Kingdom of the Kongo,* pg. 65
[2] Charles C. Jones, *The Religious Instruction of the Negroes In the United States*, pg. 128-129
[3] Georges Balandier, *Daily Life in the Kingdom of the Kongo,* pg. 65

slave plantations from 1700-1830. I argue that Central Africans in early colonial America who form the early chattel slave plantation culture of the seventeenth to mid-eighteenth century are highly impacted and informed with Central African traditional knowledge, specifically, Bantu-Kongo spiritual and religious knowledge and sensibilities.[4] Thus, my dissertation reconsiders the role BaKongo religion and social structures serve in early plantation culture and how Central Africa was recreated on South Carolina plantations through the practice of conjure.[5]

The argument of how knowledgeable Central African captives may have been in the Catholic catechist or any sincere form of catholicism will always be highly debatable. This dissertation argues that during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Central Africans in the Kingdom of Kongo who were involved with the Catholic Church were only of royal status and nominally converted based on personal alliances as opposed to a sincere allegiance to the church. Linda Heywood and John Thornton's argument that the Kongolese were converted and heavily exposed to Catholicism is idyllic in illustrating a powerful Catholic Kingdom in the African Atlantic. Yet, the Christian influence of the conversion of kings and leaders does not descend down to the on-the-ground conversion of lay Bakongo people. Central Africans circulating through the Atlantic retain their cosmological beliefs and contribute them to a variety of African indigenous religions, in particular, African-American *Hoodoo* or conjure in the African-

[4] Kimbwandende Kia Bunseki Fu-Kiau, *African Cosmology of the Bântu-Kôngo: Tying the Spiritual Knot: Principles of Life and Living*, pg. 35.Fu-Kiau's text discusses the African aspects of law and crime, but, first, emphasizes the interconnectedness of cosmology within the Kongo purview. The Kongo did not separate the cosmos from their reality, thus, making the social life of the Kongo, in part, an on-the-ground spiritual reality. Thus, "A human being's life is a continuous process of transformation" where "nothing in the daily of Kôngo society is outside of its cosmological practices."

[5] James H. Sweet, *Recreating Africa*, Amazon Kindle location conjure is also known as hoodoo and/or rootwork amongst other nomenclature, see chapter three.

American South. The early exportation of Central Africans into the Atlantic posits their early foundations in the Americas. A significant amount of Central Africans exported into the Atlantic were sent to sites in various parts of Brazil, the Caribbean, and southern North America. Throughout this dissertation I examine how Central African populations in the mid-seventeenth to eighteenth century who were exported to South Carolina developed and shaped to the early religious life.

Central and West Africans arriving under extreme conditions of slavery contribute deep and highly complex cosmological structures and spiritual traditions in a new and constantly changing antebellum plantation society. In that sense, Africans began to use the South Carolina landscape as a template on which to apply their own spiritual and religious beliefs. The concept of palimpsest[6] can better understand how Central Africans and, later, West Africans, contributed and configured varied African ritual traditions in to early enslaved spiritual practices. With respect to conjure, I argue that Central Africans in the American South, especially South Carolina, a site with a high volume of Bakongo captives, lay the foundation for conjure and recreate Central African cosmological and customary life through superstition, the application of naturopathic remedies for healing, and included ethnic identity as a complimentary force to resistance movements like the Denmark Vesey Conspiracy.

Scholars of religion and African-American conjure often apply Atlantic Religion Complex[7] or African Atlantic Religious Complex[8] in order to distill a variety of West and

[6] Here I define the word palimpsest as a document where African peoples can apply, erase, and reform a varying array of cosmological, and later religious ideologies against mainstream American historical influences.

[7] Katrina Hazzard-Donald creates a complex to describe the African religions circulation through the Atlantic. She states the, "….eight common and essential components of traditional African religion, which I have labeled the African Religion Complex (ARC), were so potent in each of the

Central African religions and cosmologies in to synthesis of common practices which often leaves little room for ethnic distinctions. This dissertation explores and distinguishes cosmology and religion and establishes that BaKongo cosmology offers a fundamental contribution to the development of conjure practices in the South. Conjure has been obscured by the more popularly identifiable religion of Vodun and American Voodoo, a direct product of Dahomey, Benin, and other ethnically identifiable West African groups. The incorporation of loas and petro religious features into new world religions of Santeria and Candomblé in the Americas can be easily be trace back to the West African mythological archetypes. In contrast, conjure has either been oversimplified or been made too complex and African corollaries are not so easily identifiable or connections drawn. One of the implications of this work is to draw connections between conjure and other faith systems like Brazilian *feticieros,* Cuban Palo, and Jamaican obeah[9] and demonstrate an arc of Central African derived naturopathic healing and resistance traditions that circulate throughout the Atlantic.

---

culturally varied regions that, after the coming of cotton, they would partially coalesce across regions and remain a supporting foundation for further magical, spiritual, and religious development. The eight components in all probability were shared by all the African ethnic groups in the American slave population. Linking the New World to the Old, the African Religion Complex included: 1. counterclockwise sacred circle dancing, 13 2. spirit possession, 3. the principle of sacrifice, 4. ritual water immersion, 5. divination, 6. ancestor reverence, 7. belief in spiritual cause of malady, and 8. herbal and naturopathic medicine. Hazzard-Donald, Katrina (2012-10-25). *Mojo Workin': The Old African American Hoodoo System* (Kindle Locations 864-869), (Kindle Locations 860-863).

[8] Young proposes that the African Atlantic Religious Complex developed during the era of slave trade and in light of Christian conversion in Kongo. He notes, "the nature of the African Atlantic religious complex is also revealed in the construction and use of ritual objects" as well as burial practices. *Rituals of Resistance*, P. 184-185

[9] Aisha Finch, "Insurgency Interrupted: Cuban Slaves and Resistance Movements, 1841-1844" (manuscript) P. 294

By placing Bakongo and related peoples' cosmology and customs at the center of early enslaved religious organization on plantations and at the origins of conjuration, one can find more direct links between Central African traditions in the formation of African American spiritual, religious, and resistance life. Scholars are now more readily able to identify specific ethnic diasporas within the Atlantic with more to come and the potential to look at the American South as a space where varying African groups melded together to create African-American identity is ripe.

> "The fetishers corrupt the faith we preach. They also try to persuade the people that what we say is untrue…So that the people will lose confidence in us, they themselves sprinkle water with the aspergillum as we do on Sunday. If we make use of diverse ornaments, they do so too. In short, they imitate us in everything and in this way deceive the poor, who are devoid of intelligence."[10]—Father Laurent de Lucques, *Relations sur le Congo de Laurent de Lucques*

In the Kingdom of Kongo, the religious resistance that Father Laurent was met with was more commonplace than what the hagiography of the kingdom often argues. This dissertation includes a sociopolitcal history of Central African BaKongo and related peoples to frame their resistance in the context of ever changing regional political shifts. At the transatlantic level, this dissertation explores the cultural connections that led to the production and circulation of Central African derived religious traditions amongst early Bakongo influenced settlements in colonial North America. What is most interesting about finding Kongo across the Americas is that remnants of their presence can be found in the ground, literally, and early African-American archaeology provides

[10] Lorenzo da Lucca, *Relations sur le Congo du Père Laurent de Lucques (1700-1717) Traduites et annotées par J. Cuvelier.* Bruxelles, 1953. pg. 130-131

significant evidence of how Bakongo customs and influence on conjure and ritual have taken place.

The archaeological evidence on early North American plantations raises interesting ideas about the process of symbolic expression and the blending of religious beliefs over time. Archaeologist Christopher Fennell's research incorporates theories of group dynamics and individual agency to material objects within African American religious beliefs. His analyses the appearance of cosmograms and minkisi containers through a Bakongo framework illustrates three interrelated but findings: first, that there exists a set of core symbols used in a broad range of expressions; second, these core symbols are expressed and fully embellished in their emblematic form in the performance of public and group rituals; lastly, with the presence of dominant and subordinate social groups, the dominant group often suppresses the religious rituals of the subordinate group.[11]

Fennell suggests understanding Bakongo presence in enslaved settlements through a framework of ethnographic analogies in order to critically analyze and move beyond the simple assumption that African Americans retained static cultural traditions. In his accounts of BaKongo religious beliefs, Fennell states that Kongolese adopted Christianity in a very selective manner, "translating most of the Christian concepts and icons into the BaKongo worldview." The excavated items surveyed from the variety of plantations throughout the American South and Southeast regions fit into a larger dynamic of interaction between distinct traditions and practices derived from separate

[11] Christopher Fennell, "Group Identity, Individual Creativity, and Symbolic Generation in BaKongo Diaspora," *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* Vol. 7, No. 1 (March 2003), P. 2

African religious groups such as the Kongolese in addition to the Yoruba and Fon. The spiritual dexterity of such past Bakongo actors and their innovativeness to create new social networks and shared symbolic expressions under difficult circumstances exemplifies African ingenuity. Fennell argues explicitly against a religious homogeneity deriving from Africa, which raises issues of how to appropriate identity and cultural roots in light of scant concrete historical evidence of African identities amongst the BaKongo in the American South.[12]

[12] Ibid. P. 11, 13, 23

The Bakongo and Related Peoples

Figure A: The Portuguese Appear Before the King of Kongo

Central Africans have greatly contributed to the American Diaspora in a variety of ways. Central African presence is easily identifiable in art, religion, cosmology, and forms of cultural resistance in the Americas. With respect to this dissertation, it is important to survey the social and religious world of Central Africa in order to understand its impact on the American South. Anthropologically, Wyatt MacGaffey examinations of Bakongo religion and society argued that Bakongo cosmology was at epicenter society and operated as an "economic, political, and religious system" to inform Bakongo perceptions of reality.[13] The Central African cosmology incorporated notions of a 'reciprocating universe' where the living and the dead intermingled through the human and the spiritual realm or otherworld. Practitioners in the form of magicians, diviners, and chiefs mediated communication with the ancestors and the spirits and were valued for possessing cultural and scientific knowledge.[14] According to MacGaffey, the endurance of Kongo religious expression lied in its "continual recurrence of similar forms" despite the prevalence of a physical hierarchy or standardized theology.[15]

MacGaffey also noted that Bakongo religion fell into three distinct but interrelated categories: ancestor cults, magic, and witchcraft. The Kongolese, however, distinguish chiefs from witches, where witches were identified by their destructive or malevolent use of power.[16] Bakongo social structure was hierarchical and based on prestations and the unity of any group is based upon cohesive matrifilial and patrifilial relationships. Chiefs and prophets acquired their power from the other worlds, whereas witches and

[13] Wyatt MacGaffey, *Religion and Society in Central Africa: the Bakongo of Lower Zaire*, Chicago: University of Chicago Pr (Tx), 1986, P. 63.
[14] Ibid. P. 89
[15] Ibid. P. 249
[16] Wyatt MacGaffey, "Comparative Analysis of Central African Religions," *Africa: The Journal of the International African Institute* Vol. 42, No. 1 (Jan., 1972), P. 21

magicians were associated with commercial and anarchic social structures, which served private interests at the expense of the public.[17] Surveys of varying Central Africa religions by MacGaffey demonstrated how scholars understood the roles of prominent figures such as sorcerer, witch, and prophet.[18] MacGaffey stated that, "chiefship is not an office but a position of precarious and contingent authority, a commission, to which succession depends upon a special relationship with the spirit world which clearly...puts the chief in the same field of action as the witch and the magician."[19]The Kongolese structuring of religious roles occurred similarly throughout the savannah and was fundamental to the regions cultural homogeneity.

Linda Heywood and John Thornton give agency to the role of Central Africans in the making of the American Diasporic tradition in their research about Atlantic creoles. Heywood's argument asserts that Central African culture contributed in equity in to West African traditions to the formation of the American Diaspora. In Heywood's edited volume *Central Africans and Cultural Transformations in the American Diaspora,* the authors examine "the cultural and social forces that informed the slave trade from Central Africa" and "the extent to which Central African traditions were successful in reproducing and transforming themselves in the Americas."[20]The authors in the edited volume reveal an implicitly "creolized" intermixture of Bakongo culture and religion in the new world that was concretely Central African. In the years predating formal slave trade, Africans established long distance trade and communication with Europeans on the

[17] Ibid. P. 26
[18] Ibid. P. 24
[19] Ibid. P. 27
[20] Linda M. Heywood, eds., *Central Africans and Cultural Transformations in the American Diaspora*, P. 14

African continent. Conversely, Europeans established bases along the African coast, proselytized denominational Christian doctrine, and likewise, developed communications and ties with African ethnic groups in varying degrees.[21] The author's claims that the late sixteenth century Kongo's introduction to Catholicism used "new set of symbols to express traditional Central African beliefs"[22] asserts that Central Africans entering the Atlantic had some relationship and practiced some form of Christianity. Heywood and Thornton's insight into the perspectives on creolization, syncretism, and sustained Africanisms present in the Atlantic have greatly contributed to Central African Diasporic literature and was instrumental in establishing religious claims for Central Africans old and new world impact. However, Heywood and Thornton's argument that Central Africans in the Americas were fully converted or deeply impacted by the Catholic mission did not particularly grapple strongly with the nuances of conversion or how it was accessed or received by non-royal persons in the Kongo Kingdom.

James Sweet's research argues that Central African religious beliefs were strongly retained beyond Christendom in the Kingdom of Kongo and enslaved captives who inhabit the new world from the region sustained and used their knowledge of customs as forms of resistance. Sweet argues that the religious exchange between the Portuguese and Central African groups such as the Bakongo in both Africa and South America showed that captives in the colony of Brazil had not 'lost' their African religious sensibilities. In the Lusophone Atlantic, religious evidence of Central African traditions survived and in fact, significantly influenced Catholicism.[23] Sweet's arguments that the

[21] Ibid. P. 150
[22] Ibid. P. 157
[23] James H. Sweet, *Recreating Africa: Culture, Kinship, And Religion In the African-°©-*

existing African religious forms that appear in Brazil such as *calundus* and the nature of accusations of witchcraft enhances a resistance counternarrative to John Thornton's vision of BaKongo Catholics well versed in circumnavigating the Atlantic World.

Atlantic Literature

This dissertation examines European and African spiritual exchange through an Atlantic framework. Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic* established the lens for understanding Black people in transatlantic history, challenging perspectives on modernism and postmodernism. Gilroy used the metaphor of the slave ship in transit as a representation of "a living, micro-cultural, micro-political system in motion."[24] The European explorations of the Atlantic in the sixteenth and seventeenth century initiated a cataclysmic interaction and exchange between West–Central Africans, Europeans, and Indigenous peoples in the Western hemisphere that affected the religious formations of all who would come to inhabit the Americas. In acknowledging the dominant religion operating in the Atlantic. Thus, this dissertation also examines the role that Catholic and Protestant religious dynamics played in the Atlantic as well.

Advancements in the historiography of the Catholic and Protestant Atlantic are used in this dissertation to strengthen arguments about the spatial influence of African religions in the Atlantic. In "A Catholic Atlantic," Allan Greer and Kenneth Mills deconstruct the early European Reformation and the Christianization of the western hemisphere. The early Catholic Atlantic was filled with lay forms of catholic religion that formulated on all sides of the Atlantic. The internal fractioning of Roman Catholicism

---

Portuguese World, 1441-1770, P.103

[24] Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double-Consciousness*, P.4

that produced the Protestant Reformation subsequently managed to create a variety of local Christian exhibitions in the Atlantic. Allan Greer and Kenneth Mills state that the Catholic Reformation was a "constituent element" in disciplining the society of the modern age, developing administrative institutions of authority and obedience.

However, the universality and broad influence of Catholicism has been generalized in to the liminal binaries of the Christianizers and the Christianized and have not readily explored its comparative transatlantic aspects.[25] One, Catholicism was "a diverse, locally rooted, popular set of beliefs" that was always in a constant state of change. Another was that simultaneously Catholicism was also a "dynamic program of discipline and regulation" that intruded into local levels of society. Lastly, the Church "worked hand in glove" with nations in the emergence of monarchies and empires. The "local religious realities" that emerged from the Catholic Atlantic required understanding their "simultaneous connectedness and autonomy."[26]

The simultaneous spread of empire and religion in the early sixteenth and seventeenth century relied on global unity through Catholicism, and later Christendom. In short, the practice of Christendom in the Atlantic was varied and inconsistent. James Sweet states that the Portuguese had lackadaisical attitudes towards their faith and that "for the Most Part, the Portuguese were content to follow the philosophical and literary leads of English, Spanish, and Italian writers on the subject during most of the sixteenth

[25] Allan Greer and Kenneth Mills, "A Catholic Atlantic," in *The Atlantic in Global History*, edited by Jorge Cañizares Esguerra and Erik Seeman, pp. 3–20 (2007). P. 4
[26] Ibid. P. 7

century. Lacking an indigenous intellectual discourse on witchcraft, the Portuguese church adhered to the broad contours of European witchcraft constructions."[27]

The religious apathy circulating through the Atlantic was best examined in Stuart Schwartz's *All Can Be Saved. All Can Be Saved* provided a great counternarrative to the national, sociocultural, and religious edicts of the Spanish and Portuguese world. Schwartz's reading of Inquisition records demonstrated the religiously apathetic perspectives of those found to be in violation of the Church's policy on belief. Schwartz' Interrogation of layperson's perspectives and failures to demonstrate full religious piety reveals a general relativism amongst the laypeople in Spain and Portugal. Although Schwartz's treatment of religious tolerance in the Iberian African world is thin, he addressed counterintuitive perspectives on how Europeans perceived their religiosity (or lack thereof) in light of persecution and its implications for Africa and the Americas. Schwartz demonstrated from Inquisition records that there was a consistent flow of dissident ideas circulating throughout Europe and the Americas. The religious apathy of European missionaries and colonial planters in the Americas left much room for African cultural retentions to stay afloat.

Kongo and Conjure in South Carolina

> "Conjure is being practiced all the time, the root doctor informed us. 'Frawgs an lizuds an sech tings is injected intuh people's bodies and duh people den fall ill and sometime die. Udduh strange tings is happenin, too. Take duh story uh dem people wut fly back tuh Africa. Das all true. Yuh jis hab tuh possess magic

[27] James H. Sweet, *Recreating Africa* (chapter 8, Amazon Kindle)

knowledge tuh be able tuh cumplish dis."[28]—George Little, *Drums and Shadows*, 58.

The aim of this dissertation is to examine the relationship between the religious tradition of precolonial Kongo and those of the Lowcountry region of South Carolina and understand how their historical movement of signs, symbols, and meanings across the Atlantic, by way of religious resistance in Africa, informed conjuring practices. Central African survivors of the slave trade to the mainland North America entered ports Charleston, South Carolina beginning in the late 1600s. However, Central Africans' early and continuous contribution towards shaping African-American spiritual and religious expression as it relates to conjure still goes underrepresented.

Yvonne Chireau's *Black Magic* offered that roots of African American conjure were attributable to a variety of West-Central Africans ethnic identities such as the Yoruba and the Kongolese. Both ethnic groups cosmological and religious artifacts have appeared in African American spiritual traditions, but only as a complete fusion of magico-religious worldviews. Chireau noted that the "Above all, blacks in America viewed Africa, the spiritual site of the ancestral homeland, as having special significance."[29] Chireau's defined conjure as a practice of herbalism, "that evolved out of African Americans' assimilation of native African, native American, and Anglo botanical techniques."[30] Chireau text provided an excellent point of departure for discourses on African-American conjure and magic traditions. However, the conversation can and has been carried further by other scholars.

---

[28] Georgia Writers' Project. *Drums and Shadows: Survival Studies Among the Georgia Coastal Negroes*, pg. 58.
[29] Yvonne P. Chireau, *Black Magic: Religion and the African American Conjuring Tradition*, p. 7
[30] P. 93

Katrina Hazzard-Donald contributes to conjure scholarship in her text *Mojo Workin'* where she defines conjurd as the "indigenous, herbal, healing, and supernatural-controlling spiritual folk tradition of the African American in the United States,"[31] which embodied social and historical linkage of North American Africans back to the continent. In contrast to Chireau safe definition of conjure as form of African American-American herbalism, Hazzard-Donald provides a more robust definition of conjure and gradual approach to conjure's early development. According to Hazzard-Donald, conjure can be best understood as a tradition in a state of "progressions and regressions" staged against the historical timeline of mainstream influences in Black culture.[32] In her examinations of "The Old Black Belt Hoodoo Tradition" on slave plantations conjure more than likely operated as a religion for most enslaved Africans. However, Hazzard-Donald links the "New World" to the "Old" by instituting her own African Religious Complex. This dissertation moves away from religious amalgams of African beliefs that may or may not apply to African-American in the Americas. Where scholars generally consider that Africans did lose their original "god" over time they also deduce principle concepts shared by all African ethnic groups in the American slave trade that limit the scope of African ethnic contribution.

In *Rituals of Resistance: African Atlantic Religion in Kongo and the Lowcountry South in the Era of Slavery* Jason Young argued "that religion operated as a central form of resistance not only against the system of slavery but also against the very ideological underpinnings that supported slavery in the first place."[33] Young located

[31] Katrina. Hazzard-Donald, *Mojo Workin': the Old African American Hoodoo System,* p. 4, 7, 40
[32] Ibid. P.7
[33] Ibid. P. 11

BaKongo presence in South Carolina and examined the cultural continuities in the advent of minkisi and conjure bags, and the analysis of burial mounds and graves. However, Young's text adopted a Catholic purview of Kongolese piety aligning Heywood and Thornton's scholarship. Here, this dissertation departs from Young's argument that again suggests that Central Africans in the Lowcountry were influenced by Christian practices. Young follows in the vein of Heywood and Thornton in suggesting that the practices exhibited by those enslaved in the Lowcountry were Catholicized. However, this dissertation suggests that the formations of plantation religion occurred along distinctly African ways of meaning making and outside the purview of Christianity.

Definitions, Methodology, and Chapter Overview

Sharla Fett's *Working Cures* is one of the few texts that draw the strongest connection between Kongo precolonial religion and conjure. She and I are both concerned with "the social reality of illness and healing occur, and the ideological contexts in which illness and healing occur, and the hierarchies of power that inform health-related encounters."[34] But, her scholarship falls short of illustrating the arc of relationship between the Kongo and conjure. Thus, I examine early African American conjure relationship to Central African religious structures and how those connections managed to produce meaning-making on plantations and foreground resistance movements in South Carolina. Here, conjure is defined as a broad decentralized network of beliefs, bound by superstition, that incorporated the use of natural materials

[34] Sharla Fett, *Working Cures: Healing, Health, and Power on Southern Slave Plantations,* P. 11

and healing and harming ideological efficacies to mitigate spiritual, physical, and social conflicts.[35]

This dissertation furthers that Bakongo peoples[36] entering in the South Carolina lowcountry were not deeply informed by Catholicism. In contrast, I argue that Kongolese Africans who enter the Lowcountry brought with them knowledge of naturopathic systems of herbs, roots, material culture, folktales, superstitions, and psyche and shaped how spirituality and religion was reared in the region. The cosmological beliefs and sociopolitical structures of Kongo society allowed enslaved Africans to develop conjure within a network of healers and spiritual practitioners. This dissertation also emphasizes the role of religion in uniting multiple sites of identity. Consequently, this dissertation suggests that Bakongo custom and cosmology like religion, must be considered as an institutional "structuring structure"[37] that informs not only the social interaction and subsequent cultural exchange but also the sites at which these exchanges place. This approach, applied by Andrew Apter in his analysis of the West African structures of deep knowledge imbedded in Haitian Vodou, is valuable when

[35] "Hoodoo," "mojo," "fixing," "tricking," are readily interchangeable with conjure. Some authors have used witch and conjurer synonymously, however, it is to be noted that conjurers are full human beings, whereas, witches are categorized as nonhuman entities.

[36] The Kingdom of Kongo is the focus of most of the written literature of the period but the ethnicities within the Central African region vary are innumerable and include the Mongo, Maluk, Kete Coofwa, Cwa, Mbeengi, and Leele. The premier states of Kongo, Ndongo, Loango, Nsudi and Kasanje housed numerous subgroups as well.

[37] Andrew Apter, "On African Origins: Creolization and Connaissance in Hatian Vodou,"*American Ethnologist* 29, no. 2 (2002), P. 237-8. In his article, Apter argues that Yoruba deep knowledge as pragmatic function of Yoruba dogma is powerful because its revisionary capabilities. He states, "If the ideology of deep knowledge asserts a fixed corpus of secrets, then this should not be taken at face value, but as a screen that allows its pragmatic functions to masquerade as sanctified wisdom and learning. As such, deep knowledge is powerful because it is revisionary, sustaining possibilities of political transformation through the revaluation and reversal of established orders." Similar to Apter's thoughts on the dexterity of Yoruba deep knowledge, I will argue BaKongo cosmological functions very similarly and enables its cosmology to extend their interpretive horizons and sustainably transform itself through the slave trade.

assessing the Bakongo Diaspora as it complicates the history and ideas of Kongolese forms of worship and forms of identity association of social dynamics within the early plantation culture.

The first generation Africans from the Kongo become influential on plantations and create the fundamental structures for Group Theory and religious dynamics on Lowcountry plantations. Other incoming ethnic groups entering the region support and engage in structured slave plantation society through hoodoo practices and functions similar Kongolese religion and reflect similar aspects of Central and West African society. As mentioned before, scholars of conjure tend to conflate the religious facets of two distinct African regions into an amalgam of ideas and does seem to dilute to power of the religious politics of an identifiable African kingdoms. Homogenizing the spiritual and religious structures of West-Central Africa, no matter how much one mirrors another, belittles the contributions of specific African ethnic groups to the Atlantic and their unique concepts of spirituality and religion.

By analyzing Capuchin missionary records, the WPA and the Slave Narrative collection, traveller's accounts, ethnography, biography, archaeology as well as anthropology, folklore, newspaper articles, and court records this dissertation argues that there was a strong spiritual relationship between precolonial Bakongo religion and Lowcountry communities. As most of the documents and recorded testimonies examined are with colonial bias, this dissertation examines and seeks out African voices hidden within the subtext of Catholic piety in Kongo. Later, it explores how resistance to Christendom and political transformations forced Central Africans in to the American

South and how Angolan ethnic identity actively participated in the African led movements in South Carolina.

Chapter one examines the ascension narrative and political profiles of Bakongo kings. The conversion narratives highlighted topically suggest that kings like Afonso I and others welcomed conversion. However, the activities of warring African authorities in the region undergird an allegiance to Bakongo custom and rites and how non-elite Bakongo peoples were in constant conflict with spreading Christendom. Chapter two follows enslaved Central Africans in to the Lowcountry and examines their patterns of labor, population density, demographics, and how Central Africans as a dominant ethnic group in South Carolina shaped the character of the plantation economy. Chapter three examines the role of Central African ethnic identity in religion, folklore, witchcraft accusations, and the accounts of ordinary life on slave early plantations as well as major uprisings like the Stono Rebellion. Lastly, chapter four analyzes the court records of the Denmark Vesey Conspiracy and draws comparisons to Stono Rebellion as the two Angolan born persons were notable leaders in both events. The value of Central African ethnic identity and pre-colonial belief systems in South Carolina affirms enslaved Africans ways of knowing and informed how to advance insurrection.

Chapter One: “A Wolf’s Conversion:” Bakongo Customs and Spiritual Resistance in Transatlantic Trade

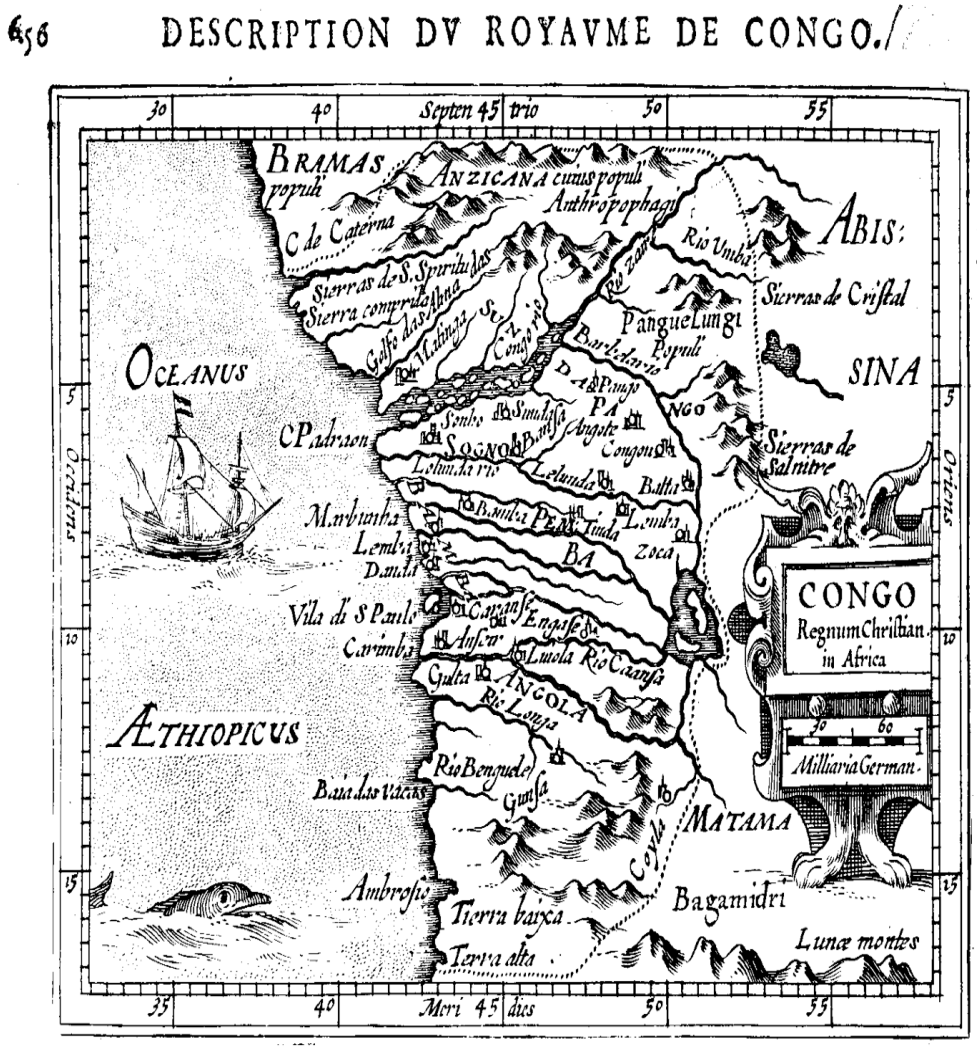


Figure 1.1 Central Africa in 1617

Political and Physical Environment

The BaKongo peoples of Central Africa are among one of the most documented and well-known kingdoms in Africa. The Bakongo peoples of Central Africa within the Ki-Kongo speaking regions of Central Africa are roughly encompassed by the Kwilu and Niari Rivers in the North, the Malebo Pool and Kwango Rivers in the East and the River Kwanza to the South (see figure 1.1). There are three major ecological zones that parallel the Atlantic Ocean: the coastal zone that contained loosely populated settlements, the heavily wooded and inhabited middle zone, and the southern zone which was generally uninhabitable land. Agriculture was the primary driver of the economy in the region and the principal crops were yams, sorghum, and various types of millet. The Bakongo peoples planted crops from September to November, germinated crops with the assistance of heavy rains from November to January, harvested first round crops from January to March and second round crops from March to May and observed the dry season from May to September.[38] Bakongo geographical boundaries are arbitrary and the *Mani* Kongo (ruler of Kongo Kingdom) held influences in further outlying areas.

From the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries the Kingdom of Kongo possessed influence over much of West-Central Africa. Kongo and its related peoples were a highly organized society that possessed complex sociopolitical structures. The King was the leader of a top-down distribution network that

[38] Anne Hilton, *The Kingdom of Kongo*, Oxford Studies in African Affairs (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), p. 1-7.

constructed and relayed political, economic, religious, and social order.[39] The King oversaw the functions of priestly chiefdoms and the network of lineage groups that formed the base of his bureaucracy. The king also appointed governors from provincial regions to serve as representatives in both the villages and towns. Acceptance into Kongolese nobility was based on appointment or primogeniture and allowed the Kongo king to maintain power and prevent opposition from building in other factions or parties.

The population density of each ecological zone varied throughout history. In the coastal zones, the presence of settlements was based on accessible water supplies and typically appeared near hills and river valleys. In the middle zone, Kongo peoples were spread throughout sans the mountainous region, as rainfall was plentiful. The Kongo Kingdom was separated into two factions: the village (*libata*) and the town (*mbanza*). Each faction operated under its own economy with its own methods of regulated production, distribution, and exchange. In the villages or *libata,* kinship was based on descent and families or *kanda,* those of which spanned about than about thirty houses or more. The *libata* structured and controlled local economies by collecting rents and supplying surplus profits to the capital, Mbanza Kongo.[40]

At the more localized level, the *belo* were the "innumerable local hamlets dispersed" throughout the kingdom and those extraneous households and families populated much of the region. The *belo* is symbolized by the public houses where

[39] Wyatt MacGaffey, *Custom and Government in the Lower Congo* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), p. 86, 306.
[40]Hilton, p. 35, 37.

social, political, economic, and organizational issues were discussed before a community assembly.[41] In Bakongo, the primary distribution of labor and lands has been controlled through the matrilineal *kanda* and as a result, most disputes are addressed through *kanda* relationships and not between individuals.

Towns or *mbanza* were centered on local markets and later slave labor markets and surpluses of wealth, which typically benefitted landlords and nobility. Most towns evolved as a consequence of trade causing variations in settlement or concentration of power. Though the kingdom was divided into two realms, their economies were intertwined into centralized systems directed by nobility and equipped with a national tax, intra-regional and international trade, and a monetary system. Though living two different ways of life, the *mbanza* and *libata,* including the smallest of *belo,* shared the common customs, language, and cosmological understandings.[42]

The origins of Kongo begin with the formation of *kanda* and extra-*kanda* clanship lead by clan leaders. Though still uncertain, it is argued that the early Bakongo gained uniformity through a unified taxation system and the marriage alliances. There were believed to be twelve major *kanda* within the central region. These children would subsequently be able to contend for the title of *Mani Kongo* or king of the state. The elite *kanda* members of the dozen families

[41] Kimbwandènde Kia Bunseki Fu-Kiau, *African Cosmology of the Bântu-Kôngo: Tying the Spiritual Knot* P. 58-59.
[42] Fu-Kiau, p. 58, 62.

belonged to the Mwissikongo ruling elite and were the governing body behind the election of a new *Mani Kongo*.[43]

The Bakongo peoples were organized into tripartite social strata: slaves, villagers, and nobility. The Kongolese made clear distinctions between domestic slaves and slaves subject transnational trade. Domestic slaves were typically attached to nobility or Catholic missions. They were also not subjected to export and generally lived amongst their own clan. Prisoners of war and conflict were also part of a social class relative to chattel slavery but not all subjected to the plight transnational enslavement.[44]

Ideologically, Kongo kingship asserted that all power and authority derived from the otherworld. Power was accessed from and justified through the spiritual realm and only those with special gifts or spiritual access were qualified for leadership. Kongolese people saw the king as sacred because of his supreme ritual access to the otherworld and only the king's spiritual access could ensure the regions rain, harvest, and prosperity. Ceremonies and rituals were used to express and affirm kingly sacredness and royal officials also enjoyed the access and benefits of otherworldly powers in order to legitimize their authority as well. The royal court, except for the provincial governor assigned to rural areas, was generally comprised of a small priestly bureaucracy and lived in the urban center of Mbanza Kongo. Similar to noble status, kingship was appointed and not inherited and a royal council elected the leader from a group of noblemen. Each nobleman established claims to the throne based on marriage, lineage, and

[43] Hilton, p. 34-35
[44] David Birmingham, *Central Africa to 1870* p. 53-54.

status. Social cohesion within the nobility was forged by lineage and marriage and was various relationships were marked by competition and aggression, especially involving a succession of kingship.[45]

Transatlantic Historiography and Impact on Precolonial Systems

The intense interactions between the Portuguese and Central African coast, beginning in 1472 and extending well into the 1800s, impacted precolonial political systems in a variety of socioeconomic and demographic ways and most scholars characterize the period into three phases. Jan Vansina characterizes the Central African history of Atlantic trade into: the formative phase, the "heyday" of Atlantic Trade, and its transition into the Industrial era. In the formative phases, the Portuguese first sought to trade with early Central African kingdoms such as Kongo and Loango in precious metals such as copper and slaves, primarily to support the sugar colony of Sao Tome. Initially, "the Kongo wanted technical advisors and some luxury goods,"[46] and paid the Portuguese in copper, ivory, and precious objects.

