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Looking East: Muslim Identity in the Archaeological Record of American Enslavement

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Abstract

A significant number of those Africans enslaved in the Americas were Muslim. Archaeological investigation has yet to be made concerning their stories. This article explores the archaeology of Islam to provide a foundation for understanding the materiality of Muslim identity as it appears in the context of American enslavement, and the historical circumstances which resulted in significant numbers of African Muslims becoming enslaved in the Americas. Drawing on the documentary record, it relates a selection of the life stories of enslaved African American Muslims. In pursuit of a critical, explanatory, and emancipatory archaeology, I undertake an examination of artifacts recovered from contexts of African and African American enslavement in North America. A model of Diaspora analysis is applied to a case in Long Island, New York, which weighs Islam as a potential cultural influence for a particular set of artifacts. It is evident that distinctly Muslim expressions are visible in the archaeological record at sites of African enslavement in the Americas. Moreover, future African Diaspora studies should consider the influence of the traditions of Islam as those projects attempt to recover meaning from the archaeological record.

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I. Introduction

On the day of Barack Obama's inauguration in 2009, a journalism crew traveled to Sapelo Island off the coast of Georgia to talk to Cornelia Walker Bailey, a writer, preservationist, and the descendent of an enslaved Muslim man known as Bilali. His life story is related in full later in this study. In short, he was a Fula from Timbo, Futa Jallon, in the highlands of present-day Guinea-Conakry. He was enslaved and brought to the Bahamas, and then after 1803 brought to Georgia where he spent most of his captivity managing the plantation of Thomas Spalding on Sapelo Island. A few of his descendents were interviewed in the 1930s for the Georgia Writer's Project commissioned by the Works Progress Administration. Bilali and his family were remembered for their distinctly Muslim practices. He had many children to whom he passed on African names, terms, and traditions that were clearly Muslim.

The journalists visiting Sapelo in January of 2009 were surprised at what they found in the churches there. They reported "that men and women commonly sit on opposite sides of the church during services as in a mosque, and all shoes had to be removed in services until recently," and that "the churches face Mecca and people are buried facing Mecca" (Martin 2009).

Islam equipped Bilali and others with the spiritual means to both resist and accommodate their captive circumstances, to structure their worlds, to bring a system of order to the turmoil of slavery. Islam as a religion does not persist today on Sapelo Island. Its residents, even those who count themselves among Bilali's descendents, do not identify as part of the worldwide *umma*. And yet the way Islam as a tradition was embraced, inherited, and alternatively faded there is worthy of note. Bilali's legacy lives today, as Sapelo's residents pray toward the east, albeit no longer with bare-soled feet.

Historical archaeology has many goals, among them the supplementing and challenging of history known through the documentary record and the reconstruction of life ways of people in the past. The cumulative evidence wrought through both processes is a central concern of this article. The goals of archaeological research necessarily change with the time period and region involved. This continuous shift in goals often also mirrors the concerns of the present. Yet, Barbara Little (2007: 22) identifies a thread which connects the discipline's goals, "of finding the present-day meaning of the historical past and making the past meaningful and useful." Both the characteristic of reflecting present-day concerns, and the interest in making the past meaningful

and useful, account for the previous absence and current presence of interest in the subject of this article.

The result of two concerns of the last few decades is an increase in scholarly interest in African American Islam. One is the increasing development of African American archaeology. The other is the rising demand for information about Islam as the United States' involvement with predominantly Muslim countries becomes increasingly complex. It is in this atmosphere, while a student in Professor Chad Seales' "Introduction to Islamic Civilization" course, that I first heard an enslaved African Muslim's story.

The story of Omar ibn Said (related in detail in Part IV), a Muslim scholar who found himself enslaved in North Carolina in 1807, transformed what I knew of American slavery, history, and ultimately archaeology. More than ever before, I became acutely aware of the silences of official histories. Despite all the details known about his life, his story is not told in America's public schools. There is something telling about Little's revelation that our interest in the past is drawn from our concerns in the present.

At the time I began my research, I naively believed that it would be difficult to discover the stories of enslaved Muslims in America. It was not. It was scholarly interest in the subject which was difficult to unearth. There are only a handful of volumes published on the subject even today, albeit some are amazing resources (see Austin 1984; Gomez 1998, 2005). I became interested both in official history's silence on the subject of enslaved African Muslims in America, and the nature of their experience.

It seems that the concerns of the present have not yet stirred archaeologists to ask questions about the enslaved Muslim presence in the Americas. Historical archaeology's interest in reconstructing past life ways includes attention to understanding past worldviews. The object of this study is to explore the material culture of Muslim identity in the context of enslavement in the Americas. I am interested in Islam as a worldview, a system of meaning, which for some enslaved African Americans would have shaped their world, from objects, food, and clothing to the actions of their days.

Like Barbara Little (2007), I am intrigued by the way we connect with selective parts of the past, and yet I remain unsettled by it. This stems from my interest in an emancipatory approach to archaeology, one which recognizes its potential to effect positive social change. Dean Saitta (2007: 14) suggests that archaeology may be emancipatory if it places a priority on

“the consequences of knowledge-claims for everyday life, for how we want to live and for the building of a genuinely pluralistic community characterized by mutual understanding and respect.” I am unsettled by the disrespect inherent in silencing a people through the omissions of official histories. I recognize that in the process of negotiating one’s place, asserting one’s identity, and reconciling one’s system of beliefs during a continuous struggle with a captive existence and changing circumstances, various forms of accommodation and resistance would have been necessary. Undoubtedly some traditional practices and modes of expression changed, while others remained the same.

In this article I propose that those practicing the archaeology of the African Diaspora and African American slavery re-examine the record, focusing on ideology and the expression of cultural identity. The maintenance and negotiation of Muslim identity in contexts of American captivity may be difficult to recover archaeologically. I suggest it may be seen in the acquisition and use of objects with particular coveted characteristics which would have been assigned meaning by their users.

In Part II, I lay the theoretical framework for a critical and emancipatory African Diaspora archaeology, one which acknowledges a Muslim presence whilst studying the landscape of African American enslavement. I also present a model for analyzing the materiality of ideology and social identity. I convey some key elements of the archaeology of Islam necessary for an exploration of the materiality of Muslim life ways and worldview in Part III. I also suggest forms which Muslim belief might take in the archaeological record, and some examples of how people observed their faith and articulated their identity in captive situations. This section of the study also includes a detailed exploration of the circumstances under which many West African Muslims were enslaved and brought to America. America’s introduction to Islam was early, much earlier than popular histories often relate. The rapid spread of the faith since its inception in the seventh century meant that it had been well-established in West Africa for centuries by the time the first slaves were shipped to the Americas in 1501. It has even been suggested that in 1492 Islam came with Columbus in the form of Muslims among his crews (Gomez 2005: ix).

Carl Ernst (2003: 18) estimates 10-15% of the enslaved population may have been Muslim. Though they constituted a significant presence in antebellum North America, like other enslaved individuals of their time, few of their stories have survived. And yet, the life stories of

enslaved individuals which have survived are disproportionately Muslim. I explore some of these stories in Part IV.

In this study I am concerned with material remains which indicate religious ritual activity associated with Muslim identity. In Part V, I examine artifacts recovered from contexts of African and African American enslavement in North America, and evaluate the potential for their being interpreted as material expressions of Muslim identity. These include blue glass beads, which are found at sites of enslavement throughout the United States, and brass hand charms, which have been recovered at multiple plantation sites. I apply a model of research employed by Christopher Fennell (2007), drawing on his notion of tangible heritage. In Part VI, I apply this model to a particular set of artifacts at the site of Latting's Hundred in Long Island to evaluate the weight of a particular cultural interpretation.

The story of enslaved African Muslims in America contains many obstacles. Most slaves were male, spouses and children were often sold off, fertility was low and infant mortality high, making family life and the transmission of traditions nearly impossible. Although the tradition of Islam struggled and never ultimately thrived in captive contexts in America, the legacy of enslaved Muslims can be seen even today. Islam may well have influenced African American culture and been important to America's early development in ways not yet understood.

In the analysis that follows I lay the foundation for understanding the enslaved African Muslim presence in America. Ultimately, it is an examination of a particular set of artifacts. Yet underlying this project is a larger concern for a critical archaeology with emancipatory potential, one with the possibility of challenging official histories. I suggest that distinctly Muslim expressions are visible in the archaeological record at sites of African enslavement in the Americas. As archaeologists attempt to recover meaning from that record, Islam should join the complex of identities over which they puzzle, and from which they ultimately craft stories about the past.

II. A Critical and Emancipatory African Diaspora Archaeology: Acknowledging a Muslim Presence among Enslaved African Americans

Interest in the history of enslaved African Muslims in the Americas is growing, though only a handful of books have been written concerning their existence. Though those interested in the archaeology of the African Diaspora have begun to consider the material expressions of worldviews and identity, they have thus far neglected Islam. This part of the study will lay the theoretical framework for a critical and emancipatory African Diaspora archaeology, one which acknowledges a Muslim presence while studying the landscape of African American enslavement.

According to Theresa Singleton (1995: 121), subsequent to the trend toward studies of black Americans and other ethnic groups in the 1960s and 70s, the archaeological study of people who left few written records emerged. Studies with various lines of focus developed, such as the archaeology of slavery and plantation archaeology. They were the antecedents to the African American archaeology which developed in the 1990s. “The objective of this research,” Singleton (1995: 121) writes, “was to give a presence to the forgotten or neglected voices in American history.” The aim of this study follows that trajectory.

And yet, though it seemed a noble pursuit to make Asian, Latino, or African Americans the focus of their studies, Singleton (1995: 121) argues that “by concentrating on ethnic minorities that are both culturally and physically distinct from the white majority in the United States, archaeologists inadvertently created an archaeology of the Other.” Multiple approaches have been taken. Some seek an understanding of the nature of life and past life ways, examining the living conditions of slavery. Others study power relations, focusing on domination, resistance, and acculturation. Some are interested in other complexities, expanding knowledge about status differences or gender (Galle and Young 2004) in plantation slavery. Still others focus on the dynamics of the formation of African American cultural identities. With each new lens through which archaeologists choose to look they improve their conceptual framework, averting categorization as an “archaeology of the Other.”

Critical Archaeology

Charles Orser (1994) finds that few archaeologists have chosen to focus on the ideology of enslaved people or study their religious traditions. Like Orser, I believe it “would be naïve to imagine that during the Middle Passage all slaves forgot the gods and spirits they worshipped, feared, and appeased, and that because of their enslavement they lost faith in the rituals and belief systems that had sustained them for generations” (Orser 1994: 35). The dehumanizing nature of slavery is in the deprivation of human qualities of the enslaved in the minds of their captors, not in an actual reduction of their humanity.

In this article I propose that those practicing the archaeology of African and African American slavery re-examine the record, focusing on ideology and the expression of cultural identity. Singleton (1995: 134) cautions that because “the factors that produce cultural identities varied through space and time, the archaeological evidence of cultural identities will also be variable,” and thus “archaeological studies should seek to understand how material expressions (ethnic boundaries) emerged, how they are maintained or eliminated, and how they are transformed, but this kind of analysis is rarely attempted in African-American archaeology.” The reason lies not with the archaeological or historical data but with the theoretical framing for the investigations.

In this part of the study, I want to present what it means for archaeology to be critical, emancipatory and explanatory. I will outline a framework for analyzing the materiality of ideology and social identity. I will also raise ideas about dominant and suppressed histories, archaeology and its relationship with historically marginalized groups, coping, resistance, and the maintenance of an Islamic identity in the wake of continuous struggles with power and change.

Mark Leone, Parker Potter, and Paul Shackel (1987: 285) have explored the way critical theory may be used in archaeology, suggesting that “a critical archaeology may produce more reliable knowledge of the past by exploring the social and political contexts of its production.” The foundation of archaeology is epistemological. How do we know what we know? The production of knowledge, via any discipline, is not apolitical. It is value-laden, from the hopes of the researchers to the aims of the institutions and individuals who provide a project’s funding.

For Leone, Potter, and Shackel (1987), critical theory questions the point of view from which conclusions are constructed. It recognizes the relationship between knowledge of the past

and the context of its production. The context is political and social; it is ideology. They suggest “critical theory uses “ideology” in many senses,” but the ideology of which they speak is “unnoticed, taken for granted, and activated and reproduced in use,” and is “the means by which inequality, bondage, frustration, etc, are made acceptable, rationalized, or hidden” (Leone et al. 1987: 284).