Yet, the Portuguese's increased demand for slaves significantly shifted Central African political institutions. The volume of the slave trade increased by the mid---1500 as a result of Portuguese's *pombeiros*[47] access to the internal slave trade source at the Malebo Pool around the center of Zaire River and instigating internal divisions amongst the Kongo and Tio kings. The Jaga Invasion of 1568 allowed the Portuguese

[45] Hilton, P. 35-38.
[46] Jan Vansina, *Paths in the Rainforests: Towards a History of Political Tradition in Equatorial Africa*, p. 198, 204.
[47] Roland Oliver and Anthony Artmore, *Africa Since 1800,* p. 26-28; 78-81 *Pombeiros* were African and sometimes mulatto agents who purchased slaves in the African interior on behalf of the Portuguese crown or private Portuguese traders for the Atlantic slave trade.

to settle into Kongo land and expand farther southwards and inwards into Luanda. The internal dynamics of the emerging slave trading system were becoming more evident during the formative period with the establishment of commercial routes and expansion of trading areas. The consequences of the formation period negatively affected African political systems. Vansina states:

> Basically the system altered over time…with the volume and character of imports accepted by the African customers…. and with European demand for slaves. European goods were first in demand as exotic luxury items, which African leaders used as instruments to increase their prestige, attract more clients and dependents, and hence increase their power…These imported instruments of power upset the balance of regional power to a greater or lesser degree, so that leaders farther away from the coast also sought them right the balance of power again.[48]

The collapse of the Kongo Kingdom after the battle at Ambwila ushered in the height of the slave trade with the onset of civil wars from the 1640s and thereafter, leading to a large supply of slaves to be sent to various places in the Atlantic. John Thornton's monograph on the Kongolese Civil Wars captures the turbulent years of 1641 to 1718 and concludes "…the changes that occurred in Kongo were much more the product of internal dynamic than simply reaction to external exposure."[49] Thornton argues that disruptions igniting the civil war could be attributed to particular interventions such as the Dutch occupation in Luanda in 1641 and the conflicts between the Kongo and Nsoyo sects that caused severe lineage instability.[50] As a consequence of Kongo's decline, from 1660 to 1793 nearly a million slaves were

[48] Ibid. p. 200
[49] John Thornton, *The Kingdom of Kongo: Civil War and Transition, 1641-1718,* p. xvii
[50] Ibid. p. 72, 83.

exported[51] into the Atlantic. After a brief decline in demand due to the Napoleonic Wars and the formal abolition of slave trading in 1807, the Central African slave trade was still maintained traffic within the Iberian Atlantic and illegal American trade networks until about 1835.

David Birmingham's examination of the Portuguese impact on Central African kingdoms of Ndongo and Kansanje in the Mbundu region provides a similar rise and fall of the Central African region. South of the Kingdom of Kongo, the kingdoms of Ndongo and Kasanje met with a similar political destruction in their interactions with the Atlantic trade beginning in the 1500s. The Ndongo kingdom led by Ngola's, a term for kings in the region, expanded and increased slave exportation with the demand of the Portuguese. Birmingham notes: "The basis for the future Portuguese economy in Angola was thus laid in these years. Until the mid-nineteenth century the chief reason for Portuguese interest in this unhealthy land was providing labour for the rich plantations and mines of Brazil."[52]

The expanding Portuguese slave trade southward into the Ndongo kingdom created a serious rivalry with the Kingdom of Kongo. Yet, the Portuguese trade southward into the Mbundu areas, open at the mouth and easily accessible into the interior of the Kwanza River, made trade with Angola and access to more slaves much easier than at the Kongo port site of Mpinda. According to Birmingham, "The first phase of Portuguese activity in West Central Africa had been predominantly peaceful,

[51] Jan Vansina, *Paths in the Rainforests*, p. 204; see also Joseph C. Miller, *Way of Death: Merchant Capitalism and the Angolan Slave Trade 1730–1830,* p. 105
[52]David Birmingham, *Trade and Conflict in Angola: The Mbundu and Their Neighbours Under the Influence of the Portuguese 1483–1790*, p. 32

in that Europeans had not been intent on conquering any African state"[53] and most internal conflicts happened with Kongo and lesser states or the Ndongo states. However, the second phase of trade was conducted in stark contrast to the previously peaceful trade relationships. Many things happen internally in the sixteenth century: the Portuguese attack Ndongo and internal warfare is proliferated, the Jaga Invasion of Kongo in the 1560s, and the later invasion of the Imbangala in Angola lead to the ultimate demise of Kongo and Ndongo.[54] As it is described, "By 1684…Kongo had been reduced to a state of chaos; Ndongo had been crushed…"[14]In the third phase, the rise and fall of other political states such as Matamba, Kasanje, Loango, and others contributed to the internal wars in Central Africa, which ultimately supplied the Atlantic captive trade well into the eighteenth century. As stated by Birmingham, "During the course of the eighteenth century the focal point of the slave supply in West Central Africa continued to move eastward and shifted beyond Matamba and Kasanje to the Lunda Empire on the Kasai. The Mbundu country and the Kwanza valley changed from being a generating point to being corridor through which slaves captured…reached the sea."[55]

Similarly, Robert Harms divides "involvement of the people of the upper Zaire River in the Atlantic trade" into three phases. He states, "During the first [phase], the Portuguese bought slaves almost exclusively…in the parts…dominated by the Kongo kingdom."[56]This trade was greatly assisted with slaves from the Malebo Pool area.

---

[53] Ibid, P. 42
[54] Ibid, p. 42, 66
[55] Ibid, P. 132-133
[56]Robert Harms, *River of Wealth, River of Sorrow: The Central Zaire Basin in the Era of the Slave and Ivory Trade, 1500-1891*, p. 24

"The second phase began in the 1560s, when the captive supplies from the Pool declined as a major source of slaves. The immediate cause was the warfare that plagued the hinterland of the Kongo kingdom…. but the long---term reason was the decision by Portuguese traders to abandon the port of Mpinda [Kongo's port] after 1570…" and relocate the center of Portuguese trade to Luanda in Angola. The third phase according to Harms, "which began in the second half of the seventeenth century, was marked by a significant expansion of slave trade into the central Zaire basin,"[57] and ultimately turned the African slave trade inwards into the interior. In the late nineteenth century as consequence of Atlantic trade, "Slave and ivory exports enriched a small class of African chiefs and traders, but neither slaving nor hunting could provide a productive economic base for future development. Instead they drained limited manpower and resources from the region. The manufactured products imported from Europe intensified the circulation of trade along the upper river, but in themselves they did nothing to develop new industries among Africans."[58] In most cases the destruction of African political systems in equatorial Africa was inevitable and caused by internal fractioning exacerbated by the Portuguese slave trade.

Kongo and Christianity

The Kingdom of Kongo is of notable importance due to its adaptation of Christian practices in the sixteenth century. The reception of African nobility in European courts often overgeneralizes the notion that Kongolese people in mass converted to Christianity. However, this dissertation argues that Central Africans involved with the

[57] Ibid. p. 25-27
[58] Ibid. p. 4-5

Catholic Church at the height of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were primarily of royal status and nominally converted. In reality, Thornton's idea that Kongolese were converted and heavily exposed to Catholicism and conversion is idyllic in illustrating the powerful Catholic Kingdom in the African Atlantic. However, the influence of widespread Christianity is deeply uneven. Bakongo Catholicism, using Thornton's words, "adapted itself almost wholly"[59] to Bakongo cosmology and adhered to precolonial cosmological principles. The early years formal slave trade forced long distance trade and communication between Europeans and Africans on the continent. The subsequent establishment of European ports and mission along the African coast to proselytize developed various political and religious ties with African ethnic groups in varying degrees. The cross-cultural relationships that developed from first encounter between the Portuguese and the Kingdom of Kongo and other ethnic groups, gave rise to the early Atlantic Creole. However, beyond the Kongo's nobility relationship with the Catholic Church, this dissertation seeks to understand the responses of those in the villages and towns whom were ultimately swept into conflict by forced conversion and how their responses underscore a consistent rejection of Christianity and growing transatlantic exchange.

The religious exchange between the Portuguese and Central African groups, in both Africa and the Americas, does not demonstrate that Bakongo peoples or consequential captives from the region 'lost' their African religious sensibilities. In contrast to creolization and religious assimilation, the resistance and cultural continuities amongst African-derived religious traditions found by James Sweet emphasize that

[59] John Thornton, "Development of an African Catholic Church," *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 25, No. 2 *(*1984), p. 154.

African religious beliefs of captives were sustained and used as forms of resistance in the Americas. James Sweet examination of Lusophone Atlantic and Brazil religious practices offers that African religions stemming from the Central African region were significantly retained and more deeply influenced Catholicism.[60] Sweet's arguments that the existing African religious forms that appear in Brazil such as *calundus* and witchcraft accusations enhance a resistance counter-narrative to John Thornton's vision of well versed in BaKongo Catholics circumnavigating the Atlantic World.[61] The tension between religious resistance and religious acculturation places the ideologies of these African creoles into polarizing camps.[62]

This dissertation offers an examination of enduring African cosmological theology and how it has interfaced with Christian tenets in both Africa and the Americas. The variety of spiritual exchange that occurred in the region requires analyzing the Kingdom of Kongo and related peoples from below and how the resistance to conversion with closer consideration exemplifies precolonial Central African practices during political transitions. Moreover, the unorthodox practices of Christianity amongst the Kongo nobility elite barely exhibited a sufficient expression of the new faith. More importantly, even amongst kings and nobility who converted, traditional Bakongo politics were always at the center of negotiating the acceptance or rejection of the faith.

---

[60] James Sweet, *Recreating Africa,* p. 103.
[61] James Sweet, "The Evolution of Ritual in the African Diaspora: Central African *Kilundu* in Brazil, St. Domingue, and the United States," in Michael A. Gomez, ed., *Diasporic Africa: A Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 64-80.
[62] Sweet's analyses of Afro-Brazilian rituals in the new world were argued to have been sustained forms of African religious traditions and resistance. Whereas John Thornton's arguments further the idea of creolized identities that are highly informed Catholics go on to greatly impact the Americas.

Early Bakongo *"Conversions"*

The early years of the Bakongo contact with the colonial Portuguese were modest at best and traditional Bakongo spiritual and political structure practices remained in practice well into the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In fact, on the first expedition to Kongo in 1483, Diogo Cao did not disembark to visit its capital, Mbanza Kongo. Instead, tribute and gifts were sent to him seaside. Upon first arrival, the Kongo first regarded the Portuguese as water or earth spirits of the *mbumba* dimension, a space within their highly complex cosmology.[63] "They arrived before the king who was in a square in front of his palace accompanied by people without number…When the Portuguese captain arrived...as a sign of satisfaction, he took earth in his hand and ran it down the captain's breast and his own, which is the greatest sign of respect…" The Portuguese looked like albinos that came from the sea, speaking of foreign lands, and were perceived to be spiritual entities. By the reaction of the crowds of witnesses who "raised their hands towards the sea…and crying out 'Long live the king and Lord of the World," the Bakongo received the Portuguese's arrival and relationship between them to be amicable.[64]

The BaKongo peoples within the kingdom called the people and the space from which the Portuguese came *nzambi mpungu* translated roughly translated as "highest spiritual authority." The Portuguese would later forcibly syncretize *nzambi mpungu* with the new Christian God though the Portuguese were deeply

[63] Hilton, p. 53-55.
[64] Pina, Rui de, "The Arrival of the Portuguese Embassy at the Kongo Court, 1491," In M. D. D. Newitt, ed., *The Portuguese in West Africa, 1415-1670: A Documentary History* , p. 103.

misinformed on the distinctions of each. The quick understanding by the Portuguese that they were perceived to be otherworldly and they used such beliefs to ultimately dispossess Bakongo of its precolonial belief systems and used religious manipulation to instigate religious subservience of the Kongo Kingdom to Christianity. [65]

The *Mani* Sonyo, a related group within the Central African region, received the Portuguese similarly. In an grand gesture of respect, "The Mani Sonyo gave signs and demonstrations of great joy at having to attend to the affairs of the king of Portugal, and as a token of respect placed both hands on the ground and then placed them on his face, which is the greatest sign of veneration that they make to their kings." The Bakongo peoples were intentional about the reception of those they believed to be spiritual entities because it would allow kings to access and increase their authority with to the other world and increase real world political access with respect to trade.[66]Increasing political and spiritual authority worked simultaneously within Bakongo kingship, and in order to secure the position of *Mani Kongo*, leaders minimally incorporated Christian imports in order to validate Bakongo, not western, political structures.

The Bakongo people's spirituality, customs, and beliefs supersede Christianity's weak pulse throughout the Central African region. The Bakongo religious roles appear similarly throughout the savannah and are fundamental to

[65] Hilton, P. 51.
[66] Pina, Rui de, "The ManiSonyo Embraces Christianity, 1491." In M. D. D. Newitt, ed., *The Portuguese in West Africa, 1415-1670: A Documentary History,* p. 100.

the regions homogeneity.[67] The Bakongo social structure was hierarchical, based on prestations, and possessed a complex organized cosmology and accompanying theological that aligns and informs its political organization. MacGaffey states that, "chief ship is not an office but a position of precarious and contingent authority, a commission, to which succession depends upon a special relationship with the spirit world which clearly...puts the chief in the same field of action as the witch and the magician." Sorcerer, witch, and prophet roles were prominent in Bakongo society and the king himself could be considered a witch.[68]

The Bakongo, like many other African ethnic groups, established leadership authority through spiritual reverence and political consolidation. Afonso, the first king to fully interact with the Portuguese, welcomed the trade relationship and drew support for his initially weak kingship by monopolizing slave markets near the Malebo Pool around the 1520s and distributing European products throughout the slowly forming kingdom. To do this, Afonso strengthened his political position with the Portuguese by establishing Christianity as a cult. Afonso convinced the Mwissikongo elite to shift their understandings of Christianity as a *mbumba* water-based cult to a *nkadi mpemba* cult of *kindoki* or witchcraft that was "concerned with the cultural world of man and with man's material striving, and its spirits were located in the sky" he was able to gain the confidence of the elite. Afonso defended the recasting of the Christian cult for three reasons: "First, it did not challenge the

[67] Homogeneity, with respect to witchcraft and sorcery, provides a space for understanding 'failure' in society through a folk sociology that helps Central Africans understand and control their experience.
[68] Wyatt MacGaffey, "Comparative Analysis of Central African Religions," *Africa: The Journal of the International African Institute* Vol. 42, No. 1 (Jan., 1972), p. 24.

established representatives of the *mbumba* dimension, the *kitome* priestly chiefs. Second, it offered the ruling group as well as the king a unique source of spiritual power and legitimacy within the dimension of *nkadi mpemba* and the dead and thereby facilitated its evolution as an elite independent of the *kanda* structures. Third, Christianity's status rose as Afonso consolidated his position in the centre and the provinces."[69] Hence, Christianity developed mainly as a cult to service the elite and was governed by the royal court and its rippling influences onto the non-elite peoples of the Kingdom of Kongo is uneven, especially since Christianity was practiced and accessed only by the elite Mwissikongo.

Early on in its establishment, it is evident that Christianity was neither widespread nor impactful. The mass baptisms that allegedly converted Bakongo peoples through the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries more than likely did not do much in the way of Bakongo peoples shifting their own ideas and intentions towards adapting a new faith. For much of the sixteenth and seventeenth century, Kongo nobility opposed the practice of traditional Bakongo spirituality. In contrast, villages saw the spread of Christianity as an imposition to local religious life. The building of new churches and shrines to replace former sacred sites was a strictly political move in order to gain and sustain relationships with Portugal and within the Mwissikongo itself. The building of new sacred churches and sites atop older ones was not uncommon and more than likely was more symbolic of spiritual transition in authority.[70] Kongolese Christianity was a cult associated with the royal graves

[69] Hilton, p. 59-62
[70] "Carta Do Rei Do Congo, A. D. Manuel I," In António Brásio, *Monumenta Missionaria Africana*, p. 294-296.

and was a cult dedicated to the royal ancestors. The veneration of the ancestors and grave-sites (*mbila)*, a non-Christian practice, insists that while at the surface or elite levels of Kongo society officials presented it as fully Christian. Yet, for those with access to Christianity it meant consolidation and access to international trade through religious association.

Most Catholic missions, including the Capuchins, operated within the rural sector with little to no widespread affect. Only around the mid seventeenth century did Capuchin missionaries establish churches and schools in the provincial and rural areas, but they still typically served noble families. Spiritual practices for the village sector of Kongo society operated differently. In the villages, the local religious leaders, the *kitome (pl. Itome)*, governed the spiritual life and well being of the people. The network of *itome* reached from the capital to the outlying areas and validated noble leadership. The *kitome* helped to ensure the safety and prosperity of each village by resolving disputes and maintaining spiritual order through proper rituals for rain, health, prosperity in harvest. At an individual level, the *nganga* (pl. *Banganga)* or ritual specialists assured individual health and protection against witchcraft and hardship. In all, the king, *itome,* and *nganga* claimed spiritual access to the beyond.

Villagers and those at the edges of provinces were not particularly concerned with practicing Christianity. Most persons operating in the *belo*, the smallest family units located in rural outlying areas, remained removed from Christianity well into the peak of the captive trade and retained more knowledge of indigenous practices than Catholic awareness. In recent scholarship, Jason

Young has argued that "Though the priests proved terribly unsuccessful in conferring of other rites—marriage, confession, last rites—they were successful with baptism, the eating of salt, *yadia mungwa,* as it was called locally."[71] Catholic baptism required priests to place a small amount of salt on the tongue followed by holy water. While the Kongolese accepted salt-water baptism to adapt to the faith, they incorporated their own preferences within the ritual and only participated for the salt itself. In contrast to the Mwissikongo's exposure to Christianity through heavy instruction and attendance of mass, lay Kongolese and other kingdoms elsewhere that were baptized, sometimes in mass, with salt sacrament make the decision to return to their prefixed traditions or demonstrate alternative intention in Christian rites.

Caltanissetta in his description of baptism states: "I was in the process of distributing salt to several people when heavy showers came; I told them to take shelter in some neighboring hut until the rain stopped, and afterwards to return for the rest of the ceremony…They promised me that they would return, but, thinking themselves baptized, they did not reappear."[72] Salt was a staple in Africa before the application of salt baptism so their incorporation of the spice into ritual was not unfamiliar and Caltanissetta learned after that experience to give the salt at the end of the ritual in order to maintain a crowd. Caltanissetta probably did not reason that the partial converts did not return because the rains mentioned probably held more symbolic value with respect to their reverence to water and nature spirits than

[71] Jason Young, *Rituals of Resistance: African Atlantic Religion in Kongo and the Lowcountry South in the Era of Slavery,* Kindle, location 696.
[72] Francois Bontinck, *Diarie Congolais (1690-1701) de Fra Luca da Caltanissetta Traduit Du Manscrit Italien Inedit Ed Annote*, pp. 112-113.

Christian influenced salt.

In the rural areas, according to Bernard Gallo, the Kongolese never truly "abandon[ed] their pagan custom." As a consequence, Kongolese understandings of Christianity are constantly "suffocated by diabolic discord" and their conversions are "never fully formed." At the end of the seventeenth century, the Bakongo peoples who managed to avoid the burgeoning captive trade were baptized in mass, often before embarking on to slave ships, but were not truly familiar with the Christian faith. It's hard to imagine that amongst the crowds of thousands of Kongolese that may have been present for baptism that authentic conversion would truly to take place for *all*.[73]

While Christianity's influence did not filter down quite successfully as believed, those elite members and the Kings of Kongo converted but through traditional Bakongo methods. Features of Bakongo political traditions such as polygamy, fratricide, and witchcraft are riddled throughout the narratives of Portugal's conversion of Kongo Kings and are indicative of a deep understanding of precolonial ways of knowing. Afonso's ascension to the throne in 1506 has the typical hallmarks of a miraculous religious narrative of conversion as recounted by the record. Yet, undergirding the tale are highly contested traditional power politics that are inherent to the Bakongo region.

In João de Barros conversion tale of King Afonso, he begins with describing the problems of trying to first convert Afonso's father, Dom João. Barros observed that unto Afonso's father "the devil added a new temptation for the king when the

[73] Louis Jadin, "Congo et la Secte de Antoniens: Restauration du Royaume sous Pedro IV et la 'Saint Antoine' Congolaise (1694-1718)," *BIHBR* 33 (1961), pg. 481.

priests tried to make him separate himself from the many women that he had and remain with only one, as prescribed by the Church." Dom João's denunciation of his wives was not readily accepted by Bakongo tradition, as it would disrupt the normal transfer of power. The practice of polygamy was particularly important for the Bakongo for it was the children of the royal wives as a whole from which the new *Mani* Kongo would be selected. Royal wives were very present and active within the Kingdom of Kongo.

Traditionally, women mitigated and access power through their male relatives, but, after the captive trade began to intensify in the early seventeenth century, women begin to step into direct positions of authority, especially in kingdoms of Ndongo and Matamba.[74] Bakongo women also worked in agriculture and trade and were particular purveyors in the exchange of salt and dived for *nzimbu* shells, the currency of the region.[75]However, after being influenced by the Portuguese, Dom João "Through the precept of these priests, these [women] lost their status as royal wives of the king's councillors who, because this was a matter which also affected them, worked on their husbands to advise the king not to consent to it." In the end, Dom João returned back to his rites and customs after his "the early fervor which he had shown [for Christianity] began to cool," and dies shortly thereafter leaving the throne open for King Afonso.

Unlike his father, Afonso, whose early kingship was weak, was more receptive to Portuguese missionaries and as expected, "The prince, Dom Afonso,

[74] John K. Thornton, "Elite Women in the Kingdom of Kongo: Historical Perspectives on Women's Political Power," *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 47, No. 3 (2006), pp. 444, 452, 455.
[75] Hilton, pp. 7.

was firmer in matter of the faith" upsetting the Mwissikongo elite. In response, the elite body immediately elected a "pagan son, Panso Aquitemo, with the object that, if he should become king, they could continue to live according to the customs of the past." Polygamy was an inextricable feature of a large portion of African societies and another struggle for missionaries to overcome with little success. Though King Afonso boasted of having one legitimate wife and was a Christian monarch, Afonso still allowed the practice to continue within his family via his son. According to Aquitemo's understanding, he knew "that is was certain that Dom Afonso, by his son, by means of the magic which the Christians had taught him, came flying over every night…and went in to those women, who had been removed from him [the king](Afonso), and had intercourse with them and returned immediately the same night." Rarely can one extract from mission accounts the opposing positions of a divided Mwissikongo elite. However, Barros account provides incredible insight to opposing perspectives of Bakongo political tension. Panso Aquitemo's description of Dom Afonso's acceptance of alleged acts unveils the underlying traditions that continue to take part in the Kingdom of Kongo and the narrative continues to be filled with Bakongo customary motifs.

In further allegations made by Panso Aquitemo's against the newly dubbed King Afonso, Aquitemo believed that Afonso had the powers to "dry up rivers and spoil the crops, all so that he could prevent him having so much income from the kingdom," indicative of the powerful natural and spiritual disruptions already being created by Christian presence in Kongolese leadership. Afonso's adoption of Christianity was perceived as a liability to the ruling elite and his "abilities" to dry up

the rivers and destroy crops were symbolic Christian ideology's power to decimate not only natural resources but also the traditional monetary streams of income based on waterways, most of which were a source of life for inhabitable regions. In response, Panso Aquitemo maintained old customs and burned relics of any Christian kind. Throughout the Central African region, it was not uncommon for kingdoms to resist Christianity, as the "new religion" after all it was a new cult, exclusive of familial principles of Bakongo customs and forced primogeniture.

To effectually adopt the Christian faith to cement his leadership, Afonso denunciates his royal wives to receive the Portuguese's blessing for more political access and also performs traditional duties to fortify his position. However, the miracle Christian narrative of Afonso quickly turns to one of witchcraft amongst the Bakongo as Dom Afonso, "ordered a charm" and "he sent it by one of his servants to one of his women, called Cufua Cuanfulo, whom he suspected" was delivered to kill him. The "charm" in this case is more than likely a cross and Aquitemo swiftly kills Cufua and orders the burning of all Christian relics.[76]

The intra-elite conflict intensifies when Dom Afonso summons Aquitemo to the court and immediately sentenced him to execution. However, "God willed it that this persecution of the prince should cease by bringing such an illness on his father that he died." Aquitemo's father was the leader of the neighboring Nsudi peoples, which possessed political and symbolic ties to the Kongo courts and his death probably explains Afonso's less deadly verdict.

In an act of familicide soon after, Aquitemo grows closer to Dom Gonçalo,

[76] João De Barros, "The Accession of Dom Afonso I of Kongo," In M. D. D. Newitt, ed., *The Portuguese in West Africa, 1415-1670: A Documentary History*, p. 112.

Afonso's Christian advisor to show loyalty to Dom Afonso. However, after Aquitemo returns to his village, Dom Afonso seizes it with intelligence provided by his mother and which allowed Afonso to secretly enter the village by night and sack it. "Having made his entry in this manner, the next day the prince went out to the great square, where he summoned the chief men of the land who to their custom and before they could change their minds, …declared him to be king…" with the assistance of "only thirty-seven Christians."

After a brief battle Aquitemo is defeated and flees in shame. Consequently and coincidentally, "in his flight the brother went through the bush and fell into a trap which had been prepared for some wild animal." In his last requests, Aquitemo asks his captain to request Dom Afonso for an official baptism, in the trap. There, after his baptism "Panso Aquitemo, the brother of the king, died from the injuries received in the trap into which he had fallen, from anger and from disgust at his situation." King Afonso, victorious, "having settled his affairs, … remained at peace in his kingdom, although he had much trouble with some of his chiefs who in many areas rebelled against him because of their idolatry." One can only imagine how many of those rejected the faith and maintained their traditional belief systems. The tension between King Afonso and Panso Aquitemo poignantly emphasize that not all Bakongo peoples were converts and that Christianity's uneven spread was constantly opposed. Additionally while Afonso was able to "to receive the faith until the last days of his life" and "himself preaching and converting a great many of his own people" in typical Christian narrative form, the narrative of Kongo's first Christian king is wrought with traditional forms of power

acquisition in order to consolidate relationships with the Portuguese.[77]

Though written as the story of Afonso's accession to the throne, Aquitemo's tale exposes much with respect to the traditional ways of political life that operated under the guise of Christianity. The death of Aquitemo's father easily weakened his position in Nsudi, and Afonso, in conquering fashion, seizes his village "with a great fanfare of music and shouts." Afonso goes into the "great square" to speak to the elders, makes a speech, and proclaims his victory not contingent upon an amicable exchange of custom, but, of politics. Afonso appears merciless and faithful, sparing Aquitemo to flee into a "trap" and "request" baptism before his death which is more clearly indicative of fratricide, which was a rightful custom amongst the Bakongo and dates back to their mythical origins.

Though framed in Christian narrative, King Dom Afonso's tale of ascension and Aquitemo's demise is rife with subplots of fratricide and "pagan" witchcraft accusations, which are traditionally Bakongo. The disruptive internal politics illustrated were not appropriated as witchcraft but discord and use as a catalyst for furthering the notion of conquering the heathen. But fortunately this overindulgence in storytelling allows closer insight into sustaining customs moving throughout Christianity. In another instance, the first Christian King of Kongo ascension more appropriately follows the typical Bakongo origin story.

The origins of Bakongo leadership are highlighted in two versions of the Kongo Civil War produced in 1710 by Capuchin missionaries Bernardo da Gallo and Francesco da Pavia. Gallo and Pavia present different origins of the kingdom

[77] João De Barros, Ibid.

but both reflect some of the same politics exhibited by King Afonso rise. Gallo argues that Kingdom of Kongo founder Lukeni lua Nimi conquered the country to avenge an insult pronounced against his mother by a ferryman. On the other hand, Pavia's version, which is more authentic, describes the unification of Kongo through the guile of a "wise and skillful blacksmith" who unanimously takes leadership because of his ability to settle disputes. The blacksmith archetypes encompass older, more enduring Bakongo clichés of blacksmiths as mediators and the likening of the production of steel to women and childbirth. While the tale of the blacksmith is deemed much older because of its close relationship to religious and precolonial consciousness, in the case of Dom Afonso's ascension to power, it is evident that he subscribed to assuming power through traditional methods.[78]

Bakongo customs and government are often inseparable from its origin story and inscribes customary relationships between respective *kanda* (families). According to the chronicles of Henrique Dias de Carvalho, the Lunda origins started with a wandering hunter named Cibinda. He met and married Lweji, a princess, and founded the Lunda Empire. Spiteful brother of Cibinda, Kinguri, rebelled and founded the Imbangala nearby. Similar origin stories amongst the Imbangala of Kasanje demonstrate the Lunda had a limited reach, but, the Lunda familial expansion through marriage suggests they are relative to numerous West-Central African groups. Conclusively, it is important to understand that "politics, much more than aesthetics, mythology, or even history, continue to determine the myths of the origins of central African states."[79] Kinguri,

[78] John K. Thornton, "Origin Traditions and History in Central Africa," *African Arts,* Vol. 37, No. 1, Exploration of Origins (Spring 2004), p. 32-33
[79] Ibid. p. 37

whose exploits will be examined later, and others foment the notion of Bakongo preference to traditional customs informed political endeavor rather than an attraction to Christianity.[80]

The succession of Dom Diogo in 1561 further illustrates how Kongolese politics were always considered and Christianity creates tension within the Kongo courts. As previously mentioned, stabilizing Christianity as a cult, the goal set out by King Afonso, was particularly contentious with respect to traditional customs of the Mwissikongo. The establishment of Christianity insisted on monogamous kingship, which meant that a lot more of the elite body and their children were excluded from taking leadership. The elite in Diogo's court "spread discord among the rulers and subjects and, after the death of the king, three princes claimed the succession at the time" around the death of a major king. As is typical with narratives of the Christian victor, the Kongo king who is a devout Christian Dom Diogo's ascension assumes the structure of religious narratives. But here too, Diogo's traditional tale is embedded with sub-plots of fratricide and other Bakongo witchcraft motifs. However, it is caused in part on the participation of the Portuguese and the first of the three kings were killed initially in order for Dom Diogo to assumer power.

According to Pigafetta's account "with the support of the greater part of the people…together with the Portuguese, [the people] went to the church to kill the newly elected king" of the two legitimate lineages. Thereafter, "So, at the very same hour, but in different places, both these kings were murdered." As a result,

[80] Thornton, p. 35-36

Dom Diogo, “there being no one else of royal blood upon whom to bestow the government…was chosen.” However, after Diogo’s reign, his successor Dom Alvaro was quick to return to pagan ways, especially polygamy. Within Alvaro’s court, Francisco Bullamatare, “took great liberties because he was an important noble…[and] gave out in public that it was a foolish thing for men to have only one wife, and that it was better to return to their customs.”[81] The fluctuating religious loyalty of Kongo kings and their courtiers was intent to preserve its permeable but still pre-colonial religious and political life in the wake of the Western Christianity. The Christianity practiced in the region would continue in a very highly contested and declining region and Kongo kings and their neighbors all have their own relationships with the Portuguese. There is no doubt that the Kingdom of Kongo can be considered Christian, however, it was more of a political conversion of the elite that occurs throughout its rise and fall and does not greatly shift the beliefs of the region until the later end of the Portuguese captive trade. What is more important to understand is that the Kongolese are making use of their declining religious agency and choosing to incorporate power associated with Christianity to fit within their governance. When villagers were later converted through baptism, even then, they utilized their own indigenous understanding and motivations for participating.

The Kingdom of Kongo is the focus of most of the written literature of the period but the ethnicities within the Central African region vary are innumerable. These ethnicities include the Mongo, Maluk, Kete Coofwa, Cwa, Mbeengi, and

[81] Filippo Pigafetta, “Christianity and a Disputed Succession in the Kingdom of Kongo,” In M. D. D. Newitt, ed., *The Portuguese in West Africa, 1415-1670: A Documentary History*, p. 159-161.

Leele.[82] The premier states of Kongo, Ndongo, Loango, Nsudi and Kasanje housed numerous subgroups as well. However, it is their spiritual, linguistical, and matrilineal commonalities that provide their overarching relationship in beliefs Bakongo and structure within the Bakongo regions.[83] The intersection of Kongolese cosmology and Christian tradition is always a site of contention. The Kingdom of Kingdom undergoes significant internal transformations as it attempts to mitigate and slowly lose its grip on the captive trade, especially in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

A Wolf's Conversion

The Kingdom of Kongo is the center of discourse for most of the region but it is important to remember Kongo is merely just one of many kingdoms within the Central African region and Christianity always had its limits. King Kasanje ka Kinguri of neighboring Kingdom of Kasanje depicts an excellent instance of conversion gone completely awry. According to Giovanni Cavazzi, a Capuchin missionary who lived in Congo and Angola from 1654 to 1677, his accounts of a false conversion more properly fits the descriptions of how Central African peoples fiercely protected to their own traditions and rejected the beliefs of the Portuguese.

Kasanje Ka Kinguri, King of the Kingdom of Kasanje, rose to the throne from humble beginnings. He and his father worked with unclean animals after the

[82] Michael A. Gomez, *Exchanging Our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South*, p. 143-144,
[83] Jan Vansina, *Kingdoms of the Savanna*, pp. 270

Imbangala captured them as prisoners of war. Thereafter, Kinguri adopts the practices of the Imbangala and rises within their military ranks. Cavazzi describes his growing status:

> With increasing years he did not fail to increase in evil, and show it, and was taken from the care of the flocks and enrolled among the Giaga soldiers; it is not possible to describe the barbarous and inhuman acts this new soldier is said to have committed, it is enough to know that they were so many and of such a kind that he distinguished himself, and for them was not only made head of a troupe of assassins and thieves, but given the dignity and office of a Colambolo, meaning Sergeant General, an office which among the Giaga people is only given to belligerent, inhuman and cruel soldiers who always go in the vanguard and are the first to treat enemies barbarously.[84]

Cavazzi, unlike most missionaries in the Bakongo region, spent significant time amongst a variety of Kongo courts including Matamba and Ndongo and was very well informed of other kingdoms operating in the region having learned Ki-Kongo and other native languages. Cavazzi's writes heavily about the rites and customs of the Kingdoms of Matamba and Kasanje, heavily populated by the Imbangala during his time there. Kinguri's tale is unique not because he is perceived as a savage king, which is a typical stereotype of the era, but because of how he left the faith and returned defiantly back towards his beliefs. In Cavazzi's depiction of Kinguri, he describes his stark savagery as well as the deep customs that supersede Christianity amongst the Imbangala:

---

[84] Giovanni Antonio Cavazzi and Fortunato Alamandini, *Istorica Descrizione de' tre' regni Congo, Matamba et Angola: sitvati nell'Etiopia inferiore occidentale e delle missioni apostoliche esercitateui da religiosi Capuccini*. (Bologna: Giacomo Monti, 1687). I used the "Araldi manuscript" copy from the Italian family holding the original manuscript: Giovanni A. Cavazzi, "Missione Evangelica nel Regno de Congo," MS 1668, p. 2-10. Translated by John Thornton and published online at http://www.bu.edu/afam/faculty/john-thornton/cavazzi-missione-evangelica-2/book-3-chapter-1/

> For the first example, I present you Cassange sitting in the public square in his tribunal as sentencing judge, and five people were presented to him, whose trial consisted of stroking their persons a great deal, and because they were very fat they were deemed worthy to die; the iniquitous judge looked at them with threatening eyes, and to satisfy his appetite and desire to feed off their flesh, whose effects he wished to observe, he sentenced them to death without trial and the sentence was executed at once with such speed that their heads were cut off, and having seen the execution of the sentence awarded by the ruling official…[85]

The Imbangala (erroneously also known as the Jaga)[86], were a warfare driven society that possessed a commercial relationship with the Portuguese. The existence and origins of the Imbangala were highly debatable at one time. Joseph Miller, in early arguments, suggested that the Imbangala do not possess a consistent chronology in the historical record and that their stories of carnal savagery were developed as a mythical archetype to further the Portuguese's racialized depiction of African savagery at the time. However, Anne Hilton's recasting of the Imbangala does suggest that the Imbangala, while obscure, did make an impact on the region and at one time invaded other neighboring kingdoms including Kongo.[87] The Imbangala origins possibly derive from lineage fission from the Lunda people and they appear in the Portuguese record as early as 1563.[88] The Imbangala rise to infamy after the publishing of Andrew Battell's *Strange Adventures* where he recounted their loosely organized yet savage rituals including cannibalism. Battell's accounts were heavily exaggerated and primarily

[85] Cavazzi, *Istorica Descrizione.*
[86] Joseph Miller, *Kings and Kinsmen, Early Mbundu States in Angola*, pp. 47.
[87] Anne Hilton, "The Jaga Reconsidered," *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (1981), p. 191
[88] John K. Thornton, "Origin Traditions and History in Central Africa," pg. 37; See also Jan Vansina, "The Foundation of the Kingdom of Kasanje," *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 4, No. 3 (1963), pp. 357-358

viewed as fiction. Beyond the fantasy and fiction of Battell's story, his adventures provide insight towards a history of geographical discovery and illustrate the daily life of a Central African group that possessed intense militaristic traditions.[89]

The Imbangala were known as a mercenary society beyond the allegations of cannibalism. The Imbangala worked very often, and at times, very well with the Portuguese in supplying captives from the internal region and though loosely had their own structural politics. The Imbangala mercenaries worked with the Portuguese and probably did so because they themselves did not want to be consumed by the captive trade. In fact, Kinguri's capture as a prisoner of war suggests that the Imbangala may not have "eaten" or killed people and probably more so repurposed, used, or sold persons as prisoners of war.

Kinguri was fiercely resistant to conversion and priests did a great deal to convert him. Cavazzi captures Kinguri's malicious nature in great detail. "The Father felt great pain seeing the obstinacy of this barbarian, and his perseverance in their diabolical low, and did not fail to send humble prayers to divine Mercy for the conversion of this barbarian accompanying his prayers with the mortifications of fasting and discipline; but all his labour was in vain because he always showed hardness and obstinacy…" Yet, Kinguri decided to convert to the Catholicism after much badgering by the priests: "finally seeing himself continually pursued with exhortations not only from the priest but from the Ambassador too he determined to gratify them both by becoming a Christian;

[89] Andrew Battell, *The Strange Adventures of Andrew Battell of Leigh, in Angola and the Adjoining Regions,* pp. 14-70.

the joy of the Father and Ambassador cannot be believed, for they believed his resolution to be a certainty."

The priests were extremely skeptical of his latent interest, but succumbed to attempting a conversion of Kinguri. "Kinguri was trained in matters of the faith and priests believe his conversion to be genuine, baptized him in the year MDCLVII (1657) on the ninth day of July with the name of D. Pasquale and the Father was very joyous at this good success because he had gained this soul for God, and taken it from the power of the devil." With great reception, the Church makes great notice of Kinguri's conversion and sends letters of his great promise**.**

However, unforeseen by the church, Kinguri stiffly reverts back to his traditions, the very day after his baptism, and a "wolf's conversion" is described: "The new Christian made great promises, but without putting them into practice, because it was a wolf's conversion, false and not true, as you shall hear… " Upon review of his religious of his tact, priests "visited him the day after he was baptised, and found him at table eating a human hand, and seeing how he was already betraying his obligations rebuked him for the sin he had committed, and he boldly answered that he had only been baptised to please the Father and the Ambassador, and that he was not going to abandon the ancient custom of his ancestors, and he has confirmed the same several times in the presence of many people."

Kinguri's false intentions for conversion reflect a rare occasion where we see a Central African king making a deliberate choice to convert in name but not in truth. Bakongo kings motives to convert are varied and it evident that kings throughout the region grappled with more traditional power politics as they sought to establish

relationship with the Portuguese rather than Christianity itself. In the case of Kinguri, he was not compelled by the faith to convert, but, to appease trade ambassadors, and to an extent protect a region that was being crippled by the advancement of the captive trade. Kinguri, King of Kasanje, and leader of the Imbangala mercenaries attempted to protect his own political interests that of which were inherently bound by traditional rites and customs.

Kinguri reaction or "wolf's conversion" occurs the day after his baptism where he is found still eating the hands of his victims and making clear to the Portuguese that he is not a Catholic and neither were his people.

> The Father remained to work uselessly with Cassange until the year 1658 for the salvation of souls but with little fruit because of their hardness and obstinacy…The Giaga was happier because of the departure of the Father…and before changing his situation and making a new house, to make a sacrifice, these two obligations were united and he had to satisfy both according to the Giaga fashion; but not according to the Christian law which he had taken on but rejected and returned to his former observances, and to fulfill these he prepared 184 men and women to offer not to blessed God in some pious work like a Christian, but like a rebel to give their souls to the devil, and their bodies to his Father and Lord Calunga Cassange; the barbarian gave orders that the place of sacrifice should be prepared according to their custom, and to show the zeal he felt in the observance of the diabolical laws, he ordered instant diligence…[90]

On the day of the exhibition, "The signal was given, military music was played not sadly and sorrowfully but with joy and jubilation as if they were going to a carnival and everyone was making merry" as they prepared for public human sacrifice, an alleged tradition amongst the Imbangala. Typically, as evidenced here, Imbangala sacrificed prisoners of war. In this display, among the victims was "a prisoner of war, with his two

[90] Cavazzi, *Istorica Descrizione.*

small children, who was to lead them, and he was gorgeously dressed as so were his sons," were properly prepared for ritual. "They were accompanied by various military musical instruments, and went to the destined place and as comforters the cruel ministers showed them the cutting swords, knives and daggers." As missionaries observed in horror, Kinguri then raised his "cutting sword" and beheaded his victim "so that in an instant he lost body and soul." Kinguri's ministers assisted in the execution of the two remaining and "one of the children was killed by a blow" and "when the other saw his Father and brother dead he threw himself on their dead bodies," and that child was beheaded as well. The depictions of heathenism often ascribed to traditional African customs provided evidence for Europeans to proclaim African "fetishes" as violent and satanic. However, this chapter only scratches the surface of the violent and unholy acts caused by Europeans on the Central African region. Christianity and The Portuguese too were violent in disrupting precolonial customs, governance, and religion. Proclaiming non-western spiritual practices as idolatry, instigating constant conflict amongst the Mwissikongo elite, and forcibly attempting and often times failing to convert people away from traditional ways of knowing were also violent interactions of the part of the Portuguese.

Therefore, the advancement of Catholicism had various and adverse reactions. Kinguri's case was an instance of where a "wolf's conversion" or fake conversion and reversion to traditional customs was used to affirm his political authority and that superseded his desire for a new faith. His swift and taunting performance to denounce the Christian faith through human sacrifice was symbolic of how Central African kings maintained customs and ritual throughout the Portuguese occupation.

The foundation of the Kingdom of Kasanje, like many other sub groups in the Central African region, was generally steeped in the classic clichés[91] of fratricide, polygamy, and witchcraft found similar to Bakongo. The Kingdom of Kasanje and the Imbangala's illustrate a case in point of where the Portuguese continued to have a functioning slave raiding relationship with a Bakongo kingdom without successful conversion. The Kingdom of Kongo underwent significant political transformations and was eventually overthrown in the Imbangala Invasions of the 1560s. The Kongo re-conquer the group through the suppression of another Imbangala the invasion of 1568.[92] The Mani Kongo received help from the Portuguese and later trade that developed around Mbanza Kongo and its extended areas.

In the early decades of the seventeenth century, the expansion of Portuguese captive trade networks deeper in to the interior of Central Africa and out to the Atlantic signal the slow decline of the Kingdom of Kongo and its neighboring kingdoms. By the middle of the seventeenth century, internal conflicts with the Ndongo and Nsudi peoples combined with the Portuguese's weakening political position amongst other rising European powers and demand for captives in the Atlantic brought the Kingdom of Kongo into deep civil war. The Dutch occupied Luanda for a short period in the 1640s but quickly loss their footing in the region. By the Battle of Ambwila in 1667, the Kingdom of Kongo and its neighbors further

[91] Joseph C. Miller, *The African Past Speaks: Essays on Oral Tradition and History, ed. Joseph C. Miller*, p. 27, 31.
[92] Filippo Pigafetta, "The Jaga Invasions," In M. D. D. Newitt, ed., *The Portuguese in West Africa, 1415-1670: A Documentary*, p. 162-165.

south in Ngola dissolve into warfare and prisoners of war were subjected to the Transatlantic trade to the Americas.

Cosmology, Nganga, and Nkisi

As the tales of kings like Afonso and Kinguri demonstrate, whether one converts for a day or a lifetime, Bakongo peoples inherently rely on traditional politics and customary forms of authority. Kongo religion fell into three distinct but related categories: ancestor cults, magic, and witchcraft. Kongolese, however, distinguish chiefs from witches as witches were identified by their destructive or malevolent use of power. However, Chiefs and prophets acquire their power from the other worlds whereas witches and magicians are associated with commercial and anarchic social structure, which serves private interests at the expense of the public.[93] Cosmology and custom still operated in the region and the variety of cults and rituals practiced amongst the Bakongo are many, but a major center of religious life was the nganga specialist and witchcraft idioms.

In Bakongo cosmology, every human is a free individual, doer/specialist whose "life is [in a] continuous process of transformation.[94] Kongo cosmology forwards that a human is in a continuous cycle between the four stages of balance between vertical and horizontal spiritual forces attempting to accumulate as much spiritual, moral, intellectual, or genetic potentialities."[95] The horizontal forces were the key to opening and closing

[93] Ibid. p. 21, 26-28
[94] Kimbwandènde Kia Bunseki Fu-Kiau, *African Cosmology of the Bântu-Kôngo: Tying the Spiritual Knot*, p. 35-36
[95] Ibid. p. 34.

the night worlds. The vertical social and terrestrial forces were more volatile and were used for balance in community and religious relations. The Bakongo possessed a deep spirituality and positioned themselves cosmologically across space and time. The Bakongo used the natural landscape of the region to embody their universe. Fu Kiau states, "The N'kongo thought of the earth as a mountain over a body of water which is the land of the dead, called Mpemba. In Mpemba the sun rises and sets just as it does in the land of the living. Between these two parts, the lands of the dead and the living, the water is both a passage and a great barrier."[96] The barrier or entryway into the other world is called Kalunga, which is actually a body of water or an ocean. Kalunga is a barrier and a waterway in which the dead pass from the otherworld. As expressed through the symbol of intersecting lines, the *dikenga dia Kongo*, or the Bakongo cosmogram captures four moments in a man's life that corresponds to their cosmological life cycle. The moments: Musoni (The sun of the 'go[-]order to all beginnings'), Kala (the sun of all births), Tukula (the sun of maturity, leadership, and creativity), and Luvemba (the sun of the last and greatest change, death) all correspond with the rising and setting the solar cycle (see figure 1.2).[97]

[96] Fu Kiau Bunseki. "Man In His World." In John M. Janzen and Wyatt MacGaffey, *An Anthology of Kongo Religion: Primary Texts from Lower Zaïre*, p. 34.
[97] Fu Kiau, p. 136

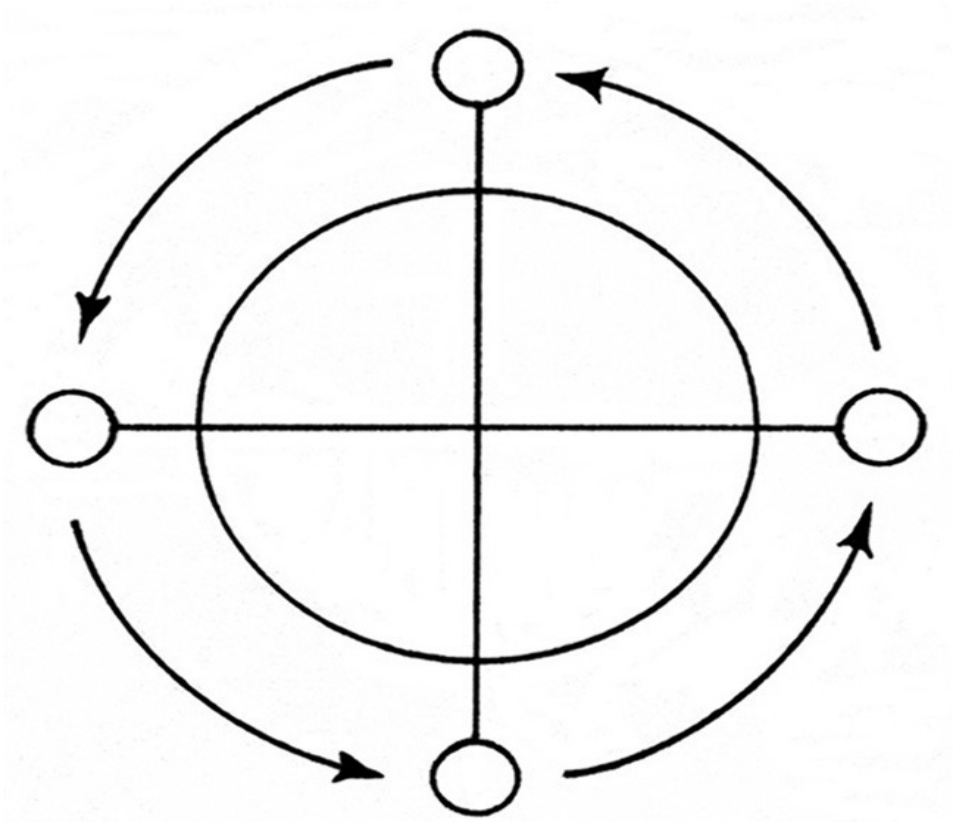


Figure 1.2 *dikenga dia kongo* (Bakongo cosmogram), Christopher Fennel, 2007

A person in Bakongo society is inextricably connected to their community (kanda) and to the cosmos. Fu Kiau states that “nothing in the daily life of Kôngo society is outside of its cosmological practices.”[98] In understanding this, it is evident that the Bakongo peoples, including those inhabiting the Kingdom of Kongo, possessed deeper, sustaining theological forms that undergird their motivations to either pursue or reject Christendom. In Bakongo cosmology, Bakongo conceptions of resurrection were similar to Christianity but indigenous. Death occurred when the soul (*moy*o) took a new form, if not, it became restless and dangerous. If the dead or buried were disturbed they could remain and haunt among the living in form of the witch, *ndoki* (pl. *kindoki*).

In earlier sixteenth century contact, Christianity was associated with the *mbumba* cult and was considered witchcraft, *kindoki*. The *mbumba* dimension was associated with fertility and health. The *nkadi mpemba* dimension was associated with social and cultural relationships. Practitioners in the form of magicians, diviners, and chiefs mediate communication with the ancestors and the spirits through ndoki and are valued as possessing a culturally scientific position in society. *Ndoki* was misconceptualized as a sphere as the devil, the dead, and a devouring space. Other terms like, *Nzambi* the omniscient supreme god in a certain contexts, is another misinterpreted word that often detracts from proper Bakongo understanding.

The *Nzambi Mpungu* was interpreted by the Portuguese to mean God but more appropriately identifies the spiritual authority of Bakongo kings, some taking the title as their name. The *nkadi mpemba* dimension was associated with grave cults and the otherworld and the Bakongo believed that Christ was a powerful chief and associated

[98] Fu Kiau, p. 38

Christian cults with the grave. “The churches came to be called nzo a nkisi, house of the fetish or graves.”[99] The dimension of the *nkadi mpemba* and the sky spirits together were associated with the powers of destruction, protection, and manipulative powers of the human world. The kitome chiefs possessed major control over chiefdoms and served as religious centers. It was not uncommon for kitome to align themselves with mbumba or nkadi mpemba cults to apply distinction to their chiefdoms. Anthropologically, the Bakongo cosmology is at the epicenter for understanding Kongo perceptions of reality, and its “economic, political, and religious system.”[100] The resilience of Bakongo religious expression lies in its “continual recurrence of similar forms” despite the prevalence of a physical hierarchy or standardized theology i.e. a religious pantheon.[101]

The nganga (priest or specialist) was a major interlocutor between the Bakongo people and the otherworld and worked against individual ills that could plague society such as greed, jealousy, and harmful forms of witchcraft. The Bakongo peoples equated and addressed individual disputes and maladies as the same, therefore, ngangas appeared all over the region in a multiplicity of services for their clients. The nganga varied in specialty and type but performed major rites in Bakongo society. The nganga handled the dead, healed the ill, and maintained the social order amongst the Bakongo. The nganga of the *mbumba* dimension were both male and female and sought healing in the natural world. The nganga of *mbumba* was associated with the pure and altruistic and those nganga were either possessed or perceived as incarnations of the *mbumba*.

[99] Hilton, p. 95.
[100] Wyatt MacGaffey, *Religion and Society in Central Africa: the Bakongo of Lower Zaire*, p. 63.
[101] Ibid. p. 249

However, Nganga of the *nkadi mpemba* were exclusively male and were used to settle conflicts in and between lineages. The *nkadi mpemba* was associated with magic, reasoning and understanding. They were also used to seek out evil and those who practiced *loka*, cursing or bewitching practices. Nganga for each category likewise were assigned and performed different functions in Bakongo society. There were nganga priests who provided healing and protective nkisi and healing medicines for certain ailments. In addition to a plethora of other specialties, their were nganga who were used to boost morale in battle (*nganga mpungu*), to seek out witches (*nganga ngombe*), manipulate the natural world (*nganga nsambi* and *nzazi*), to protect and ensure prosperity.

Local deities in the Bakongo were believed to be spiritual embody figures and objects considered *nkisi (*pl. *minkisI*). *Nkisi* were the "local habitations and embodiments of personalities from the land of the dead, through which power of such spirits are made available to the living."[102] These power objects were created and utilized by the nganga to address societal ills and concerns and were 'activated' in a number of ways including burial, knocking and, later, driving nails into wooden figure statues or objects. Caltanissetta describes how a woman nganga "called *nganga zagi*, that is to say, priestess of the devil having power over thunder and lightening…was cursing her enemy, invoking strikes of lightening upon him...[as] she knocked the idols together, one against the other"[103] as she activated her *nkisi*. The nail driven *nkisi nkondi* statues that pervade the popular art culture of Central Africa are a later iteration of activation

[102] Wyatt MacGaffey, "Complexity, Astonishment and Power: The Visual Vocabulary of Kongo Minkisi," *Journal of Southern African Studies 14* (January 1988), pp. 190
[103] Luca de Caltanissetta and Francois Bontinck trans., *Diarie Congolais, (1690-1701),* pp. 95

processes within the region. Essentially, *nkisi* figures, packets, and relics are windows and provide insight into the otherworlds, and furthermore, how the Bakongo peoples tried to mitigate and balance their own existence through them.

Kongolese nganga invoked simbi spirits, spirits related to the ancestors and natural elements such as water, fire, and earth, into an *nkisi* for a client's specific need. *Nkisi* were also used for the protection, healing, and spiritual conjuration of the individual who wears or observes it. The concoctions created by the *nganga* to remedy against harm were numerous and its containments could include any number of things such as roots, bones and/or teeth of animals or human ancestors, "grave-dirt, kaolin…or relic of an ancestor."[104] Medicinal *nkisi* packets can be made from natural elements such as animal skins, minerals, and shells for healing. *Minkisi* can also materialize as a shrine at "fixed places," as individually applied amulets, in "the bodies of the priest and his client," wooden figures, packets containing medicinal ingredients, or pottery vessels. Most importantly, as MacGaffey explains, "most of them are in some degree portable."[105] The Kongolese *nkisi* is a reflection of spiritual and human interaction in Kongo life. Simply stated, the prevalence of *nkisi* in all forms can only be understood by first recognizing the spirit that one would like attached to it, the activation of the *nkisi* by an *nganga*, or the faith in the *nkisi* by the client who wears it.

The powers of the nkisi figures straddle the political, physical, and the spiritual realm. They also reflect human connections with nature, and therefore, *nkisi* itself, whether packet, figure, or in vessel form reflected Bakongo's relationship man, earth,

[104] Wyatt MacGaffey, "Complexity, Astonishment and Power: The Visual Vocabulary of Kongo Minkisi," *Journal of Southern African Studies 14* (January 1988), p. 192.
[105] Wyatt MacGaffey, p.190

and one another through art, spirit, and ceremony. The emergences of nkisi begin, first, with the emergence of chiefdoms and the need for social security around 500 A.D. according to Vansina. He states:

> The big men needed wealth to attract followers and skill in its management…their followers attributed their success to supposed links with occult powers, especially to charms (*nkisi*), or to a pact with nature spirits (*nkira).* Moreover, big men were seen as a special type of wizard. Houses congregated in villages for security purposes, hence their defensive village charms, which were the main collective institution at this level. When a village was founded, its headman erected this charm with the collaboration of the heads of all the Houses that planned to settle with him there.[106]

Nkisi were at the center of state formations in the kingdom and varied in nature and form. MacGaffey explains that "the principal classes of *minkisi* were those that healed and those, called 'blood *nkisi*' or *nkondi*, that hunted down and punished witches, thieves, and adulterers, treaty-breakers and other wrongdoers."[107] The object's production corresponds to a political and social hierarchy as well to an appropriation of space for the spirits to inhabit. The significance of the object's spiritual relationship to its stature amongst people in the society explains their prevalence in the region and was used as centers of economic and spiritual exchange. It also demonstrates how witchcraft and the constructions of spiritual objects with were the crux of Bakongo customs and political thought. As such pivotal items in Kongo life, *nkisi* thus create their value within the African spiritual context as being place-markers of authority or law, healing, and social cohesion.

---

[106] Vansina, *Paths in the Rainforests*, p. 147
[107] Wyatt MacGaffey, "Aesthetics and Politics of Violence in Central Africa," *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 13 (June 2000), p. 64

Kimpa Vita and the Concept of Intention

Bakongo customs syncretized with Christianity as the Kingdom of Kongo declined in the 1650s. Yet, even when Bakongo peoples outwardly adapted the religion, Bakongo peoples constantly sought to negotiate the politics of its tenets and understand how the religion could agree with traditional cosmology and customs. Religious leader Beatriz Kimpa Vita Beatriz of the Kongo led a religious revolution against the Capuchin order of the Catholic Church to challenge their authority. Kimpa Vita was born into the elite class of Bakongo nobility in 1684, and while she was notably a professed convert, her history and the development of the Antonian Movement offer much insight in to how Bakongo peoples attempted to negotiate their customs and ideology with Christian principles and met with deadly consequences.

According to record, Vita demonstrated early natural gifts and had visions. Before her baptism she first was first initiated as an *nganga marinda*, a diviner of dreams and social relations, which allowed her access to spiritual power with the otherworld. She was reared in Bakongo custom in her adolescent, demonstrating that Bakongo traditional life was still fomenting alongside Christianity in the region. She was also initiated into her local Kimpasi (meaning suffering) society. The organization addressed and organized communities around social and individual problems.[108] After a near death illness and resurrection, Kimpa Vita, or the Kongolese Saint Anthony, became the self-proclaimed incarnate saint.

[108] John K. Thornton, *The Kongolese Saint Anthony: Dona Beatriz Kimpa Vita and the Antonian Movement, 1684-1706,* p. 55-58.

After her rebirth and conversion to Christianity, Vita markedly recast Christian motifs, and even the Bakongo topography, locating Bethlehem in Mbanza Kongo, within traditional Bakongo theology. God revealed visions to her through nature and ceremony and she would come to embody the Catholic Saint Anthony.[109] In her own visions of the Catholic faith she states, "There are black Kongolese up in Heaven...But...they are not black in color nor white, because in Heaven no one has color"[110] The idea of a colorless heaven already pre-existed in Bakongo understandings of the afterlife where spirits dwell parallel to the living in a gray-white likeness. As a consequence of her visions and 'false' embodiment of the faith, the Catholic Church immediately dismissed her claims o sainthood and her acknowledgment of the lack of Black saints within the Catholic sainthood pantheon disturbing the administration of the Capuchin order.

The Capuchins, like many other Catholic orders operating in the region, were absorbed in European notions of African spirituality as witchcraft. The European witch craze overtook Europe, guided by the established ideas of *maleficium*. As described "*Maleficium* is the art of doing ill to others by the power of the devil."[111] European ideas and representations of witchcraft were superimposed onto African religious practices. European witchcraft was categorized in its many manifestations with principal texts such as the *Malleus Malificarum,* the Bible, and other texts and guided the beliefs of Christian priesthoods, like the Capuchins and

[109] Thornton, *Kongolese Saint Anthony*, p. 114
[110] Thornton, *Kongolese Saint Anthony*, p. 121
[111] Manuel S. J Álvares, "*Maleficium* And Its Forms," In M. D. D. Newitt, ed., *The Portuguese in West Africa, 1415-1670: A Documentary History*, p. 175; See also Translated with Introductions, Bibliography, and Notes by Montague Summers, *The Malleus Maleficarum of Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger*, p. 41-65.

the Jesuits that came to convert. Witchcraft can occur through cause of physical harm or falling ill as a result of spiritual causation, potions, spirit-possession, working with evil spirits and a host of other ways.

Usually, European witchcraft beliefs were conflated with devil worship and antichristian practices. Missionaries recorded their observations of conversion and their progress in the region and European characterizations of African religious life were usually racially and sexually characterized as primitive fetishes and as a form of scapegoating Bakongo rituals for curiosity and horror.[112] Europeans targeted and accused persons, especially women, for commiserating nocturnally with the devil and/or practicing non-Christian rituals or naturopathy.[113] The ways in which supernatural harm is done is numerous but usually involved are plenty could involve sexual impotence, curing ills, poisoning.[114]

During the late sixteenth century, in establishing religious claims for both old and new world spiritual traditions, Kongo Catholicism introduced a "new set of symbols to express traditional Central African beliefs"[115] syncretize Christian iconography with preexisting Bakongo cosmological forms. Central Africans had contact with the precepts of Christianity possessed the underlying workings of their own predated theology. Witchcraft accusations and fetishized European understandings of witchcraft were abound throughout the region and were a

[112] Robert W. Thurston, *The Witch Hunts: A History of the Witch Persecutions in Europe and North America*, p. 14.
[113] Bengt Ankarloo and Gustav Henningsen, eds., *Early Modern European Witchcraft: Centres and Peripheries*, p.10.
[114] Brian P. Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, p. 51-61.
[115] Linda M Heywood, ed., *Central Africans and Cultural Transformations in the American Diaspora*, p. 157.

common feature of Bakongo daily life. Surely, Kimpa Vita grew up in a well developed and constantly transforming world of spiritual belief that was well equipped with witchcraft. But her early initiation and training as an *nganga* were usually overcasted by her own affirmed beliefs in Christianity but within her story, like those of the Kongo kings, are the Bakongo theological underpinnings that work alongside the politics and religious hermeneutics of the changing region.

Vita reshaped Catholicism to become more familiar Bakongo cosmology. She "revealed truer versions of the Ave Maria and Salve Regina," major components of the Catholic catechist that use the term *nzambi mpungu* to provide mercy and aid. She further upset the church with her growing Antonian Movement by convincing her audience to reject the salt baptism and burn relics, including the cross, as it did not prove true devotion. In her version of the she states, "Salve you say and you do not know why. Salve you recite and you do not know why. Salve you beat and you do not know why. God wants the intention; it is the intention that God takes. Baptism serves nothing, it is the intention that God takes. Confession serves nothing, it is the intention that God takes. Prayer serves nothing, it is the intention that God wants."[116] The performance of Christianity through sacred rites did not *mean* anything inasmuch as the intention behind it. This same notion of intention underlines the structure of Bakongo witchcraft motifs. Witchcraft accusations were caused by the actions and mal-intent of others. Amongst the Bakongo "intention is critical to determining whether the use of kindoki is positive or

[116] Ibid. P. 214

negative, and hence to be considered helpful or evil" for the community.[117]

Early on Bakongo did perceive Christianity as it own forms of witchcraft. In 1697, Caltanissetta observes "At some point some men and women told my interpreter that my mission was evil because I fashion myself to be an enemy of the 'feticheurs' and burned their idols; they added that they were unable to abandon the practices of their country…. they have originally prayed to god for the healing of the sick [and] have not obtained [it], they turned to the 'feticheurs' in order to get healing from the devil, [and] honored these idols."[118] After all, the immediate call to burn tradition relics and abandon was ineffective and an offense to populations of people. The Bakongo peoples read and understood the intention and failures of Catholicism as a cause for their need to rely on Bakongo traditions and customs that endured throughout the period.

Intention, from the Latin word intentio meaning concept, is the power of minds to be about, to represent, or to stand for: things, properties, and states of affairs. Franz Brentano argues, "Every mental phenomenon includes something as object within itself, although they do not do so in the same way. In presentation, something is presented, in judgment something is affirmed or denied, in love loved, in hate hated, in desire desired and so on."[119] Intentionality is a pervasive feature of many different mental states such as beliefs, hopes, judgments, etc. and can be applied upon non-existing objects and ideas. In this case, Bakongo cosmology centers traditional assessments of intention and apply those spirits of variable intent into objects like *nkisi* figures. Brentano states that,

[117] Thornton, *Kongolese Saint Anthony*, p. 116
[118] Luca de Caltanissetta and Francois Bontinck trans., *Diarie Congolais, (1690-1701)*, p. 68-69.
[119] Franz Brentano, *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint,* p. ix.

"What is characteristic of every mental activity is...the reference to something as an object…If I take something relative […] something larger or smaller for example, then, if the larger thing exists, the smaller one exists too. […] Something like what is true of relations of similarity and difference holds true for relations of cause and effect."[120] Intention is an underlying criterion for qualifying a person's veracity towards Antonian Christianity.

Bakongo people's authenticity of conversion was relative to the underlying intentions of how Christianity would positively or negatively affect health and communal relationships. In the case of religious ideas amongst the Bakongo, non-existent objects, intentions substantiate spiritual reality and subsistence of traditional culture. Considering Christianity's uneven impact on Kongo, its then clear that if this impact is large, as most scholars presume, then the reactions against it because of malcontent exists largely as well. Amongst the Bakongo, understanding and appreciating underlying concepts within the cosmology, especially, proved a firmer ground for spiritual accessibility to Bakongo captives in the Atlantic.

Kimpa Vita's prerequisite knowledge as an nganga, steeped in concepts of recognizing and understanding intention, informs her direct approach towards Christian authority. Amongst the Bakongo, various people might possess good or evil forms of witchcraft (*kindoki*), which corroborate intentions and beliefs and provide social cohesion. Practitioners of harmful *kindoki* were sought and reprimanded, whereas, practitioners of good *kindoki* that healed or helped individuals and societies like that of Kimpasi society were welcomed and

[120] Brentano, p. 88-89.

incorporated into the social structure. Intention as a Bakongo notion is a powerful idea that is exhibited throughout Vita's Christian rhetoric. She refrains, "it was the purposes and intentions of those using the power that counted," and Vita dissected the intentions of Catholicism, which were vicious and would bring about the decline of her and her kingdom. Vita even argued that, "the king and his Capuchin priest lacked the will and determination to restore the kingdom"[121]

The Church responded murderously, turning the followers of the Antonian Movement against Kimpa Vita and denounced her baptism leading to her demise. After proclaiming that she was possessed by the devil, the "Saint Anthony" was publicly burned on July 2, 1706 for witchcraft [122]The many wars that were a result of religious dissention that of which the Antonian movement was part, created the surplus of Bakongo peoples that would be sent out into far reaches of the Atlantic. Yet, as Thornton eloquently states and I agree, the Bakongo peoples, "had sought to end the wars that fed this trade in humans by attacking the kindoki, the relentless greed that fueled it. Greed for goods, greed to rule, greed to command…some were good Christians, but as Dona Beatriz (Kimpa Vita) had taught… 'Prayer serves no purpose, it is the intention that God takes."[123] Ultimately, as many of the religious struggles examined, the Antonian Movement, had fatal consequences for Vita and her followers.

Conclusion

Like those of Aquitemo and Kinguri, and other failed counter-movements to

[121] Thornton, *Kongolese Saint Anthony*, p. 111
[122] Ibid. p. 177
[123] Ibid. p. 214

the ethos of Catholicism and onslaught of international captive trade, The Antonian Movement (1684-1706) went into dissolution after Kimpa Vita's murder. The adverse reactions and failed conversions of kingdoms, kings, and people can be viewed within a larger framework of competition between warring kings within the deteriorating Bakongo region, the interjection of the rise of the Christianity cult, and growing demand for enslaved Africans in the Atlantic. For the conquered, and even those who rise within the Church, he or she still relied upon their traditional custom, which informed their politics of accession and their response to the manipulative, and often racialized nature and of the Catholic Church. For the people of Bakongo, the strain of Christianity forced countless to make decisions on their shifting and declining way of life. The idea of the captive trade itself becomes a form of witchcraft and Europeans become immediately identified as witches with the consumption of the trade.[124]

The Central African Kingdom of Kongo participating in the role of proselytizing and slave trade was rife with insular narratives of Central African Creole, authentic Catholic converts, and Central Africans radically resistant and are minimally affected by its ideology. The evidence for all roles existed, and more than adopting a certain attitude or resistance or acculturation, what is apparent is that Bakongo leaders and peoples are make decisions, carving and harping traditional Bakongo theology and cosmology against a changing landscape and declining era in precolonial traditions. Christianity complicated Bakongo traditional beliefs but it

[124] John Thornton, "Cannibals, Witches, and Slave Traders in the Atlantic World," *The William and Mary Quarterly,* Third Series, Vol. 60, No. 2 (Apr., 2003), pp. 273-294.

did not eliminate them. And they made these decisions to incorporate Western Christendom fully or not at all, but in all, on the terms of there encounters with it. Moreover, what Bakongo peoples did see and have were their precolonial spirituality that they used to counteract impending religious detriment.

Christianity in the Kingdom of Kongo was political strategy used by the Mwissikongo elite to navigate power in a declining state. Whether, kings and kingdoms truly adapted Christianity was not so much the goal for most missionaries or baptised kings. With each encounter examined, Bakongo and relate peoples employed strategy, motivated by traditional politics, shifting access or subjection to trade, and peoples facing immediate decline to inform their motivations for if and how they practice the emerging religion of the region. The decisions of the Bakongo to employ a religion as tool of power, or solace, whether political or personal, were foremost guided by Bakongo ways of knowing.

The Bakongo peoples were not tabula rasa upon Portuguese encounter and their politics, and hopes of maintaining precolonial order, animate with cosmology, were sustained throughout the transformations of the Christianity in the region. More importantly, through the internal politics and contestation of European religious authority, it was evident that amidst Christian ideology in the Kingdom of Kongo, Bakongo customs remained a viable and threatening antagonist to Christendom. Even in the case of Kimpa Vita, who converts to her own form of Christianity, she was able to shift her followers attitudes towards the Church because she understood and advanced, that intention, a deeply rooted Bakongo concept, and the practice of its discernment, preexisted and worked simultaneously to make Christianity valuable. Bakongo customs

and cosmology underwrote whatever Christianity existed in the region and these traditional ways of knowing forms greatly impacted and informed those who were captured and subjected to the Atlantic trade.

Chapter Two: “The Negroes or Moorish Slaves Are Not Yet Pacified But Are Roaming in Gangs in the Carolina Forests:” BaKongo Across the Waters and in the Lowcountry

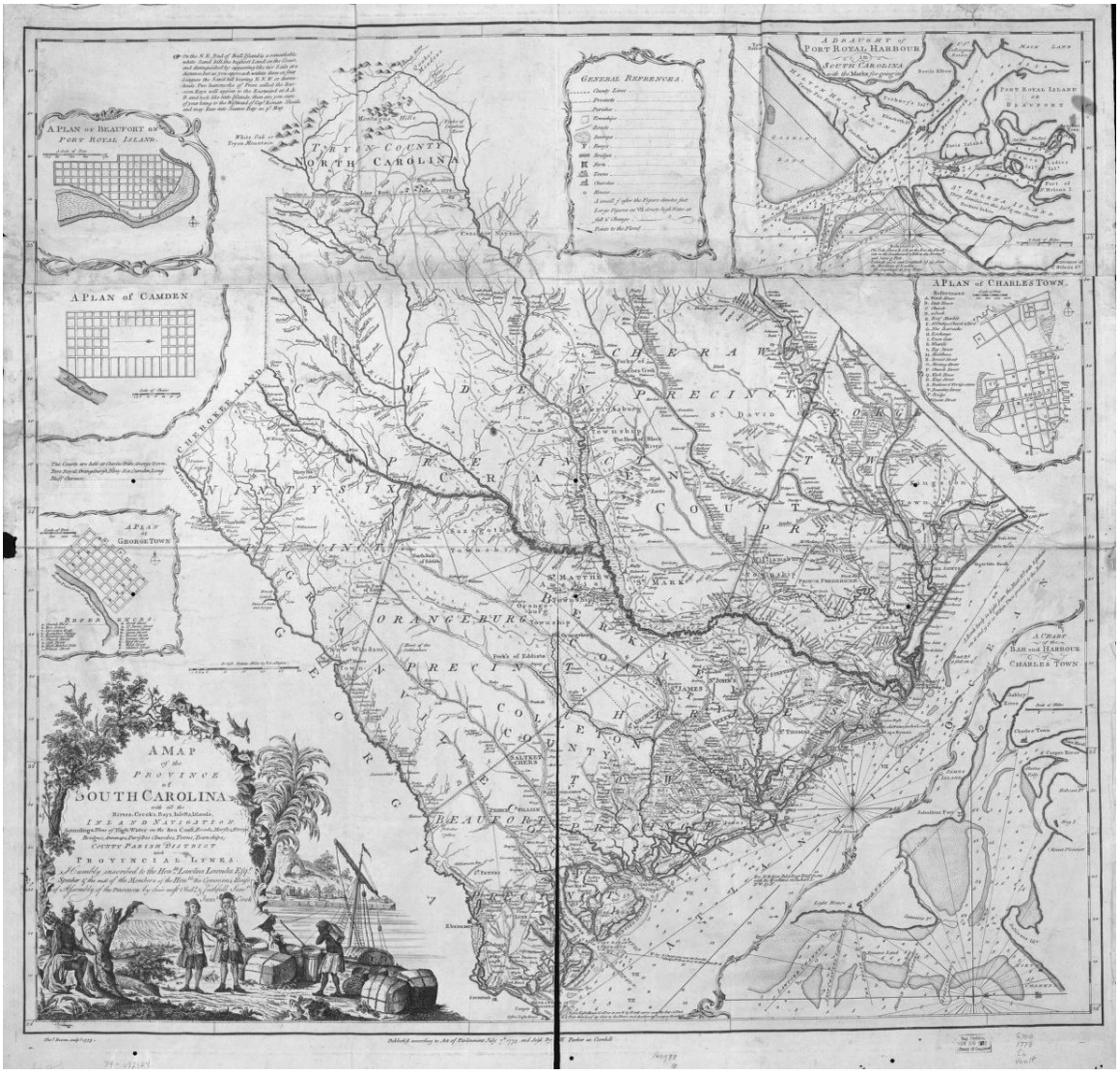


Figure 2.1 Map of South Carolina, 1773

Central African Ideology Along the Coast

As the previous chapter suggests, intra-political conflicts between unrelenting kings led them towards an uneven exchange with Portuguese Christianity and often times forced kings in to constant negotiation and obstruction to proselytization and conversion. Those converted also saw the decline Central African nation states and were subject to the Atlantic trade, adding to pre-existing fears of witchcraft endemic to the region. In the aftermath of The Antonian movement lead by Kimpa Vita, followers were enslaved and exported as prisoners of the movement, sent to North American ports to sites such as Biloxi, Mississippi and Charleston, South Carolina. John Thornton has generally furthered that the disembarked were Christianized before their arrival to the Americas, however, the religious and political upheaval that appeared throughout the two centuries prior illustrate a society, beyond the elite interfacing directly the Portuguese, more invested in sustaining customs as Christendom was forcibly expanding. For those Bakongo peoples enslaved and sent to South Carolina in the early eighteenth century, events such as the Bakongo led Stono Rebellion continued to center cultural identity and traditional custom as a form of resistance to enslavement and reflected stronger ties to ethnic, not, Christian identity.[125]

Central African traditional ways of knowing and cosmological idioms endured across the waters as they traversed the Atlantic. From the onset of the

[125] John K. Thornton, *The Kongolese Saint Anthony: Dona Beatriz Kimpa Vita and the Antonian Movement, 1684-1706* , p. 209-214.

captive trade, Central Africans often used witchcraft and spiritual idioms to understand its consumptive nature and the enslaved experience. West Central African folk ideology viewed encroaching slave trade exploitation as cannibalism and strong ideas of cannibalistic consumption were rooted in greed and selfishness. Data from several accounts of Africans from various parts of the continent forced into the slave trade all share sentiments of terror and fear they will be eaten, crushed to make oil, or ground to make gunpowder by "white cannibals" and captors. The Kongolese believed that only witches, who were most often associated with authoritative power, could release supernatural phenomenon such as greed, which could curse a person and cause them to possibly become ill. The Kikongo- and Kimbundu-speaking regions of Central Africa were especially subject to such notions of witchcraft and cannibalism and were known to seek out and address witches to prevent exploitation and malaise-whether in government, religion, family, and community life.[126]

Both Central African leaders and white traders were associated with such notions of witchcraft and many such groups—such as the Imbangala—had a "cannibalistic" reputation for their collaboration with the Portuguese slave traders. Slave trade grew as a perceived illness metastasizing along and within the West-Central African and reshaped African societies through constant warfare for the next two hundred years. On ships, this fear of being consumed by the "white cannibals" was so great that it caused many to take their own lives by jumping overboard. These accounts provide key insight into the mental and ideological

[126] John Thornton, "Cannibals, Witches, and Slave Traders in the Atlantic World," *The William and Mary Quarterly,* Third Series, Vol. 60, No. 2 (Apr., 2003), pp. 273-294.

outlook of enslaved Africans as they were taken through the middle passage to the Americas. Examining the slave trade through the lens of illness at sea, both physically and spiritually, one can see how the desire for escape, healing, and protection would be needed for the treacherous and often deadly and diseased journey.