Discussions of ideology in archaeology are not novel, but what is relevant here is the employment of the concept to describe inequality. In such studies “inequality implies the alienation of labor – the use of goods and services without a full return of value to their producers,” and Leone and his co-authors suggest that “[o]ne word for this asymmetrical relationship is exploitation,” where “ideology hides and masks exploitation or rationalizes by naturalizing or super-naturalizing it” (1987: 284). A complex ideology functioned to rationalize the enslavement of Africans in the Americas, and it was a complex ideology that masked Islam in the lives of some enslaved Africans in America.

Critical archaeology spawns an agenda of revealing hidden histories (Baram 2009: pers. comm.). It casts shadows of doubt on familiar history, asking questions about the past which recognize those sometimes denied a history. It is from this questioning that an emancipatory and explanatory archaeology stems.

Dean Saitta (2007: 3) situates critical archaeology as an explanatory and emancipatory enterprise, “explanatory, in the sense of producing causal knowledge of the past that respects accumulated data; emancipatory, in the sense of promoting reflection upon the present in ways that can help realize human freedom, potential, and dignity.” I draw on Saitta’s description of archaeology as having a dual nature. Borrowing from Wilk (1985), Saitta (2007: 1) observes that on one hand archaeology “is a search for objective, verifiable knowledge about the past” and “archaeologists use explicitly formulated theory and methods to clarify and expand our understanding of human history.” Yet, Saitta asserts there is a general consensus that the knowledge generated about the world is constrained by that world: “There are facts of the matter to be appropriated, and it is the goal of scientific archaeology to parlay the facts within its domain into historical truth” (Saitta 2007:1). This suggests the active construction of the past rather than its passive existence. Saitta (2007:1) finds the other side of archaeology’s nature to consist of an irreducibly human enterprise: “As Wilk frames it, archaeology conducts an ‘informal and often hidden political and philosophical dialogue’ with the major issues of

contemporary life.” It is as a result of this dialogue with contemporary life that archaeological knowledge sometimes unwittingly reinforces negative agendas. Theresa Singleton’s argument (discussed above) that archaeologists focusing on ethnic minorities created an “archaeology of the Other,” is one such case. Alternatively, some feminist archaeologists (e.g., Gero and Conkey 1991) have argued for including gender in archaeology. The goal is not to “add women and stir,” but to theorize the roles of women and men in the past. I suggest not that African Diaspora archaeology should add Islam and stir, but that it inquires into the roles of enslaved Muslim individuals in the past.

This study recognizes the significance of Saitta’s stance for the archaeology of class for rethinking archaeology of the African Diaspora. His exploration of the archaeology of collective action framed by the case of the Colorado Coalfield Strike at Ludlow, Colorado, offers one model for archaeology as an emancipatory enterprise. An emancipatory approach recognizes the potential of archaeology to effect positive social change.

Saitta (2007: 2) finds that, “[a]ware of archaeology’s class position and historical ties to colonialist projects, descendent communities are putting pressure on archaeologists to write pasts that acknowledge the history, humanity, and creativity of their ancestors and to incorporate traditional knowledge and voices into those narratives.” It is this situation which is inspiring more critical, self-aware, and even activist approaches. The critical archaeology or “working-class archaeology” that Saitta’s work develops is offered as an antidote to official histories.

Official histories – especially in the American West – are nationalist, progressive, and triumphal, emphasizing social unity and continuity of the existing social order and its institutions. They gloss over periods of transformation and rupture or spin those ruptures (for example, the Civil War) as always having produced a better society, “a more perfect union.” In contrast, critical histories deal with context, transformation, and rupture, addressing both the historical process and different narratives about the process. Both kinds of history often conflict with vernacular histories of the past. Vernacular histories are local histories derived from the firsthand, everyday experience of those people who were directly involved with history’s events. They are “passed around the kitchen table,” conveying “what social reality feels like rather than what it should be like.” Vernacular histories threaten the sacred and timeless nature of official history, just as critical history threatens vernacular history (Saitta 2007: 13).

A critical archaeology destabilizes notions of how things came to be. It has emancipatory potential if it can promote reflection on the present in ways that can help realize human freedom and dignity. This evinces archaeology as a discipline concerned not just with the past, but with the present. Saitta recognizes that there is a real past about which secure knowledge can be produced, but he notes that “knowledge is both *constructed* (dependent upon theoretical extensions beyond observables) and *contextual* (shaped by contemporary social conditions and trends)” (2007: 6, emphasis in original). In this study, I employ a framework through which knowledge may be constructed, relying on theoretical extensions informed by concerns about ideology and the maintenance of identity. Such a project is, however, also shaped by contemporary social conditions surrounding race and Islam. These conditions include an academic climate in which it has been acknowledged that it is a worthwhile endeavor to engage multiple interests in the past, especially those of historically disenfranchised groups, such as those indigenous and descendent populations which have been marginalized, to provide new perspectives on Wolf’s (1982) “people without history,” those muted by capitalist endeavors.

And yet, it remains true that gender, race, and class are the primary axes of social identity along which material resources and life chances are differentially distributed in the modern world (Saitta 2007: 5). The knowledge produced, or more importantly, being shared, is shaped by the same forces which govern the radical differentiation of material resources and perpetuate sexism and racism in the world today. It is ambitious but appropriate to hope that knowledge produced in the vein of this study can promote reflection on the present human condition and thus reach emancipatory potential. It is in this way that those archaeologists whose interests include “peoples without history” may avoid creating Singleton’s “archaeology of the Other.”

The Archaeology of Ideology, Identity, and Islam

A framework for analyzing the material culture of ideology and identity will be explanatory. That is, it will produce causal knowledge of the past while respecting accumulated data. The locus of its concern will be the meaning of things, and the concerns of cognitive and what have been called “postprocessual” archaeologies.

Kent Flannery and Joyce Marcus (1998: 37) have defined cognitive archaeology as:

the study of all those aspects of ancient culture that are the product of the human mind: the perception, description, and the

classification of the universe (cosmology); the nature of the supernatural (religion); the principles, philosophies, ethics, and values by which human societies are governed (ideology); the ways in which aspects of the world, the supernatural, or human values are conveyed in art (iconography); and all other forms of human intellectual and symbolic behaviour that survive in the archaeological record.

Postprocessual archaeology, that is, the movement which has attempted to add to and critically improve processualist theory, places emphasis on the recognition in interpretations of the individual human agent. Where I share postprocessual concerns, I am concerned with human action as it negotiated with a framework to assign things meaning, understand relationships, and resist or accommodate a variety of circumstances.

In addition, my framework employs a model developed by Christopher Fennell (2007: 3, 4), through which he explored “the ways in which particular cultures and their intangible heritage survived, diminished, or continued to develop in the face of . . . transatlantic colonial regimes imposed by European interests.” As a historical archaeologist concentrating on the African Diaspora in North America, Fennell focuses on recovering the meaning of things found in the archaeological record. A consideration of the materiality of the enslaved Muslim presence in the Americas requires an exploration of the meaning of artifacts for people in the past.

How does one begin to understand the “why” of the actions of the people of the past? Is it fruitful to ask questions such as what specifically did these things, the objects of their actions, mean to people? David Whitley (1998: 99) claims that “[o]ne key point about meaning is that there are always multiple levels of it – there is no single meaning embedded in any symbol, act of communication, or by extension, artifact.” This fluid or multivalent nature of meaning complicates the archaeological endeavor to reconstruct past life ways, creating doubt as to the viability of attempts to understand the concerns, values, or ideas of the peoples of the past. It has been suggested that the intensive debate about whether it is possible to reconstruct past belief systems is irrelevant if the dynamic quality of the text is acknowledged as intrinsic, whether the medium be geoglyphs, rock art, textile designs or oral text, and it is understood that the meaning at the time of creation will not necessarily coincide with the meaning derived at any point in time that the text is “read” (Clarkson 1998: 124). Thus an attempt to reconstruct the belief systems – religions, ideologies, or cosmologies – of past peoples, rather than simply recover the material

they used, may be seen as a feasible endeavor. Though again, such an endeavor must be understood as a process taking place within present social and intellectual milieus.

I suggest that the meaning of things be considered in the acquisition, possession, and shaping of objects. Dorothy Holser (1998: 16) observes that the “relative weight of ideological as opposed to other factors varies with the particulars of the social and environmental circumstances,” and she finds that particular fundamental religious beliefs in the past which were emphasized by properties such as sound and color could be embedded in and perpetuated by a technology and its products. I will return to the shaping of objects by symbolic and ideological meanings while examining and reexamining the materiality of Muslim identity in a later part of this study.

I stated above that the multivalent nature of the meaning conveyed can make endeavors to reconstruct the past difficult. Accepting the dynamic quality of the material is only one facet of the necessary framework. Persis Clarkson (1998: 122), discussing the reality of past landscapes, has invoked their grounding in a processual and thus interactive performance. Acknowledging objects in performance, rather than having a static nature, assists in the recovery of meaning. Just as meaning shapes the course of a person’s day, so it shapes the materiality of those days. Islam exists in each act of kneeling in prayer toward Mecca, and so there is a system of meaning that places the prayer rug or mat under the knees of the believer, which shapes the way an enslaved woman covers her hair, or the beads worn around one’s waist or neck.

This study is specifically concerned with enslaved African Muslim identity and the preservation of Muslim practice in the Americas. I recognize that any attempt to define a particular identity may risk presumptuousness, especially for archaeology. Nevertheless, among my primary aims is to apply an explanatory framework which allows for the interpretation of artifacts of African American religious practices and expressions of cultural identity found in sites in the Americas.

Islam as Identity

Muslim identity is grounded in a personal association with the religious traditions of Islam. Thus to understand what it means to be a Muslim, one must possess at least a basic understanding of Islam. A concise definition acknowledges the bases of Muslim faiths and practices, the five articles of faith, and what are known as the Five Pillars, and that they structure

the life of the faithful. The five articles of faith include: a faith in God (perhaps best exemplified by the term *tawhid*, meaning both God's oneness and the human acknowledgment of it); faith in the reality of angels (such as Gabriel through whom Muhammad encountered God); faith in God's messengers (recipients of God's revelation to mankind are known as prophets and messengers, prophets act among specific communities of people, but messengers, such as Muhammad, have received divine revelation, and thus have universal significance for all people); faith in the holy books (Muslims recognize Jewish and Christian scriptures as divine revelations, though distorted, thus necessitating the final revelation, related to Muhammad and recorded as the Qur'an); and faith in the Day of Resurrection and Judgment (a belief that at the end of time all people will be gathered together for an accounting of how they have lived their lives) (Smith 1999: 6-8).

The essentials of living a good and responsible life are expressed in the Five Pillars: *shahada*, *salat*, *zakat*, *Ramadan*, and *hajj*. The *shahada* is a profession of faith in the oneness of God and the acceptance of Muhammad as his prophet. *Salat* is the obligation of prayer five times a day toward Mecca. *Zakat* is the requirement to give alms, traditionally taking the form of a tax of a percentage of the value of the total of one's worldly possessions. *Ramadan* is the month of fasting during daylight hours, exercising one's physical and spiritual discipline. *Hajj* refers to the requirement of pilgrimage, specifically to the holy city of Mecca, birthplace of the Prophet Muhammad and home to the *Ka'ba*, the most sacred shrine in Islam.

Although each act performed by a Muslim may not be a ritual act, the provisions of the faith structure one's life, resulting in an ever-present recognition of the sacred and the profane. Islamic Studies scholar Jane Smith (1998: 22) recognizes that "the many individuals who over the centuries have called themselves Muslims have shaped and developed Islam as a living faith." The worldwide *umma*, or Muslim community, is diverse. Thus, while it is true that Islam defines Muslim identity, the choices which Muslims make about how to understand and practice the faith in turn define Islam. This underscores the importance of recognizing the role of ideology and the agency of individuals in an attempt to recover meaning from the archaeological record.

The Meaning of Material Culture

Although the provisions of the Muslim faith offer one way to identify what it means to be a Muslim, if my definition of Muslim identity acknowledged only individuals' connection to a religious tradition it would be too narrow. It would not provide a holistic means of understanding that identity. Culture, cosmology, and heritage, as outlined by Christopher Fennell, may help further elucidate a definition of Muslim identity.