At Sea

Along the coast and at sea, captives were likely to witness the traumas of illness and the terrorizing realities of enslavement that confirmed their suspicions of witchcraft and sorcery. On ships limited medical resources and knowledge to respond to health conditions created inhumane circumstances onboard ships that forged the conditions for new spiritual worldviews that would emerge in the Americas. While this dissertation does not examine the medical history of the slave trade, it is important to understand sites of illness and violence on ships to broaden the view of health conditions for the enslaved to develop a clear perspective on the trauma and physical pain enslaved people suffered on board slaving vessels.

Unlike other goods being traded, human cargo was the least regulated branch of commerce that subjected captives to array of unscrupulous physical assessments. Human cargo was treated differently at sea than on land and ill health was common aboard slaving vessels. Furthermore, the lack of a proper diet, food contaminants, and vermin made both captives and captors extremely

vulnerable to a variety of disease like scurvy, dysentery, small pox, and venereal diseases in the Middle Passage.[127]

Historian Sowande Mustakeem's scholarship engages the very little researched sphere of medical ailments and their affect on captives at sea in the Middle Passage.[128] In one instance, an anonymous "Negro Woman" aboard a 1791 slave ship called the Polly forced captain James D'Wolf and crew of the ship to confront the limitation of resources and isolation of maritime travel as they weighed and went through all options of the "bondwoman's rapid decline" due to a severe case of smallpox. The crew's dialogue with regard to her fate surrounded how to engage with the diseased body and the anonymous woman's deteriorating life: whether to cast her overboard, deliberating the safety and well being of the other 'cargo' and crew members, the economic loss of profit, and the politically charged premeditated concocting of her death by lowering her into the water.

The gravely ill "Negro Woman" was distinctly murdered by being lowered overboard blindfolded. Mustakeem suggest this unique ritualizing of her death by blindfolding and lowering her overboard via chair emphasizes that the anonymous "Negro Woman's" last moments before death raised varying unresolved questions of "the sequence of events and how decisions were made on-board and among the crewmen" about the fate of captive passengers. Beyond

[127] Sowandé Muskateem, "'I Never Have Such a Sickly Ship Before': Diet, Disease, and Mortality in 18th-Century Atlantic Voyages," *The Journal of African American History* Vol. 93, No. 4 (Fall 2008), p. 476-477, p. 490.
[128] Sowande M. Mustakeem, *Slavery at Sea Terror, Sex, and Sickness in the Middle Passage*, P. 5

the crewmen, slaves aboard ships were unable to tend to themselves or each other in illness. While the crewmen were consumed with worry about their own safety, the imagination and realities of the slave trade suggest that their were others on board who may have possessed the knowledge to better ease her transition as well. The unknown "Negro Woman," like many, when below deck were amongst people of all backgrounds and skillsets, including healers and spiritual practitioners. Both kings and citizenry of small and large nation states in Central and West African valued the spiritual piety of the *ngangas,* healers, and ritualists of all specialties and they too were swept into the trade. While this woman was unable to receive aid in this instance, captives elsewhere in the centuries of trade that would persist, resistance through escape and healing would be an option to assist the survivors of the trade.[129]

Kongo Diaspora in the American South

In 1619, "twenty and odd negroes" arrived in Point Comfort, Virginia by way of Luanda, Angola on the British *Treasurer*.[130] The contraband ship arrived carrying Central Africans from the Nsudi region of Kongo and Kimbundu speakers representing a small array of Central Africans populating the Virginia colony and later future colonies. The lives of most of these Africans were not well documented. But with their arrival, Central Africans begin to embed their presence in the Americas wherever they found themselves. Amongst those early

[129] Sowandé Muskateem, "'She Must Go and Shall Go Overboard': Diseased Bodies and the Spectacle of Murder at Sea," *Atlantic Studies* Vol.8, No. 3 (September 2011), p. 307-312.
[130] John K. Thornton, "The African Experience of the '20. And Odd Negroes," *The William and Mary Quarterly,* Vol. 55, No. 3 (Jul., 1998), p. 421-434.

Africans disembarked in Virginia were a few women, two of whom were named Angela and Isabel of the Kongo-Angolan region. In fact, by 1677, John Jr., a descendant of Isabel and other contemporaries of the first imports, acquired his own land in Somerset, Maryland and named his land "Angola," after his unknown ancestral homeland. One can imagine in a variety of ways how Isabel may have recounted personal stories to her family and how her memories of Central Africa impacted her grandson. However, it is evident by the name of the Eastern Shore dwelling that Central Africans, like James Sweet has illustrated in Brazil, 'recreated Africa' in the American South.

British North American mainland slavery lasted more than three hundred years and defined the fabric of American life and built enduring sociopolitical, racial, and cultural institutions. Scholars have exhaustively debated the cultural retentions of African captives in the Americas and the cultural transmission of memory to following generations. In the case of John Jr. one can see the establishment of cultural meaning making and ethnic identity early on. However, when analyzing the United States, scholars were initially much slower and more abstract in their approach studying the cultural retentions of African Americans, in contrast to elsewhere in the Americas. Raboteau suggested that, "In contrast to Haiti and Brazil, African retentions in the United States cannot be ascribed with any certainty to definite areas of West Africa…"[131] This lack of retention was allegedly due in part to the lower number of Africans imported to the U.S. in contrast to the Caribbean and South America where the highest number of

[131] Albert Raboteau, *Slave Religion: the Invisible Institution in the Antebellum South*, p. 87

enslaved Central Africans were imported to Brazil. However, scholars know now with much more certainty how and where African ethnic identity reaches the American colonies. The transit and enslavement of Africans was a traumatic experience to say the least, but, soon after the first arrival of Africans, ethnic clusters begin to populate British North America and shape the characteristics of early settler plantations.[132] In South Carolina, the fugitive, maroon, and enslaved communities that inundate the region shape culture, character, and resistance for centuries to come in the Lowcountry. Kongolese cultural transfer begins early in the British American colonial south.

The increased intensity of slave trade in Central Africans to British North America mainland begins in earnest by the mid 1660s. In the early seventeenth century the first Africans reaching America generally arrive through the Caribbean and it was not impossible that the few Africans mentioned to have accompanied Ponce de Leon's voyage to the Florida Peninsula in the early sixteenth were of Kongo origins as well.[133] Central Africans arriving into the North America mainland were captured from Portuguese ships by Dutch and British privateers throughout the seventeenth century.[134] Central Africans arriving throughout the century would become a part of the "Charter Generation," those within Ira Berlin's theory that newly disembarked Africans possessed working knowledge of European customs and language that allowed them to navigate

[132] Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, *Slavery and African Ethnicities in the Americas* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007). Hall provides the most thorough and convincing evidence for ethnic clusters throughout the Americas.
[133] Jane Landers, *Black Society in Spanish Florida*, pg. 12-18.
[134] Linda Heywood and John K. Thornton, *Central Africans, Atlantic Creoles, and the Foundation of the Americas, 1585-1660*, pg. 5-48, 250-253, 262-267.

and negotiate for accessibilities and freedom in the early Americas.[135] Even after the formal abolition of the slave trade in 1807, places like New Orleans and Florida still continued to illegally import human trade from Africa, in some estimates, up to five thousand people within the first decade of abolition.

In general, the Kongo Diaspora was widely present at the onset of transatlantic slave trade. While larger populations from the Senegambia and the Bight of Biafra were closely tied to plantation populations in Virginia, twenty Africans from Central Africa were amongst the first captives to arrive in the Chesapeake region in the early 1600s. Without question, slavery produces an innumerable amount of African captives and the ethnic origins of many Africans in the seventeenth and eighteenth century can never firmly identified. However, Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, Michael Gomez, and others have identified that African identities in Louisiana and South Carolina were shaped by Central African cultural imports. Databases and extensive datasets such a *Voyages*, *Afro-Louisiana History and Genealogy*, and *African Origins* firmly reassess and make clear that Central Africans are one of the single largest population groups within demographic records.[136]

[135] Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries Slavery in North America*. P. . In Berlin's *Many Thousands Gone*, he suggest that Africans within the "Charter Generation" of the seventeenth century were Atlantic Creoles who benefitted from extended forms social agency. Following Berlin's ideas, Heywood and Thornton's research highly suggests that these Africans were predominantly coming from West Central Africa.
[136] David Eltis, *Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database*; Gwendolyn Hall, *Afro-Louisiana History and Genealogy*; Emory University, *African Origins*.

Upon Arrival, By The Numbers

The rise of slavery and the decline of Kongo and other Central African nations advanced the slave trade over the next two hundred years creating the world's largest forcible migration of human beings across the world. Estimates from 1501 to 1866 suggest that approximately 12.5 million Africans were exported out of the continent and into the transatlantic sphere (see table 1.1).[137] Upon arrival to North America, Central Africans encountered a new terrain and reality. The acceleration of the North American slave trade and its transition away from white indentured servitude labor in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century demanded Africans by the thousands from all along the West Central African coast to labor in the new world.

According to Bancroft, Africans as a general demographic by 1721 "comprised one-seventh of New York's population, one-thirteenth of Pennsylvania's, nearly one-half of Maryland's, more than one-half of Virginia's,

[137] All qualitative data used here is drawn from the *Slave Voyages* Database (https://www.slavevoyages.org/assessment/estimates).

	Spain / Uruguay	Portugal / Brazil	Great Britain	Netherlands	U.S.A.	France	Denmark / Baltic	Totals
1501-1525	6363	7000	0	0	0	0	0	13363
1526-1550	25375	25387	0	0	0	0	0	50762
1551-1575	28167	31089	1685	0	0	66	0	61007
1576-1600	60056	90715	237	1365	0	0	0	152373
1601-1625	83496	267519	0	1829	0	0	0	352844
1626-1650	44313	201609	33695	31729	824	1827	1053	315050
1651-1675	12601	244793	122367	100526	0	7125	653	488065
1676-1700	5860	297272	272200	85847	3327	29484	25685	719675
1701-1725	0	474447	410597	73816	3277	120939	5833	1088909
1726-1750	0	536696	554042	83095	34004	259095	4793	1471725
1751-1775	4239	528693	832047	132330	84580	325918	17508	1925315
1776-1800	6415	673167	748612	40773	67443	433061	39199	2008670
1801-1825	168087	1160601	283959	2669	109545	135815	16316	1876992
1826-1850	400728	1299969	0	357	1850	68074	0	1770978
1851-1875	215824	9309	0	0	476	0	0	225609
Totals	1061524	5848266	3259441	554336	305326	1381404	111040	12521337

Table 1.1 Africans From All Regions Embarked Into the Slave Trade, 1501-1875

	Mainland North America					
	Northern U.S.	Chesapeake	Carolinas / Georgia	Gulf states	U.S.A. unspecified	Totals
1626-1650	0	100	0	0	0	100
1651-1675	1116	1212	0	0	0	2328
1676-1700	0	3802	0	0	133	3935
1701-1725	0	14584	480	319	0	15383
1726-1750	4280	34557	26412	0	852	66101
1751-1775	0	13054	17926	0	0	30980
1776-1800	0	0	3281	593	0	3874
1801-1825	0	0	30151	3379	350	33880
1826-1850	0	0	0	91	0	91
1851-1875	0	0	303	0	0	303
Totals	5396	67309	78553	4382	1335	156975

Table 1.2 Central African Captives Disembarked in the United States, 1621-1866

one-third of North Carolina's and four-sevenths of South Carolina's."[138]Then, statistics suggested that total numbers of Africans imported into North America were in the hundreds of thousands. Early imports of Central Africans into North America were intercepted cargo from Portuguese and Dutch ships that disembarked from Luanda, Loango, and other Central African sites. However, steadier patterns of increased trade began to direct themselves into Charleston as an entrepot for southern slave trade at the beginning of the eighteenth century.

In the South Carolina, Central African populations were generally maintained and more prevalent their presence here elsewhere (see Table 1.2). The early planter classes that moved their operations from Barbados to settle the new land increased demand for enslaved Africans over the next two hundred years.[139] The first ships coming directly from Africa arrive in Charleston in 1696, initiating a high demand for labor, and at certain periods of time, causing slave to outnumber slaveholders, in producing indigo at first, then rice and cotton. Early on, prominent planters such as Henry Laurens led and advanced the slave market in South Carolina. While Laurens mentioned that he did not prefer Angolan slaves because they were "short people," they were a preferred group in contrast to Igbo or other Biafran groups because they were less likely to allegedly

[138] Frederic Bancroft, *Slave Trading in the Old South*, Southern Classics, p. 2; based on statistics provided from Du Bois' *Suppression of the African Slave Trade*, p. 5
[139] Ned and Constance Sublette, *The American Slave Coast: A History of the Slave-Breeding Industry*, p. 117-131, 141-158.

"wander." Laurens managed to advertise and draw a large market of Central African slaves from that area.[140]

The Carolina-Georgia Lowcountry principle staples were rice followed by cotton and indigo. The laborious and expensive enterprise of developing rice plantations required many numbers of slaves to produce it, upwards of at least thirty people to make profit by some accounts. Therefore, planters were ambitious in importing Africans to the Lowcountry to labor on burgeoning plantations. According to Philip Morgan, "As early as 1720s, more than half of South Carolina's slaves resided on plantations with twenty or more slaves." The enslaved labor principally came from Central Africa up until the 1730s. Kongo and Angolan women in particular represented nearly one fourth of the enslaved colony. They were also present in the region after the 1740s where thereafter large numbers of peoples from Sierra Leone and the Senegambian began to populate the region. However, "Angolan negroes" gained a notorious reputation after the Stono Rebellion of the late 1730 as planters sought to shift and diversify demand for different ethnic groups.[141]

After 1740s, Central Africans were directed to South Carolina and by the mid-eighteenth century nearly a third of all voyages arriving into Charleston were from Central African points of departure. Concentrations of such

[140] Philip D. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint: Black Culture in the Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake and Lowcountry*, p. 67-68.
[141] Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, p. 35, 39

	Mainland North America, Disembarked by Ethnicities 1501-1776					
	Northern U.S.	Chesapeake	Carolinas / Georgia	Gulf states	U.S.A. unspecified	Totals
Senegambia and off-shore Atlantic	1369	28218	31607	1286	0	62480
Sierra Leone	0	3296	12019	691	0	16006
Windward Coast	0	3389	9543	0	0	12932
Gold Coast	0	13147	9724	204	0	23075
Bight of Benin	0	3141	1936	362	0	5439
Bight of Biafra	0	45120	14288	0	133	59541
West Central Africa and St. Helena	0	22026	30530	0	852	53408
South-east Africa and Indian ocean islands	765	2032	311	0	0	3108
Totals	2134	120369	109958	2543	985	235989

Table 1.3 Mainland North America, Disembarked by Ethnicities 1501-1776

populations were commiserate with those of in Brazil and the Caribbean.[142] In the latter half of the century, populations from the Senegambia and Sierra Leone grew to stronger numbers than Kongo-Angolan populations (see table 1.3). Senegambian and Sierra Leonian enslaved women combined comprised approximately sixty-four percent of slave plantation at the time of the American Revolution. The American Revolution slowed the growing rate of import in 1776, but South Carolina and Georgia remained prime entrepots where slaves could be directly imported from Africa through the Atlantic thereafter.[143]

[142] Walter Hawthorne, *From Africa to Brazil*: *Culture, Identity, and an Atlantic Slave Trade, 1600-1830*, pg. 139

[143] Brenda Stevenson, "The Question of the Slave Female Community and Culture in the American South: Methodological and Ideological Approaches," *The Journal of African American History*, Vol. 92, No. 1, Women, Slavery, and Historical Research (Winter, 2007), pg. 86.

Archaeology

The advent of the transatlantic slave trade caused dramatic transformations in Kongo society from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century. The disruption of trade, instigation with fractional wars, as described in the previous chapter with Aquitemo and others, caused diverse intragroup warfare that gave fuel the slave trade, destructing traditional life and society. The Kongo captive trade displaced and swept men, women, and children from all walks of life. Leaders, chiefs, kinsmen, farmers, craftsmen, priests, and healers were swept into the Atlantic slave trade by cycles of war and at their arrival in the Americas. As a consequence, the Kongo Diaspora developed a strong material culture reflective of their Kongolese spirituality.

The Kongo Diaspora shaped material culture in alignment with deep Central African cosmological beliefs and practices. Core structures in Bakongo spirituality revolve around a principal inventory of symbols and material compositions including the Bakongo cosmogram. The *dikenga dia Kongo* or the BaKongo cosmogram enveloped core symbolic traditions that developed and endured long before European contact. Cosmograms encompassed a variety of metaphors and meanings regarding the universe, laws of nature, the physical, spiritual, and ancestral realm, and identity of Bakongo peoples. They were typically depicted as perpendicular axes encompassed within a circle or fixed with smaller disks at the end of each axis. The horizontal line is defined as the “line of Kalunga,” a symbiotic boundary between the living and the dead. The vertical line represented spiritual manifestations that can be conjured into the

human world for assistance and protection. The intersecting lines were the simplest representation of the emblematic figure but more elaborate cosmograms were affixed innumerably in public displays and aligned solidarity within social groups and appeared on the deployment of national flags.

Healers transformed mundane spaces into spiritual centers by by the demarcating cosmograms on the grounds within spaces. Healers and priests also used constituent objects like *minkisi* and white-pigmented *bilongo* in the forms of paquets, containers, and statuette, charged with natural materials including grave dirt, animal claws, and teeth to evoke spiritual efficacy. Archaeological sites all across the American South have yielded artifacts and artistic expressions related to Kongo culture and have been considered by many to be indicative of cultural continuity. From the Chesapeake to the Gullahs to Texas, Kongolese material deposits of all iterations demonstrated signs of not only Bakongo cultural endurance, but, an early proto intra-cultural healing and social networks. Archaeologist Leland Ferguson has explored colonoware artifacts in underwater estuaries finding crosses etched in the circular based rims of bowls.[144]

Christopher Fennell, moving beyond the simple assumption that African Americans retained static and conservative cultural traditions, incorporated theories of group dynamics and individual agency to material objects within African American religious beliefs. The archaeological evidence on early North American plantations raised interesting issues concerning the process of

[144] Leland G Fergusand, *Uncommon Ground: Archaeology and Early African America, 1650-1800*, P. 63

symbolic expression and the blending of religious beliefs over time. The excavated items surveyed from the variety of plantations throughout the American South and Southeast regions fit within a larger dynamic of interaction between distinct traditions and practices derived from separate African religious groups such as the Yoruba and Fon, in addition to the Kongolese.

The appearance of BaKongo cosmograms and minkisi containers throughout illustrate three interrelated points but distinct points: first, that there exists a set of core symbols used in a broad range of expressions; second, these core symbols are expressed and fully embellished in its emblematic form in the performance of public and group rituals; lastly, with the presence of dominant and subordinate social groups, the dominant group often suppresses the religious rituals of the subordinate group. In this instance, with respect to South Carolina, the dominant BaKongo ethnic group offers archaeological evidence would reflect their dominating presence in the record.[145]

[145] Christopher Fennell, "Group Identity, Individual Creativity, and Symbolic Generation in BaKongo Diaspora," *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* Vol. 7, No. 1 (March 2003), pg. 2, 11, 13, 23.

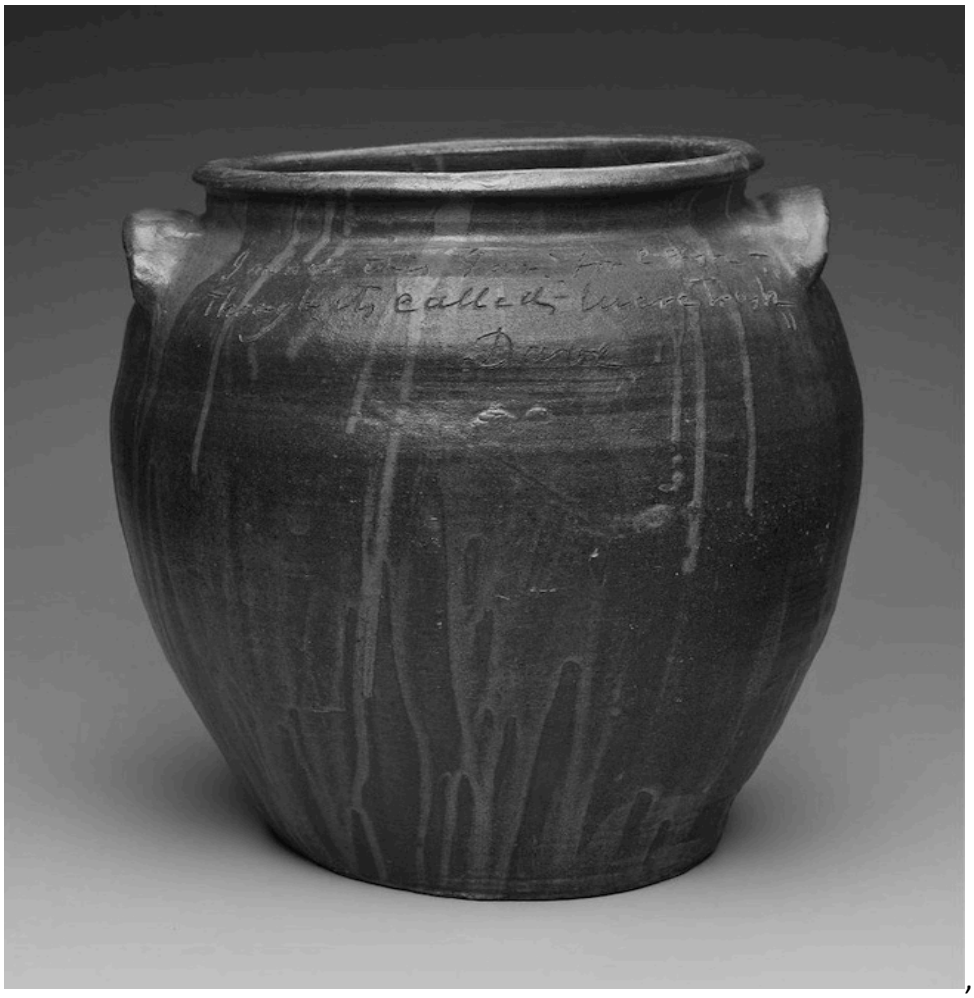


Figure 2.2 Dave the Potter colonoware, Christopher Fennell, 2007

In Edgefield, South Carolina, figural vessels called “face vessels” were collected and observed to have strong Kongo resonances. The colonoware found can be used to understand prior earthenware and ornamental practices in the area and their potential connections to other similar artifacts found in Brazil. Ceramists of African descent produced clay jars and other vessels based on Bakongo ritual wares for cooking, serving, decoration, medicine containers, and ritual purposes throughout South Carolina and Georgia. Evidence from “Dave the Potter” archaeological site suggests that enslaved people embedded cosmological meaning into material culture for daily use. Dave The Potter notably marked X’s or intersecting lines on the bottom of his vessels.[146] In the accounts of BaKongo religious beliefs, Fennell states that Kongolese adopted Christianity in a very selective manner, “translating most of the Christian concepts and icons into the BaKongo worldview.” Therefore, by understanding enduring Bakongo cosmological traditions one can gather a greater sense of appreciation of cultural flexibility and their innovativeness towards creating new social networks with shared symbolic expressions under difficult circumstances.

Elsewhere, Bakongo heritage was grounded in creating ritual spaces within confined conditions such as healing cabins and sacred spaces which have been located within early African American archaeological spaces. Levi Jordan’s plantation contains a ritual area where a variety of sacred objects have been deposited. Iron nails, shells, glass, and doll figured relative to *nkisi nkondi* have

[146] J. W. Joseph, “…All of Cross”—African potters, Marks, and Meanings in the Folk Pottery of the Edgefield District, South Carolina,” *Historical Archaeology*, Vol. 45, no. 2 (2011), pg. 134-155.

been discovered. Likewise, in Annapolis, Maryland, the James Brice House contained strong power packet *minkisi* bags containing compact clay, nails, and a stone axe as well as other dating back to the 1740s. Safe spaces were created within rooms circular cross sectional orientations as exhibited within Brice House and, again, were charged with deposited materials around the room like feathers, doll parts, polished stones, beads, pieces of red fabric, and other various item.[147] In all, artifacts excavated from various sites with Central African presence attested to the creativity, endurance, and longevity of Central African influences in the North American mainland.

Landscape and Plantation Systems in the Lowcountry

The Carolina littoral extends some five hundred miles along the coast from North Carolina's Lower down to East Florida and was one of colonial British America's primary centers of seventeenth and eighteenth-century development and trade. Lowcountry planters transformed the land and secured it for colonial occupation for rice, indigo, and rice plantations. Colonial South Carolina landscape and geography was generally divided into two regions and produce two different co-related economies, the Lowcountry and Backcountry. The commercial rice economy of the Lowcountry hosted a variety of dispersed plantations connected by riverine transportation, led by the urban center of

[147] On Levi Jordan Plantation archaeology and ethnography see Kenneth L. Brown, "Ethnographic Analogy, Archaeology, and the African Diaspora: Perspectives from a Tenant Community," *Historical Archaeology*, Vol. 38, No. 1, Transcending Boundaries, Transforming the Discipline: African Diaspora Archaeologies in the New Millenium (2004), pp. 79-89; On Brice House archaeology see Kathryn H. Deeley, Stefan F. Woehlke, Mark P. Leone and Matthew Cochran, "West Central African Spirit Practices in Annapolis, Maryland," in Susan Cooksey, eds. *Kongo Across the Waters* (Gainesville: University of Florida, 2013), pg. 240-244

Charleston. The Backcountry initially lacked access to Charleston urban and export markets but commercial investment by Charleston interests eventually established the economic infrastructure in the Backcountry and incorporated its resources towards the larger South Carolina economy.[148]

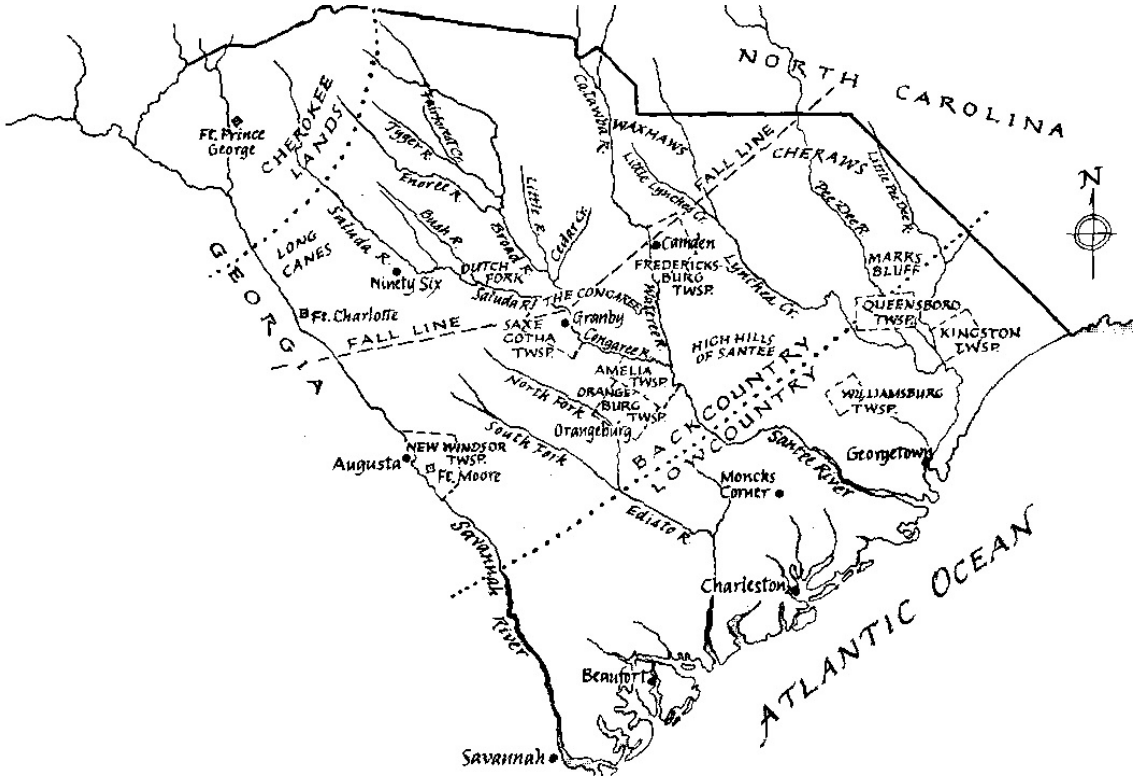


Figure 2.4 Map of South Carolina Lowcountry and Backcountry

[148] Kenneth E. Lewis, "The Metropolis and the Backcountry: The Making of the Colonial Landscape on the South Carolina Frontier," *Historical Archaeology*, Vol. 33, No. 3, Charleston in the Context of Trans-Atlantic Culture (1999), pg. 3-13.

The Lowcountry was host to an exotic variety of vegetation alongside rich swampland. Low-lying pineland forestry stretched parallel to the watery coastline that includes opens to the mouths of small rivers and streams. Francis Asbury wrote highly of the deep sands, "lofty pines, …and twinning Jessamine" that scented the air.[149] In the region, swamplands produced fertile soil that was resistant to erosion as well as thicketed woods. Lowcountry inland regions were divided into parishes. Growing seasons averaging around two hundred and seventy days (between inland and coastal days) permitted the prime rice market to thrive in the Lowcountry.[150]

Slaves cleared freshwater swamps and riverside flood plains to grow rice, the region's staple commodity. After 1700, planters began clearing and fusing swamps, bottomlands, savannas, and woodlands into large rice plantations. These settlements clustered along waterways, taking in the diversity of soil types that typically characterize areas located along a gradient landscape that drained into adjacent marshes and rivers. In an ongoing internal process of colonization, marked by the constant clearing of new land, planters deployed their slaves within these large holdings to grow provisions, saw lumber, and bring new swamplands into cultivation. [151]

[149] Elmer T. Clark et. Al., eds., *The Journal and Letters of Francis Asbury*, II (London, 1958), pp. 281; see also Fant, Jennie Holton, *The Travelers Charleston: Accounts of Charleston and Lowcountry South Carolina, 1666-1861*, pp. 63.
[150] Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, pg. 29-34
[151] Max Edelson, "Clearing Swamps, Harvesting Forests: Trees and the Making of a Plantation Landscape in the Colonial South Carolina Lowcountry," *Agricultural History*, Vol. 81, No. 3 (Summer, 2007), pg. 381-406.

Native Americans in the Lowcountry

Unfortunately, dispossession and manipulation of Native American ethnic groups was critical to the expansion of the settler colonial project in the Lowcountry. Indigenous groups native to the Lowcountry were numerous. The initial occupation of the Carolina-Florida region during the mid to late sixteenth (1562-1576) produced the first contact between groups like the Escamacu and the Edisto in the Lowcountry. In the Carolina region, internecine wars occurred between indigenous groups and Europeans that instigated and exacerbated native circumstances already occurring in the region. Similar to slave trading practices along the West-Central African coasts, Europeans motivated conflict amongst indigenous groups in the Americas to conduct slave raids and created slave labor market, an opening which in South Carolina would be later filled by Africans.[152]

Warfare and pillaging of native groups such as the Escamacu and Kussoe were the cause of several periods of native displacement and forced migration of indigenous groups out the Lowcountry. Early Scots and the Yemasee natives were forced north into the area by the Spanish occupation and emigrated into the low and backcountry in the 1680s. Most native groups were forced to sign land cessions, "legally" handing over land rights from the Atlantic to the Appalachian

[152] Gene Waddell, *Indians of the South Carolina Lowcountry, 1562-1751*, pg. 3, pg. 360 according to Waddell there are nineteen original indignenous groups native to the South Carolina Lowcountry: Witcheaugh, Hoya, Escamacu (St. Helena), Edisto, Touppa, Mayon, Stalame, Wimbee, Combahee, Kussah, Ashepoo, Bohicket, Stono, Kussoe, Kiawah, Etiwan, Wando, Sampa, and Sewee. Other groups in the area but were not indigenous to the region are the Yemasee, Shawnee, and Apalachee; For more information on early trade of indigenous peoples see Sublette, *American Slave Coast*, pg. 145-147.

Mountains to Scottish and English planters.[153] The Scots and Yamasee, at times worked together, in particular to expel the Spanish from the region, however, they too were forced inland by 1702. Unfortunately, in addition to warfare and migration brought on by white planters, diseases such as smallpox decimated native populations, some in totality. Lastly, the murder of South Carolina traders caused in part by Native American fears of enslavement started the The Yamasee War (1715-1716) and reduced already small groups to miniscule populations.[154]

Maroonage and Insurrections

Indigenous Lowcountry populations dwindled significantly in the eighteenth century, and those present in the area, had a varied relationship with the growing African demographic population. Bustling plantations in the lowcountry and overpopulation in anticipated demand for slave labor in the region created a significant population imbalance between planters and the enslaved, making enslaved Africans much more harder to manage and maintain. This coupled with the swampy wooded environment of the Lowcountry provided many opportunities for Africans to escape, and possibly find or create small maroon communities in the thick of the lowlands.

[153] Rachel N. Klein, *Unification of a Slave State: The Rise of the Planter Class in the South Carolina Backcountry, 1760-1808*, p. 10, 106.
[154] James Hart Merrell, *The Indians' New World: Catawbas and Their Neighbors from European Contact through the Era of Removal* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), p. 66-75.