Fennell's (2007) *Crossroads and Cosmologies: Diasporas and Ethnogenesis in the New World* explores the ways that enslaved Africans maintained aspects of their traditions and identities in the Americas, and finds that material culture exemplifying symbolic modes of expression contributed to the persistence of these traditions. He recognizes changes in individual customs and beliefs allowing for creation of new social groups and new expressions of identity, and ultimately offers a model for examining the material culture of Diasporic Africans and Europeans and understanding cultural transformations over time. In attempting to interpret finds from a small log house in Virginia, he examines cultural belief systems and specific symbols of the BaKongo and Yoruba cosmologies, development of African American religious expressions in the Americas, and the spiritual traditions (Christian and other) of German-speaking immigrants.

The site of the house was occupied by German immigrants beginning in the late 1700s, who had purchased enslaved African Americans. During excavations of the house Fennell (2007:12) uncovered a small, sculpted figure in the form of a human skull which bore inscriptions of initials and a cross-line motif dating to a period between 1780 to 1860 that he believed "was likely created pursuant to a system of religious and cosmological beliefs." The attributes of the artifact initially led him to think it was created by an African American person subscribing to beliefs and practices of the BaKongo culture of West Africa. After exploring similar artifacts exhibiting cross-lined motifs, and the cultural belief systems mentioned above, he concluded that symbolism derived from particular African cultures did not provide the most persuasive basis for interpretation. Rather, he interprets the meaning of the artifact as an expression of a system of German American folk belief. His model of research allows for the weighing of interpretations, providing an avenue by which to evaluate suggestions concerning material expressions created pursuant to religious or cosmological beliefs. He states:

Culture, in the general sense, entails the learned beliefs, knowledge, practices, and behavior with which a people live as a group. As a central element of such a shared meaning system, a *cosmology* comprises the way a group understands the workings of the world, nature, and the cosmos. Cosmologies thus encompass what we think of as religion, physics, and philosophy in a comprehensive framework (Fennell 2007: 1).

I suggest that Islam shapes what Fennell defines as culture and serves as a cosmology. As it structures beliefs, knowledge, practice, and behavior, Islam may then also be recognized as cultural identity. This cultural identity is reflected in the heritage of a group.

Fennell discusses heritage as both a tangible and intangible concept. Drawing on the 2003 *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* promulgated by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Fennell (2007: 3) defines intangible cultural heritage as “the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage.” Tangible heritage is produced when people create and shape material culture as they subscribe to, learn, and perform these beliefs and practices. The two forms of heritage continually participate in an interdependent process where the production and presence of tangible heritage reinforces beliefs and practices.

This process served as a critical mechanism for the transatlantic movement of particular African traditions during the slave trade. As Fennell (2007: 2) explains, “European slave traders could steal their captives’ heirlooms, but not their intangible facets of knowledge, beliefs, and expressive skill.” Although captive Africans were rarely able to transport their tangible cultural heritage with them to the Americas, “their knowledge, beliefs, and skills in performing the cultural traditions of the society from which they were abducted could be applied in locations in the Americas to create new material expressions of those legacies” (2007: 2). Thus Muslim identity, both religious and cultural, was expressed in terms of intangible and tangible heritage.

Fennell’s model presents several other useful notions, such as *ethnogenic bricolage*, the ethnohistorical approach, core symbols and their emblematic and instrumental expressions, and systems of meaning, human agency, and the ability of archaeologists to access and understand these, which will be outlined below.

Charles Orser, Jr. (1994: 38) observes that the “search for African-inspired objects forms the core of the archaeology of slave religion,”¹ since “such objects provide concrete evidence that African peoples retained elements of their cultures in the New World.” In general this was true, both of the archaeology of slave religion and the archaeology of enslaved life ways. Theresa Singleton finds it true of the work of Leland Ferguson (1992). Ferguson’s *Uncommon Ground: Archaeology and Early African America 1650-1800* discusses both the artifacts left by enslaved Africans and African Americans found by archaeologists and how those artifacts are analyzed together with history and folklore to learn new things about African American life ways. It is at once a discussion of artifacts, primarily Colono Ware, a hand-built pottery used by both Native Americans and African Americans, and a presentation of archaeological evidence for African American religious ritual in eighteenth-century South Carolina involving that pottery and other artifacts. Singleton (1995: 133) claims that Ferguson’s study “is problematic because like many others with an aim of understanding the cultural identity of African-Americans in material culture, it gives primacy to evidence supporting the continuity of an African heritage rather than to its discontinuity and reconfiguration,” and she recommends that since both processes were involved in the creation of African American culture, evidence of both should be involved in analyses of creolization.

Therefore, though captive Africans could draw on their intangible cultural heritage, it should be clear that when that heritage was translated to tangible forms in the Americas, the products should not be simply seen as survivals or Africanisms, but rather expressions of identity in a multicultural atmosphere. Since the ability of ideological factors to affect the production of material culture varies with the particulars of social and environmental circumstances, the multicultural and oppressive atmosphere of enslaved life in the Americas would warrant a process of creative interaction and exchange during the expression of social identity even when individuals had access to a strong system of intangible cultural heritage. Fennell refers to this process as *ethnogenic bricolage*, a notion I will return to shortly.

1. “Insofar as people develop their own culture they are not slaves” – Margaret Washington Creel. Reflecting on this quote, Ferguson (2004: 118) observed: “Interpreted more actively, this assertion implies that insofar as people create their own culture in the face of slavery’s oppression they resist slavery.” I consider the term “slave religion” problematic, and have attempted to avoid the term “slave” in this thesis. To refer to any individual as a slave assumes their entire identity may be summarized by their captive experience, and that the sole concerns of their existence were the will of those who subordinated them.

One of the strengths of Fennell's model is his focus of the expression of core symbols during the formation and maintenance of sociocultural identities. Core symbols may be emblematic or instrumental, and serve as expressions of fundamental elements of cultural groups' cosmologies and senses of identity. They may be communicated through spoken words, ritual performances, or depicted in tangible, graphic forms through material culture (Fennell 2007: 7). Although instrumental versions of core symbols ultimately inform the framework being developed in this part of my study, it is important to understand their source. Fennell (2007: 8) relates that core symbols span a continuum of expression, where emblematic versions "serve to summarize the identity of a culture group as a cohesive unit and are illustrated by such symbols as a national flag, the crucifix of Christianity, or the Star of David for Judaism."

Where emblematic forms often serve as a public expression of collective identity, instrumental forms often serve personal purposes. Instrumental symbols are frequently abbreviated forms of a core symbol of a cultural belief system, used for private expressions. Fennell (2007: 27) finds that the individual use of such abbreviated forms "can lead to stylistic innovation and the creation of new symbolic repertoires to express membership in social networks formed in new settings."

Ultimately, it is the expression of core symbols which is most likely to leave a trace in the archaeological record which may aid in a recovery of meaning. Core symbols are a mode of expressing one's heritage, where heritage is understood as a system for defining one's identity. I now return to the notion of *ethnogenic bricolage*. Fennell (2007: 9) states:

Ethnogenic bricolage entails a creative process in which individuals raised in different cultures interact in new settings, often at the geographic crossroads of multiple diasporas. In these new locations, individuals tend to desist from displaying emblematic expressions of the core symbols of the former culture groups from which they were abducted or compelled to depart. Yet, instrumental expressions of those same core symbols continue with vigor and are employed in private, individual spaces as part of invocations for healing, self-protection, and prayers for the vitality of loved ones.

Others (such as Ferguson 1992) have used the term *creolization* to communicate similar notions of cultural interaction or blending in multicultural settings. Fennell (2007: 128) avoids the term due to its widespread use without a clear definition, and the emphasis some studies have placed on the dominant status of one group over another in past social settings. He finds that

instrumental symbolic expressions, due to their abbreviated quality become multivalent, and easily open to interpretation and reinterpretation. Thus, they may be easily manipulated and combined to communicate new meanings in new settings, providing solidarity in a captive situation where previously they had been used uniquely to express separate identities.

Ethnogenic bricolage serves as one method for understanding how individuals may utilize and manipulate modes of expression previously available to them to negotiate new and unfamiliar situations such as enslavement.

Fennell (2007: 27-28) employs these theoretical insights concerning expressions of identity and core symbols “to formulate a methodology for assessing the significance of artifacts uncovered at African American domestic sites in North America dating to the late seventeenth through nineteenth centuries.” He proposes a predictive model based on a set of ethnohistorical evidence concerning the past beliefs and practices of the BaKongo culture in West Central Africa during the relevant time periods and anticipates the changes over time due to the impacts of the transatlantic slave trade, predicting “the patterns of symbolic expressions one would expect to see in new settings” (Fennell 2007: 28). This approach builds on the scientific as well as critical traditions in archaeology. I propose a similar model may be applied with regard to the materiality of Muslim identity in the same manner, drawing on the relevant documentary record for enslaved African American Muslims.

Fennell’s model delineates some other useful considerations for an archaeology concerned with the analysis of the materiality of ideology and identity. These include reflections about systems of meaning, human agency, material culture as a passive or active part of cultural practices, and the ability of archaeologists to access and understand these.

Above I suggested that heritage can be seen as a system for defining identity, where Fennell’s core symbols are seen as modes of expressing one’s heritage. This does not account for how systems of meaning continue to function for individuals in less than ideal situations, such as that of enslaved Muslims, as they are products of communities. The approach Fennell (2007: 34) finds most appropriate when considering the intentional creation of material culture expressing religious beliefs and spiritual invocations through symbolic core symbols is one where “an ethnic marker is viewed as representing a past social actor’s conscious efforts to create material culture expressions that signal group identity and membership to others.” This approach recognizes that “consistent patterns can exist within such material culture, because

each member purposefully and consciously expressed elements of the group's shared meaning system in those objects" (Fennell 2007: 34). This is also the way traditions are created, through a process in which intangible heritage is made tangible.

I am concerned with individual human action or locating the individual in these systems. Fennell (2007: 36) addresses the relationship of individual "agents" perceptions of ethnicity and associated modes of interaction, and the cultural contexts and social relations in which they are embedded within the theoretical framework of Bourdieu's *habitus*. He finds that *habitus* as a social structure consisting of a shared system of beliefs and practices learned from an early age onward provides each group member with a set of durable dispositions toward certain ways of perceiving the world and conducting oneself (Fennell 2007: 37). This accounts for the similar expressions applied by social actors in varied contexts.

But while these durable dispositions exist, individuals make the choice to actively express their identities, or particular facets of them. Fennell (2007: 38) finds that "[m]aterial culture thus functions in varying contexts as a primary medium for creating, confirming, or modifying cultural beliefs and practices." I will return to this discussion of the active role of individuals in a later part of this study concerned with artifact analysis.

Concerning archaeologists' ability to access the expressive intentions of past social actors, Fennell (2007: 30) contends that while "the spoken words of past social interactions may be lost to us, the archaeological record often shows persistent patterns of material forms of symbolic expressions that can be interpreted in the context of one or more past cultural traditions and associated meanings." There is no question of whether individuals abducted into slavery and subjected to the horrors of the Middle Passage and captivity in the Americas could have retained any of their cultural beliefs and practices. That they did, and in what manner they managed to express these beliefs and practices and by way of these their identities, may be recovered by archaeologists.

Fennell (2007: 30) further observes that "persuasive interpretations and explanations can be formulated when supported by multiple lines of evidence addressing the attributes and context of the material culture in question." My study presents an endeavor concerned with Muslim ideology and cosmology and the materiality of the expressions of these values that survive in the archaeological record. Drawing on the documentary record as a body of supporting evidence, I will examine and reexamine the archaeological record to assert the presence of expressions of

Muslim identity among enslaved Africans and African Americans in the Americas. In the next part of this article, I explore the archaeology of Islam to provide a foundation for conceptions of the materiality of Muslim identity, as well as review the historical circumstances that account for the presence of a significant number of enslaved African Muslims in the Americas.

III. The Archaeology of Islam and the Circumstances of African Muslim Enslavement

A discussion of the material evidence of the enslaved African Muslim presence and continued religious practice in the Americas requires an understanding of the materiality of Muslim identity. In this part of the study, I present some key elements of the archaeology of Islam, as well as provide insights on how Muslim belief might appear in the archaeological record and some examples of how people observed their faith and articulated their identity in captive situations. I will also offer an outline of historical events which resulted in the presence of numerous enslaved Muslims in the Americas, and suggest possible consequences of the survival of African Islam beyond the Middle Passage. I propose here that the historian's understanding does not seem to have influenced archaeology in the United States. It also appears absent from popular histories about enslaved African Americans. Learning from the perspective of Timothy Insoll (2003: 3), I follow his view that the "archaeology of Islam is here foregrounded because, as in other forms of historical archaeology, there is the possibility that what we can learn from material culture not only complements and supplements the historical record, but also may contradict what we think we know from history." The archaeology of the African experience in Diaspora, and as affected by colonialist endeavors on both sides of the Atlantic, may benefit from the insights of the archaeology of Islam and an acknowledgement of known historical circumstances.