In June of 1711, maroons led by the "Spanish Negro" Sebastian were sought after for running away "from their Masters &…arm'd, robbing & plundering houses & Plantations &Putting ye Inhabitants…in great fear and terror." The "felonies & abuses" committed by the runaways led whites to offer "fifty pounds" for Sebastian, dead or alive, and five pounds for his or any of his linkages whereabouts. In October of the same year, orders were given to Public Receiver Richard Berisford to pay out funds of the Public Treasury to Eliza Dutch and Sarah Perry Widd for damages suffered as a result of an encounter with Sebastian and others. Eliza and her family received thirty pounds for her relief "having her House & all her Substance burned by Bastian." Her sister Eliza received ten pounds "in consideration of the great Loss she sustained by the death of her Indian." The encounter with the Widd sisters proved deadly and regrettably, both Native Americans and Sebastian died in the incident. Nevertheless, the Public Receiver did pay out the fifty pound reward "unto the Indians who took & killed Bastian, the Spanish Negroe." Certainly, white settlers needed to quell such fugitives and the eighteenth century opened with searches for African fugitives of enslavement. Insurrections and fears of enslaved uprisings were a feature of colonial life. Revolts from the Native Americans and instances of armed resistance that Bastian exhibit kept planters in a constant state of fear.[155]

White settlers both owned indigenous slaves and used them as maroon hunters in the lowcountry. For example the Catabwa, "tho not very numerous" by

[155] Timothy James Lockley, ed., *Maroon Communities in South Carolina: A Documentary Record* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 2009), p. 8.

the mid-1750s were "very brave and warlike" and were conscripted by the English to seek out fugitive slaves and maroons because of their "superior knowledge in the woods and swamps."[156] Likewise, in 1744, Captain Richard Wright was commissioned by James Glen to approve the use of "Notchee Indians" in locating "Negroes who shelter themselves in the woods…and having procured arms, [and] comit divers disorders wch may be of evil example" to others enslaved in the area.[157] Runaways and fugitive slaves would become a distinct feature of plantation life in the South and the maroon communities that existed in the Lowcountry were hard to quell.

For the enslaved, community and familiarity with the South Carolina landscape was forged along many axes. The South Carolina slavery was brutal and arduous. Enslaved peoples worked six and seven days a week cultivating staple crops that would be traded along the eastern littoral and the Atlantic. In spite of dehumanizing conditions that slavery wrought, African peoples, especially those existing within strong ethnic clustering like the Central Africans populating the Lowcountry, were able to develop and maintain community, regardless of whether they were lying low in the swampland maroon communities or living side by side on plantations. The ethnic clustering in both maroon societies and plantation systems was indicative of enslaved Africans, in South Carolina and elsewhere, desire to either flee into maroon communities, to

[156] James Glen to the duke of Newcastle, April 14, 1748, U.K. National Archives, CO 5/389, 58. (http://www.colonialamerica.amdigital.co.uk/Documents/Images/CO_5_389_014/1 accessed on October 18, 2019).
[157] "Order to Will, King of the Notchee Indians from his Excellency," South Carolina Council Journal, July 5, 1744, U.K. National Archives, CO 5/450, p. 61 (http://www.colonialamerica.amdigital.co.uk/Documents/Images/CO_5_450_001/61 accessed on October 19, 2019)

galvanize or be associated with Insurrections, or use developing modes of spirituality and healing to create safe spaces amongst burgeoning plantation societies. Lockley states, “The demarcation of between a plantation slave and a maroon is of course, not as clear-cut as the label suggests. The former became the latter by running away and staying away; the latter could become the former by being captured. The two came from the same African and African American population in South Carolina and were familiar with each other’s lives.”[158]The lines between maroonage and running away are blurred and where escape was not an option, insurrection was a formidable alternative.

The Stono Rebellion of 1739 was among the many insurrections that occurred all throughout the colonies.[159] Competition between the English, Spanish territories led the Spanish to attract African and Native American slaves belonging to the Carolinas to populate Spanish territories in Florida with offers of freedom in 1738. On September 9, 1739, “some Angolan Negroes assembled” led by one “who was called Jemmy” as their captain held a surprise raid on a planter’s warehouse and then led a murderous plunder that rocked Stono and the Lowcountry for decades to come. There is no identifiable source of origin for how the Africans were able to organize however ethnic identity was a key marker in their resistance. The origins of the rebellion themselves are steeped in notions of maroonage and escape along ethnic lines.

[158] Lockley, *Maroon Communities*, p. 132-133
[159] Sublette, *American Slave Coast*, pg. 63, insurrections occurred in various scales thorughout the eighteenth century: Stono Rebellion of 1739, The New York Conspiracy of 1741, Gabriel’s Conspiracy of 1800

After "plundering" the houses of several planters, "Several Negroes joined…calling out Liberty, [and] marched on with Colours displayed." On his campaign, Jemmy was able to aggregate upwards of one hundred enslaved people "with two drums beating" to pursue and kill any and all white planters in their path. As the rebellion increased "every minute by new Negroes…they halted in a field, and set to dancing, singing and beating drums" in misled victory. White enslavers got control of the population eventually and the "Negroes were soon routed," mostly shot instantly or executed. In all, about forty slaves and twenty white enslavers were killed in the insurrection.[160] Thirty or more escaped further south towards Georgia before being killed. Local newspapers, so fearful of further conspiracy, did not report on the Stono insurrection at all. However, the Negro Act of 1740 implemented the following year harsh punishment and increased restrictions on enslaved peoples' behavior. Yet and still, some of the about thirty people or so those who escaped the Stono Rebellion were sited the next year and according to reports: "The Negroes or Moorish slaves are not yet pacified but are roaming in gangs in the Carolina forests."[161]

John Thornton stresses the Bakongo military background of the Stono Rebellion participants. He suggests that the Bakongo peoples that are incorporated into the general Angolan identity group were proud of their version of Catholicism and were fully realized Christians. More importantly, he notes, that during the eighteenth century, lengthy civil wars resulted in the capture and sale

[160] Anonymous sole firsthand account reproduced in its entirety in Sublette, *American Slave Coast*, pg. 180-182
[161] Mark M. Smith, ed., *Stono: Documenting and Interpreting a Southern Slave Revolt*, pg. 11

of many people and that those people may have possessed strong military knowledge. Without question that the marching, beating of drums, and "colours displayed" in the Stono Rebellion were indicative of a strong, organized group of people.[162]

More importantly, unifying under a military banner, as the "colours displayed" suggests was indicative of Bakongo peoples understandably galvanizing to not only fend off transatlantic consumption but also protecting traditional forms of daily life more akin to local municipalities that dictated life in Bakongo and were typical of the region. As Aquitemo's response has illustrated, people in mass, were willing to respond at the local level to combat and reject threats of danger from both intentional slave raiding groups like the Imbangala or threats from the ravenous Catholic church that sought to strip Central Africans of their customs. If those "Angolan Negroes" were agreeably exposed to or closely informed with military training or resistance practices, it was because they were probably imbued upon them at the local level, the *libata* itself. After all, before the rebellious were killed and suppressed, they danced and sang in a field, hoping "to draw more Negroes to them," not pray. One can imagine that, at least for a brief moment, the exhilaration of conquering enslavers was a spiritual victory, hence the congregation of dance.

The promise of freedom and the necessity to escape plantation violence were motivators for the participants of the Stono Rebellion. Territories like St. Augustine and free garrison towns like Gracia Real de Santa Teresa de Mose

[162] John Thornton, "African Dimensions of the Stono Rebellion," *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 96, No. 4 (Oct., 1991). P. 1101-1113.

(Fort Mose) constantly iterated to enslaved persons that if they reached Spanish Territories they would receive freedom and protection. However, another underlying impetus for the rebellion and escape immediately may have been unhealthy conditions that were ongoing in the area. Peter H. Wood describes but underemphasizes the role illness could have played in the timing of the rebellion. Yellow fever swept through the area during the time of the rebellion just after the Charleston community had overcome a fierce small-pox epidemic the year before. Hence, for the majority of Africans who remained on plantations, the enslaved experience sought fit to address medical, psychological, and sociopolitical needs by way of healing and spirituality.[163]

Insurrection and maroonage were amongst the many options for enslaved and feared amongst planters in the colonial south. However, as Africans continued to arrive into the American South from Central Africa and West Africa, for those who only knew of plantation slavery, they too resisted in direct and indirect ways. For the majority of Africans who remained on plantations, the enslaved experience sought fit to address its medical, psychological, and sociopolitical needs by way of healing and spirituality. As evidenced with the Stono rebellion, it was deadly to address the plantation power structure head on, and punishment was swift for those who resisted plantation life with such spectacle. Laborers worked slowly, broke tools, feigned illnesses or injury all the

[163] Peter H. Wood, *Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 through the Stono Rebellion*, ed., pg. 309-313, Wood states: "The epidemic 'destroyed many, who had got thro' the Small-pox' of the previous year and, as usual it was remarked to be 'very fatal to Strangers & Europeans especially.'"

while acclimating and learning new botanical topography. Despite the grim realities of plantation life, enslaved persons still resisted through poisoning.

Throughout the latter half of the eighteenth century, newspaper reports often times carried news of slave poisoning, escape, and related conspiracies throughout the colonies. Additionally intra-colonial trade between South Carolina and northern areas like Virginia and Maryland at times allowed enslaved to travel between plantations in different regions. In 1751, word from Boston via the *Pennsylvania Gazette* indicates that "a Negro Wench, about sixteen years old, slave to an Apothecary in this Town, was committed to Gaol for poisoning a Child of her Master's, about 11 Months old, by putting Arsenick, or Rastsbane, several times into what it drank."[164] While the enslaved woman remained unnamed in the story, her "crime" was probably informed by master's professional experience with pharmacopeia. In 1775, a fugitive slave advertisement for enslaved woman named Nanny told an interesting story. Nanny, who was "of a yellowish complexion, slender made, and is of fond dress…went off with a free negro fellow, who pretends to be a doctor…" The unnamed partner of Nanny was "guilty of stealing several horses" and fleeing. Both were subject to punishment if caught.[165]

In 1776, a runaway named Anthony was caught Amelia County, Virginia. He says that he had been a runaway "since the year 1766" and "has been in several jails in different provinces." It was unstated how or why he alleges that he has been a runaway for so long or why he managed to find himself in several

[164] *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, Feb. 19, 1751
[165] *Purdie's Virginia Gazette*, Aug. 11, 1775

jails around the area but pretended “to be very religious, also pretends to be a doctor.”[166] Arguably, fugitive slaves “pretending to be doctors” were amongst the first to covertly heal and harm with their understanding of a naturopathic cultural network that would come to be known as conjure or hoodoo. Knowledge of poisons or lethal apothecary was prohibited and exhibition of such skills allowed fugitive slaves blend in new areas. In 1766, Two “convict men,” Andrew Young, a trade weaver, and John Monroe, an apothecary ran way In Richmond, two fellows, that had trad-able skills that would allow them to at least improvise and navigate society as a fugitive.[167]

Just as maroonage was a viable form of escape navigating the land, using healing as a reason to move in between plantations was also another way Africans were able to mitigate colonial life. As further chapter will illustrate, as slave community was created on plantations, it took on distinct characteristics and features, one of which was “poisoning” or “conjuring.” Conjuring communities, fugitive slaves “pretending to be doctors,” and poisoning cases would become enigmatic feature of southern colonial life for decades to come. As Dr. Alexander Garden, a Scotish naturalist observed in 1752, “the Negro slaves here seem to be but too well acquainted with the Vegetable poisons” but was unsure as to whether they learned of such skill in Africa or elsewhere. However, in three years time, he further suspected that “the Negroes bring their knowledge of the Poisonous Plants, which they use here, with them from their own Country.” Undoubtedly, the skills and use of poisons to harm people was of great concern

[166] *The Maryland Gazette,* Jun. 27, 1776.
[167] The Virginia Gazette, May 16, 1766.

on plantations, especially in South Carolina, where "Negro Doctors" were reported to have poison babies as early as 1741.[168]

In another instance, an enslaved woman belonging to a Mr. Warner "…attempted the destruction of the whole family by poison." She was able to kill three people with four remaining "doubtful" to survive. After being charged, the woman confessed to putting 'rats-bane into the coffee--but not with the intention to kill—that it was given her by a neighbouring wench, who told her it would only make them sick for a while, and afford her fun. They are both lodged in jail."[169] Slave conspiracy's using poisons were legitimate and at times involved multiple people. One can imagine that this slave woman was young, maybe even a child, as she the priority to have fun was probably more the goal of someone not fully indoctrinated into the strictures of slave life. Women and children were often accused together of poisoning plots, and was probably one of the ways in which the practice was passed between enslaved people.

Conclusion

In all, Bakongo Diaspora of the Atlantic had a direct impact on colonial South Carolina life and character. Ethnic ties and shared ideological understandings of the greedy slave trade informed those entering the Atlantic that the consumption of their bodies were reflective of consumption and disruption of tradition ways of life. Central Africans were the first to experience

[168] Dr. James Garden to Charles Alston, Jan. 21, 1753, Feb. 10, 1756, Laing MSS, III, 375/42,44, University of Edinburgh. See also Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, p. 619; *South Carolina Gazette*, Aug. 15, 1741.
[169] *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, Dec. 3, 1794.

and endure the Transatlantic slave trade. The legacy of John Jr.'s 'Angola' settlement was only one example of how Central Africans, identified as Kongo-Angolan descendants in the Americas, were able to connect with African homeland and how ethnic identity endured across the deadly passages of the Atlantic. Many more people came after "twenty and odd negroes" arrived along the American slave coast via the diseased and tragic passage. As Mustakeem's work has illustrated, the ship was its own locus of physical, mental, and psychological trauma where enslaved person felt hopeless witnessing scenes like a gravely ill "Negro woman" being lowered to her death, helpless and probably needing aid themselves.

Kongo-Angolan presence in the earliest colonies offered those arriving thereafter the opportunity to reaffirm their ethnic identity in spite of the treacherous Middle Passage. Death, disease, and oppression would become a feature of colonial life and enslaved Africans and responses to the landscape were limited but viable. Declining Native American communities presence after 1787, left white planters and fugitive slave seekers generally left to their own resources to hunt in the woods and swamps, which was very little. For enslaved Africans, there were very few options to respond to developing plantation society but all were exercised.

Insurrections like the one led by "Bastian, the Spanish Negro" illustrated that Africans were working against large odds but early on made decisions to take up arms and use the swamplands to escape and live in hidden maroon communities. And where they could escape using the land they could and did.

The enslaved experience often ran adjacent to the maroon experience, and growing African slave population left planters with few options to control the movements of many enslaved. Maroons living in hidden swamps reminded colonists of the constant threat of slave upheaval. The Stono rebellion itself was arguably fought by or in part by such maroons.

In other instances, Africans looked to the land and inward towards community and spiritually to create networks of healing and protection to navigate the colonial South. Likewise, enslaved people were wanted all throughout the eighteenth century for poisonings and disguising themselves as doctors or healers to escape bondage. Poisonings were unusually endemic to South Carolina, probably because Africans quickly became familiar with the landscapes natural properties as they cleared swamplands to create plantations. In return, the conjure culture that developed in the Lowcountry possessed a host of insights into how enslaved Africans used naturopathic methods to acquire social power, resist plantation oppression, and mitigate interpersonal conflict in the nineteenth century.

Chapter Three: "…Passes for a Doctor Among People…:" Kongo, Conjure, and South Carolina

RUN-AWAY on Monday last, from the subscriber, A NEGRO FELLOW, named Jack, lately belonging to Mrs. Course. He says he was born in Amsterdam, has a rough face, about 45 years old, is about 5 feet 5 inches high, and professes to be a negro doctor. It is said he is gone to Dorchester. Any person delivering him to the master of the work hour, shall receive Twenty Shillings, and all reasonable expences.
William Shirtliffe.
September 16.

Six Dollars Reward.
ABSCONDED on or about the 1st instant, a NEGRO FELLOW, named PERO. He is remarkably tall, being nearly 6V2 feet in height; his hands have been frost-bitten, in consequence of which he has lost several of his fingernails. He speaks the French and English languages; passes for a Doctor among people of his color, and it is supposed practices in that capacity about town. The above Reward will be paid on his delivery at the Work-House, or to the Subscriber.
JAMES GEORGE.
N.B. All masters of vessels are forwarned from carrying him off the state as they will be prosecuted to the utmost rigor of the law.
June 19.[170]

Law

The increasing number of enslaved Africans in colonial America created suspicion and fear among the white populations and led to a swift desire to implement new laws to police enslaved communities. In South Carolina, after consistent reports of enslaved uprisings and rebellion happening in Barbados and Jamaica, the "Act for the Better Ordering of Slaves" was passed in 1691, modeled after Barbadian and Jamaican laws of the previous two decades. The slave acts in South Carolina insisted that enslaved men and women were solely to be understood as property and that enslavement was a lifelong sentence and ensured that all descendants of slaves would be deemed slaves as well. An

[170] *The City Gazette*, St. George's Dorchester, Charleston, September 16, 1791; *The City Gazette*, St. George's Dorchester, Charleston, June 6, 1797.

excerpt from section seven of the slave code 1740 Act for the Better Ordering of Negros reads:

> VII., *And be it further enacted* by the authority aforesaid, That it shall and may be lawful for every justice assigned to keepthe peace in this Province, within his respective county and jurisdiction, upon his own knowledge or view, or upon information received upon oath, either to go in person, or by warrant or warrants directed to any constable or other proper person, to command to their assistance any number of persons as they shall see convenient, to disperse any assembly or meeting of slaves which may disturb the peace or endanger the safety of his Majesty's subjects, and to search all suspected placed for arms, ammunition or stolen goods, and to apprehend and secure all such slaves as they shall suspect to be guilty of any crimes or offences whatsoever, and to bring them to speedy trial, according to the directions of this Act; and in case any constable or other person shall refuse to obey or execute any of the warrants of precepts of such justices, or any of them, within their several limits and precincts, or shall refuse to assist the said justices or constables, of any of them, when commanded or required, such person or persons shall forfeit and pay the sum of five pounds, current money, to be recovered by a warrant under the hand and seal of any other justice of the peace, in the same way and manner as is directed by the Act of the trial of small and mean causes.

In the aftermath of Stono, white planters were allowed to harm or kill "rebellious negroes" and the assembly of enslaved persons became illegal. This the first instance where South Carolina directly created laws to prevent slave gatherings, affecting how slave communities congregated and why religious practices of the enslaved occurred in secret. More concerned with policing than legal status, slave codes prohibited enslaved men and women from doing a host of things such as: striking a white planter, possessing weapons, gathering in large groups, moving between plantations without a form of identification, running away, and other various forms of resistance. Punishment of crimes included torture, whipping, branding, maiming, humiliation and emasculation, and often

times death. White planters could not legally murder their slaves, though some did and were never prosecuted.[171]

The laws that defined enslaved status in South Carolina and the enforcement of slave codes varied and were centered on criminalizing enslaved persons activities. With consistent acts of maroonage, runaway, and insurrection peppering the Lowcountry landscape, by 1740, after the Stono Rebellion, the Negro Act of 1740 was enacted to further quell rebellious behavior by prevented slaves from learning to read or write.[172] Likewise, treatment of enslaved people varied by enslaver. In some instances, enslaved people were treated well in the care of planters. Isabella Dorroh remembers, "slaves had a good place to live in and everything to eat" and attended church on Sundays with 'marse' in "new clean clothes dat he give 'em." The laws shaping daily life during slavery were rife with abuse and mistreatment and the movements and actions of enslaved persons were heavily policed early on.

Masters gave slaves more freedom during peaceful period, but in times of unrest, planters vigorously enforced the slave codes both through legal reprimand and by establishing slave patrols. Isabella Dorroh of Spartanburg remembers "slaves couldn't go away de place [plantation] unless dey had a pass

[171] Thomas Little, "The South Carolina Slave Laws Reconsidered, 1670-1700," *The South Carolina Historical Magazine* Vol. 94, No. 2 (Apr., 1993), p. 96-99.; Nicholas May, "Holy Rebellion: Religious Assembly Laws in Antebellum South Carolina and Virginia," *The American Journal of Legal History*, Vol. 49, No. 3 (July 2007), pp. 237-256

[172] Birgit Rasmussen, "Attended with Great Inconveniences": Slave Literacy and the South Carolina Negro Act," *PMLA*, Vol. 125, No. 1 (Jan., 2010), pg. 201-203.

from de marse to show de patrollers when dey caught them out."[173] Composed of white men who took turns covering a particular area of their county, slave patrols watched for runaways or assisted owners in enforcing the slave codes on their plantations. Slave patrols and policing were often conducted to search for missing or runaway slaves and those caught were often sent back to their plantations or jails. Those enslaved knew that the conditions of slavery were inhumane and remembered punishment vividly. Ryer Emmanuel of Claussens recounts that while his mother was generally protected from abuse because she was a housewoman, for the others who "never do right" punishment was fierce and tortuous.

> "…Dey would carry dem to de cow pen en make dem strip of they frock, bodies clean to the waist. Den dey would tie dem down to a log en paddle dem wid a board. When dey would whip de men, de boards would often times have nails in dem. Hear talk dey would wash dem wid dey blood. Dat first hide dey had, white folks would whip it off dem en den turn around en grease dem wid tallow en make dem work right on. Always would inflict de punishment at sunrise in de morning fore dey would go to work. Den de women, dey would force dem to drop dey body frock cross de shoulders so dey could get to de naked skin en would have a strap to whip dem wid. Wouldn' never use no board on de women."

Labor

Patterns of labor in South Carolina were driven by intense work in rice and indigo crops through extenuating climate and microbial environments. Often, enslaved Africans were forced to work throughout the year on primary and

[173] Interview with Isabella Dorroh, *Federal Writers' Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 14, South Carolina, Part 1, Abrams-Durant, 1936.* Manuscript/Mixed Material. https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn141/. pg. 326

secondary crops corn and other provisions in addition to lumbering and estate maintenance until the point of illness, exhaustion, and death. Men and women were generally relegated to the same labor conditions and received similar punishments as described. Women were typically assigned to labor in the fields of South Carolina alongside their male counterparts and experienced insufferable realities. When asked as to whether white masters sought to purposefully kill enslaved Black people, Mr. Emmanuel stated, “Well, I don’ know as de white folks would be meanin to kill any of dey niggers, but I hear talk dey would whip dem till dey would die some of the time en would bury dem in de night,”[174] emphasizing that often enslaved punishment was without impunity.

Former slave, Henry Brown of Charleston remembers the average work day beginning quite early and lasting all day. “Work used to start on the plantation at four o’clock in the morning, when the people went in the garden. At eight or nine o’ clock they went into the big fields. Everybody was given a task of work. When you finished your task you could quit. If you didn’t do your work right you got a whipping.” Labor was equally distributed between men and women and women were not removed from maternal and laborious responsibilities such as breastfeeding. “The babies were taken to the negro house and the old women and young colored girls who were big enough to lift them took care of them. At one o’ clock the babies were taken to the field to be nursed, then they were brought back to the negro house until the mothers finished their work, then they

[174] Interview with Ryer Emmanuel, *Federal Writers' Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 14, South Carolina, Part 2, Eddington-Hunter. 1936.* Manuscript/Mixed Material. https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn142/. pg. 14-15

would come for them."[175] After giving birth enslaved women went right back to work, with their children wrapped by their sides.

Planters, envisioning generational wealth in perpetuity through the reproduction of enslaved women, provided little reprieve from slave labor though a woman had just given birth. Nursing women were also responsible for nursing the children of others not born to them, even their owner's children. On a smaller farm, an enslaved mother's responsibilities were simply added on top of her usual duties, as with the duties of breastfeeding as read above. Childbearing came with its own gendered physical and psychological responsibilities that were enormous for enslaved women. Slave mothers on a large plantation returned to the fields soon after giving birth, leaving her child to be raised by others like elders. Enslaved mothers were expected to put the needs of the planters and their families before her own children.[176]

The children of enslaved Africans worked alongside their parents as well. The age of a child entering the plantation labor force was on average nine or ten varied by planter's decision, however, enslaved children have been known to work as early as five or six. If not working, children were looked after by older children or in the care of elder enslaved peoples on the plantation until they were

[175] Interview with Henry Brown, *Federal Writers' Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 14, South Carolina, Part 1, Abrams-Durant. 1936*. Manuscript/Mixed Material. https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn141/.

[176] Judith A. Carney, *Black Rice : the African origins of rice cultivation in the Americas,* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2001); Daniel C. Littlefield, *Rice and Slaves: Ethnicity and the Slave Trade in Colonial South Carolina* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991). In South Carolina, where rice was the dominant crop, men hoed the fields alongside women. The task was an emasculating one given that the hoe was specifically identified with woman's work in West Africa.

of working age. Enslaved children were forced to conduct household chores or work beside their parents in field labor.

Samuel Boulware of Columbia, South Carolina says that he could never "disremember" his enslavement as a child working alongside his mother unless he died. The eighty-two year old stated "My mammy worked hard in de field every day and I was just a small boy, I toted water to de hands in de field and fetched wood into de kitchen to cook wid. Mammy was de mother of twelve chillum; three of them die when they was babies. I's de oldest of de twelve and has done more hard work than de rest."[177] Boulware, the oldest, likely worked the hardest to fulfill the demands of plantation labor and to also assist his mother with her work throughout pregnancies. Boulware's testimony to his mother arduous daily work also may have led him to witness the birth of his nine siblings births and the death of his three siblings. Only he and four other siblings survived to adulthood, though he did not speak fondly of them for having selfish characteristics. The personal characteristics and personalities of enslaved persons would become a significant component of their identity and how enslaved people related to one another was a key part of their survival.

Marriage, Kinship, and Connection

On Lowcountry plantations, sex ratios were very imbalanced throughout the eighteenth century. However, familial and kinship ties were still strongly

[177] Interview with Samuel Boulware, *Federal Writers' Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 14, South Carolina, Part 1, Abrams-Durant. 1936.* Manuscript/Mixed Material. https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn141/.

formed through facilitated co-resident unions. South Carolina's reliance on imported slaves for the large part of the early eighteenth century meant that it was hard for enslaved persons, particularly men, to find mates. However, during the latter part of the eighteenth century, the development of extended households on larger estates stabilized enslaved life and supported many more co-resident two-parent households. While slave marriages and unions were inherently unstable due to social conditions, it is evident that enslaved people in some cases had a preference for African born persons over enslaved or creolized people.[178] For instance, Charles Ball's observations through his travels in South Carolina highlighted that, Lydia, an enslaved women was "compelled" to marry her African husband, specifically because of his ethnic origins. While her husband mistreated her severely, she noted amongst his unique traits were that "he had been a priest in his own nation." With the constant replenishing of identities direct from Central Africa and elsewhere, partners seeking may have wanted to find a union with African identities, which may have seemed more authentic or relatable.[179]

Philip Morgan has noted that the on Lowcountry plantations, distinct African ethnic presence was more notable and South Carolina immigrants often intermarried depending on demographics, and carried on symbolic naming traditions based on their ancestral homeland. While in the long run most geographical or African names became lost or did not have linguistic

[178] Morgan, *Slave Counterpoints,* pg. 530-540
[179] Ball, Charles, *Slavery in the United States: a Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Charles Ball* (New York: J. S. Taylor, 1837) pg. 157, 236-264

complements in English, most enslaved Africans after a while struggled with retaining intricate ties with their African homeland names and locales. However, the preference for African identities in marriages endured and was valued as they reflected traditional African norms.

Many enslaved Carolinians noted that their parents or grandparents arrived in the Americas together or joined in union shortly thereafter. Born into slavery, Charley Barber notes that his parents came from Africa together via the Atlantic trade and were chained to each other as cargo. “My pappy was name Jacob. My mammy went by de name of Jemima. They both come from Africa where they was born. They was 'ticed on a ship, fetch 'cross de ocean to Virginny, fetch to Winnsboro by a slave drover, and sold to my marster’s father. Dat what they tell me…They never did talk lak de other slaves, could just say a few words, use deir hands, and make signs.” Barber’s parents were amongst a noted five or five six hundred people on board the ship. Though their reclusive behavior was probably due in part to their traumatic kidnapping and attempt to acclimate to new landscapes, it was evident through hand signals and other non verbal forms of communication that Jacob and Jemima were able to establish a relationship of survival and love. It is unknown whether they both disembarked from the same locations or were of the same ethnic background but their commitment to communicating to each other solely speaks volumes to enslaved

persons desire to preserve their identity during captivity and through their union.[180]

Enslaved unions in the Lowcountry were encouraged and often brought enslaved persons and planters together. Isabella Dorroh remembers that when her parents Harvey and Mary of two nearby plantations were to be wed their plantation was filled with excitement. "…When dey married dey had a big wedding. Marse didn't make slave women marry men if dey didn't want to. Befo' my mammy and daddy married, somebody give a note to take to Mrs. Fair, her mistress. Mistress wouldn't tell what was in it, but daddy run every step of de way, he was so glad de would let 'em marry." Marriages were typically conducted by white planters and overseers, and while some unions were forced, others were also consensual and enduring. She furthers that, "My mother married at Thomas Pope's place, and he had old man Ned Pearson, a nigger who could read and write, to marry 'em. He married lots of niggers den." Older enslaved people, especially those who appeared religiously devout or those who had special like Ned Pearson, in some instances, could elevate social status or bequeath special recognition to officiate certain public ceremonies such as weddings or funerals.[181]

Slave life and labor were managed to the best extent that Carolinian planters and lay patrollers were able to surveil and police the social behaviors of

[180] Charley Barber, *Federal Writers' Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 14, South Carolina, Part 1, Abrams-Durant. 1936*. Manuscript/Mixed Material. https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn141/.pg. 30

[181] Interview with Isabella Dorroh, *Federal Writers' Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 14, South Carolina, Part 1, Abrams-Durant.* 1936. Manuscript/Mixed Material. https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn141/. pg. 326

enslaved people. However, as the previous chapter has detailed, the policing of enslaved persons movement were extremely difficult, and with maroonage communities and runaways secretly passing through the thick of the Lowcountry, interacting with those on plantations very often for knowledge and resources, enslaved persons were able to cultivate strong interpersonal connections and community through recreational and leisure activity within private social spaces, away from the planters. Thus crafting the social and healing spaces of enslaved life that were key components of enslaved community happened in spite of planter surveillance. [182]

Some planters were allowed leisure and recreational time, often on Sundays and holidays. Dorroh, under the enslavement of her master, stated that, "Marse Fair let his niggers have dances and frolics on his plantation, and on Saturdays dey danced till 12 o'clock mid-night." Night dances and evening recreations created a sense of community and displayed exhibitions of enslaved community. "Sometimes dey danced jigs, too, in a circle, jumping up and down. In dese times de young folks dance way into Sunday mornings, and nobody to stop 'em, but Marse wouldn't let his slaves dance after 12 o'clock." However, in more secret nightly escapes, enslaved people gathered together in private quarters or in heavily forested areas to fellowship, dance, and commune.

It is these spaces where early notions of freedom, spirituality, and resistance were shared. Specifically, spirituality and religion, which is the center

[182] For more information on slave policing see Howell M. Henry, *The Police Control of the Slave in South Carolina. (*New York: Negro Universities Press, 1968.) and Norrece Jones, *Born a Child of Freedom, Yet a Slave: Mechanisms of Control and Strategies of Resistance in Antebellum South Carolina* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1989.).

of this dissertation was shaped along varying axes amongst enslaved people in South Carolina. Carolinian planters were not very strong in proselytizing slave communities in the eighteenth century. In all, masters tried to quell or prevent secret meetings for fear of the gatherings turning conspiratorial or violent. Secret meetings such as these and other unauthorized leisure were perceived as resistant by overseers and planters and were outlawed as such. Though dancing was outlawed, meetings took place in private quarters. “Dey wasn’t allowed to dance, but sometimes we had secret dances, shut up in de house so de master couldn’t hear us” recalls Madison Griffin of Whitmire, South Carolina.[183]

Here, one must examine to relationship between circle dancing and the enslaved religious and spiritual worldview. Sterling Stuckey’s classic *Slave Culture* examines and the practice of dance in enslaved ceremony and harken their African ancestral legacies. Agreeably, “The use of the circle for religious purposes in slavery was so consistent and profound that one could argue that it was what gave form and meaning to black religion and art.”[184] The practice of counter-clockwise dancing and “the ring shout” which Isabella Dorroh described follows a strong tradition developed in South Carolina and elsewhere of enslaved people galvanizing and expressing interethnic community through communal dance. Though the circle solely was not the focal point of value within rites, it is distinctly African deposit with multiple layers of implied meaning.

---

[183] Interview with Madison Griffin, *Federal Writers' Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 14, South Carolina, Part 2, Eddington-Hunter*. 1936. Manuscript/Mixed Material. https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn142/.
[184] Sterling Stuckey, *Slave Culture: Nationalistic Theory and the Foundations of Black America*, pg. 11

However, in order to maintain a steady labor production planters enforced year round work with few breaks. Sabbath days and Christian holidays like Christmas, Easter, and Whitsuntide along with New Years were the only few labor free days for enslaved people. Ninety-four year old Fannie Griffin remembers that pastimes were nigh and dangerous to attend: “We was never allowed to have no parties nor dances, only from Christmas Day to New Year’s eve…We’d have all kinds of frolics from Christmas to New Years but never was allowed to have no fun after that time.” Elsewhere, enslaved frolic was often an exciting but very dangerous endeavor. Unfortunately, Fannie remembers sneaking off to dance and getting caught thereafter. “I ‘members one time I slip off from de missus and go to a dance and when I come back, de dog in de yard didn’t seem to know me and he bark and wake de missus up and she whip me something awful. I sho didn’t go to no more dances widout asking her.” She further noted that, “de patarollers (patrollers) would ketch you too, if you went out after dark.” The policing of enslaved life was centripetal to enforcing slave laws and increasing slave labor production, which was the overall goal of planters and plantations.[185]

In spite of the laborious demands of plantation life the enslaved person, social lives and families developed. Kinship and families were formed along fictive and biological terms and strong familial bonds ensued. While planters sought to work their enslaved everyday, climate and designated holidays opened

[185] Fannie Griffin, *Federal Writers' Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 14, South Carolina, Part 2, Eddington-Hunter*. 1936. Manuscript/Mixed Material. https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn142/. pg. 209

small windows of opportunity to create and cultivate community and meaning-making in the otherwise bleak conditions of daily life. In all their efforts, planters and policemen were usually outnumbered by enslaved populations and therefore were unable to control plantation communal exchanges to a limited extent. The networks developed in secret night and dance meetings generate knowledge and community systems that grow within South Carolina. As a consequence of these slave networks, enslaved people were able to offer many contributions towards their own forms of self-healing and mitigate interpersonal conflict amongst themselves, using a variety of spiritual and natural material affect which forms the basis of American conjure or Hoodoo.

Conjure and South Carolina

> "All of the hoodoo doctors have non-conjure cases. They prescribe folk medicine, "roots", and are for this reason called "two-headed doctors" . . . Often they are not hoodoo doctors, but all hoodoo doctors also practice medicine."[186]-Zora Neale Hurston, "Hoodoo in America"

Similar to the BaKongo decentralized groups that comprised the Kongo Kingdom, and the spiritualists, ritualists, nganga, and practitioners that inhabited therein, conjure was a broad decentralized network of beliefs, bound by superstition, that incorporated the use of natural materials and healing and harming ideological efficacies to mitigate spiritual, physical, and social

[186] Zora Neale Hurston, "Hoodoo in America." *The Journal of American Folklore* 44, no. 174 (1931): 317-417.

conflicts.[187] Unlike religions such as Voodoo or Santeria which were more relative to syncretic Catholicized traditions, conjure in not bound by a religious pantheon and strongly resembles its Bakongo spiritual predecessors. Functionally, syncretic religions seek to honor the gods and spirits who people the believers' world. In contrast, conjuration sought to accomplish practical aims through the use of the spirit world invoked through items or natural materials. Conjurers may consider their practice as a religion and often incorporate Christian ideology to invoke power. Likewise, Christian pastors might try to compel God to bend to their will through the use of roots. For example, it was well known that Bishop C.H. Mason, founder of the Church of God in Christ Church, used and was pictured with roots as part of his Pentecostal ministry.[188]

Conjure was also unique in that it also lacks the developed theology and religious pantheon of deities. A majority of conjurers engaged in many of the same practices and use similar materials, such as graveyard dirt, bones, and plant materials, though their uses differ widely from practitioner to practitioner. Furthermore, some conjurers claim to receive their power from God. Others credited familiars or animistic spirits or source their power through charismatic or pragmatic processes. Conjure was a unique network of ideas and spiritual worldview grounded in Central African cosmology and added unto by the introduction other African ethnic spiritual identities.

[187] "Hoodoo," "mojo," "fixing," "tricking," are readily interchangeable with conjure. Some authors have used witch and conjurer synonymously, however, it is to be noted that conjurers are full human beings, whereas, witches are categorized as nonhuman entities.
[188] R Drew Smith, *With Signs Following: The Life and Ministry of Charles Harrison Mason* (St. Louis, Missouri: Christian Board of Publication, 2015), pg. 29-43.

Folklore and Superstitions

Early enslaved spiritual beliefs were manifested through folklore, and many moral objectives and the products of these beliefs were transmitted in oral traditions typically. Before they were commercialized by white American audiences in the late nineteenth century, the Uncle Remus tales captured by enslaved and white planter audiences alike. Charity Moore fondly remembers that her father Isaiah Moore embodied the role of storyteller in the recounting of Uncle Remus: "… Isaiah Moore?… He was de Uncle Remus of all de white chillum 'round dese parts. He sho' was! I seen him a settin' wid you, Marse Johnnie, Marse Boyco, and Dickie Brice, in de back yard many a time. You all was askin' him questions 'bout de tale he was a tellin' and him shakin' his sides a laughin'. He telled all them tales 'bout de fox and de rabbit, de squirrel, brer tarrapin, and sich lak, long befo' they come out in a book. He sho' did!"[189]

The Uncle Remus trickster tales about the adventures of Brer Rabbit and other creatures were often told as entertaining and insightful social archetypes for engaging using mind over strength to outwit opposing characters. Uncle Sabe Rutledge says he "'member all them Buh Rabbit story! Mudder tell 'em End we laugh and wake up! They was one bout Buh Rabbit and Buh Patridge. You know Buh Patridge the onliest one get the best of Buh Rabbit!" The antics and exploits and antics of Brer Rabbit were the opposition of other creatures in stories and the tales used various rhetorical devices to retell complex narratives to entertain children especially to keep them vigilant and industrious. According to Gus

[189] Charity Moore, *FWP Jackson-Quattlebaum*, pg. 205

Feaster, “When Father and Mudder tell them story we ohillun noddin’. Some cackle out and all jump up and go baok to picking out cotton seed!” The stories often told to children were loaded with metaphors of various labor and social dynamics to assist them with the struggles of plantation life and the various ethical and moral dilemmas of adult life.[190]

Some of the moral lessons of conjure folklore were also captured in fearful stories told to quell misbehaving children. The more sinister folktales of Bloody Bones and Raw Head, though less academic information is detailed on its origins, were told such frightening lore to keep children and enslaved people from venturing out after dark." When us very little, ma say at night when she want us to go to bed and we be playing marbles, 'Better come on in de house or Raw Head and Bloody Bones ‘ll git you. From den on I is seed spooks.”[191] Mom Sara Brown, who did not believe in the more sinister forms or conjuring lore due to her learned Christian beliefs, were still familiar with some of the scarier tales told. “O Lord, baby, I don' know a thing bout none of dat thing call conjurin. Don’ know nothin bout it. Dat de devil work en I ain’ bother wid it… I put my trust in de Lord cause I know it just a talk de people have…I hear dem say Raw Head en Bloody Bones would catch you if you be bad, but how it started, I don’ know. I know I don’ know nothin bout how dey look en I don’ want to see dem neither.”[192] Many

[190] Sabe Rutledge, FWP Raines-Young, pg. 59; Florence E. Baer, *Sources and Analogues of the Uncle Remus Tales* (Helsinki: Folklore Fellows Communications, 1981); Bickley, R. B.. "Uncle Remus Tales." New Georgia Encyclopedia. 23 July 2018.
[191] Gus Feaster, *FWP Eddington-Hunter*, pg. 53
[192] Mom Sara Brown, *FWP Abrams-Durant*, pg. 143

of the oral traditions shared on plantations merged with white Christian visions of witches, ghosts, and other supernatural beings.

Western Christian notions of the devil and supernatural spirits were pervasive amongst early planters and certainly used to scare enslaved people. For white people witches and ghosts were of demonic production and witchcraft was admonished as heresy. European and African based notions of the supernatural overlapped in various ways amongst enslaved populations. Enslaved persons often had intimate experiences with the supernatural. Mrs. M. E. Abrams remarks:

> "Dem things bees light on dark nights; de shines de' self jes like dese 'lectric lights does out dar in dat street ever' night, 'cept dey is a scaird waary light dat dey shines wid. On light nights, I is seed dem look, furs dark like a tree shad'er; den dey gits raal scairy white. T'aint no use fer white folks to low dat it ain't no haints, an' grievements dat follows ye all around, kaise I is done had to many 'spriences wid dem. Den dare is dese young niggers what ain't fit to fee called darkies, dat tries to ac' eddicated, and says dat it ain't any spe'rits dat walks de earth. When dey lows dat to me, I rolls my old eyes at dem an' axes dem how comes dey runs so fas' through de woods at night. Yes sirree, dem fool niggers sees dem jes as I does. Raaly de white folks doesn't have eyes fer sech as we darkies does; but dey bees dare jes de same."[193]

Ghost stories and conjure tales often intersected in personifying and embodying nature and spiritual forces to assist in human discernment and foretell fortune. Benjamin Russell recounts his experiences and how such beliefs could be disruptive to plantation production. He states, "No, I never saw a ghost, but there was a general belief among the race in ghosts, spirits, haunts and conjuration. Many believe in them yet. I can never forget the fright of the time my

[193] Mrs. M.E. Abrams, *FWP Abrams-Durant*, pg. 4

young master, William was going off to the war. The evening before he went, a whippoorwill lighted on the window sill and uttered the plaintive 'whip-poor-will.' All the slaves on the place were frightened and awed and predicted bad luck to Master Will. He took sick in war and died, just wasted away. He was brought back in rags toward the end of the struggle."[194] The archetype of the whippoorwill bird foretelling the demise of the plantations young master illustrated an instance of where such subscription to such beliefs had poor outcomes for the victims but also heavily impacted enslaved realities.

Graveyards and cemeteries held special significance for enslaved people. The belief that the spirits of the dead haunted grave-sites was common belief shared by many. According to Isabella Dorroh belief in ghosts was widespread. "Everybody believed in ghosts. Nobody would pass by a graveyard on a dark night, and dese days dey go to cemeteries to do deir mischief, at night and not afraid."[195] Furthermore, graveyard dirt in particular held supernatural powers that were often used by conjure doctors.

According to many accounts ghosts, spirits, and witches had the ability to haunt and severely disrupt the lives of enslaved people. Charlie Davis had a distinct encounter with a ghost that ran he and his wife out of their house. "I have seen dem things peoples say is a ghost when I was stayin here to Lake View. I plant a garden side de road en one night I hear somethin en I look out en dere was a great big black thing in me garden dat was makin right for de house. I call me wife en tell her to look yonder. De thing was comin right to de house en my

[194] Benjamin Russell, *FWP Raines-Young*, pg. 51.
[195] Isabella Dorroh, FWP Abrams-Durant, pg. 326

wife hurry en light up de lamp. I hear de peoples say if you didn' light up de lamp when you see a spirit, dat it would sho come in en run you out. I had done paid some money on de place but after I see dat thing, I didn' have no mind to want it. Had de best garden en chickens dere I ever had, but I never bother no worry bout dat. Just pick right up en leave dere to come here en I been here ever since. I knows dat been somethin come dere to scare me out dat house. Dat ain' been nothin else but a spirit. Ain' been nothin else."[196]In another instance, Sylvia Duran, captured how the conjuring haunts worked and how some incorporated or cured some of its affects:

> "Oh, my soul, hear talk bout dere be ghosts en hants, …Yes, mam, I hear too much of dat… I hear people say dey see dem, but I ain't take up no time wid nothin like dat…I gwine tell you far as I know bout it. I hear dese old people say when anybody child born wid a caul over dey face, dey can always see dem things en dem what ain' born dat way, dey don' see dem...I hear lot of people say dey can see hants en ghosts all time of a night. Yes'um, I hear de older people say dat, but I don' know whe' it true or no…Yes, mam, I see plenty people wear dem dimes round dey ankle en all kind of things on dey body…Hear talk dat some would wear dem for luck en some tote dem to keep people from hurt in dem. I got a silver dime in de house dere in my trunk right to dis same day dat I used to wear on a string of beads, but I took it off…Den some peoples keeps a bag of asafetida tied round dey neck to keep off sickness. Folks put it on dey chillun to keep dem from havin worms. I never didn' wear none in my life, but I know it been a good thing for people, especially chillun…dere a heap of other things dat I learn bout been good for people to wear for sickness. Dere been nutmeg dat some people make a hole in en wear it round dey neck…"

[196] Charlie Davis, *FWP Abrams-Durant*, pg. 249

Witches

In addition to the fear of ghosts and trepidation to enter graveyards, enslaved Africans also had strong experiences with respect to witches. Often witches were described as consumptive entities that traveled long throughout the night to disturb or “ride” their victims. Specifically, witch-ridings were assaults on enslaved victims in their sleep. "Now das sumpm reel," approved Uncle Robert. "I bin rid lots uh time by witches. Jis sit on yuh ches an ride yuh. Yuh wake up an feel lak yuh smudduhin. Ef yuh kin git duh succulation an tro um off, it all right." Victims often report being paralyzed in their sleep being unable to move or wake into consciousness. Notably, witches were known go prevent the victim from being able to speak or call for relief while the witch rode their chests and torsos.[197]

> "Witches is lak folks…Dey done sell demsefs tuh duh debil an he make em do anyting he wants tuh. Some git a grudge gense yuh an stahts tuh ride yuh. No mattuh wut yuh do, dey kin git in yuh house. Sometime dey come lak a mouse, sometime a rabbit, an sometime eben a roach. I membuh heahin bout a witch wut come ebry night lak a rabbit an rode a woman. A man wut knowd duh woman laid a trap fuh duh witch. Duh witch scape frum duh house, but duh dogs track uh down. Wen she see she wuz caught, she beg duh man not tuh do nuttn tuh uh an she wouldn nebuh do no mo witchin.”

Witches were known transform into animals or other embodied entities by removing their own skin and use the hair or other remnants to pursue and enter victims. Celia Small told us, "Dey's mosly folks yuh know. Jis change deah

[197] Robert Pickney, *Drums and Shadows: Survival Studies Among the Georgia Coastal Negroes* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986), pg. 99.

shape at night an come in duh house an ride yuh." Experiencing the consistent effects of with-riding could cause one to "pine away and die." Witch-riding was metaphorical expression for spirit possession and a colloquial folkloric expression for sleep paralysis. Folklore of witches flying, transforming, or riding their victims recalls BaKongo perception and beliefs of kindoki. Bakongo witchcraft beliefs rested within complex system of social checks and balances that worked for the health and wholeness of the traditional community.[198]

Amongst the Bakongo, witchcraft or ndoki (pl. kindoki) wss the unique power to do good and evil. In particular, the malevolent harming characteristics of witches according to Bockie' emphasizes the differences between 'eating kindoki' and 'protecting kindoki' and their position in Kongo society. 'Protective' ndoki were visible in society and 'eating' ndoki were hidden adherents to society though their mode of operations seems to be inconsistent. Hence, destructive ndoki act by 'eating' or "attacking their psyche, their inner source of life and vitality." A common means by which witches harmed their victims was by stealing their souls and imprisoning them inside a bottle. Similar practices persisted in conjure. Stopping bowels by sealing someone's excrement in a tree was one

[198] Celia Small, *Drums and Shadows*; David J. Hufford's *The Terror That Comes in the Night* experience-centered study of supernatural assault traditions is one of the very few academic texts that addresses the witch-riding assault or "Old Hag" traditions, as they are referred to in European folklore, with any redress. He notes that "the Old Hag" tradition (2) is described in variant ways but can be summarized as: "(1) awakening (or an experience immediately preceding sleep); (2) hearing/or seeing something come into the room and approach the bed; (3) being pressed on the chest or strangled; (4) inability to move or cry out until either being brought out of the state by someone else or breaking through the feeling of paralysis on one's own (10-11). In medical diagnoses, the witch riding or Old Hag traditions can be described as sleep paralysis sleep paralysis with hypnagogic hallucinations or general nightmares Here this dissertation examines how the witches and witch idioms operated in African and African American settings.

derivation of such Kongo witchcraft. Another was the practice of placing materials representing particular people, such as names or fingernails, in bottles or packets, which were then thrown in running water, buried in graves, turned upside down, or similarly manipulated in order to cause death.[199]

In response to malevolent spiritual harm, Bakongo peoples and their descendants in the lowcountry were known create, procure, and sell nkisi (pl. minkisi), protective conjure bags, and medicine bottles for protection. Manufactured by Bakongo magicians and spiritual practitioners, minkisi were positive beings inhabiting charms designed to protect their owners from spirit-induced illness and often took the shape of packets and portable vessels. Minkisi often incorporated the spirits of the ancestors in the form of dirt from graveyards, a popularly used material identical to the goopher dust of the Lowcountry. The pervasiveness of goopher dust alone speaks to the power of Kongo ancestry in the Lowcountry area, though unlike in the Kongo, American graveyard dust was as often used for evil as well as good.

Other common forms of minkisi were roots, which likewise appeared other cultural zones. According to Kongo belief, the first nkisi was the spirit Funza, who dwelt in twisted roots. John the Conqueror root, common used throughout the nineteenth-century South, was the American derivation of the Central African Funza. Bakongo people chewed and spat another kind of root, called “disisa” or “nsanga-lavu,” in order to drive off enemies and evil forces. This roughly corresponded to the chewing roots employed by enslaved Lowcountry Africans.

[199] Simon Bockie, *Death and the Invisible Powers: the World of Kongo Belief*, pg. 47

In later days, such roots would be known as “Chewing John,” the most commonly used species of which was galangal, a member of the ginger family, as were the Kongo disisa or nsanga-lavu.[200]

Healing and Conflict

Healing and resolving conflict were fundamental components of conjure. Some enslaved Africans believed that wearing dimes or coins for good luck and such folk beliefs or superstitions required no peculiar understanding of the supernatural. However, elevated or advanced supernatural skills were necessary to make love and luck potions, poisons, or healing treatments that often required the use of grave-dirt, human hair, animal blood, bones, and feathers. In simplistic form, conjure did not rely on a strong amount of specialized knowledge or abilities required for practice. For instance, many enslaved people wore medicinal roots around their neck for healing and protection without connection to conjure. However, in most instances, enslaved persons who subscribed to conjuring networks or beliefs often respected and feared the supernatural effects of conjure and sought the knowledge of conjure doctors to address both natural and supernatural concerns and conflicts.[201]

---

[200] Robert Farris Thompson, *Flash of the Spirit: African and Afro-American Art and Philosophy* , pg. 11-131; Robert Farris Thompson, *Face o f the Gods: Art and Altars of Africa and the African Americas*, pg. 47-107; Jason R. Young, *Rituals of Resistance: African Atlantic Religion in Kongo and the Lowcountry South in the Era of Slavery*, Amazon Kindle location; Wyatt McGaffey and John Janzen, *An Anthology of Kongo Religion: Primary Texts from Lower Zaire*, pg. 34; Wyatt MacGaffey, *Religion and Society in Central Africa: the Bakongo of Lower Zaire*, pg. 70; Wyatt MacGaffey, “Complexity, Astonishment and Power: The Visual Vocabulary of Minkisi,” J*ournal of Southern African Studies* 14, no. 2 (January 1988)
Sharon Sharp, “Folk Medicine” in *Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*, ed. Charles Reagan Wilson and William Ferris (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), p. 508; “Remedies to Cure Conjuration,” Southern Workman 28, no. 3 (1899): 112

Conjurers, also known as root-workers, were men and women who used herbal remedies to cure medical and supernatural problems. While root-work was a central component of all conjuring practitioners, root-work could also be practiced independently for healing solely. However, many conjurers and clients attributed herbal healing to the efficacy of magic. In all, conjure sought to improve human and social conditions in the spiritual realm and as Zora Neale Hurston noted “nearly all of the conjure doctors practice ‘roots.’ but some of the root doctors are not hoodoo doctors.”[202]

South Carolina, as expressed in the previous chapter, was rife with diseases of all varieties and ilk. Enslaved people often fell ill to many diseases such as cholera, rheumatism, typhoid, diphtheria, fevers, dropsy, lack of “soundness,”[203] venereal and other infectious diseases. White care of enslaved Africans was dependent on the ability of planters to hire doctors to attend to them which varied by plantation. Milton Marshall notes that his master made his “big chaps” drink chinaberry tea "to keep worms from gitting in dem” and that, "De old folks made medicines from root herbs and tree barks. Herb tea was made to keep away fevers.” Plantations doctors were often inconsistent or not trusted by

[202] Zora Neale Hurston, *Mules and Men*. p. ; Zora Neale Hurston, "Hoodoo in America." *The Journal of American Folklore* 44, no. 174 (1931): 317-417.

[203] The health of enslaved communities in the United States was of significant importance to Southern economies. As a result, white slave owners were invested in the health of their property and, often times, feared the consequences of supernatural practices. As a principal of preserving human property, plantation owners sought to ascertain the “soundness” of enslaved people in order to understand a person’s overall health and value in the market place. According to Sharla Fett, “Soundness in its most basic sense concerned the health of a slave, measured in his or her capacity to labor, at the time of sale.” Defining soundness is critical both the mental and physical assessment of an enslaved person, and for women, it also alludes their ability to produce children. Subsequently, slave owner undergirded the character and “soundness” of enslaved persons as part of sale and insuring slaves. Thus, plantation owners and overseers were invested in the domestic life of enslaved people and their afflictions.

the enslaved leading people to seek the care of root doctors. Roots and herbs were used by many root doctors to heal and prevent illnesses.[204]

Herbal applications within conjuring networks evolved out of syncretism between Native American, African, and colonial botanical techniques. Enslaved herbal cures, when efficacious, were valuable to planters as well. Sylvia Duran, who worked with roots herself, expressed her own gifts in the practice. "De peoples use herb medicines for dey cures in dem days dat dey get out de woods. I make a herb medicine dat good for anything out de roots of three herbs mix together. Couldn' tell you how I make it cause dat would ruin me." Duran at one time was offered fifteen hundred dollars for the ingredients and that "Town people try to buy de remedy" from her but at the instruction of her master declined to sell it. Early enslaved Africans addressed physical health concerns with naturopathic medicines where applicable. Yet, within enslaved realities spiritual and physical malady was interconnected healing practices and the therapies used invisible and opaque language to describe its cause and affect.[205]

Most illness caused by conjuration originated in conflicts over love, sex, economic resources, and interpersonal power. A range of physical ailments were attributed to conjure and pneumonia, rheumatism, and arthritis were included among the infirmities for which enslaved persons required supernatural redress. Interpersonal conflict over love and courtship of particular partners were very

---

[204] Miton Marshall, *FWP Jackson-Quattlebaum*, pg. 175; Sharla M. Fett, *Working Cures: Healing, Health, and Power On Southern Slave Plantations*, pg. 136; Holly F. Mathews, ''Doctors and Root Doctors: Patients Who Use Both,'' in *Herbal and Magical Medicine*, pg. 72–75

[205] Sylvia Duran, *FWP Abrams-Durant*, pg.; Fett, *Working Cures*, pg. 60-84; Ake Hultkrantz, *The Religions o f the American Indians*, trans. by Monica Setterwall, pg. 116-128.

consistent in conjuring cases.[206] Govan Littlejohn remembers distinctly being afflicted by conjure while pursuing the person of his attraction:

> "Yes, I been conjured," he said. "You see that left foot? Well, once when I was a young 'buck', I was setting up to a gal and there was another fellow setting up to her, too. I held a little bit the upper hand with the gal. But when my left foot began to swell up and pain me, I had to go to bed. I stayed there three months. Dr. Nott came to see me and treated me with corn poultices, but they would dry up and fall off and I didn't get any better. He lanced my foot three times, but nothing but blood would come. One day a herb doctor came to see me and said he could cure my foot. He took corn meal poultices, rhubarb roots and some other things, and it wasn't long before my foot got well. About that time, my mother found the 'conjuration' right in the front yard at the door-steps. I must have stepped over it, or got my foot caught in it some way. The 'conjuration' was, pins, feathers and something else all tied up in a bag. My mother heard that if it was put in running water, the conjurer would leave the country. So pretty soon after she put the stuff in running water, that fellow left the country. He got his arm caught in a cotton gin not long after he left, and got it chewed off right to his shoulder."[207]

Littlejohn, like others, sought the source of their affliction within others in their immediate environments, usually in competing figures for social roles. And the debilitating malaise associated with conjure affliction forced victims to identify and address the causation. Here, Littlejohn sought the advice of an "herb doctor" when Dr. Nott's lancing produced "nothing but blood." Lancing wounds was a process typically applied alleviated the contents of boils, cysts, and other infected areas. The disappointment of "only blood" expelling signals that Littlejohn was expecting to identify a visible source of infestation which is also a strong indicator of conjuration. However, when Littlejohn's mother found and properly addressed

[206] Fett, *Working Cures*, pg. 87
[207] Govan Littlejohn, pg. 107, Jackson-Quattlebaum

'the conjuration' bag and washed it in water was when the unidentified conjurer fled. In this instance, the unidentified conjurer possessed stronger characteristics of witch and may have possibly been identified as his antagonist but it remains unclear. Placing the conjuration in running harkens strongly back to Bakongo associations with water.

Bakongo simbi spirits were a significant portion of the cosmology. The simbi spirits embodied natural forces. Simbi spirits were found in local, ponds, streams, and waterways were known to require offerings and respect for good fortune. Whether the victim's mother knew to address the conjuration through a Simbi spirit in the nearby waterway is unclear, however, the healing process was advanced after the source was properly addressed.[208]

Persons exhibiting strange persistent symptoms that were prime clients to seek conjure counseling. Pervasiveness of reptiles, insects, and small animals invading the body are unique to these narratives. George Little, a root-doctor himself noted that "Conjure is being practiced all the time… 'frawgs an lizuds an sech tings is injected intuh people's bodies and duh people den fall ill and sometime die. Udduh strange tings is happenin, too. Take duh story uh dem people wut fly back tuh Africa. Das all true. Yuh jis hab tuh possess magic knowledge tuh be able tuh cumplish dis."[209] Frogs, lizards, turtles, and insects associated with pollution were often the known culprits of conjuring. These creatures were by entering through cavities and vulnerabilities in the body would invade the body and wreak havoc if not addressed. Their presence in the body

[208] Anne Hilton, *Kingdom of Kongo*, p. 12-19, 98.
[209] George Little, *Drums and Shadows*, pg. 58

presents the body as a porous vessel or nkisi like it Bakongo ideological provenance. The majority of enslaved Central Africans, as they began to intersperse with other ethnic groups, lost close connection with the continent's spiritual connection but was reconstituted with added elements from other ethnic groups as we will encounter later.

Lowcountry residents Uncle Ben and Aunt Sarah of Pine Barren knew that conjure was in pervasive practice and that some magic had strong magic. "Ise heahd bout bein cunjuhed an I know fuh true deah's sech tings as magic." Uncle Ben chuckled, "Ef yuh ebuh see a cross mahk in duh road, yuh nebuh walk obuh it. Das real magic. Yuh hab tuh go roun it. It's put deah by a enemy an ef yuh walks cross it, duh ebil spell will cause yuh hahm. Duh cross is a magic sign an hab tuh do wid duh spirits." The Christian cross, a representation of catholic beliefs was certainly, a strong symbol throughout the Protestant American South. However, Christian proselytizing, like healthcare in the region, was generally inconsistent well into the early eighteenth century opening enslaved Africans to varying degrees of spiritual autonomy. With strong efforts for African associations of meaning-making, the cross symbol strongly resembles Central African ideology as expressed in chapter one. "Ef dat happens," said Aunt Sarah, "reckon bout duh only ting yuh could do would be tuh see a root doctuh. He gib yuh sumpm, wut cuos yuh." Uncle Ben states, "Lots uh folks carry hans all duh time an dis bring em, luck an keep duh ebil spirits away."

Hair, fingernails, and foot track dust could all be used to create powerful malevolent conjures according to Sarah and Ben. When asked about seeing people being conjured personally he says that, "Dey's mosly all crippled up an caahn moob

bout. Ef dey dohn do nuttn, duh cunjuh gits wus, an dey dies…Folks wut is cunjuhed hab snakes in em an sometimes frawgs. Yuh kin see em moobin roun in deah bodies…Wen dey visit duh root doctuh an he wuks obuh em, den dey's jis as good as noo." Conjure narratives and afflictions caused by conjure reinforced public standards of slave health and community behavior pertaining to property, sexuality, and relations between young and old.[210]

Enslaved men and women frequently traversed plantation boundaries in their search for reputed healers who understood their ailments or shared their visions of life beyond the plantation. In essence, conjurers straddled a fine line between the use of cures for spiritual or social or medical efficacy, and their intentions were usually combined. In an effort to share in community, Benjamin Russell, recounts how attending barbecues at Saturday night gatherings led to his need to mitigate punishment from his master using conjure.

> "…we n'used to steal our hog ev'er sa'day night and take off to de gully what us'd git him dressed and barbecued. Niggers has de mos'es fun at a barbecue dat dare is to be had. As none o' our gang didn't have no 'ligion, us never felt no scruples bout not gettin de 'cue' ready fo' Sunday. Us'd git back to de big house along in de evenin' o' Sunday. Den Marse, he come out in de yard an' low whar wuz you niggers dis mornin'. How come de chilluns had to do de work round here. Us would tell some lie bout gwine to a church 'siety meetin'. But we got raal scairt and mose 'cided dat de best plan wuz to do away wid de barbecue in de holler. Conjin Doc. ' say dat he done put a spell on ole Marse so dat he wuz 'blevin ev'y think dat us tole him bout Sa'day night and Sunday morning. Dat give our minds 'lief; but it turned out dat in a few weeks de Marse come out from under de spell. Doc never even knowed nothin' bout it. Marse had done got to countin' his hogs ever' week. When he cotch us, us wuz all punished wid a hard long task. Dat cured me o' believing in any conjuring an'

[210] Celia Small, *Drums and Shadows*, pg. 99

> charmin' but I still kno's dat dare is haints; kaise ever time you goes to dat gully at night, up to dis very day, you ken hear hogs still gruntin' in it, but you can't see nothing.[211]

In this case, the desire for enslaved Africans to activate more of their agency and engage in community privately set the stage for conflicts between Russell and his master. Theft and substituting children in place of laboring adults caused immediate slowing of labor and complicated access to petty property. Additionally, the notion that the master could be manipulated, for at least a time, led to white suspicion of conjurers and conjure ideological networks as threatening and problematic for planters. Especially, with respect to poisonings, a malevolent form of conjure, planters, as will be reviewed in chapter four, obviously held contentious views of conjurers and their potential to negative influence it could have over enslaved groups.

Conjure overtly took the form of interpersonal slave healing and the doctoring that necessarily took place on plantations did not always look inwards to community for redress. It also had that potential to harm and consume as seen in various conjuring afflictions, which was a threat of white overseers who also encountered enslaved conjured experiences. The lines between magic, religion, and the supernatural were fluid and permeable with conjure and its social reach amongst enslaved communities and those overseeing them in South Carolina is varied but well acknowledged. Every plantation similarly controlling enslaved people under constant surveillance of white authority and violence was a motivating force for slave community to address the power structure of slavery head on directly. And whether it was actual poisonings, whispers of

[211] Benjamin Russell, *FWP Raines-Young*, pg. 51

conspiracy, or all out revolt, conjure played a significant role in major rebellions in South Carolina and elsewhere.

Slave Religion, ATRs, and Theory of Palimpsest

Enslavement was a traumatic and debilitating experience for Africans involved to say the least. The some nearly three centuries of American slavery undergird the fabric of American life and build enduring sociopolitical, racial, and cultural institutions. Scholars since Herskovits and Frazier have exhaustively debated the cultural retentions of African captives in the Americas and its transmission to following generations.[212] However, when analyzing the United States scholars were much slower and deeply abstract when approaching the analyzing African American cultural practices as opposed to elsewhere in the Americas. Raboteau suggested that, "In contrast to Haiti and Brazil, African retentions in the United States cannot be ascribed with any certainty to definite areas of West Africa such as Nigeria or Dahomey." This lack of retention of due in part to North America's "lower" numbers of African imports in contrast to the Caribbean and especially South America where enslaved persons were the most exported. Fortunately, Raboteau opened the field of studying slave religions and with much effort, scholars have properly located African derived spiritual identities with evolving strength in North America and their distinct African ethnic contributions.[213]

[212] E. Franklin Frazier, *Negro Family in the United States (*Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966); Frances Herskovits, *The Myth of the Negro Past*; Frances S. Herskovits, *The New World Negro*

[213] Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion (*New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), pg. 58.

With respect to conjure, Yvonne Chireau's Black Magic offers that roots of African American conjure are attributable to variety of West-Central Africans cosmological identities such as the Yoruba and Kongolese. Both ethnic groups cosmological and religious artifacts have appeared in African American spiritual traditions, but, only as a complete fusion of magico-religious world views. Chireau notes that the "Above all, blacks in America viewed Africa, the spiritual site of the ancestral homeland, as having special significance." More recently, Katrina Hazzard-Donald arguments on Hoodoo in her book *Mojo Workin'*. She defines hoodoo as the "indigenous, herbal, healing, and supernatural-controlling spiritual folk tradition of the African American in the United States," which embodied social and historical linkage of North American Africans back to the continent. In contrast to Chireau seemingly safe definition of conjure as form of African American-American herbalism, Hazzard-Donald provides a more robust definition of Hoodoo and the text itself comes with rich grounding perspective.[214]

Hazzard-Donald turns to looking at Hoodoo in a state of "progressions and regressions" partially demarcated in stage set against the historical timeline of three mainstream influences in Black culture. Hazzard-Donald links the "New World" to the "Old" in her African Religious Complex which includes: counterclockwise sacred circle dancing, spirit possession, the principle of sacrifice, ritual water immersion, divination, ancestor reverence, belief in spiritual case of malady, and herbal and naturopathic medicine. The origins of conjure or "The Old Black Belt Hoodoo Tradition" were founded on slave plantations and

[214]Yvonne P. Chireau, *Black Magic: Religion and the African American Conjuring Tradition*

observes that during the antebellum period, more than likely, hoodoo more than likely operated as a religion for most enslaved Africans.[215]

Likewise, Jason Young analyzes the slave traditions in the Lowcountry American South and their relationship to the Kongo in Rituals of Resistance. His central thesis argues "that religion operated as a central form of resistance not only against the system of slavery but also against the very ideological underpinnings that supported slavery in the first place." Young's text claims a Catholic purview of Kongolese Africans the Lowcountry over embellishing their catholic influence with often withhold the stronger impact of Bakongo cosmology in the Lowcountry. Though authored through a narrative of resistance, Young's text that subscribes that these Kongolese peoples entering in the South Carolina lowcountry were deeply informed by Catholicism and here the contrary is more apparent.[216]

These and many other scholars tend to conflate the religious facets of two distinct African regions into a spiritual elixir of ideas does seem to dilute to power of the religious politics of an identifiable African kingdoms. Homogenizing the spiritual and religious structures of West-Central Africa, no matter how much one mirrors another, belittles the contributions Africans and the Atlantic and their unique concepts of spirituality and religion. In particular, this dissertation argues that there is a strong spiritual relationship between indigenous Kongolese and

[215] Katrina Hazzard-Donald, *Mojo Workin': the Old African American Hoodoo System*, pg. 7-15
[216] Jason R. Young, *Rituals of Resistance: African Atlantic Religion in Kongo and the Lowcountry South in the Era of Slavery*, pg. 11

related people's communities along the coastal hinterlands of Angola and the early colonies in the North American South.

Here, I am not particularly inclined to create an amalgam of African beliefs that may or may not apply to African-American in the Americas. In contrast, I argue that Kongolese Africans who transform into African-Americans through the use and participation in conjure networks are able to sustain their traditions during slavery and thereafter. However, they arrived equipped with their own highly complex African cosmologies, and without a pantheon of deities to worship, they use it to navigate the physical and spiritual terrain of the South. The enduring naturopathic system of herbs, roots, material culture, folktales, superstitions, and psyche that accompanies conjure can be tied to other naturopathic healing and harming networks in the Caribbean and the Americas.

The cosmological beliefs and structures of Kongo society formed the basis for enslaved Africans to create Hoodoo, not as lay "religion" like that which Hazzard-Donald argues, but, more privately as a network. First generation Africans from the Kongo become influential elders on plantations who create the fundamental spiritual contributions towards group theory other meaning making dynamics on lowcountry plantations. Other incoming ethnic groups such entering the region supported and engaged in slave plantation society through conjure practices and associations, reflecting as many aspects of Central and West African society as possible in the American Lowcountry.

This dissertation emphasizes religion as a significant factor that unites multiple sites at once by providing a conceptual framework through which to

understand these sites as interconnected. In this way, I argue that cosmology must be considered as an institutional "structuring structure" that informs not only the social interaction and subsequent cultural exchange, but is also a nexus in which these exchanges take place.[217]

Bakongo religious history exhibits a tradition of renewal or dexterity. From the sixteenth century to the nineteenth century, Central Africans certainly brought with them a strong wherewithal of Central African religious and spiritual mores, even if deduced to its core forms. And with archaeology, material culture, and folklore in tow allowed Central Africans to ground themselves spiritually in a new American universe. However, slavery was an awfully destructive event with cataclysmic consequences for the Atlantic. In general scholarship suggests that it is unsafe to idealize African ethnicities and "Africanisms" into tangible remnants of an African ethnic culture. As a consequence, and rightfully so, recent scholars have found it more fitting to develop a African Religious Complex (ARC) or African Religious Traditions (ART) to account for the similarities between West and Central forms of religious expression. It is safe and deduces to the contributions of a variety of African ethnic groups into a limited variety of elements.

The layering of artifact and religious expression in the Americas can be further understood through the application of palimpsest history. Palimpsest is

[217]This approach, applied by Apter in his analysis of the West African structures of deep knowledge imbedded in Haitian Vodou, would be worthy of exploration amongst the Kongo, as it complicates the history and ideas of Kongolese forms of worship and forms of identity association of social dynamics within the early plantation culture.

defined as a writing material (such as a parchment or tablet) used one or more times after earlier writing has been erased. It is something that has diverse layers or aspects apparent beneath the surface or an overlay of classes and generations. The concept of palimpsest is apropos when analyzing the discursive, material, and physical linkages of the past and present and is "a useful way of understanding the developing complexity of culture, as previous 'inscriptions' are erased and overwritten, yet remain as traces within present consciousness." The concept of palimpsest evokes the idea of a layered history. It is a process of writing, erasing, and rewriting creating a layering effect of history that has been mediated by successive periods, partially erasing through trauma what has happened in the past, while "all present experience contains ineradicable traces of the past that remain part of the constitution of the present."[218]

The complex of conjure beliefs have a stronger Bakongo provenance than previously understood. This dissertation does not have the capacity to extend its scope beyond the Lowcountry to analyze Latin zones of cultural influence. Yet, it is important to examine how Central Africans spiritually inscribed and re-

[218] Norton and Elaine M. Wise, "Staging An Empire." In *Things That Talk: Object Lessons From Art And Science* edited by Lorraine Daston (ed.) 2004. Norton Wise and Elaine M. Wise take space as an object of material culture in *Staging an Empire*. The authors use the island of Pfaueninsel as an object and trace this "palimpsest" (101) from 1793 to the 1830s to demonstrate how different leaders and how changing economic and cultural landscape of Prussia influenced what Pfaueninsel embodied. Pfaueninsel was originally designed to resemble a paradise according to its first planner Friedrich Wilhelm II (103), but, was later transformed into a "model farm"(106), "steam-powered garden"(123), and, later adapted themes from famous operas (137) showing how changing intentions for the site, inspired from international travellers like Alexander von Humboldt and Harry Maitey, are subjective to the time period and whoever had a brilliant idea for the parcel of land. Ultimately, Pfaueninsel was unique by the way "in which its component and their interrelationships spoke of a larger world in which they acquired their meaning"(144).

inscribed the landscape of the Lowcountry to strengthen its influence and reflect Central African characteristics. Enslaved Africans who had spiritual pantheons did not leave the spiritual hierarchies of Africa behind when dragged from their homeland by slave traders. On the contrary, elements of the old religions survived in the American South. In Latin zones of influence, West African deities of the Yoruba, Fon, and the Mande were able to survive and syncretize more ease due to the relative substitution for Catholic saints in replace of tradition African deities. In Dahomey for example, serpents ruled high in the religious pantheon and pythons were sacredly used for ritual. Where pythons were unavailable in the southern sites, other types of snakes were used to symbolically replace their value in ceremony notably in New Orleans.[219]

Arguably, Bakongo cosmology was a foundational layer of the palimpsest in South Carolina. In Kongo, the strong affinities and reliance on ngangas, magicians, and spiritual practitioners to create and activate natural materials speaks volumes to how conjure was informed and developed in the United States. In Africa, a variety of spiritual practitioners dealt with the spirit world. Chiefdom leaders and elders possessed both political and spiritual power, communicating with and conducting worship of the ancestors. There overwhelming demographic representation lends towards cultural dominance in the region that transforms the identity of Central Africans in to enslaved persons in the Lowcountry with deeply informed Bakongo spiritual identity. The displacement, trauma, and forced labor of Central Africans into the Lowcountry

[219] Kofi Asare Opoku, *West African Traditional Religion* (Accra: FEP International Private Limited, 1978), pp. 9-10,14-18; Robert Tallant, *Voodoo in New Orleans* pp. 46-103

by white planters attempted to remove and erase their spiritual landscape and ideology. However, their presence and ability to connect inscribes meaning-making healing and agency to cause harm in unique ways, like their Bakongo predecessors established foundations unique their region.