A consideration of the archaeology of Islam, perhaps at its very inception, would be misguided were it to conceive of itself as the archaeological study of a fixed religious tradition. First and foremost, it should be clear that the conception of Islam around which this argument is raised is one of indisputable diversity practiced by individual Muslims having unique experiences the world over. Yet for all this diversity, it has been noted that "the remarkable thing is the extent to which Muslim societies resemble each other" (Insoll 1999: 11).

Moreover, there is something to be said for a clear understanding of the notion of "Islam" as it is treated here. Insoll (1999: 8) writes that, "in the case of Islam, all facets of life can be structured by religion, and thus to separate out the religious element as something confined to a specific part or element of an individual's life is wrong." In so many words, the archaeology of Islam is not a simple matter. This is in no small part due to the fact that conceiving of Islam is not simple by nature. As Carl Ernst (2003: 51) so wonderfully put it:

Although it is common to hear people say, for example, ‘Christianity says that . . .’ or ‘according to Islam . . .,’ the only thing that can be observed or demonstrated is that individual people who call themselves Christians or Muslims have particular positions and practices that they observe and defend. No one, however, has ever seen Christianity or Islam do anything. They are abstractions, not actors comparable to human beings.

The Islam that I treat here is one which may structure all facets of life, and in this way may guide individual Muslims’ particular positions and practices.

Envisioning an Archaeology of Islam in the Americas

In the following discussion I am concerned largely with identifying materiality relevant to the central argument and do not intend to provide a historical overview of Islam, which has been successfully accomplished multiple times by others elsewhere (Berkey 2003, Ernst 2003). Though it is unified by key elements, there is no single *Muslim* style. “The essential doctrines of Islam might have been largely established in the seventh century CE, and detailed ritual practices developed between the seventh and ninth centuries CE,” Insoll (1999: 15) writes, “but Islam itself is not a fossilized entity; Islamic material culture in all its forms was not fixed at that time.”

What are some of these key elements? Some are prominently evident architecturally, both in the public and private sphere. Others are thought of better in terms of personal possession. A focus on personal practices will be most useful for the present discussion, since there are only a few known cases of organized Muslim practice early in the Americas. One general category of evidence that would indicate the presence of Muslim practice is that produced by recognition of the Five Pillars.

As outlined in Part II above, the Five Pillars are the *shahadah* (profession of faith), *salat* (prayer), *zakat* (almsgiving), *Ramadan* (fasting), and *hajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca if one has the means). Evidence in the archaeological record for some of these seems unlikely, almost impossible. Each will be treated individually below. Insoll has made useful suggestions as to the archaeological evidence indicating the observance of each of the Five Pillars. He proposes that they could include, “for the *shahadah* (credo), inscriptions in many different media; *salat* by the mosque and other places of prayer; alms-giving by inscriptions and through the system of endowments (*waqf*) by pious and wealthy individuals of buildings such as hospitals, mosques,

religious schools, etc; *hajj* by pilgrims' hostels, routes, wells, milestones, etc. It is only *sawn* that will be unlikely to be recognized archaeologically" (Insoll 2003: 13).

Despite the improbability of *sawn* (fasting) being recognizable archaeologically, adherence to some Muslim proscriptions concerning diet may be identifiable with the aid of zooarchaeological evidence. For instance, pork and alcohol are both *haraam* (forbidden) in Islam. It is true that enslaved men and women often had little, if any, control over the food which they received. Pork was the preferred meat by planters for their laborers since it was cheap and pigs were easy to keep (Diouf 1998: 88). And yet, some slave owners made exceptions. This is documented by Charles Joyner (1986: 171), who finds that some lowcountry planters substituted a ration of beef for pork for their Muslim slaves. Regrettably, Joyner does not offer details. The plantation books of William Ball of South Carolina show that an enslaved Muslim named Nero drew his ration in beef instead of pork (Diouf 1998: 88).

Sylvaine Diouf relates that an enslaved Muslim from Mali spoke for many others when he lamented to a merchant in Mississippi "in terms of bitter regret, that his situation as a slave in America, prevents him from obeying the dictates of his religion. He is under the necessity of eating pork, but denies ever tasting any kind of spirits" (Diouf 1998: 88). It seems it would have been much easier to honor the prescription against alcohol than the one against pork. Unfortunately, an absence of bottle-glass in slave dwellings does not infer an absence of alcohol consumption, much less a Muslim presence.

In some circumstances, slaveholders had no choice but to honor the dietary demands made by their captives. Diouf relates just such an occurrence, where the rejection of pork by the enslaved population in the French West Indies rose to insurmountable proportions. In 1672 Mr. de Baas, governor of the islands, wrote that plantation managers "cannot see any longer how to feed the slaves for bacon is their aversion and they eat it only through force," which Diouf (1998: 88) can find no reason for apart from religious taboo, since pork is widely consumed in Africa by Christians and other non-Muslims. The ability of an enslaved Muslim to honor traditional dietary proscriptions would not always have been wholly constrained by the leniency of slaveowners. Depending on the locale, enslaved men and women were required to obtain wild game and cultivate a small garden. Though it allotted even more labor to an enslaved person, it offered an avenue by which a number of Muslims could have maintained a permissible Islamic diet. There are no references to the diets of the enslaved Muslims whose stories are related in the

next part of this study (Ibrahima, Bilali, Omar ibn Said), and others, but according to his biographer Job ben Solomon adhered to Qur'anic dietary rules, since he "has no scruple about fish; but won't touch a bit of pork, it being expressly forbidden by their law" (Diouf 1998: 88).

Inferences about alcohol consumption may be impossible based on the archaeological evidence, however, evidence for the consumption or avoidance of pork may be more feasible. In circumstances where significant faunal remains are recovered in a context of African American enslavement and pig bones are entirely lacking, the absence may reasonably be considered significant. It should certainly be considered potentially meaningful if it is corroborated by other material evidence indicating a Muslim presence, or direct documentary evidence linking Muslim individuals to the site.

In lieu of further discussion concerning how upholding the Five Pillars or honoring proscriptions might appear materially, I proceed with a discussion of how they were upheld – by a strictly controlled population, in a foreign land. Sufficient records document religious practice by enslaved Muslims in the Americas (Bastide 2007, Georgia Writer's Project 1940), and rather than entertain the purely theoretical by considering undocumented practice, it seems more constructive to consider the reality.

First the *shahadah*, how was it upheld? Enslaved Muslims were predominantly literate (Diouf 1998: 107), and thus had an advantage over their fellow illiterate enslaved Africans. Diouf provides two examples. Omar ibn Said, an enslaved Muslim from Senegal who ended up in North Carolina whose experience will later be discussed in full, "has left testimonies of his faith in numerous manuscripts in Arabic" (1998: 50). He was not alone. And although interest in converting slaves to Christianity was widespread, it was not always necessary to be silent about one's faith. Of Ben-Ali, or Bilali Mohamed, "a Guinean Pulo who became something of a celebrity in the Sea Islands of Georgia," it is said that he "remained a devout Muslim all his life and died uttering the *shahada*" (Diouf 1998: 50).

Salat or prayer has some of the greatest potential to be evident archaeologically, but in some ways would have been quite difficult to uphold. Because prayer should occur five times a day, a slave would likely have had to find ways to pray in secret, or gain permission from his/her master to do so, since pausing to perform ablutions and the prayers themselves would have required breaks in a slave's work day. This time lost would not benefit a slave owner. Diouf (1998: 59) has pointed out that although "it considers prayer a pillar, the Koran is flexible, and a

believer is allowed to abstain from praying if circumstances are not favorable. Understandably, then, the Muslims who prayed did so by choice, not by obligation.” At the same time it should be noted that just as enslaved Africans had to adapt to their new environments in many other ways, they also had to adapt their religious practices. Since the saying of prayers five times a day would have been difficult to achieve, especially without encountering some level of controversy, Muslims likely adapted their practice to the time limits imposed on them. This is evident in the documented cases from Brazil and the Georgia Sea Islands noted below.

Prayer has such a great potential to be evident archaeologically because it required material objects for its practice. Diouf (1998: 59) states, for example, that it “requires a mat, prayer beads, and a veil for women.” Prayer beads are often used, but are not necessary for the five daily prayers. Mats or rugs used for prayer may come in a variety of forms, likely as varied as the circumstances and personalities of Muslims across the globe. Though use of woven rugs is traditional and widespread, practitioners who found themselves enslaved in the Americas and with meager or nonexistent economic capital could have employed pieces of cloth. Among a group practicing prayer together in Brazil, animal skin prayer mats were used, and after the group completed ablutions “they put on white garments, covered their heads, each took a rosary made of one hundred big beads, and prayed” (Diouf 1998: 62).²

This brings the discussion to prayer beads, a frequent material accompaniment to the Muslim practice of prayer. The descriptions of Islamic prayer beads are many and varied. They commonly consist of ninety-nine beads, and can be constructed using any number of different materials. Diouf (1998:63) identifies them as “[r]esembling a Catholic rosary, it is made of round beads and has an elongated bead in lieu of a cross,” and indicates that they have been known to have been worn both around the waist and neck. I have noted that Brazilians were documented as using strands of one hundred beads. Further details are not provided. Since the typical number of 99 is meaningful (representing the 99 beautiful names of Allah), a different count of 100 might seem cause for concern. I posit that this is not the case. Diouf’s mention of “an elongated bead in lieu of a cross” resembles the form of mala beads used for Buddhist and Hindu meditation practices. Mala beads often number 108, requiring the recitation of 108

2. “There is no information concerning the provenance of the prayer beads, at least in the United States. The Muslims may have made them themselves, with beads found locally. The prayer beads also may have come from afar. The Brazilian Muslims imported theirs, called *tecebas*, from the coast of West Africa even into the twentieth century” (Diouf 1998: 63-64).

mantras, but include one large head bead to assist the practitioner in keeping track of the number of recitations performed, bringing the count of a mala to 109. One possibility is that prayer beads with a count of 100, especially if an elongated bead is employed, may have served an identical purpose.

Diouf (1998: 64) notes that both the Brazilian community and the Georgian Sea Island communities “used the long rosary made of one hundred beads, as opposed to the regular one that has thirty-three beads.” She observes that anyone “can use the long rosary, but men and women who belong to Sufi order and do *dhikr* (incantatory formulas that may consist of the repetition of certain names of God or Qur’anic excerpts) use it systematically” (1998: 64). Diouf sees this as evidence for the presence of deeply involved religious practitioners. Rather than insisting on the presence of uniquely devout or particularly zealous Muslims, I consider this explanation possible but would also accept another if only one takes time to recognize the religious climate out of which practitioners came. Particular Sufi orders were prevalent in West Africa at the time large numbers of people were being enslaved and taken from the region. This does not require that those enslaved necessarily belonged to Sufi brotherhoods, but it is reasonable to assume that the styles of prayer beads in popular use were influenced by the style preferred by a prevalent Sufi order.

The third pillar is the giving of alms. For some, it might be difficult to imagine enslaved Muslims in the Americas, those in need themselves, setting aside something in order to uphold this pillar, in order to give alms. But give they did. In the Georgia Sea Islands and in Brazil, there are accounts, recounted by descendents and others, of enslaved women making rice cakes, giving them to children, and saying a prayer over them. “The Sea Islands *saraka* and the Brazilian *saka* are the exact transposition to America of an African Muslim custom. The rice ball is the traditional charity given by West African women on Friday. The testimonies from the Sea Islands refer to one distribution a month or a year, which indicates a lack of means in no way surprising” (Diouf 1998: 65).

Fasting is difficult to see in the archaeological record, and at present I have no suggestions for identifying it. Records make it clear, however, that it did occur, and this will be discussed in a later part of this article. On the other hand, there are indications that *hajj*, or pilgrimage was recognized and honored. Some individuals, such as Omar ibn Said, had made their pilgrimage to Mecca before they were taken from West Africa. Others did not have the

opportunity. Enslaved Muslims who banded together found ways of honoring this pillar of their faith, though they lacked the means to fulfill the journey. These examples, also part of the documentary record, will be treated at length later.

Diouf (1998: 69) claims that “African Muslims kept their faith is not exceptional. What is, is the fact that they had the will to follow rites that were difficult to live by, and that they retained them in the most orthodox manner.” The examples provided above are not abstract ideas about how individual Muslims might have kept alive the traditions of their faith. They are not mere hypotheses about the way the acts of Muslim religious practice could manifest materially while practitioners endured the hardships of captivity. They are proof, writ large, of a story that still goes untold in the retelling of history.

The archaeology of Islam, or the material evidence of Muslim practice, is not confined to expressions of adherence to the Five Pillars. A discussion of Muslim architecture is one of the key elements to a consideration of the archaeology of Islam. At the center of any such discussion is the mosque. It is true that the mosque can be said to be the material embodiment of a fundamental aspect of Muslim life, that of prayer (Insoll 1999:58). The obligation of prayer is a visibly significant part of Muslim belief. When upheld in its full and complete sense, it shapes the nature of one’s life. Although as noted above, a captive situation would not have been the ideal. It is for this reason that I choose to treat the mosque separately, in addition to the fact that the mosque is perhaps the most recognizable and lasting feature of Islamic material culture.

Conjure up a mosque in your mind: the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, the Masjid al-Haram in Mecca, the Sultan Ahmed (or Blue Mosque) in Istanbul, or al-Azhar in Cairo. World famous mosques, they each have certain features: minarets, prayer halls, *qibla* walls, *mihrabs*, to name a few. Certain criteria mark them, causing them to stand apart from their environs. This is true (necessarily so) of all mosques, large and small. And yet it is not necessary for a mosque to be lavish, a behemoth of wood and stone, or even an average feat of architectural talent. Citing Hillenbrand (1994), Insoll (1999: 28) finds the criteria which define a mosque are “forbiddingly simple: a wall correctly oriented towards the *qiblah*, namely the Black Stone within the Ka’bah in Mecca. No roof, no minimum size, no enclosing walls, no liturgical accessories are required.”

Various factors, such as architectural tradition, the building materials available, or the anticipated size of the congregation, influence the form a mosque will take. Nonetheless, it should be apparent that “mosque” is not a limiting category. If mosques lack a fixed, or at the

least rigidly defined form, this fact should change the way archaeologists view places of Muslim worship.

Some of the earliest Muslim mosques were not the enduring structures seen today. They were likely to be more ephemeral; “in Basra in Iraq, for example, the first mosque founded [circa 635 C.E.] was, depending on the source followed, either simply a marked-out prayer area on the ground, or an area enclosed with a reed-fence” (Creswell in Insoll 1999: 46). This type of temporary structure can easily become difficult if not impossible to locate archaeologically. The Survey of the Negev Highlands (Avni 1994; Rosen 1987) discovered dozens of settlements dating to the end of the Byzantine and Early Islamic periods (sixth to eighth centuries C.E). Structures interpreted as early mosques were found adjacent to several of the sites, and few appear to have had roofs. Most are low rectangular or square stone enclosures which face south, with a slight eastward angle, and a protruding *mihrab* (prayer niche) visible in the southern wall (Avni 1994: 84).

These structures may only be known through the documentary record. It is true that the written record left behind is more often than not one-sided, shaped by the struggle between the powerful and the powerless. And yet, if archaeologists were to ignore the surviving documents corresponding to the times they study, they would undoubtedly lose a valuable resource. In this case, it would negate the possibility of finding such mosques.

It is evident then that in order for archaeologists to identify such a fundamental expression of Muslim life, presence, or practice as the mosque, they need to expand their framework. The archaeology of Islam needs to take into account the mutability of the mosque, of sacred space. Armed with the knowledge that humans are capable of constructing their own sacred space, possibilities of interpretation proliferate. Archaeologists can then come closer to locating the material evidence of such sacred places, and acquiring a reasonable understanding of past.

Islam in West Africa: Conflict, Enslavement, and Deportation

Now that some background has been provided on the archaeology of Islam in the Americas, a brief discussion of the historical events which resulted in the presence of enslaved Muslims arriving in the Americas is in order. I rely largely on Diouf’s (1998) *Servants of Allah: African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas*. She tells the story of African Muslims caught in the

politico-religious wars in Futa Toro, Bundu, Kayor, Futa Jallon, the northwest part of the Gold Coast, northern Dahomey, and central Sudan, and their ability to overcome obstacles and maintain and express their faith in the hostile environment of captivity in the Americas. Out of this discussion both a greater sense of the early enslaved Muslim presence in America and the particularities associated with the archaeology of Islam practiced by Africans in the Diaspora will develop.

In the beginning of the fourteenth century, when the first Africans were shipped to the New World, Islam was already well established in West Africa. The religion spread rapidly, introduced to North Africans as early as 660 C.E., and thanks to merchants from the north, it was known south of the Sahara since the eighth century (Diouf 1998: 4). Islam was not immediately adopted on a large-scale. The religion was taken up by individuals, and sometimes incorporated with older traditions. In Sub-Saharan Africa for example, some features of traditional religions and customs were also present in Islam, such as “the ritual immolation of animals, circumcision, polygamy, communal prayers, divination, and amulet making” (Diouf 1998: 4).

Other factors aided the spread of Islam. Sometimes expansion of and conversion to Islam resulted from the decisions made by the elite of West African kingdoms. For example, Sunni Islam started to spread after the conversion of two rulers at the beginning of the eleventh century. One was War Diaby, from Takrur in northern Senegal, which became the first African Muslim state after applying the *sharia*, or Islamic law, and the second was Kosoy from Gao in present-day Mali (Diouf 1998: 4). The conversion of rulers shaped the course of history for West African Muslims in years to come. Elite support of Islam increased its popularity, and in addition, this caused it to become part of the identity of the kingdoms and their people, defining them in opposition to their non-Muslim neighbors.

Islam continued to expand, from the banks of the Senegal River in the west to the shores of Lake Chad in the east (for map of major states see Figure 3.1), while Malian traders and clerics introduced it to northern Nigeria, “where the Muslims became known as *Malé*, or people coming from Mali – in the fourteenth century” (Diouf 1998: 4). The spread of Islam in West Africa brought change. Muslim traders brought with them new ideas, perspectives, and of course, goods. New ideas and commodities had a profound affect on West African life ways, the effects of which were significant for their later American enslavement, which will be discussed further below.

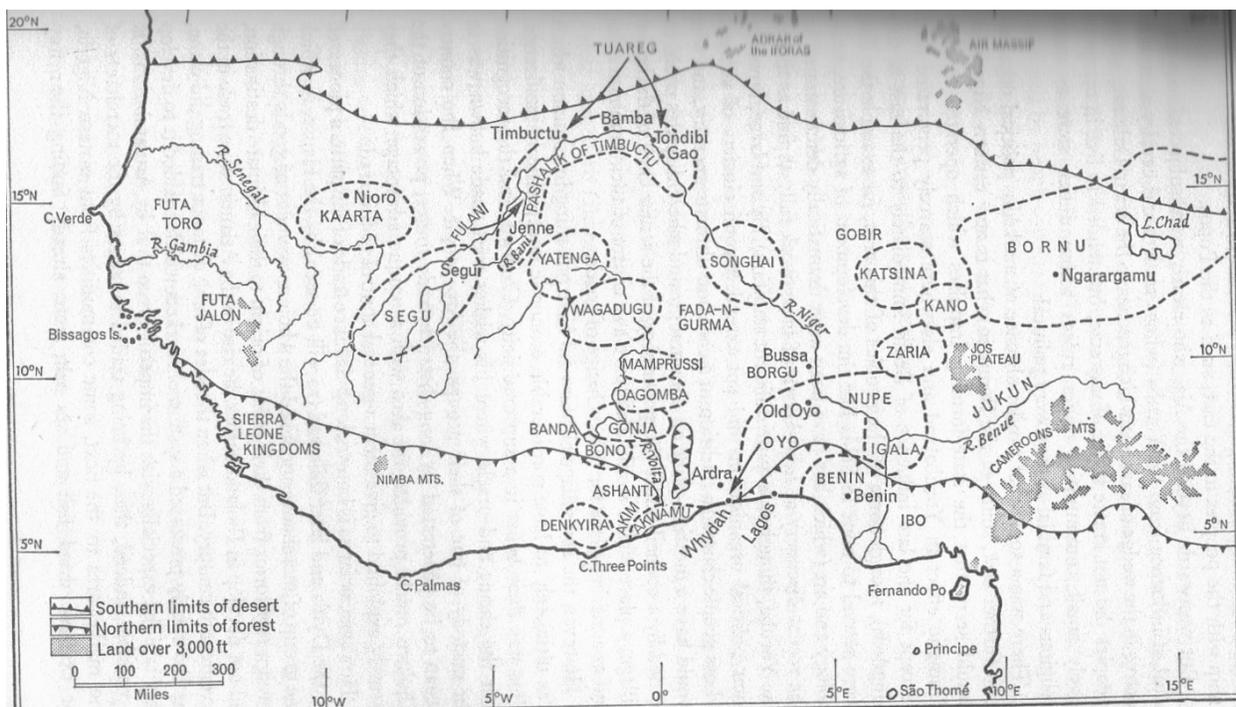


Figure 3.1. Map of major states in West Africa in the 16th century (Fage 1969: 29).

Worthy of note is the fact that beginning in the fifteenth century, Islam in West Africa became associated with the Sufi orders. The Qadiriyyah, founded by Qadir al Gilani who lived in Baghdad from 1078 to 1166, became the most extensive Sufi order in West Africa until the mid nineteenth century (Diouf 1998: 5). The Sufis stressed “the personal dimension of the relationship between Allah and man, as embodied in the surah 2:115: “Wherever you turn, there is Allah’s Face” (Diouf 1998: 5). This personal dimension of religious practice should also be recognized as a feature of possible significance during consideration of the material record.

Islam having been firmly established as an influential force in the region, it played a hand in shaping the results of the Atlantic slave trade. The Muslim men, women, and children who were sold in the New World for three hundred and fifty years were “victims of the general insecurity that the Atlantic slave trade and the politico-religious conflicts in West Africa fostered” (Diouf 1998: 1). Abd ar-Rahman, whose story I relate in a later part of this article, is one of these. He was captured after the defeat of the Muslim Fulbe by the Jalunke in 1788. In 1790, an animist monarch attained the Kayor throne and attacked Muslims in both Kayor and the

surrounding regions of Walo, Baol, and Jolof, killing or selling many to Europeans (Diouf 1998: 28).

Conflicts between Muslim and non-Muslim polities directly led to the enslavement of large numbers of West Africans. Not long after a regular slave trade between Africa and the Americas had been established just such a conflict led to the enslavement of large numbers of Sengalese. Diouf (1998: 19) relates that the sequence of events “started in the Jolof Empire, founded in the thirteenth century by a Muslim dynasty originally from Walo on the Senegal River; the empire extended over most of what is today Senegal,” and that among the Sengalese enslaved, many were Muslim.

Under Islamic law, one Muslim may not enslave another. This does not mean, however, that Muslims who were enslaved were previously unfamiliar with slavery. Slavery for a Muslim is lawful in one of two ways, either the person must be born of slave parents, or if they had been prisoners of war, the captives could be made slaves if they were pagans, though they might have been offered the chance to convert (Diouf 1998: 10). The pattern of enslavement that developed appears to have been influenced by this law. Where Muslims were in power and prevailed in a conflict, there were no qualms about enslaving unbelievers, both for a profit and because slavery was, after all, more merciful than death. This is in line with Muslim principles, the same principles that deemed slavery acceptable due solely to the rationale that the enslaved were different. Slavery in Africa, just as in Europe was justified by slaves’ difference, though in Africa this would be a difference in religion observed or because one belonged to a different ethnic group, not a difference of skin color (1998: 16). Two additional points are worthy of note. First, slavery in Africa should not be construed as having been identical to slavery in the Americas. The difference in distance traveled once enslaved, length of enslavement, and relationship of enslaver and enslaved differed. In addition, it cannot be said that African Muslims were never guilty of selling their coreligionists. For example, civil wars in nineteenth-century central Sudan resulted in the sale of many Muslims by other Muslims to the Americas (Diouf 1998: 12).