Undoubtedly, the predominance of other important ethnic groups such as the Mande on the coastal sea islands produces another unique result. Bakongo people were present amongst The Gullah for example but were culturally influenced heavily by the impact of the Mande peoples. The practices of the Poro and Sande secret societies are recreated within Gullah religious communities are recounted many times by planters. These gendered societies served as religious, social, cultural, and governmental organizations. Though "secret" the societies created amongst themselves were also very transparent and served a variety of functions, including providing moral regulation, care for the needy, diplomacy and trade between villages and tribes, and education for both men and women.[220]

The Upper Guinea and Gold Coast imports into South Carolina local sites like St. Helena and Hilton Head adds another layer of meaning to early spiritual networking and re-inscribes ritual in West African characteristics. In the coastal Lowcountry according to Jeffrey Elton Anderson, "African men and women's societies truly became secret organizations, hiding many of their practices, and sometimes even existence, from outsiders. They also largely abandoned their roles in economics and politics, becoming wholly religious and magical in

[220] Margaret Washington Creel, *A Peculiar People: Slave Religion and Community-Culture Among the Gullahs*, pg. 180-182

purpose. As a result, evidence for the survival of African organizations in the South is sparse. What data exists, though, is convincing. Scattered references to sects involving "sacred spirits" argue in favor of the minor presence of African-derived societies in the Anglo area."[221] The introduction of ethnic groups later into the region contribute more layers of complexity and identity to conjure networks and their utility. The Gullah Culture shared spiritual and communal connection with neighboring Lowcountry peoples in numerous ways. However, once can make the distinction between the two neighboring cultures by working through their individual layers of African cultural influence.

In sum, the best way to expand our understanding of African ritual expression and practice in the Americas, under systematic colonial or imperial oppression is to peel back the layers of African ethnic composition within the Lowcountry from the beginnings of slavery and investigate the vestigial features throughout time. The United States, for its colonial authorities and those enslaved within it, was the parchment or text that was used to express history, erase, and rewrite the story of burgeoning African-American life. Spiritually, the learned practices of the Bakongo homeland were written on the palimpsest of the American South and rewritten by additional ethnic groups over generations. A mélange of African practices can occur as result cultural concentrations of African demographic. With respect to South Carolina and elsewhere, when digging into the palimpsest of its of material expression and folklore, one can source Bakongo spirituality as a core structure that informs the nexus of Hoodoo

[221] Jeffrey Elton Anderson, "*Conjure in African-American Society*," PhD diss. University of Florida, 2002. Pp. 4, 50-62, 85-89.

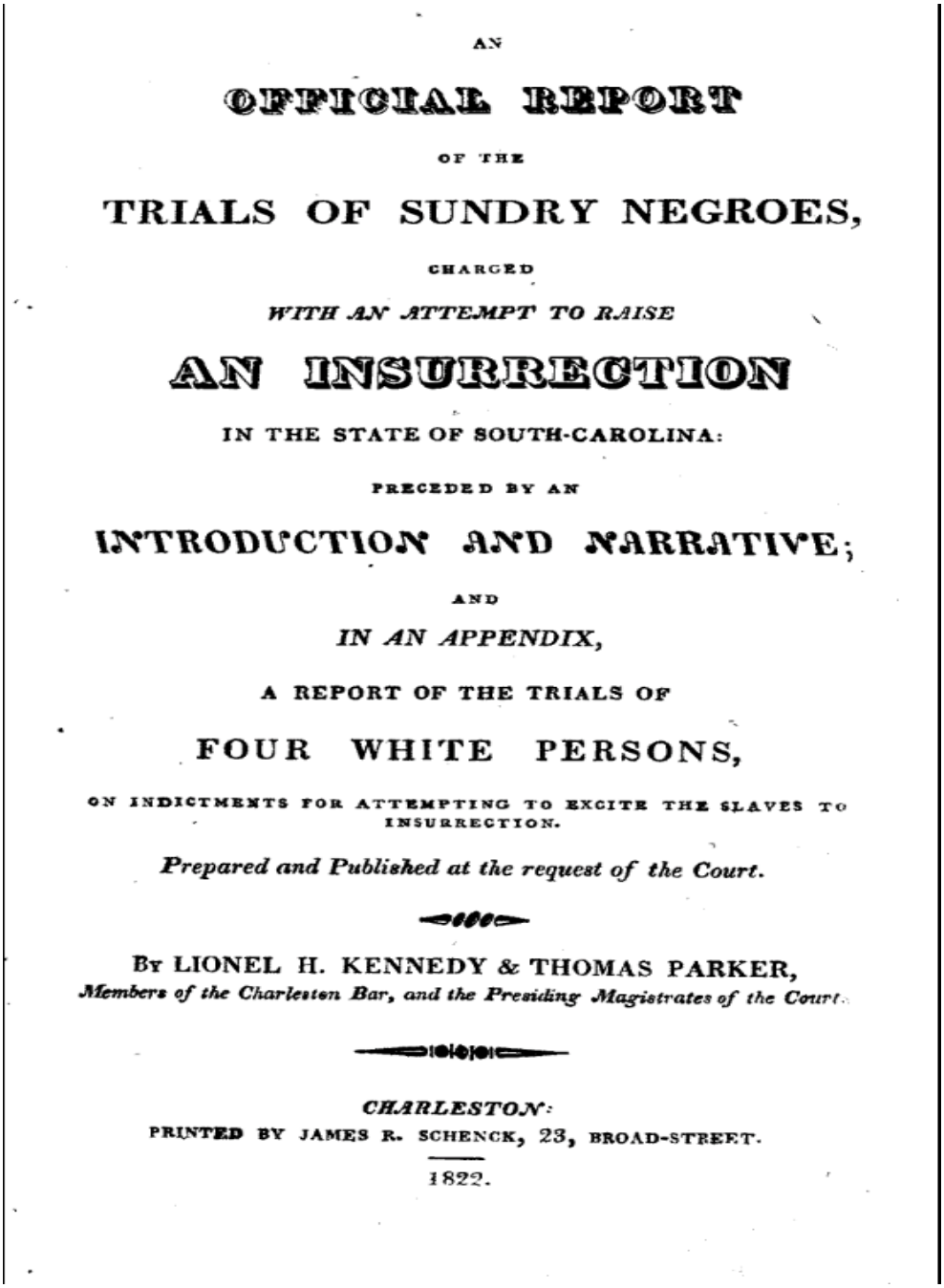
folk life in the region and other contexts of cultural expression of superstitions and naturopathic healing during and post-enslavement.

Conclusion

In the next chapter, we will see how harming traditions or poisoning evoking conjure scared and challenged white planter structures since conjures earlier formation. African Americans have used poisonings under the guise of poisonings and witchcraft in acts of personal resistance and protection throughout history. The persistence of Central African ideology in the Lowcountry also informed the lens in which early Africa-Americans understood the enslaved experiences. Some African Americans understood slavery to be a form of sorcery or witchcraft and often sought out the supernatural to disable or kill plantation owners or address interpersonal conflict. Harming practices or poisonings were a viable response or cause to many conflicts within both white and Black communities in the eighteenth and nineteenth century.

Incidents of poisoning were a resistive response to power structures of plantation life. In response to the increase of poisonings occurring throughout the southern plantations, swift and harsh punishments were executed, typically by prosecution and hanging, castration, or burning. Criminal prosecutions and indictments of enslaved Blacks throughout the nineteenth century were so frequent that local courts increased legislation throughout the South, in all cases suggesting capital punishment for the seditious acts and were treated with high level of importance and publicly outcry. Often times, poisoning enabled slaves to

work slower or not at all due to illness, allowing them to vacate their assignments for a time, slowing labor and production.



AN

OFFICIAL REPORT

OF THE

TRIALS OF SUNDRY NEGROES,

CHARGED

WITH AN ATTEMPT TO RAISE

AN INSURRECTION

IN THE STATE OF SOUTH-CAROLINA:

PRECEDED BY AN

INTRODUCTION AND NARRATIVE;

AND

IN AN APPENDIX,

A REPORT OF THE TRIALS OF

FOUR WHITE PERSONS,

ON INDICTMENTS FOR ATTEMPTING TO EXCITE THE SLAVES TO INSURRECTION.

Prepared and Published at the request of the Court.

BY LIONEL H. KENNEDY & THOMAS PARKER,
Members of the Charleston Bar, and the Presiding Magistrates of the Court.

CHARLESTON:
PRINTED BY JAMES R. SCHENCK, 23, BROAD-STREET.

1822.

Figure 4.1 Image of Title Page of Denmark Vesey trial that reads "An official report of the trials of sundry Negroes, charged with an attempt to raise an insurrection in the state of South-Carolina : preceded by an introduction and narrative : and, in an appendix, a report of the trials of four white persons on indictments for attempting to excite the slaves to insurrection"

"The Nat Turner insurrection in Virginia and the Vesey uprising in Charleston was discussed often, in my presence, by my parents and friends. I learned that revolts of slaves in Martinique, Antigua, Santiago, Caracas and Tortugus, was known all over the South. Slaves were about aa well aware of what was going on, as their masters were. However the masters made it harder for their slaves for a while."—Daniel Goddard, Ex-Slave 74 Years Old

Daniel Goddard was born in Columbia, South Carolina right before the end of slavery on February 14, 1863. In his well-spoken interview delivered to the WPA, he mentions that he would even have been considered free in the northern states if he were born just a month earlier in January. The concept of freedom was an early ambition of his as he envisioned it even before his birth. Remarkably, Goddard had much to impart when asked about his life and "the effort of slaves to shake off the shackles." He recalled that long before his time that his uncle participated in a ship insurrection in the early 1830s, a story that inspired him. He noted the crew overthrew the crew members in New Orleans, then travelled and resettled in the Bahama Islands.

Goddard continues with histories of ship insurrections on the "L'Amada"[222] where he "heard about the other slave revolts, where that African prince, one of a large number of slaves that were kidnaped, took over the Spanish ship L'Amada, killing two of the officers. The remaining officers promised to return the slaves to Africa but slyly turned the ship to port in Connecticut. There the Spanish minister at Washington demanded the slaves, as pirates. Appeal was made to the courts and the United States Court ruled that slavery was not legal in Spain and declared the slaves free." A well-educated man, Goddard recounted the events of the Amistad with ease and pride.

[222] Marcus Rediker, *The Amistad Rebellion: an Atlantic Odyssey of Slavery and Freedom,* pg. 13-20, 101-104

After enslavement Goddard was able to access education through northern Freedman's Bureau and studied in Boston earning the equivalent of a high school education. With his education he was later able to work as porter for Columbia's morning newspaper, the State Paper Company. Goddard's testimony often recalls major political events and opinions and even a chance encounter with Frederick Douglass, whom he knew at the time as the "United States Minister to Hayti" and "eminent as an orator." Whether it was his education or his work experiences with the daily newspaper, Goddard was imbued with strong examples of enslaved resistance in the Americas.

His running list of insurrections was indeed thorough and he even kept an1860s Census that lists 487,970 free Negroes and 3, 952, 760 slaves in the United States just a few years before he was born. Whether this data was accurate or not he states, "I am not at all surprised at the number of free Negroes. Many South Carolina families freed a number of their slaves. Some slaves had the luck to be able to buy their freedom and many others escaped to free areas. The problem of slavery as a rule, was a question of wits, the slave to escape and the master to keep him from escaping." For one to recount various uprisings in his manner, he recognized that knowledge and strategy was key in aligning against the colonial structure. The enduring legacy of the such revolts stateside and elsewhere in the Americas undoubtedly spread amongst enslaved groups all over the western hemisphere. Thus as Goddard describes, "The Nat Turner insurrection in Virginia and the Vesey uprising in Charleston was discussed often, in my presence, by my parents and friends. I learned that revolts of slaves in Martinique, Antigua, Santiago, Caracas and Tortugus, was known all over the South." Even decades after such events,

enslaved communities shared the news of uprisings as a legacy of Black resistance and Black possibility. Goddard's family was no different and the consistent messaging of revolts occurring throughout the Americas signaled to many enslaved that uprising was a real possibility if groups galvanized together. As Goddard puts it simply, "Slaves were about as well aware of what was going on, as their masters were. However the masters made it harder for their slaves for a while."[223]The circulating knowledge of uprisings and insurrection at the beginning of the nineteenth century, left white enslavers in constant fear as they faced growing dread and dysfunction amongst their enslaved populations in the Americas[224].

For slave owners, the early nineteenth century was marked by the largest and only successful revolt of enslaved Africans in the western hemisphere striking a deep nerve of defeat for enslavers and deep cord of inspiration for the enslaved. From 1791 to 1803 the Haitian Revolution of invoked a series of revolts and political strategies on the side of enslaved Blacks to gain independence that was ultimately achieved in 1804. The consequences of the achievement would be long lasting and resonate within Charleston. The Denmark Vesey Conspiracy, that of which Goddard's parents and their friends discussed in his presence was a key event in the history of Charleston and a prime example of how resistance through subtle but intentional invocations of conjure suggest that conjuring networks informed by Angolan born Africans in South Carolina were able to sustain and inform resistance movements, actualized or otherwise.

[223] Daniel Goddard, Eddington-Hunter, pg. 150
[224] Cedric Robinson, *Black Movements in America,* pg. 35-37; In *Black Movements in America*, Cedric Robinson highlights the consistent efforts by enslaved people in the english colonies to suppress enslaved Insurrections all throughout Southern entrepôts.

Haitian Revolution

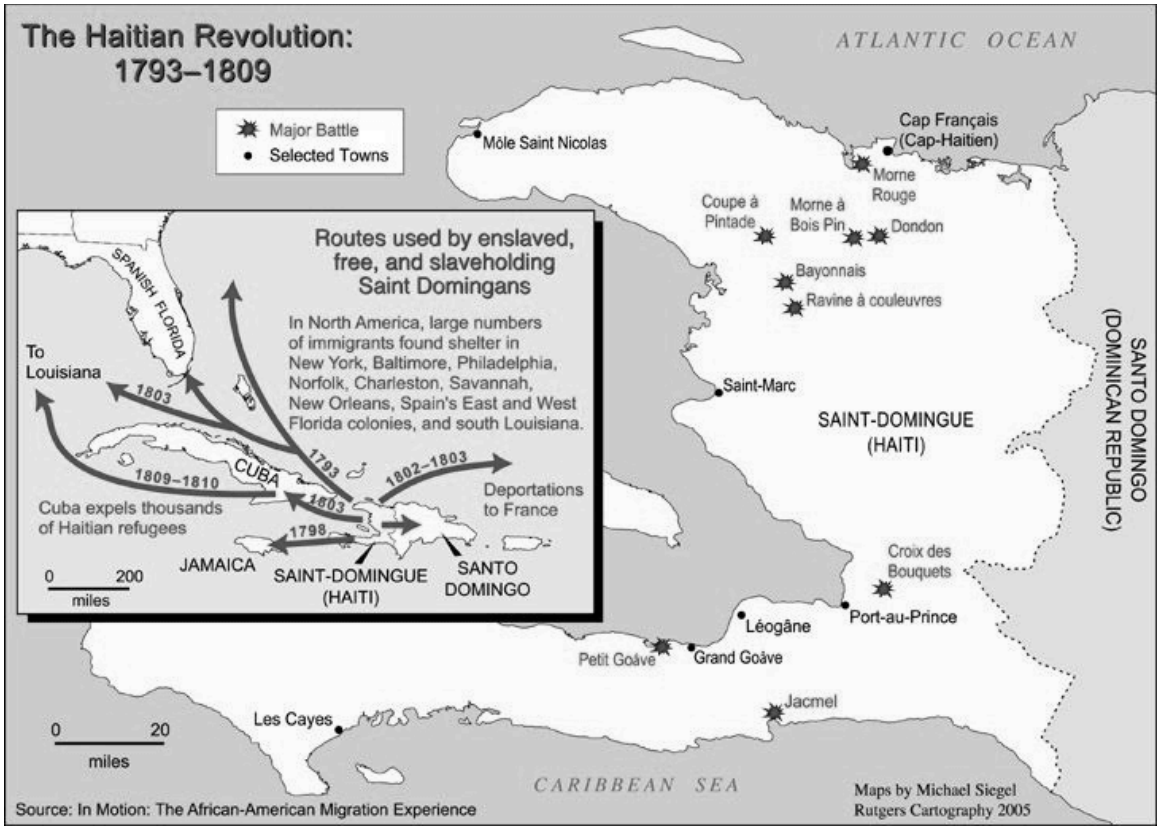


Figure 4.2 Map of Haitian Revolution

The Haitian Revolution, the only successful Black revolt in the Americas, was a cataclysmic Atlantic event that brought to life the ultimate white fears of a successful enslaved revolution. Enslaved hostility and hatred for the planter class was mounting for decades prior to the revolution. In 1789, French colony of Saint-Domingue produced more than sixty percent of the world's coffee and forty percent of the sugar imported by France and Britain. The island colony of Saint-Domingue was the most profitable and among one of the most overworked colonies in the Caribbean. However, even with high death rates amongst all ages and sexes, the constant import of enslaved persons and

growing racial and class tensions on the island lead to the inevitability of revolution. On the eve of the revolution, according to Laurent Dubois “there were roughly 465,000 slaves in the colony, 31,000 whites, and 28,000 free colored” indicating a severe outnumbering of enslaved people to their colonial authority. Two-thirds of the enslaved populations were African born and in the years right before the revolution Kongo slaves accounted for forty percent of the slaves on sugar plantations.[225]

The use of spirituality and poisons were known and practiced widely before and during the revolution. Tensions between grand blancs, mulattoes, and enslaved Africans were growing well before the 1791 clash and conspiracies and actual rebellions in Haiti were often lead, at least, in part by Haitian Vodou or other African syncretic religious motivation. Makandal, a charismatic maroon leader who encouraged poisoning one’s master and raiding plantations, caused great fear amongst owners. In 1757, the French, fearing that the guerrilla leader and religious herbalist Makandal would kill all the whites from the colony, tortured an ally of Makandal into divulging information that led to Makandal's capture. After six years of planning and building up an organization of Black slaves throughout Haiti to poison the French, Makandal was burned at the stake in the center square of Port-au-Prince in front of everyone. Even at his burning, followers still believed he escaped death by changing form and flying away.[226]

The series of revolts that started the Haitian Revolution in 1791 began with a religious incursion by grand blancs (or the white planter class) on a Haitian Vodou ceremony attended by thousands of enslaved that summer. On the night of August

[225] Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World* ( ) pg. 30-32, 41-44, 51
[226] Carolyn Fick, *The Making of Haiti*, pg. 59-69

21,1791, slaves attended a secret vodou meeting lead by High Priest Dutty Boukman and Cecile Fatiman, a notable vodou mambo priestess.[227] As C.L.R. James writes:

> "On the night of the 22nd a tropical storm raged, with lIghtning and gusts of wind and heavy showers of rain. Carrying torches to light their way, the leaders of the revolt met in an open space in the thick forests of the Morne Rouge, a mountain overlooking Le Cap. There Boukman gave the last instructions and, after Voodoo incantations and the sucking of the blood of a stuck pig, he stimulated hIs followers by a prayer spoken in creole, which, like so much spoken on such occasions, has remained. 'The god who created the sun which gives us light, who rouses the waves and rules the storm, though hidden in the clouds. he watches us. He sees all that the white man does. The god of the white man inspires him with crime, but our god calls upon us to do good works. Our god who is good to us orders us to revenge our wrongs. He will direct our arms and aid us. Throw away the symbol of the god of the whites who has so often caused us to weep, and listen to the voice of liberty, which speaks in the hearts of us all.'"[228]

That night, invigorated with the spirit of the ceremony, enslaved Haitians began to kill their masters, starting a revolution. Boukman was killed on November 7th, just a few months into the rebellion and his head was ceremoniously set on a pike to dispel notions of his self proclaimed invincibility and as a warning to other enslaved rebelling in the region. Yet, even after Boukman's murder and later in the revolts, more vodou leaders rise in his place and Hyacinthe's leadership as a voodoo leader certainly created epic images of war and destruction on behalf of the French.[229]

---

[227] Fick, *The Making of Haiti* pg. 93; DuBois, *Avengers of the New World,* pg. 100
[228] C.L.R. James, *Black Jacobins* ( ), pg. 87
[229] Fick, *The Making of Haitii,* pg. 139 According to Fick, "Hyacinthe carried with him a talisman made of horsehair, which he waved before his troops to protect them and to reinforce their defiance and determination, crying: 'Forward! Don't be afraid; it's only water coming out of the cannon.' French observers related with incredulity how they would throw themselves directly onto the cannon, stick their arms into the mouth, shout to the others, 'Come, come; I've got it,' but would inevitably be blown to pieces. In great masses, they advanced over the dead bodies

The ultimate victory of Haitian masses over French oppression was a massive blow to all plantation colonies in the Americas, especially those in the antebellum south. The global impact of the Haitian Revolution sent shockwaves of anxiety and fear into those who heard, read, or were able to flee the newly liberated island itself (see Figure 4.2). In the aftermath of the revolution, refugees flocked to southern port cities like Charleston, South Carolina carrying with them the increased tension and dread of uprisings.[230] In newspapers and literature the sensationalism of the Haitian revolution and the vodou incorporated throughout capture the fearful imagination of colonial authorities or decades to come.[231] Haiti's ability to successfully triumph in revolution and construct a Black republic was widely shared in the Atlantic. And for the masses in South Carolina, who may have happened upon the stories of the Black republic, it served as an escape option and an opportunity to truly understand the realized ability to overcome slavery and oppression.

The Denmark Vesey, Gullah Jack, and the 1822 Conspiracy South Carolina

Charleston Mercury, and Morning Advertiser Wednesday, July 3, 1822 The six convicted blacks, who were condemned to death for plotting and attempting an insurrection in this state, were hanged, yesterday morning, between the hours of six and eight, pursuant to their sentence.[1] Denmark Vesey—a free black man—Rolla, Bat-teau, Ned, Peter and Jesse, all five slaves, made up the number.[2]

---

of their comrades, and finally began fighting hand to hand…" forcing men fighting alongside the national guard at a Port-au-Prince post to retreat.

[230] Robert L. Harris, Jr., "Charleston's Free Afro-American Elite: The Brown Fellowship Society and the Humane Brotherhood," *The South Carolina Historical Magazine*, Vol. 82, No. 4 (Oct., 1981), pg. 289

[231] Kirstin L. Squint, "Vodou and Revolt in Literature of the Haitian Revolution,"*CLA Journal*, Vol. 51, No. 2 (December 2007), pg. 170-185; Kieran Murphy, "Magic and Mesmerism in Saint Domingue," *Paroles Gelées*, 24(1), 2008; Nathaniel S. Murrell, "Vodou and the Haitian Struggle: An Afro-Caribbean Religion and the Politics of the Oppressed," in Edozie, Rita Kiki, Glenn A. Chambers, and Tama Hamilton-Wray, eds. *New Frontiers in the Study of the Global African Diaspora: Between Uncharted Themes and Alternative Representations* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2018), pg. 234-240

Amongst the many who continued the charge for liberation inspired by the events of the Haitian Revolution was lay religious leader Denmark Vesey. Denmark Vesey, also known as Telemaque, was a literate carpenter and religious leader who led enslaved Africans in an attempt to cause an insurrection in Charleston, South Carolina. In 1822, Vesey and other key co-conspirators planned a slave revolt with that intended to kill slaveholders in Charleston, liberate the slaves, sacks the city for resources, and sail to the Black republic of Haiti for refuge. The varying testimonial accounts suggest the revolt was organized to involve thousands of urban and plantation slaves in the city and nearby countryside. Charleston authorities uncovered the plot and sent a militia to arrest Vesey and his followers on June 22nd before the uprising could take place on the set date of July 14th.

Scholars of Vesey have grappled with the standard narrative of Vesey's failed plot: whether the attempt to "rise up" in Charleston was an intentional conspiracy or as Richard Wade stated early on, "probably never more than loose talk by aggrieved and embittered" Africans that was ultimately over-exaggerated.[232] This dissertation argues in the tradition of Pearson, Egerton, and Robertson and other antebellum scholars that subscribe that the quelled

[232] Edward A. Pearson, "Trials and Errors: Denmark Vesey and HIs Historians," *The William and Mary Quarterly,* Vol. 59, No. 1 (Jan., 2002), pg. 137-142; Richard Wade, "The Vesey Plot: A Reconsideration," *Journal of Southern History*, 30 (1964), 143-61; William W. Freehling, *Prelude to Civil War: The Nullification Controversy in South Carolina*, 1816-1836 (New York, 1965), p. 53-61; Eugene Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made*, p. 593-97; Sterling Stuckey, *Slave Culture: Nationalist Theory and the Foundations of Black America*, p. 43-53; Johnson and Roark, *Black Masters: A Free Family of Color in the Old South*, p. 37-42; Johnson, "Denmark Vesey and His Co-Conspirators," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d Ser., 58 (2001), p. 915-76

conspiracy was indeed a genuine but failed plot sack the city.[233] Many testimonies suggest the event was in motion. In several trial testimonies, those participating in secret meetings were already known to have gathered arms in advance. Bill Bulkley, a follower and participant, "…was at the meeting of Gullah Jacks party at Bulkleys farm—He was at 2 meetings & he tried to fire the pistol off but could not" and was mindful to keep the additional pikes hidden from his owner's knowledge.[234] Fortunately, *The Denmark Vesey Affair* documentary history provides all primary sources related to the events surrounding the conspiracy itself. The documentary history contains evidence beginning with newspaper accounts, biographical data, both *The Official Report* and the Senate Transcript, as well as eyewitness testimonies that illustrate the detailed nature of the conspiracy. Here, this dissertation will examine the background and plot of the alleged conspiracy and the conjuring elements of the trial therein using selected primary sources from the documentary history text.

Denmark Vesey

Biography of Denmark Vesey, August 1822

As Denmark Vesey has occupied so large a place in the conspiracy, a brief notice of him will, perhaps, be not devoid of interest. The following anecdote will show how near he was to the chance of being distinguished in the bloody events of San Domingo.[1] During the revolutionary war, Captain Vesey, now an old resident of this city,[2] com-manded a ship that traded between St. Thomas and Cape Francais (San Domingo.) He was engaged in supplying the French of that Island with Slaves. In the year 1781, he took on board, at St. Thomas', 390 slaves and sailed for the Cape; on the passage, he and his officers were struck with the beauty, alertness and intelligence, of a boy about 14 years of age,[3] whom they made a pet of, by taking him into the cabin, changing his apparel, and calling him, by way of distinction, *Telemaque*. (which

[233] Douglas Egerton, *He Shall Go Out Free: The Lives of Denmark Vesey*; Robertson, *Denmark Vesey*; Edward A. Pearson, ed., *Designs against Charleston: The Trial Record of the Denmark Vesey Slave Conspiracy of 1822*.
[234] Senate Transcript, *The Vesey Affair,* pg. 315

appellation has since, by gradual corruption, among the negroes, been changed *to Denmark,* or sometimes *Telmak*).[4] On the arrival,[5] however, of the ship at the Cape, Captain Vesey, having no use for the boy, sold him among his other slaves, and returned to St. Thomas'. On his next voyage to the Cape, he was surprised to learn from his consignee that Telemaque would be re-turned on his hands, as the planter, who had purchased him, represented him unsound, and subject to epileptic fits. According to the custom of trade in that place, the boy was placed in the hands of the king's physician, who decided that he was unsound, and cap-tain Vesey was compelled to take him back, of which he had no occasion to repent, as Denmark proved, for 20 years, a most faithful slave.[235]

According to record, Telemaque, later known as Denmark Vesey, was born in to slavery in the Danish Island of St. Thomas in 1767. He was purchased when he as fourteen by captain Joseph Vesey and sent to work in Saint Domingue for a year but was returned to his purchaser due to unsoundness, and was finally resettled in Charleston. Thereafter, and with no further complaint from captain Vesey, Telemaque proved to be "a most faithful slave" for the next twenty years. Vesey won the fifteen hundred dollar East Bay Street Lottery in 1899 and purchased his freedom around the age of thirty-two. He was unable buy the freedom of his wife Beck but remarried, had several children, and Vesey became a notable carpenter and active leader in the Second Presbyterian Church and later a founder of Charleston's newly minted AME Church.

After gaining his freedom, Vesey continued to identify and engage with many enslaved. As a lay preacher, one participant observed that, "He said he would not like to have a white man in his presence—that he had a great hatred for the whites, and that if all were like him they would resist the whites—he studies all he can to put it into the heads of the blacks to have a rising against the whites, and tried to induce me to join—he tries to induce all his ac-quaintances—

[235] "Preconditions" in *The Denmark Vesey Affair*, pg. 2.

this has been his chief study and delight for a considerable time…he studies the Bible a great deal and tries to prove from it that slavery and bondage is against the Bible."[236] In the years and months before the plot attempt, Vesey like many other free and enslaved Africans in Charleston became increasingly disgruntled with the conditions of slavery and began organizing comrades to break away from bondage.

Several regional events served as precursors to the conspiracy and failed plot. One, after the founding of the AME Church, white officials resented, harassed, and heavily regulated the proceedings of Black clergy in Charleston. Restrictions required that "…meetings shall be held at suitable times and places, so as to suit best with the convenience of all concerned; and to avoid giving offence to the civil authority." For a time, Vesey was a congregant of Second Presbyterian Church with white led ministers. However, like many Black Carolinians, who outnumbered white congregants ten to one, Vesey became increasingly interested in the Reverend Richard Allen's African Methodist Episcopal Church, founded in Philadelphia in 1816. Black congregants ultimately withdrew from the white church to construct an independent AME Church, often referred to as the "African Church," which became a worship meeting place for followers of Vesey.

Two, Charleston newspapers after 1804 continued to publish news about Haiti. Haiti even sent out invitations to Black people in North America to improve their condition and settle in Haiti. An excerpt from a call circulating in the 1818

[236] *The Vesey Affair*, pg. 181

New York Commercial Advertiser illustrates the clear opportunities for those able to seek refuge in the Black republic:

> "The men of color, who may desire to become Haytians, will find but little difference in our manner of living from that of the places they shall leave. They who possess some capital will use it either in commerce or in cultivation, which produces ordinarily more than fifty per cent per annum beyond the original disbursement. Men of all arts—of all trades—smiths, braziers, tinmen, ship and house carpenters, millwrights, caulkers, coopers, cabinet makers, boot and shoemakers—can earn in this place from six to twelve dollars per week, and even more, according to their talents and activity. The cultivators of the soil can get from two to four dollars per week, besides board and lodging; those among the last class who have numerous families, can find portions of land already planted, either in coffee, sugar cane, or cotton, to work on shares with the proprietors. The result of these associations are very advantageous to those who undertake them. Others can raise stock, particularly horned cattle—Laborers are in great demand, and will easily gain a dollar per day, if industrious, besides boarding and lodging. Sailors will find employment, either in the coasting trade or long voyages. In a word, all such as will come with a resolution to establish themselves in this country, will be protected by the government, which, on its part, will grant bounties of land to those who wish it. Men, women and children, of our color, let them come, we will receive them with pleasure, and we wait for them with open arms."[237]

The impact and aftermath of the Haitian Revolution, together with published offers of welcome to Black emigrants who might move to the Black republic, fostered dreams of freedom and had an impact on the mind of the slaves. Lastly, in the years before the conspiracy newspapers published a number of stories

[237] "Preconditions" in *The Vesey Affair*, pg. 13

about slaves found brutally murdered in and around Charleston. Stories and rumors of such murders fueled about the tensions in the area.[238]To further already exacerbated conditions, the economic Panic of 1819 caused major damage to the regions economy, dropping the value of cotton and rice forcing rural planters to sale off slaves to pay off debts. In urban areas, opportunities for enslaved skill workers to hire out labor decreased significantly as funds were in short supply.[239]

In the year of 1821, Vesey and a few comrades began to conspire and plan a revolt. As a lay preacher the AME church, Vesey recruited followers through his religious lessons taught in his home. Often invoking the stories found in the book of Exodus, Vesey was often the "first to rise up and speak" and "read from the Bible" about "how the Children of Israel were delivered out of Egypt from bondage." But, the plot to recruit and strengthen an army to sack Charleston to escape bondage was accelerated with the assistance of Angolan conjurer, and Vesey's most feared co-conspirator, Jack Pritchard, also known as Gullah Jack. Vesey, Gullah Jack, and other lead co-conspirators held numerous secret meetings, some under the guise of religious lesson that eventually gained the

[238]Many instances of slave murders appear in newspapers across the eastern seaboard. A letter reprinted in a New England paper via Camden, South Carolina reads: "'We have had a murder committed in this place, which for atrocity, is unprecedented in the annals of villany. It was the act of John Harris, upon his own slave, a woman. It appears the slave was sick, confined to her bed and unable to work. He went to her hut at the lower end of the town, about 12 at night, dragged her from her bed, and beat her in a most unmerciful manner; then got a rope, one end of which he tied round her neck, and the other round the neck of his horse, and dragged her about the streets, till she was apparently dead. He then built a fire upon her and left her. The only witnesses of this diabolical act were two poor old women, who could do nothing in defence of the victim. The murderer was apprehended next morning, and bound over to make his appearance to next court.' A bailable offence!!" in *The Denmark Vesey Affair: A Documentary History* edited by Douglas R. Egerton and Robert L. Paquette, eds.,pg. 50.
[239] Edward A. Pearson, "Trials and Errors: Denmark Vesey and His Historians," pg. 140.

support of both slaves and free Blacks throughout the city and countryside who were willing to participate in revolt. Vesey's recruitment of Gullah Jack allowed knowledge of the plans to spread among thousands of enslaved in Charleston's countryside. Vesey created an extensive network of supporters by using Gullah Jack and other personal connection to bring rural and urban enslaved.

Gullah Jack

> THE TRIAL of GULLAH JACK a Negro Man, belonging to Mr. Pritchard—His owner attending.[1]
> EVIDENCE. WITNESS No. 10, testified as follows:—Jack Pritchard also called on me about this business—he is sometimes called Gullah Jack. sometimes Cooter Jack; he gave me some dry food, consisting of parched corn and ground nuts, and said eat that and nothing else on the morning it breaks out, and when you join us as we pass put into your mouth this crab-claw and you can't then be wounded, and said he, I give the same to the rest of my troops—if you drop the large crab-claw out of your mouth, then put in the small one—said I, when do you break out and have you got arms—he said a plenty, but they are over Boundary-street, we can't get at them now, but as soon as the patrol was slack they could get them—this was previous to the 16th June, on which day he said they were to break out—On that day he came to me and said they would not break out that night as the patrol was too strong—he said he would let me know when they were ready—that Sunday fortnight, the 30th June, he came to me and said I must lay by still, they would not break out then, that he had been round to all his company and found them cowards. I said thank God then—he said give me back my corn and cullah (that is crab-claw). I said I would not and upbraided him for having deluded so many. He said all his country born promised to join because he was a doctor (that is a conjurer)—He said the white people were looking for him and he was afraid of being taken; that two men came to his master's wharf and asked him if he knew Gullah Jack, and that he told them no—*he said his charms would not protect him from the treachery of his own colour.*—[240]

Arguably conjuring networks already present and operating in the region bolstered Vesey's network of followers. As previous chapters have suggested, burgeoning conjure networks were deeply informed by Bakongo ways of knowing and cultural contributions. Within Vesey's network, while he attracted many urban slaves due to his urban proximity and free status, it is with Gullah Jack's participation as a lead co-conspirator that support for insurrections was amplified

[240] Trials, *The Vesey Affair,* pg.197

due to the respected private nature of practice of conjure already solidified in the region.

Using his African born knowledge and identity, Gullah Jack was crucial in recruiting African-born slaves as soldiers and provided them with charms as protection against the "buckra" (whites).[241] His Angolan background affirmed his spiritual authority and his late arrival to Americas authority suggests his past life memories of African freedom certainly guided his principled approach to the alleged day of uprising. Jack Pritchard arrived into Charleston as purchase of Paul Pritchard, Sr. in 1807, right before congressional bans on Africans took effect. As previously stated, the English colonies in the revolutionary ages of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, and especially South Carolina, remained in a constant state of fear as slave uprisings and rebellion continued to occur well in to the 1800s. However, South Carolina's legislation in the 1800s reopened direct importing of Africans by demand of planters expanding plantations in the Backcountry.

From 1804 to 1808, Charleston merchants imported some 75,000 slaves, more than the total brought to South Carolina in the 75 years before the American Revolution. Some of these slaves were sold to the Backcountry and other areas, but many of the new Africans were held in Charleston and on nearby Lowcountry plantations.[242]The infusion of the Lowcountry with imported Africans early in the nineteenth century certainly informed how information and relationships were developed along ethnic and

[241] Slaves in the antebellum South and in other slaveholding regions in the Americas used "Buckra" to refer to white persons. Hugh Goldie, *Dictionary of the Efik Language* (Glasgow, UK, 1862), 89–90, traced the word to the Efik "mbakara," meaning "master."
[242] James A. McMillin, *The Final Victims: Foreign Slave Trade to North America, 1783-1810* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2004) pg. 86

cultural lines. Lastly, with constant threat of insurrection by means of poisoning or murderous revolt, planters were wary of any conspiracy and sought to quell any and all suspicious activity.