It should be no surprise given the outlined pattern of enslavement when Diouf (1998: 20) writes that “[e]very conflict that led to the disintegration of Jolof sent Muslim Wolof, Mandingo, Tukolor, and Fulani to Mexico, Peru, Colombia, and Hispaniola.” In this way the population of the Jolof empire found itself providing the manpower for development in the Americas.

Enslavement and deportation-causing conflicts were not limited to the Jolof empire. Another significant historic event or chain of events with similar results began with the ambitions of a Muslim who was interested in furthering the Islamic faith, but perhaps more importantly in restoring the state of things which the slave trade and other trans-Atlantic commerce had disrupted, though he had no qualms with the selling of infidels. This, Diouf (1998: 20) relates, was “the so-called *marabouts*’ war, or *Tubenan* (from the Arabic and Wolof *tuub*, to convert to Islam) revolution,” led by “Nasir al-Din, a berber marabout from Mauritania who belonged to the Qadiriyah brotherhood,” who “launched a jihad that reached Senegal in 1673.” Part of such a widespread Sufi order, al-Din’s jihad likely would have garnered significant support. It did not, however, prove to be enough.

After Nasir al-Din’s death, just a year after his jihad began, the French succeeded in defeating the movement by playing on internal divisions (Diouf 1998: 21). As should be expected, this defeat sent numerous Muslims to the New World, benefiting the French and the non-Muslim kingdoms against which the *marabouts* had struggled. The *marabouts* that remained went to Bundu, which in 1690 became the second Muslim theocracy in West Africa, owing to a movement there inspired by Nasir al-Din (1998: 22). Conflicts in the region continued, and the young theocracy suffered the same problems as the Jolof empire. Struggles in Bundu resulted in the enslavement of a large number of Muslims, among them was Ayuba Suleyman Diallo, an individual who was later known by the name Job Ben Solomon and was enslaved in 1731. He found himself on a plantation in Maryland, but arrived back in Africa by 1734 after a ransom was paid for him (Diouf 1998: 22, 11).

Many more battles, over the course of the next century, resulted in the transportation of Muslims to the Americas, individually or en masse. Some of these events, taken from Diouf’s research, are summarized in the timeline in Figure 3.2. Throughout the eighteenth-century in Senegambia and Guinea, Diouf (1998: 30) writes, “Muslim movements and theocracies were associated with the fight against old regimes that had reinforced their power by selling men and women to the Europeans . . . the movements appealed to the mass of peasants, who were the main victims of the slave trade . . . and these theocracies became havens not only for Muslims but for the non-Muslims who accepted their protection.”

1730s	The ruler of Kayor and Baol refused to sell slaves and to trade his goods for alcohol, angering the French. After his death a quarrel over succession leads to a series of civil wars that led to a massive deportation of Wolof
1775	O'Hara, French governor of St. Louis aided attacks on Walo, which had threatened to cut St. Louis off from Upper Senegal. The kingdom is destroyed, and eight thousand captives are taken and shipped to the West Indies
1788	A contingent of several thousand from the kingdom of Futa Jallon is sent to fight a population that destroyed vessels from the coast and prevented trade between that region and Europeans. Among them is Ibrhamima abd al Rahman, son of Futa Jallon's ruler. He is captured with others and sold to the English, ending up in New Orleans. He spends his life enslaved in America. Thanks to stories and his nickname "Prince," he gains notoriety
1790	An animist monarch attains the Kayor throne and attacks Muslims in both Kayor and surrounding regions of Walo, Baol, and Jolof. Many are killed or sold to Europeans
1804	After trade is interrupted, the French send twelve boats from Saint-Louis to burn a dozen villages, taking 600 prisoners, the majority of whom belonged to the ruling class
1804	Conflict in the Gold Coast (Ghana) pitted the Muslims against the fetishist Ashanti after the asantehene Osei Kwame had been chased from power and strangled in 1803 because it was feared he would "establish the Koranic law for the civil code of the empire"
1804	Heavy losses are suffered by the followers of Usman dan Fodio who launched a jihad against the rulers of Hausaland due to their unorthodox practices, "Of the surviving men – on both sides of the conflict – large numbers ended their life in Brazil, Trinidad, and Cuba"
1807	Related actions to those of the French in 1804 in the same area probably led to the capture of Omar ibn Said, "a scholar, warrior of the faith, and trader from Futa who was shipped to the United States"

Figure 3.2. Timeline of West African conflicts resulting in Muslim enslavement (Diouf 1998: 24-33).

It should be evident from the sources on which I have drawn that some scholars interested in the slave trade and slave religion have a firm understanding of the political turmoil of West Africa during the period of transatlantic trade. They also understand Islam as a key influence, and the actions of individual Muslims in the events which resulted in the enslavement and deportation of large numbers of West Africans, Muslim and non-Muslim alike. It is

surprising, therefore, that the archaeological scholarship concerned with elucidating further the people who were enslaved in the Americas seems to have been little influenced by and hardly interested in these details. There is no doubt that there is significant progress toward the scientific study of Africans in the Diaspora (see, e.g., OgunDIRAN and Falola 2007) taken as a historic group, and their culture via analysis of excavated material remains attributed to them. Additionally, these studies are periodically concerned with the expression of religious or spiritual practices in the archaeological record that may be deemed “African.” And yet, during examination of the artifacts and other remains the influence of Islam which by its observance (as seen above) in many ways shapes one’s life beyond what researchers would typically categorize as “spiritual practice,” goes unacknowledged.

Muslim and Enslaved: Consequences for the Captive Experience

Insofar as individuals are products of their place and time, those enslaved in the Americas were directly affected by the historical events related above. Again, Carl Ernst (2003: 18), estimates that as many as fifteen percent of the enslaved population may have been Muslim. Michael Gomez (1998: 66) estimates that “of the 481,000 Africans who came to British North America during the slave trade, nearly 230,000 came from areas influenced by Islam,” finding it reasonable to conclude that Muslims may have come to America by the thousands, if not tens of thousands. If a significant number of these people were Muslims, Islam should be seen as a key influence in the creation of African American identity. Recognizing just one key influence in the lives of these people enslaved in America, I pose a question: as Muslims, what might they have taken with them? What legacies would not have been lost to the Middle Passage?

I recognize that answers to this question could easily prompt unnatural generalizations about people who would have come from different places, had different languages, and different traditions. Insoll (2003: 6) writes that “Islam in Africa is African Islam, albeit of diverse character, and this is reflected in the archaeology.” In light of diverse circumstances and the diverse character of African Islam I suggest two examples as historic similarities, that of a religion as a life-shaping force and literacy. Previously I have acknowledged the notion that Islam is not just a religion, it is a way of life. My suggestion of religion as a life-shaping force stems directly from an argument made by Insoll (1999) in *Archaeology of Islam*. He proposes that “[r]eligion as a guiding force in all aspects of life has been forgotten, and subsequently

Western archaeologists, influenced by the prevailing social climate no matter how much they like to think of themselves as neutral observers, have likewise reflected this absence of an overall spiritual structure within their interpretations” (Insoll 1999: 9). At first glance, this statement might indicate a precarious scholarly position, one that perceives a romanticized, more religiously devout and moral other in contrast to the modernized, scientific and perhaps cynic academic. Yet those from the Jolof Empire, the supporters of Nasir al-Din and later the theocracy of Bundu, those from Futa Jallon, and others who were later enslaved lived in a world where one’s religious identity was more than a negligible difference. The significance of that difference was a cause for war and death or of a lifetime of enslavement.

Understanding what people brought with them to the condition of captivity can help inform explanations of how they reacted to that condition. The consequences of the factor of religion as a life-shaping force would have been significant. Consider the following. All slaves living in Spanish lands were forcibly baptized. Senegambians brought to Spain were thus baptized and became considered Christians and called *ladinos*, and were among “the first Africans to be introduced into the New World, as early as 1501” (Diouf 1998: 17). Forced baptism can hardly be thought to lead to committed conversions. It is reasonable to conclude that Africans who were considered Christian after forced baptism may well not have been Christian.

Consider another curious fact that Diouf relates. “Within fifty years, five decrees were passed to forbid the importation of African Muslims to the Spanish colonies.” Why would it have been necessary to reiterate the same point in new legislation once a decade, if not more frequently? Perhaps the legislation was not heeded. This is exactly the conclusion the author reaches, noting that “persistent reissuing of the prohibition shows that Muslims nevertheless continued to be imported and to cause concerns and problems,” and that as a result “colonists claimed that the Muslims incited the other nations to rebellion, and it was feared that they would take Islam to the Indians” (Diouf 1998: 18).

The significance of the implications of these few facts is of considerable interest. First, the nature of the information highlights the fact that surviving reports concerning enslaved Muslims comes from the writing of priests. This is evident in the concern that Muslims would take Islam to the Indians which may have made it more difficult for priests to later convince them of the verity of Catholicism. Successful conversion of enslaved Africans and what are here

referred to as Indians would have been of great consequence, since the work of missionaries was used as a primary justification for enslavement. In addition, it makes it clear that Muslims commonly resisted conversion.

Some accounts, such as those chronicling the story of Omar ibn Said, related in a later part of this study, claim an enslaved Muslim's conversion to Christianity. There are also accounts of what appear to have been possible conversion, and then there are accounts of obvious pseudo-conversion, wherein it seems an individual appeared to have converted, but subsequently reverted to Islamic practice or had only ever given the pretense of abandoning it. It is here again that an examination of contemporary legislation and the accounts of priests are informative.

For example, in Brazil, following a Muslim revolt of 1835, masters were allotted six months time before which they would be fined for each non-Christian slave they owned (Christian status being measured by baptism and some religious education having been provided) (Diouf 1998: 53).³ Circumstances such as these would have been easily accommodated by acts of pseudo-conversion, one method of coping with the conditions of captivity. One could easily receive the baptismal rite and be instructed on the basic tenets of Christianity and remain a practicing Muslim unbeknownst to those in power. Giving the pretense of having been converted was not without its benefits. Pseudo-converts would have been relieved of the pressure and attention placed on those who refused to convert, affording them some measure of freedom or additional privileges.

In response to complaints by priests of the rarity of Muslim conversion, Diouf (1998: 52) writes that “[o]n the Africans’ part, it is worth noting that, as was – and still is – the case in Africa, the peoples who followed traditional religions were more willing than the Muslims to convert.” This by no means denies the possibility that individuals subscribing to other traditions could not have also chosen strategies of pseudo-conversion, adopting the outward signs of the imposed religion or incorporating features of that religion that seemed useful into their practice, effectively modifying but not abandoning their religious beliefs or identities.

Finding themselves a minority, both religious and ethnic in the Americas and in enslaved communities, West African Muslims “did not succumb to acculturation but strove hard to

3. Diouf offers no details or citations. Bastide (1978) mentions multiple revolts instigated by Muslims, the most well-known being that of 1835.

maintain their traditions, social values, customs, and particular identity” (Diouf 1998: 3). In effect, they carried with them Islam as a life-shaping force.

The other significant factor which many Muslims had in common which they would have carried with them was literacy. How common would literacy have been? At the end of the nineteenth century the French estimated that 60 percent of all Senegalese were literate in Arabic, while French and British colonial administrators reported the number of Qur’anic schools in Futa Jallon and Nigeria as three thousand and twenty-five thousand respectively, and in turn it is believed that hundreds of thousands of literate West African Muslims ended their lives as slaves in the Americas (Diouf 1998: 8).

The implications of literacy in a captive situation are extensive, allowing those literate and in captivity a significant advantage over those who are illiterate. The advantage is of a greater magnitude if one is able to use this ability to communicate with others in one’s captive community, however this is not exclusively the case. Literacy can play a role both in the communication of a community, both in coping and for covert planning required for a rebellion, or communication of personal value, where the enslaved scholar Omar ibn Said penned his autobiography in the pursuit of his freedom.

Of additional interest here, since the records which survive or simply the ones historians have chosen to focus on of enslaved Muslim individuals are of men, including those identified as scholars or sons of kings, is the literacy of peasants and girls. Contrary to the situation in Europe at the time is the state of affairs expressed by Lamine Kebe, a former Qur’anic teacher enslaved in the United States, who “made a point of mentioning that he had a few girls (7 percent) in his school in Futa Jallon (Guinea) and that his own aunt ‘was much more learned than himself” (Diouf 1998: 7).

These two examples, religion as a life-shaping force and literacy are by no means the only commonalities that could have survived the Middle Passage and affected the experience of those enslaved. It is simply evident that Muslims were unlikely to convert to Christianity, which would have made a significant minority of those enslaved practitioners of a tradition which has not received attention in the scholarship. It is also true that there are few personal accounts by Africans of their lives under slavery, but of those, a disproportionate number are by Muslims (Diouf 1998: 2).

In this part of the study, I have provided an overview of the archaeology of Islam and the ways that continued Muslim practice has become evident in the Americas both materially and immaterially. I have outlined the historical circumstances of Islam's spread in West Africa and in turn the results for West Africans (including numerous Muslims) of the volatile politico-religious climate in which Islam was a force. And finally I suggested the significance of particular common factors of which I have provided two examples that would have been of consequence for enslaved Muslims' reaction to and experience of captivity in the Americas. I consider these necessary in order to lay the groundwork for a larger argument, at the center of which is the assertion that the continued practice of Islam by Muslims enslaved in America is materially evident, that its presence is significant, and that it should be recognized in the archaeological record at excavated sites where Muslims lived and worked where that record is actively constructed via a recursive relationship where meaning is found both in the intuition of the archaeologist and the ground itself.

IV. The Power of Words: Stories of Enslaved Muslims in the Americas

The details of the lives of most African Muslims who found themselves enslaved in the Americas will never be known. It was a rarity for enslaved Africans and their descendents to be included in the written record beyond notations concerning their sale and purchase. Yet the stories of some enslaved African Muslims were recorded and have managed to survive. Some wrote autobiographies, perhaps in an effort to create a lasting record of their struggles or simply to grasp their suffering through words. Others were taken to be remarkable by their captors or other members of society (often due to their literacy, but sometimes due to other circumstances) and were either encouraged to relate their stories or were merely speculated about. The resulting accounts are often a mix of firsthand knowledge and occasionally legend. Nevertheless, they offer a glimpse into the nature of the enslaved African Muslim experience.

In this part of the study, I will seek to provide portraits of individuals, drawing on the documentary record where others deemed their stories worthy of note. First I review some of the schools of thought which have characterized historical archaeology and outline the methodological framework which provides for the joint use of the documentary record and archaeological record, review the use of stories in historical archaeology, and then follow with individual life stories. These small biographical sketches by no means provide the complete picture of the enslaved African Muslim experience in the Americas. The surviving documentary record, for example, seems to have nearly exclusively privileged men. Despite this, I adduce the following examination of the documents in the hope of emphasizing the need to reexamine the record, to rethink a study of the past which continues to ignore individuals and creates an unthinkable past (Trouillot 1995: 73).

Historical Archaeology: Drawing on the Documentary and Archaeological Record

When conceiving of the relationship between archaeology and history, from where does one embark? A review of historical archaeology may serve to shed light on this relationship. Generally, historical archaeology is an archaeology which temporally and spatially coincides with the presence of a documentary record. This record is sometimes utilized as a resource in conjunction with the study of human behavior through material remains. As Kathleen Deagan (1996: 18) observes:

Documented information about past social, temporal, and economic variables allows investigation of the cultural processes that affect those variables, and which are in turn affected by them. Furthermore, the simultaneous access by historical archaeologists to both emic statements (documents) and etic statements (archaeological data) about conditions in the past allows the study of behavioral processes involved in human perception, and the manipulation and means of coping with the environment.

Since the 1960s, historical archaeology has been distinguished by various schools of thought. The first is evident in Ivor Noël Hume's definition of historical archaeology as a "handmaiden to history" (Deagan 1996: 23). It is also expressed by Barbara Little when she recognizes the "supplementation function" of historical archaeology. Historical supplementation is characterized by the idea that there is certain historical information which can only be retrieved through archaeology. This information, seen as a more objective than subjective written histories, can then enhance or even change traditional interpretations of social history (Deagan 1996: 24). Little wishes not to resurrect the idea that archaeology is objective while history is subjective, but to emphasize that archaeology may provide alternative questions and interpretations. She suggests that part of historical supplementation "includes creating ways of writing about the past that do not rely on historical documents or documentary historians as final arbiters of meaningful or accurate history" (Deagan 1996: 44). The familiar maxim that "history is written by the victor" comes to mind. How then, in light of this imbalance, might the documentary and material record be combined effectively? I will return to this question below.

Another aim of historical archaeology is the reconstruction of past life ways. Deagan (1996: 25) recognizes the trend as "in keeping with anthropological tradition and practice, it is essentially similar to social history and to ethnography in that the focus of research is most often, although not always exclusively, on a particular time, place, and society," and was paralleled by a methodological shift toward "backyard archaeology," where "emphasis was to be placed on the by-products of all aspects of behavior in the past, which were found most frequently in those locations where the behavior took place, namely the backyard." One of the results of this approach is the documentation of historically disenfranchised groups, which has provided alternative images of national identity from those provided by dominant written history. This orientation opened up archaeologies interested in the pasts of women, blacks, workers, and others often neglected and subordinated by popular or conventional histories.

Processual studies are another avenue in historical archaeology. Their focus is often becomes general human behaviors or cultural processes. Deagan (1996: 26) asserts that “they provide . . . the building blocks on which more general processual questions about human culture may be investigated.”

Two other models are those of archaeological science and cognitive archaeology. According to Deagan (1996: 30), historical archaeological studies concerned with the former “have attempted to demonstrate the ways in which certain sociocultural variables are manifested in the archaeological record, using documentation about the nature of these variables as controls.” Studies of contemporary societies may thus become relevant, in the interest of documenting the nature of formerly undocumented or rarely documented variables. This is related to cognitive archaeology which is, as Deagan (1996: 32) states, “also based on the simultaneous observation of the spoken, written, observed, and preserved contexts of behavior, is the attempt to discover and define the mental structures and cognitive systems of people through material culture.” After describing these pathways, Deagan (1996: 22) suggests the following principles for historical archaeology:

If historical archaeology is a scientific discipline, it should be concerned with developing general principles that can explain regularities and variability in human culture and behavior. If it is essentially an historical discipline, it should be concerned with studying and illuminating the attributes, events, and processes of a particular time, place, and society; however, this does not preclude the use of scientific methods in the approach to these concerns. Finally, if historical archaeology is a humanistic discipline, it should impart an aesthetic appreciation of and an empathy with the human conditions of the past.

There are various methods for achieving these aims. Mark Leone and Parker Potter Jr. (1988) present a method, based on Lewis Binford’s middle-range theory, which seeks to account for regularities and variability in human behavior and the attributes and processes of particular times, places, and societies. Further, it may be combined with an effort to impart appreciation for or empathy with the human conditions of the past.

Historical archaeology has often successfully combined the evidence of the documentary record and archaeological record in tandem. Leone and Potter (1988) discuss methods for utilizing the documentary and archaeology records. They present two problematic ways of linking these forms of evidence and propose an improved method based on Binford’s middle-

range theory for ethnoarchaeology. Binford “notes the difference between what would be predicted on the basis of ethnography and what is found archaeologically,” and recognizes this difference or “ambiguity” as an important piece of knowledge, the value of which lies in the independence of each line of evidence (Leone and Potter 1988: 13). Where previously one excavated and then used the documentary evidence to identify archaeological finds or gleaned the story from the documents and then used archaeology to fill in the gaps, middle-range theory stresses the independence of each type of evidence rather than the dependence of one upon the other. Leone and Potter (1988: 14) find that “four parts of middle-range theory are particularly useful for historical archaeology: (1) the independence of the archaeological and documentary records, (2) the concept of ambiguity, (3) the use of descriptive grids, and (4) the idea of organizational behavior.”

Treating the types of evidence as independent is important since the archaeological and documentary records are often created in different contexts. Leone and Potter (1988: 14) warn against treating them as dependent which creates a connection between the two which would not have existed in the past, suggesting alternatively that if each is treated as independent one may move back and forth from one to the other, “using each to extend the meaning of the other.” Their method involves creating descriptive grids based on the documentary record against which the archaeological record may be arrayed. Once a framework has been assembled and expectations of the archaeological record identified, then the ambiguities which appear may be used to form a new set of questions about both records. “In such an analysis,” write Leone and Potter (1988: 14), “organizational behavior, which can also be learned from the documentary record, is the concept used to ascribe meaning to the ambiguities discovered through careful description and comparison.” In other words, identifying organizational behavior is a search for context, circumstance, or societal standard which would translate the ambiguity.

The subsequent challenge, then, is to tell stories about the past following a process of sifting, of reevaluating the documentary and archaeological records effectively. Using Binford’s middle-range theory, Leone and Potter’s method provides a way to successfully navigate the connection between archaeology and history, advancing historical archaeology beyond supplementation, beyond being a “handmaiden to history.”

Archaeology and Storytelling

With the recognition that archaeologists tell stories about the past, the use of storytelling itself has become widespread in archaeological writing. I think it pertinent to preface the biographical sketches to follow with an explanation of the use of storytelling in archaeology. The phenomenon is not exclusively found in historical archaeology, though the presence of the documentary record makes telling stories an easier task. The trend stemmed from a growing frustration with the inadequacy of traditional styles of archaeological writing. Often passive-voiced and object-specific, descriptions in the past frequently paid rapt attention to the pottery sherds lifted from the ground but largely ignored the people who made them. Brian Fagan (2005: 17) claims that “[w]e forget that all archaeology is the result of human behavior, of people like ourselves.” This sentiment is not new, but as it is increasingly expressed, more archaeologists are taking new approaches.

One of these is Janet Spector. In her quest to relate more than a “distanced and lifeless generation of the past,” she developed a narrative about an episode in the life of a fictional young Wahpeton Dakota girl in order to relate her interpretation of the material record at a site and what it conveyed about the past (Spector 1996). Spector overcame the longstanding fear of “I” and placed herself at the center of her interpretation instead of providing a passive-voiced authoritative text on her subject. The writing of authors who have taken up this style reveals recognition of biases and their rejection of the descriptions and interpretations of material in the past. It has also led to a more accurate archaeology. More accurate because it places a primacy on the living people whose actions archaeologists attempt to read in the material record. It is true, Spector’s story about a Dakota girl, the awl she used for leatherwork, the meanings of its markings, and how it could possibly have been lost, does not rank as one of the best pieces of literature of the late twentieth century. Yet her experiments with writing archaeology serve as a model for the betterment of the discourse. She confronts the male-centered status quo by writing about a young girl. As both a female and a child, the main character of her story represents two groups in human societies that are frequently written out of archaeological narratives. The focus of her writing is people, their lives, and their relationships to one another (Spector 1996).

To further understand the use of the story for historical archaeology, it is useful to consider Barbara Little’s (2007) suggestions when she makes a distinction between a story and a plot. “A story is series of events. The audience for a story asks, “And then? And then?” as a

story demands only curiosity. On the other hand, a plot is based on causality and demands intelligence and memory, as the audience asks, “Why?” It is worth considering that the story that only seeks to tug on universal emotions doesn’t need a “why” or a historically based explanation of conflict or controversy” (Little 2007: 147). Sometimes historical archaeologists use stories to invoke the human presence in the material record. Sometimes they utilize what Little differentiates as a plot. Below, as I offer life stories of enslaved African Muslims in the Americas, I seek to evoke more than curiosity. I endeavor to ask why, and I suggest that readers do the same.

In addition to being object-centered and failing to focus on human action and intentionality, another criticism of archaeological writing (the last I will relate here, though this is hardly a summary of the complaints which have been lodged), is that its style is frequently not engaging, and filled with jargon. Both of these factors contribute to a writing of archaeology that effectively alienates any public audience it may have.

For Mikhail Bakhtin, the “speaker breaks through the alien horizon of the listener, constructs his utterance on alien territory against his, the listener’s, apperceptive background” (quoted in Joyce 2002: 50). The words archaeologists choose must be chosen carefully, because they will be weighed by the reader. It is upon alien territory that an understanding of the past is constructed. Upon this potentially hostile territory unlike the archaeologist’s own, a story must be engaged in that can compliment or invalidate accepted histories.