Gullah Jack's biographical information provided by slave importer Zephaniah Kingsley states that, "…(Gullah Jack or Jack the Conjurer was a (priest) (Conjurer) in his own country, M'Choolay Moreema, where a dialect of the Angola Tongue is spoken clear across Africa from sea to sea, a distance perhaps of three thousand miles: I purchased him a prisoner of war at Zinguebar. He had his conjuring implements with him in a bag which he brought onboard the ship and always retained them." The port of Zinguebar, adjacent to the island of Zanzibar along the Swahili Coast, was where Swahili and Arab traders sold Central African men and women from a broad region of Central and Eastern Africa to the Americas in the nineteenth century. Though the human trade out of the Eastern African port cities like Zinguebar, Mozambique, Kilwa, and others started relatively late and was generally small scale, prisoners of war like Jack Pritchard arrived to North American shores via the Transatlantic trade as a conjurer with his own materials, arguably a mobile religious totem such as an *nkisi* charm that was readily present all through Central Africa. It is further surmised that possession of his "conjuring implements," suggests that he may have either been an *nganga* or informed on the spiritual practices in his community to insist on retaining them so closely.

The specific location of M'choolay Moreema is unclear at this time, however, as evidenced in chapter one, fundamental linguistic and cultural similarities unites Angola and the rest of West Central Africa together. Pritchard may have spoken KiKongo

and/or Kimbundu, two of the many Central African Bantu sublanguage groups used in the region. Additionally, Christianization efforts in the eighteenth century and early nineteenth century came much later, were weaker in reach, and were much more short lived than those of the seventeenth century suggesting that indigenous African religious influence was greatly practiced and retained.[243] Trial records of Jack's participation in the plot aligns with his seriousness of the plan and the conjuring elements that would be prescribed in order to achieve protection, invincibility, and ultimately success.

In testimonies from the trial, Jack was said to have used his spiritual powers to terrify others into keeping silent about the conspiracy. Billy Bulkley observed in his attendance during meetings with Gullah Jack "about the means of rising against the whites" that "they roasted a fowl, and eat it half raw, as an evidence of union"[244]and Gullah Jack, as a recent arrival to the Americas, consumed the half raw fowl which draws upon similar ceremonies used in pre-revolutionary Haiti, where Kongo inspired spiritual ceremonies sustained daily life. Haitian Vodou ceremonies often required blood sacrifice of fowls, birds, or other animals appropriate for such ceremonies.[245] Likewise, for Gullah Jack, an Angolan born man and identified conjurer, his peculiar preparation of meals and manners meaning-making with other followers contribute an added level of mystique and sensation to the conspiracy. Nonetheless, his disposition and African identity channeled fear and commanded respect and loyalty from all his followers.

---

[243] Gwendolyn Midlo Hall "Bantulands: West Central Africa and Mozambique" in *Slavery and African Ethnicities in the Americas: Restoring the Links* (University of North Carolina Press, 2005) pg. 153-156
[244] *The Vesey Affair*, pg. 256
[245] Margarita Fernandez Olmos and Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert, *Sacred Possession*, 13-36.

Gullah Jack's participation also elevated the stakes for participants. In full testimony of the intended plot alleged by co-conspirator, Gullah Jack suggested that he required members in his company to hold crab claws and grounded powder in their mouths to effort in protection. If the followers rejected this or other directives, Jack threatened to injure any potential defector. Other participants organizing the liberation plots knew as Gullah Jack did, that "charms would not protect him from the treachery of his own colour," if anyone were to expose the plot or any of it intendants. Though research and records reflect that participants were afraid of him as a conjurer, here this dissertation suggests that along with fear there was an elevated sense of respect and legitimacy regarding Gullah Jack conjuring powers that contributes to his formidability. After local authorities captured Jack, one enslaved witness literally begged the court to send him out of state because he considered his life in danger. Both American and African-born slaves believed in his powers, and Gullah Jack's leadership magnifies the role of conjurers and conjuring networks in the region.

The ethnic contributions of Angolans towards Lowcountry ritual healing and resistance measures authenticated on some level the plot to overtake Charleston itself. Like their Haitian predecessors that incorporated many African based rituals into their resistance practices, it is not inconceivable to believe that Vesey's recruitment of Gullah Jack furthered the credibility of the mission. As Walter Rucker notes: "Gullah Jack was one of the most important recruiters in the conspiracy, due primarily to his influence over fellow slaves. Feared by others because of his abilities, this "little man who can't be

killed, shot or taken" was well respected in Charleston and in the surrounding countryside."[246]

Many followers feared Jack and he was also very cunning in some instances to persuade followers into participating. As part of the plan to plunder Charleston, Gullah Jack encouraged followers to take up poisons water pumps around the city. Harry Haig's testimony recounts how Gullah Jack approached him to act in the poisoning cabal. "Jack was going to give me a bottle with poison to put into my masters pump & into as many pumps as he could about town & he said he would give other bottles to those he could trust to" and Haig did not feel safe confessing this knowledge until the trial. Haig went on to say, "I refused to poison as I considered that murder and that God would not pardon me 'twas not like fair fighting. Jack charmed Julius and myself at last—& we then consented to join." It is unclear what specific methods Gullah Jack used to convince Haig and other followers to join the poison plot. But what is clear is that what knowledge and skills Gullah Jack possessed he was willing to share with willing apprentices.

Tom Russell, a Blacksmith and companion of Jack, was a partner and studied doctoring skills under Gullah Jack. In fact, Russell was present and involved conversation persuading Haig to poison water supplies. Haig noted, "Tom Russell the Blacksmith and Jack are partners…Jack learn't him to be a Doctor…Jack said Tom was his second and when you did not see him and see Tom you see him." Gullah Jack, like other conjurers in the area made their forms of doctoring accessible to interested

[246] Walter Rucker, "Conjure, Magic, and Power: The Influence of Afro-Atlantic Religious Practices on SlaveResistance and Rebellion," *Journal of Black Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 1 (Sep., 2001), pp. 84-103

learners. And though conjuring was perceived negatively in certain Lowcountry communities leading to fearful associations with Gullah Jack himself by some followers, he used his conjuring skills to his advantage, in a “charming” way to increase the enslaved participation.[247]

Conclusion

The conspiracy began to come to light on May 22, 1822, when subsidiary recruiter William Paul spoke of the planned uprising to Peter Prioleau. Word of the conspiracy caught the ears of planters but both participants remained composed and did not reveal the details of the plot. However weeks later, two slaves, Joe La Roche and Rolla Bennett Jr., tried to recruit their friend George Wilson. George Wilson urged his fellow slaves to abandon the plan as ‘unchristian’ on June 9 and ultimately informed his owner of the intended plot five days later. It is undetermined whether or not Gullah Jack’s co-leadership shaped Wilson’s ‘unchristian’ attitude towards the plan, but Jack’s African identity and ways off knowing probably did not positively aid in making his decision.

Vesey, Gullah Jack, and other co-conspirators were among the first group of men to be swiftly judged guilty by the secret proceedings of a city court and condemned to death. Gullah Jack was arrested for his part in the plot on July 5, 1822 and was tried and hung for his role in the planning, along with one hundred and thirty other followers in total. Gullah Jack's Central African spiritual and ethnic identity seemingly incensed the courts as he was deemed as necromancer and was alleged to have engaged with “all the powers of darkness.” In a damning sentencing delivered by Charleston

[247] *The Vesey Affair,* pg. 304

prosecutors Jack's "wicked designs" against Charleston were condemn in dramatic fashion:

> "In the prosecution of your wicked designs, you were not satisfied with resorting to natural and ordinary means, but endeavoured to enlist on your behalf, all the powers of darkness, and employed for that purpose, the most disgusting mummery and superstition. You represented yourself as invulnerable; that you could neither be taken nor destroyed, and that all who fought under your ban-ners would be invincible. While such wretched expedients are calculated to excite the confidence, or to alarm the fears of the ignorant and credulous, they produce no other emotion in the minds of the intelligent and enlightened, but contempt and disgust. Your boasted charms have not preserved yourself, and of course could not protect others.— "Your Altars and your Gods have sunk together in the dust. The airy spectres, conjured by you, have been chased away by the superior light of Truth, and you stand exposed, the miserable and deluded victim of offended Justice."[248]

Traditional African identities and relationship with African custom were decried as demonic and certainly dangerous as superstition was associated with unsoundness and ill-mannered behavior. Yet, Jack's African identity coupled with Vesey's Christian liberation ideology and strategic plot to galvanize the oppressed against the oppressor attracted many of the followers that joined the conspiracy. Walter Rucker has already posited the early Pan-African implications of the failed plot and the value of ethnic enclaves in its organization.[249]

[248] Trials, pg. 200
[249] Walter C. Rucker, "I Will Gather All Nations': Resistance, Culture, and Pan-African Collaboration in Denmark Vesey's South Carolina," *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 86, No. 2 (Spring, 2001), pg. 139

The Denmark Vesey Conspiracy was an example of how white fear of enslaved revolution was instigated by the power of African born conjurers. Enslaved Africans in South Carolina were in constant receipt of messaging of international news and ideas of liberation between city and countryside beyond domestic and foreign boundaries fluidly and often under the radar of colonial authority. In a world post-Haitian Revolution America, enslaved Africans in South Carolina had new faith in the possibilities of freedom. If and when possible, they also used their ethnic identities and indigenous practices could as a tool to overthrow their masters. As they were able to learn of news of the Black republic, those like Vesey and others, thereafter aspired to reach Haiti itself or achieve that same sense of liberation in America.

Gullah Jack's presence draws upon important Angolan identified enslaved conjuring networks and tapped into the tradition known to practitioners that existed in the Lowcountry within the last century. Certainly, plenty of enslaved participants may not have subscribed to conjuring or known about its network of practitioners or clients but for those who subscribed to or feared the power of conjure, Gullah Jack's participation amplified the propensity of the conspiracy to occur immensely. Vesey understood that in order to be successful, he and co-conspirators had to be "unanimous and courageous" in order to defeat white Charlestonians. Vesey was religious. Jack had strong connection with his Angolan identity and spirituality. Yet, revolution was, at times, secular and singular in its mission, effacing religion and cultural mores. And it will incorporate whatever was necessary and has any ounce of efficacy in order to help enslaved Africans achieve freedom. And this case, as Michael Gomez, states that "with the Bible in his right hand and Gullah Jack to his left, Denmark Vesey prepared to

initiate the apocalypse" and Gullah Jack's identity and traditional knowledge were certainly used as a tool to intensify a strategy in order for Vesey to capture audiences and organize the plot's execution.[250]

[250] Michael Gomez, *Exchanging Our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South*, pg. 2

Conclusion

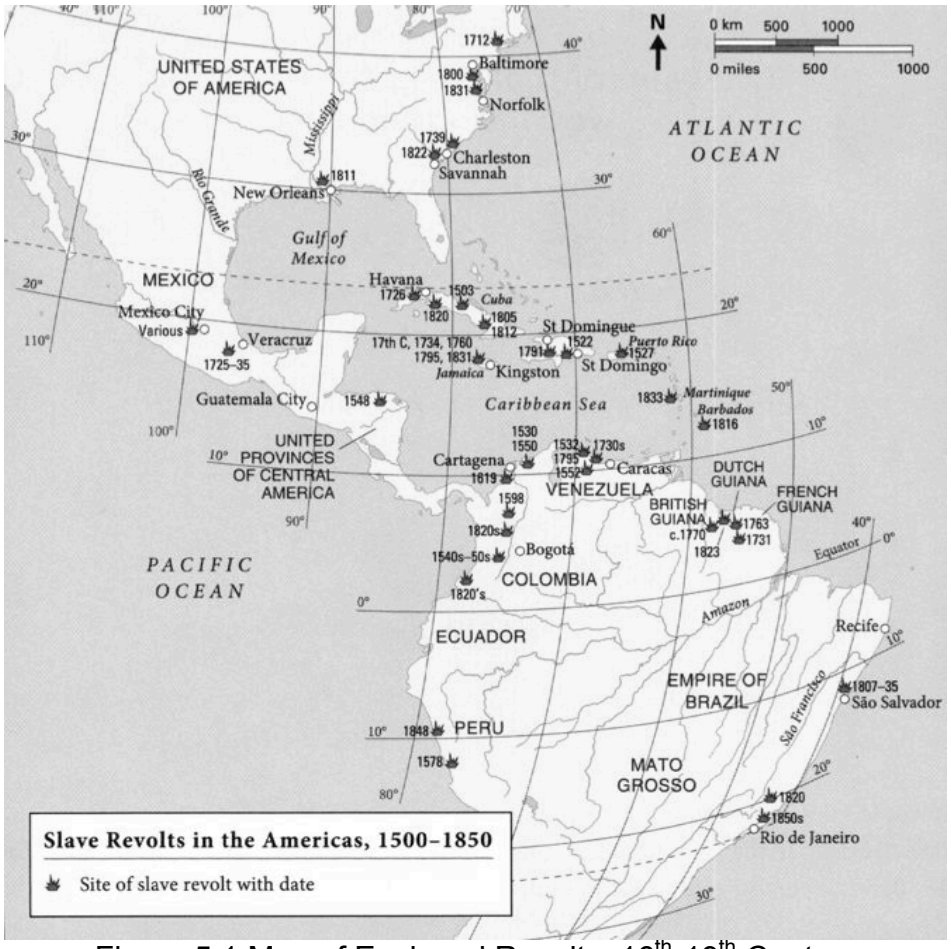


Figure 5.1 Map of Enslaved Revolts, 16th-19th Century

In Summary, there is a strong relationship between African-American conjure and Bakongo precolonial spirituality and custom. The origins of such tradition begin long before the introduction of Christianity to the kingdom. Bakongo politics, and their hopes of maintaining precolonial order and customs were sustained throughout the transformations of the Christianity in the region. The decisions of the Bakongo to employ religion as tool of power, or solace,

whether political or personal, were foremost guided by Bakongo ways of knowing.

The Bakongo Diaspora in the Atlantic had a direct impact on colonial South Carolina life and character. Kongo-Angolan presence in the earliest colonies offered those arriving thereafter the opportunity to reaffirm their ethnic identity in spite of the treacherous Middle Passage and harsh realities of enslavement. Death, disease, and oppression were mainstays of the colonial era and runaway Africans and maroon communities grew in response to the harsh conditions of plantation life. Insurrections like the one led by “Bastian, the Spanish Negro” demonstrated how Africans worked cohesively to plot for freedom using ethnic and cultural ties. The Stono Rebellion itself was an example of where ethnic identity united Central Africans to exact destruction.

Enslaved Africans in South Carolina consistently demonstrated the resolve to create their own forms of daily life and, at times, utilized their identity and practices to live within and challenge the colonial project. The events documented in the previous chapters merely scratch the surface of the Transatlantic past and South Carolina remained a hotbed for white fears of enslaved uprising joining in with the rest of the Americas. The active participation of Angolan-born identities early events like the Stono Rebellion and Denmark Vesey Conspiracy fall within a wider tradition of enslaved insurrection in the

Americas, that of which had been reaching all edges of Atlantic slavery in the Americas for nearly two centuries (see Figure 5.1).[251]

In other instances, Africans looked to the land and inward towards community and spirituality to create networks of healing and protection. Poisonings were unusually endemic to South Carolina, probably because Africans quickly became familiar with the varying landscapes. However, The Denmark Vesey Conspiracy was an example of how white fear of enslaved revolution was instigated by the power of African born conjurers. To close, this dissertation examined how the persistence of the spirit, the power of Bakongo cultural retentions, informed the production of South Carolina conjuring culture and emphasized a stronger relationship between BaKongo cosmology and social and cultural life in the American South.

[251] In addition to the Vesey Conspiracy, between 1800 and 1865, in the U.S. alone there were several major enslaved uprisings: Gabriel Prosser's revolt (1800), Nat Turner's revolt (1831), and John Brown's raid (1859) in addition to the quagmire of major revolts occurring in the Caribbean and South American, most of which were violent and destructive.

Bibliography

Databases

Eltis, David. *Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database*. https://slavevoyages.org/.
Hall, Gwendolyn. *Afro-Louisiana History and Genealogy*. https://www.ibiblio.org/laslave/.

Archives

Arquivo Nacional Torre Do Tombo, Lisbon, Portugal

Newspapers

The City Gazette, St. George's Dorchester
The Pennsylvania Gazette
Purdie's Virginia Gazette
The Maryland Gazette
South Carolina Gazette
The Virginia Gazette
The Philadelphia Inquirer

Anderson, Jeffrey Elton. *"*Conjure in African-American Society." PhD diss., University of Florida, 2002.

Apter, Andrew. "On African Origins: Creolization and Connaissance in Haitian Vodou."*American Ethnologist* 29, Vol. 29, No. 2 (May, 2002), pp. 233-260.

Ankarloo, Bengt and Gustav Henningsen, eds. *Early Modern European Witchcraft: Centres and Peripheries.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990.

Baer, Florence E. *Sources and Analogues of the Uncle Remus Tales*. Helsinki: Folklore Fellows Communications, 1981.

Balandier, Georges. *Daily Life in the Kingdom of the Kongo: from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century*. New York: The World Publishing Co., 1969.

Ball, Charles. *Slavery in the United States: a Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Charles Ball*. New York: J. S. Taylor, 1837.

Bancroft, Frederic. *Slave Trading in the Old South*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996.

Battell, Andrew. *The Strange Adventures of Andrew Battell of Leigh, in Angola and the Adjoining Regions*. London: The Hakluyt Society, 1901.

Berlin, Ira. *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries Slavery in North America*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998.

Birmingham, David. *Central Africa to 1870*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.

Birmingham, David. *Trade and Conflict in Angola: The Mbundu and Their Neighbours Under the Influence of the Portuguese 1483- 1790*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966.

Bockie, Simon. *Death and the Invisible Powers: the World of Kongo Belief*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993.

Brásio, António. *Monumenta Missionaria Africana.* Lisbon: Agència Geral do Ultramar, Divisão de Publicações e Biblioteca,1952.

Brentano, Franz. *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*, Routledge Classics. Oxon: Routledge, 2015.

Brown, Kenneth L. "Ethnographic Analogy, Archaeology, and the African Diaspora: Perspectives from a Tenant Community." *Historical Archaeology*, Vol. 38, No. 1, Transcending Boundaries, Transforming the Discipline: African Diaspora Archaeologies in the New Millennium (2004), pp. 79-89.

Caltanissetta, Luca da and Francois Botnick trans. *Diarie Congolais, (1690-1701) Traduit du manuscrit italien inédit et annoté par François Bontinck.* Louvain: Editions Nauwelaerts, 1970.

Carney, Judith A. *Black Rice: The African Origins of Rice Cultivation in the Americas*. Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2001.

Cavazzi, Giovanni Antonio and Fortunato Alamandini. *Istorica Descrizione de' tre' regni Congo, Matamba et Angola: sitvati nell'Etiopia inferiore occidentale e delle missioni apostoliche esercitateui da religiosi Capuccini*. Bologna: Giacomo Monti, 1687.

Cavazzi, Giovanni A. "Missione Evangelica nel Regno de Congo," MS 1668. Translated by John Thornton. http://www.bu.edu/afam/faculty/john-thornton/cavazzi-missione-evangelica-2/book-3-chapter-1/

Chireau, Yvonne P. *Black Magic: Religion and the African American Conjuring Tradition*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006.

Clark, Elmer T. eds. *The Journal and Letters of Francis Asbury*, II .London: Abingdon Press,1958.

Creel, Margaret Washington. *A Peculiar People: Slave Religion and Community-Culture Among the Gullahs*. New York: New York University Press, 1988.

Deeley, Kathryn H., Matthew Cochran, Mark P. Leone, and Stefan F. Woehlke. “West Central African Spirit Practices in Annapolis, Maryland.” In *Kongo Across the Waters*, edited by Susan Cooksey, 240-244. Gainesville: University of Florida, 2013.

Drums and Shadows: Survival Studies Among the Georgia Coastal Negroes. Athens: University of Georgia Press,1986.

Dubois, Laurent. *Avengers of the New World*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004.

Du Bois, W.E.B. *Suppression of the African Slave Trade to the United States of America, 1638-1870*. New York: Schocken Books, 1969.

Edelson, Max. “Clearing Swamps, Harvesting Forests: Trees and the Making of a Plantation Landscape in the Colonial South Carolina Lowcountry.” *Agricultural History*, Vol. 81, No. 3 (Summer, 2007), pg. 381-406.

Egerton, Douglas. *He Shall Go Out Free: The Lives of Denmark Vesey*. Madison: Madison House Publishers, 1999.

Egerton, Douglas R. and Robert L. Paquette, eds.*The Denmark Vesey Affair: A Documentary History*. Florida: University Press of Florida, 2017.

Fant, Jennie Holton. *The Travelers’ Charleston: Accounts of Charleston and Lowcountry South Carolina, 1666-1861*. Columbia: The University of South Carolina Press, 2016.

Fennell, Christopher. “Group Identity, Individual Creativity, and Symbolic Generation in BaKongo Diaspora.” *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* Vol. 7, No. 1 (March 2003), pp.1-31.

Fergusand, Leland G. *Uncommon Ground: Archaeology and Early African America, 1650-1800.* Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992.

Fernandez, Margarite and Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert. *Sacred Possession: Vodou, Santeria, Obeah, and the Caribbean*. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1997

Fick, Carolyn. *The Making of Haiti: the Saint Domingue Revolution From Below.* Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1990.

Finch, Aisha. “Insurgency Interrupted: Cuban Slaves and the Resistance Movements, 1841-1844” (manuscript)

Fett, Sharla, *Working Cures: Healing, Health, and Power on Southern Slave Plantations.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002.

Freehling, William W. *Prelude to Civil War: The Nullification Controversy in South Carolina*, 1816-1836. New York: Harper & Row, 1966.

Fu-Kiau, Kimbwandènde Kia Bunseki. *African Cosmology of the Bântu-Kôngo: Tying the Spiritual Knot*. Brooklyn, N.Y.: Athelia Henrietta Press 2001.

Fu Kiau Bunseki. "Man In His World." In John M. Janzen and Wyatt MacGaffey, *An Anthology of Kongo Religion: Primary Texts from Lower Zaïre*, 35. Lawrence: University of Kansas, 1974.

Federal Writers' Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 14, South Carolina, Part 1, Abrams-Durant, 1936. Manuscript/Mixed Material. https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn141/.

Federal Writers' Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 14, South Carolina, Part 2, Eddington-Hunter. 1936. Manuscript/Mixed Material. https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn142/.

Federal Writers' Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 14, South Carolina, Part 3, Jackson-Quattlebaum. 1936. Manuscript/Mixed Material. https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn143/.

Federal Writers' Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 14, South Carolina, Part 4, Raines-Young. 1936. Manuscript/Mixed Material. https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn144/.

Frazier, E. Franklin. *Negro Family in the United States*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966.

Dr. James Garden to Charles Alston, Jan. 21, 1753, Feb. 10, 1756, Laing MSS, III, 375/42,44, University of Edinburgh.

Genovese, Eugene. *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made*. New York: Pantheon Books,1974.

James Glen to the duke of Newcastle, April 14, 1748, U.K. National Archives, CO 5/389, 58. (http://www.colonialamerica.amdigital.co.uk/Documents/Images/CO_5_389_014/1 (accessed on October 18, 2019).

Gilroy, Paul. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double-Consciousness*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993.

Greer, Allan and Kenneth Mills, “A Catholic Atlantic,” in *The Atlantic in Global History*, edited by Jorge Cañizares Esguerra and Erik Seeman, 3–20. New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2007.

Gomez, Michael A. *Exchanging Our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998.

Goldie, Hugh. *Dictionary of the Efik Language*. Ridgewood, N.J.: Gregg, 1964.

Hall, Gwendolyn Midlo. *Slavery and African Ethnicities in the Americas.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007.

Harms, Robert. *River of Wealth, River of Sorrow: The Central Zaire Basin in the Era of the Slave and Ivory Trade, 1500–1891.* New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1981.

Harris, Jr., Robert L. “Charleston’s Free Afro-American Elite: The Brown Fellowship Society and the Humane Brotherhood,” *The South Carolina Historical Magazine*, Vol. 82, No. 4 (Oct., 1981), pp. 289-310.

Hawthorne, Walter. *From Africa to Brazil*: *Culture, Identity, and an Atlantic Slave Trade, 1600-1830*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Hazzard-Donald, Katrina. *Mojo Workin': the Old African American Hoodoo System*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2013.

Henry, Howell M. *The Police Control of the Slave in South Carolina.* New York: Negro Universities Press, 1968.

Herskovits, Frances S. *The Myth of the Negro Past*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1958.

Herskovits, Frances S. *The New World Negro*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004.

Heywood, Linda M., ed. *Central Africans and Cultural Transformations in the American Diaspora*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Hilton, Anne. *The Kingdom of Kongo*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985.

Hilton, Anne. “The Jaga Reconsidered.” *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (1981), pp. 191-202.

Hufford, David J. *The Terror That Comes in the Night: An Experience-Centered Study of Supernatural Assault Traditions*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982.

Hultkrantz, Ake. *The Religions o f the American Indians*, trans. by Monica Setterwall. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979.

Hurston, Zora Neale. "Hoodoo in America." *The Journal of American Folklore* 44, no. 174 (1931): 317-417.

Hurston, Zora Neale. *Mules and Men.* Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1935

Jadin, Louis. “Congo et la Secte de Antoniens: Restauration du Royaume sous Pedro IV et la ‘Saint Antoine’ Congolaise (1694-1718).” *BIHBR* 33 (1961), pp. 411-615.

James, C.L.R. *Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo*. New York: Vintage Books, 1963.

Johnson, Michael P and James L. Roark. *Black Masters: A Free Family of Color in the Old South*. New York: Norton, 1984.

Johnson, Michael P. "Denmark Vesey and His Co-Conspirators," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d Ser., 58 (2001), 915-976.

Jones, Charles C. *The Religious Instruction of the Negroes In the United States*. Savannah: T. Purse, 1842.

Jones, Norrece. *Born a Child of Freedom, Yet a Slave: Mechanisms of Control and Strategies of Resistance in Antebellum South Carolina*. Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1989.

Joseph, J. W. “…All of Cross”—African potters, Marks, and Meanings in the Folk Pottery of the Edgefield District, South Carolina,” *Historical Archaeology*, Vol. 45, no. 2 (2011), pg. 134-155.

Klein, Rachel N. *Unification of a Slave State: The Rise of the Planter Class in the South Carolina Backcountry, 1760-1808*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990.

Landers, Jane. *Black Society in Spanish Florida*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999.

Levack, Brian P. *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe.* Harlow, England: Pearson Longman, 2006.

Lewis, Kenneth E. ”The Metropolis and the Backcountry: The Making of the Colonial Landscape on the South Carolina Frontier.” *Historical Archaeology*, Vol. 33, No. 3, Charleston in the Context of Trans-Atlantic Culture (1999), pg. 3-13.

Little, Thomas. “The South Carolina Slave Laws Reconsidered, 1670-1700.” *The South Carolina Historical Magazine* Vol. 94, No. 2 (Apr., 1993), p. 96-99.

Littlefield, Daniel C. *Rice and Slaves: Ethnicity and the Slave Trade in Colonial South Carolina.* Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991.

Lockley, Timothy James, ed., *Maroon Communities in South Carolina: A Documentary Record*. Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 2009.

Lucca, Lorenzo da. *Relations sur le Congo du Père Laurent de Lucques (1700-1717) Traduites et annotées par J. Cuvelier.* Bruxelles, 1953.

MacGaffey, Wyatt. “Aesthetics and Politics of Violence in Central Africa.” *Journal of African Cultural Studies* Vol. 13, No. 1, In Honour of Professor Terence Ranger (June 2000), pp. 63-75

MacGaffey, Wyatt. “Comparative Analysis of Central African Religions.” *Africa: The Journal of the International African Institute* Vol. 42, No. 1 (Jan., 1972), pp. 21-31.

MacGaffey, Wyatt. “Complexity, Astonishment and Power: The Visual Vocabulary of Kongo Minkisi.” *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 2, Special Issue on Culture and Consciousness in Southern Africa (January 1988), pp. 188-203.

MacGaffey, Wyatt. *Custom and Government in the Lower Congo*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971.

MacGaffey, Wyatt. *Religion and Society in Central Africa: the Bakongo of Lower Zaire*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986.

MacGaffey, Wyatt and John Janzen. *An Anthology of Kongo Religion: Primary Texts from Lower Zaire*. Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1974

The Malleus Maleficarum of Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1971.

Mathews, Holly F. ‘‘Doctors and Root Doctors: Patients Who Use Both.’’ In *Herbal and Magical Medicine,* edited by James Kirkland, et al. 72-75. Durham: Duke University Press, 1992.

May, Nicholas. “Holy Rebellion: Religious Assembly Laws in Antebellum South Carolina and Virginia,” *The American Journal of Legal History*, Vol. 49, No. 3 (July 2007), pp. 237-256.

McMillin, James A.*The Final Victims: Foreign Slave Trade to North America, 1783-1810.* Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2004.

Merrell, James Hart. *The Indians' New World: Catawbas and Their Neighbors from European Contact through the Era of Removal*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989.

Miller, Joseph C. *Way of Death: Merchant Capitalism and the Angolan Slave Trade 1730–1830*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988.

Miller, Joseph C. *Kings and Kinsmen, Early Mbundu States in Angola.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976.

Miller, Joseph C. *The African Past Speaks: Essays on Oral Tradition and History, ed. Joseph C. Miller*. Hamden, CT: Archon, 1980.

Morgan, Philip D. *Slave Counterpoint: Black Culture in the Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake and Lowcountry.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998.

Murphy, Kieran. "Magic and Mesmerism in Saint Domingue." *Paroles Gelées*, UCLA French Studies, Vol. 24(1), 2008, pp. 31-49

Murrell, Nathaniel S. "Vodou and the Haitian Struggle: An Afro-Caribbean Religion and the Politics of the Oppressed." In *New Frontiers in the Study of the Global African Diaspora: Between Uncharted Themes and Alternative Representations,* edited by Edozie, Rita Kiki, Glenn A. Chambers, and Tama Hamilton-Wray, eds. *234-240*. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2018.

Muskateem, Sowandé M. "'I Never Have Such a Sickly Ship Before': Diet, Disease, and Mortality in 18th-Century Atlantic Voyages." *The Journal of African American History* Vol. 93, No. 4 (Fall 2008), p. 474-496.

Mustakeem, Sowande M. *Slavery at Sea Terror, Sex, and Sickness in the Middle Passag*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2016.

Muskateem, Sowandé. "'She Must Go and Shall Go Overboard': Diseased Bodies and the Spectacle of Murder at Sea." *Atlantic Studies* Vol.8, No. 3 (September 2011), p. 301-316.

Newitt, M. D. D. ed., *The Portuguese in West Africa, 1415-1670: A Documentary History.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Oliver, Roland and Anthony Artmore, *Africa Since 1800*. London: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

"Order to Will, King of the Notchee Indians from his Excellency," South Carolina Council Journal, July 5, 1744, U.K. National Archives, CO 5/450, p. 61

(http://www.colonialamerica.amdigital.co.uk/Documents/Images/CO_5_450_001/61 (accessed on October 19, 2019)

Opoku, Kofi Asare. *West African Traditional Religion*. Accra: FEP International Private Limited,1978.

Pearson, Edward A. "Trials and Errors: Denmark Vesey and HIs Historians," *The William and Mary Quarterly,* Vol. 59, No. 1 (Jan., 2002), pg. 137-142

Pearson, Edward A. ed., *Designs against Charleston: The Trial Record of the Denmark Vesey Slave Conspiracy of 1822.* North Carolina: University of Chapel Hill, 1999.

Pigafetta, Filippo and Duarte Lopes (Trans, and annotated by Willy Bal). *Description du Royaume de Congo et Des Contrées Environnantes.* Publications de l'Université Lovanium de Léopoldville, 1591.

Raboteau, Albert. *Slave Religion: The Invisible Institution in the Antebellum South.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980

Rasmussen, Birgit, "Attended with Great Inconveniences": Slave Literacy and the1740 South Carolina Negro Act," *PMLA*, Vol. 125, No. 1 (Jan., 2010), pg. 201-203.

Rediker, Marcus. *The Amistad Rebellion: an Atlantic Odyssey of Slavery and Freedom*. New York: Penguin Books, 2013.

"Remedies to Cure Conjuration," Southern Workman 28, no. 3 (1899): 112

Robinson, Cedric. *Black Movements in America.* New York: Routledge, 1997.

Robertson, David. *Denmark Vesey.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999.

Rucker, Walter C. "Conjure, Magic, and Power: The Influence of Afro-Atlantic Religious Practices on Slave Resistance and Rebellion," *Journal of Black Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 1 (Sep., 2001), pp. 84-103

Rucker, Walter C. "I Will Gather All Nations': Resistance, Culture, and Pan-African Collaboration in Denmark Vesey's South Carolina," *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 86, No. 2 (Spring, 2001), pp. 132-137.

Squint, Kirstin L. "Vodou and Revolt in Literature of the Haitian Revolution." *CLA Journal*, Vol. 51, No. 2 (December 2007), pg. 170-185.

Sharp, Sharon. "Folk Medicine" in *Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*, ed. Charles Reagan Wilson and William Ferris. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989.

Smith, R Drew. *With Signs Following: The Life and Ministry of Charles Harrison Mason*. St. Louis, Missouri: Christian Board of Publication, 2015.

Smith, Mark M., ed., *Stono: Documenting and Interpreting a Southern Slave Revolt*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2005.

Stevenson, Brenda. "The Question of the Slave Female Community and Culture in the American South: Methodological and Ideological Approaches." *The Journal of African American History*, Vol. 92, No. 1, Women, Slavery, and Historical Research (Winter, 2007), pp. 74-95.

Sweet, James H. *Recreating Africa: Culture, Kinship, and Religion in the African-Portuguese World, 1441-1770*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003.

Sweet, James. "The Evolution of Ritual in the African Diaspora: Central African *Kilundu* in Brazil, St. Domingue, and the United States," in *Diasporic Africa: A Reader*, edited by Michael A. Gomez, ed., 64-80. New York: New York University Press, 2006.

Stuckey, Sterling. *Slave Culture: Nationalistic Theory and the Foundations of Black America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987.

Sublette, Ned and Constance. *The American Slave Coast: A History of the Slave-Breeding Industry.* Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 2016.

Tallant, Robert. *Voodoo in New Orleans.* New York: Macmillan, 1946.

Thornton, John K. "Elite Women in the Kingdom of Kongo: Historical Perspectives on Women's Political Power." *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 47, No. 3 (2006), pp. 437-460.

Thornton, John K. *The Kingdom of Kongo: Civil War and Transition, 1641-1718.* Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983.

Thornton, John K. "Development of an African Catholic Church in the Kingdom of Kongo, 1491-1750." *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 25, No. 2 *(*1984), p. 147-167..

Thornton, John K. "Origin Traditions and History in Central Africa," *African Arts,* Vol. 37, No. 1, Exploration of Origins (Spring 2004), p. 32-33

Thornton, John K. "Origin Traditions and History in Central Africa," *African Arts*, Vol. 37, No. 1, (Spring 2004), pp. 32-37+93-94.

Thornton, John K. *The Kongolese Saint Anthony: Dona Beatriz Kimpa Vita and the Antonian Movement, 1684-1706.* Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Thornton, John K. “Cannibals, Witches, and Slave Traders in the Atlantic World,” *The William and Mary Quarterly,* Third Series, Vol. 60, No. 2 (Apr., 2003), pp. 273-294.

Thornton, John K. “The African Experience of the ’20. And Odd Negroes.” *The William and Mary Quarterly,* Vol. 55, No. 3 (Jul., 1998), p. 421-434.

Thornton, John K. “African Dimensions of the Stono Rebellion.” *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 96, No. 4 (Oct., 1991). P. 1101-1113.

Thurston, Robert W. *The Witch Hunts: A History of the Witch Persecutions in Europe and North America*. Harlow, England: Pearson Longman, 2007

Thompson, Robert Farris. *Flash of the Spirit: African and Afro-American Art and Philosophy.* New York: Vintage Books, 1984, 1983.

Thompson, Robert Farris. *Face o f the Gods: Art and Altars of Africa and the African Americas*. New York: The Museum of African Art, 1993.

Vansina, Jan. “The Foundation of the Kingdom of Kasanje.” *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 4, No. 3 (1963), p. 355-374

Jan Vansina, *Paths in the Rainforests: Towards a History of Political Tradition in Equatorial Africa*. Great Britain: James Currey, 1991.

Jan Vansina, *Kingdoms of the Savanna*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1967.

Waddell, Gene. *Indians of the South Carolina Lowcountry, 1562-1751*. Spartanburg: University of South Carolina Press, 1980,

Wade, Richard. "The Vesey Plot: A Reconsideration," *Journal of Southern History*, 30 (1964), 143-161.

Wood, Peter H. *Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 through the Stono Rebellion*, ed., New York: Random House, 1974.

Wise, Norton and Elaine M. Wise. “Staging An Empire.” In *Things That Talk: Object Lessons From Art And Science* edited by Lorraine Daston (ed.) 101-145. New York: Zone Books, 2004.

Young, Jason. *Rituals of Resistance: African Atlantic Religion in Kongo and the Lowcountry South in the Era of Slavery*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2007. Kindle.