Before I turn to the relevant surviving documentary record for enslaved Muslims in America, it is important to note that both archaeological stories in the past, and the historical narratives drawn on below, often suffer from their single-voiced nature and their finality. Archaeologists must constantly be telling each other, employers, relevant stakeholders, or the world what they are doing. They tell them what they find and what they think it means in site reports, conference papers, public lectures, and books, both popular and academic. However, “Archaeologists,” Rosemary Joyce (2002: 100) contends, “cannot escape the knowledge that they do not complete and encompass the material they study by making it the object of their regard.” Joyce (2002: 2) has critiqued archaeology “as a discipline engaging in the present in the construction of persuasive stories about imagined pasts.” I suggest that there is always more to tell, there is always more to learn, in this case from the archaeological record. All the excavation in the world would mean nothing if archaeology did not report and interpret. As Deetz proposed,

“What is it that we do, and why do we do it? Simply put archaeologists *are* storytellers. It is our responsibility to communicate to as wide an audience as possible the results and significance of our findings” (quoted in Joyce 2002: 121).

Archaeological writing can be incredibly consequential because it plays a role in the construction of understandings of the past. What archaeologists say about other cultures is taken as particularly believable (Joyce 2002: 113). Particular conceptions of the past at different times have been used to subordinate groups of people and empower others. The voice archaeologists use matters because it is taken as a voice of authority. They must recognize that authority as they engage in crafting stories about the past.

I offer the following stories to augment my suggestions concerning the interpretation of the archaeological record, and, following Spector, relate more than a distanced and lifeless generation of the past. I rely on the collection of stories that is Allan Austin’s (1984) *African Muslims in Antebellum America: A Sourcebook*, and his 1996 condensation of that work. Austin says of African Muslims, like many of the first Africans in America, that “Very few were allowed to go to school, to own property, to marry, to go to court, or to have their deaths legally recorded or probated. Africans and their children in America have always been of interest, of course, as laboring property, as strangers, exotics, threats, and, in the Constitution, as discounted, disenfranchised persons – each three-fifths of a white male – used in yet another way to strengthen the voting power of slaveholders” (Austin 1996: 5). This is true of the individuals in the stories to follow. “Most slaveholders,” Austin (1996: 5) writes, “had to suppress manifestations of non-Christian religious practices that might be used to unite or direct their slaves. If necessary, they found some way to accommodate the proudest people by recognizing and rewarding a supposedly exceptional slave with limited power over others. All masters had to oppose the distribution of letters in a language they could not read.” Austin’s point, then, is that those who did write about these individuals had to be careful about how much they told and to whom. This may indicate why so few documents are known, and account for the nature of those which survive.

The scarcity of the documents may also be due to the low number of Muslims presumed to have become captive in America. However, as stated previously, some scholars find it reasonable to conclude that Muslims may have come to America by the thousands, if not tens of thousands (e.g., Ernst 2003; Gomez 1998).

The nature of the documents may not be ideal, yet I suggest they are useful to the archaeology of enslaved African America. Since they take the form of stories, and not Little's (2007) "plots," archaeologists must not forget to search for causality and to ask, "Why?" of these stories. Nevertheless, they indicate that Islam should join the complex of identities over which archaeologists puzzle for enslaved African America and about which they ultimately craft new stories.

Omar ibn Said, "Omeroh," or "Prince Moro"

I begin with the story of Omar ibn Said (see photograph, Figure 4.1), perhaps the most well-known African Muslim to be enslaved in the Americas, whether for the curiosity he aroused in life or the interest he has sparked in the scholarly world. It is his story, in fact, which first inspired this study. He was enslaved and brought to America in 1807, in the waning days of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Over the course of his life he penned various documents in Arabic which survive today. The most famous of these is an autobiography, today in the possession of the library at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.⁴

Those that wrote about Omar ibn Said during and after his lifetime, such as journalist Calvin Leonard and Reverend Matthew Grier, remembered him as a gentleman and a scholar (Austin 1984: 488, 499). It is these two traits that probably account for much of the legend surrounding him. Stories of Omar tell of royalty, of an Arab prince perhaps, suffering nobly in his unfortunate captivity. Allan Austin (1984: 448) claims that the "legend seems to be the product of a lengthy series of accretions, and an unwillingness to recognize 'civilization' in an African." The letters and tales that survive almost universally reflect a prejudice, that an educated man, a literate and "civilized" man, could not really be an African, and if so, he must be a very exceptional one. The slave owner's conscience was thus placated.

Born "on the south bank of the Senegal River in Futa Toro," he was "not an Arabian, but an African, a swarthy, proud Tukolor Fula," and "his portrait clearly reflects early descriptions of his hair, color, and physiognomy as being 'distinctly of the African character'" (Austin 1984: 447). And if not royalty who was this man who gained, in his time, so much notoriety in and

4. Available as the *Autobiography of Omar ibn Said, Slave in North Carolina*, 1831, edited by John Franklin Jameson, *American Historical Review* 30(4): 787-795 (July 1925), available as an internet resource through the North Carolina at Chapel Hill's library, *Documenting the American South* collection.



Figure 4.1. Photograph of Omar ibn Said (North Carolina Collection: University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill)

around Charleston? He was, “a scholar educated in Africa by Africans, a teacher, a trader, probably an aide to non-Muslim rulers, and when required – perhaps – a soldier” (Austin 1984: 447).

In his own rough, Arabic words (translated by historian J. Franklin Jameson in 1925) he wrote:

In the name of God, the Gracious, the Merciful. – Thanks be to God, supreme in goodness and kindness and grace, and who is worthy of all honor, who created all things for his service, even man’s power of action and of speech.

From Omar to Sheik Hunter

You asked me to write my life. I am not able to do this because I have much forgotten my own, as well as the Arabic language. Neither can I write very grammatically or according to

the true idiom. And so, my brother, I beg you, in God's name not to blame me, for I am a man of weak eyes, and of a weak body.

My name is Omar ibn Seid. My birthplace was Fut Tûr, between the two rivers. I sought knowledge under the instruction of a Sheikh called Mohammed Seid, my own brother, and Sheikh Soleiman Kembeh, and Sheikh Gabriel Abdal. I continued my studies twenty-five years, and then returned to my home where I remained six years. Then there came to our place a large army, who killed many men, and took me, and brought me to the great sea, and sold me into the hands of the Christians, who bound me and sent me on board a great ship and we sailed upon the great sea a month and a half, when we came to a place called Charleston in the Christian language. There they sold me to a small, weak, and wicked man, called Johnson, a complete infidel, who had no fear of God at all. Now I am a small man, and unable to do hard work so I fled from the hand of Johnson and after a month came to a place called Fayd-il (the town of Fayetteville, North Carolina [Austin 1984: 450]). There I saw some great houses (churches). On the new moon I went into a church to pray. A lad saw me and rode off to the place of his father and informed him that he had seen a black man in the church. A man named Handah (Hunter?) and another man with him on horse-back, came attended by a troop of dogs. They took me and made me go with them twelve miles to a place called Fayd-il, where they put me into a great house from which I could not go out. I continued in the great house (which, in the Christian language, they called jail) sixteen days and nights. One Friday the jailor came and opened the door of the house and I saw a great many men, all Christians, some of whom called out to me, "What is your name? Is it Omar or Seid?" I did not understand their Christian language. A man called Bob Mumford took me and led me out of the jail, and I was very well pleased to go with them to their place. I stayed at Mumford's four days and nights, and then a man named Jim Owen, son-in-law of Mumford, having married his daughter Betsey, asked if I was willing to go to a place called Bladen. I said, Yes, I was willing. I went with them, and have remained in the place of Jim Owen until now" (Austin 1984: 465, 466).

"Before I came to the Christian country, my religion was the religion of 'Mohammed, the Apostle of God – may God have mercy upon him and give him peace.' I walked to the mosque before day-break, washed my face and head and hands and feet. I prayed at noon, prayed in the afternoon, prayed at sunset, prayed in the evening. I gave alms every year, gold, silver, seeds, cattle, sheep, goats, rice, wheat, and barley. I gave tithes of all the above-

named things. I went ever year to the holy war against the infidels. I went on pilgrimage to Mecca, as did all who were able. – My father had six sons and five daughters, and my mother had three sons and one daughter. When I left my country I was thirty-seven years old; I have been in the country of the Christians twenty-four years. – Written A.D. 1831 (1984: 466, 517).

This is not the extent of the manuscript. Omar opens his story with passages from the Qur'an, and includes substantial praise for Jim Owen and his family, acknowledging their beneficent behavior toward him. Over the years which he abided with the Owen family, until his death in 1864, he was often remarked upon by visitors. A Bible in Arabic was acquired for his use. He eventually “engaged in a campaign to send such Bibles to West Africa in cooperation with another African Muslim of some renown, Lamine Kaba, or ‘Lamen Kebe,’” however, “Umar b. Said continued to implore the help of Allah and the prophet Muhammad with invocations found even within the margins of his Christian Bible” (Gomez 2005: 168).

Omar became something of a curiosity for visitors to the Owen household. He assured Christian visitors that he was truly a convert to Christianity, penning for them what they often believed were the Lord's Prayer or the Twenty-third Psalm in Arabic. This was not, in fact, always the case (Austin 1984: 447).

He seems to have been able to convince Owen and others of his assertion that he was of a “weak body,” since hard labor was never required of him. Austin (1984: 447) relates that “[w]hat he did, exactly, for his keep is a mystery,” and that “[s]everal romantic accounts hopelessly disagree.” The activities of his daily life, apart from treating visitors, are somewhat of a mystery. In life and death he remained a curiosity, and curiosity fed speculation. This, coupled with the desire to see Omar write, ultimately kept his story alive.

Bilali, or “Ben Ali”

This is not a story about one man, though it may seem that way. Perhaps the most interesting part about Bilali is not his life but his legacy, since Islam as it was brought to Sapelo Island in Georgia did not disappear after the first generation it thrived there. Further, as Austin (1984: 265) noted, this story “is not to be confused with several attractive yet completely negrophobic stories for children which their author, Joel Chandler Harris, the creator of Uncle Remus, pretended were modeled on Bilali or one of his sons.”

The story of Bilali is a mixture of details related by his friend Salih Bilali, folklore, and the memories of his descendents. Zephaniah Kingsley, a slaveholder in Florida, remembers “two instances, to the southward, where gangs of negroes were prevented from deserting to the enemy [the British between 1812 and 1815] by drivers, or influential negroes, whose integrity to their masters and influence over the slaves prevented it; and what is still more remarkable, in both instances the influential negroes were Africans; and professors of the Mahomedan religion” (1984:268). Austin (1984: 268) notes that this is “without a doubt, a reference to the two Bilalis.” That is, Bilali of Sapelo Island, with which I am currently concerned, and Salih Bilali, of St. Simon’s Island.

Austin (1984: 268) lays out that according to Salih Bilali, “Bilali was a Fula from Timbo, Futa Jallon, in the highlands of present-day Guinea-Conakry.” This was the homeland also of Abdul Rahaman, whose story will follow. He eventually became the manager “of a large Sea Island property and its 400 to 500 souls, whom he reportedly saved twice: in the War of 1812 (mentioned above) and in a great hurricane in 1824. He was also prolific, producing twelve sons and seven daughters to whom he passed on African names, terms, and traditions that were clearly Muslim” (1984: 265).

Between Africa and Georgia fell the shadows of the Middle Passage and a stay of indefinite length in the Bahamas. Bilali either brought with him or there married one or more wives (four are legitimate in Islam), and he was brought to the mainland with a then unnumbered progeny of sons and daughters. Usually, Muslims did not learn European languages until doing so appeared advantageous, but it is reported that all but the last daughter could speak English, French, Fulfulde, and, perhaps, Arabic (Austin 1984: 272).

Katie Brown (see photograph, Figure 4.2), a descendent of Bilali still resided on Sapelo Island when interviewed in the 1930s for the Georgia Writer’s Project. She spoke of Bilali’s wife and daughters. His daughters were: Margaret, Hester, Charlotte (Cotty), Fatima, Yoruba, Medina, and Binty (Austin 1984: 278). Fatima and Medina are distinctly Muslim names.

Katie Brown related that all Bilali’s daughters had been born by the time he arrived in America. He and one of his wives, Phoebe, from the Bahamas, prayed with beads which they were very particular about, and at very specific times. She says, “Bilali he pull back and he say,



Figure 4.2. Photograph of Katie Brown on Sapelo Island (GWP 1940: XVa).

‘Belambi, Hakabara Mahamadia’” (perhaps a compression of “God is one, great” and “Mohammed is his prophet”) (Austin 1984: 278). Austin (1984: 278) observes that “Phoebe passed on some African words (*sojo*, *deloe*, and *diffy*) and made the ceremonial *saraka* cake for harvest time.” And speaking of her grandmother Margaret, one of Bilali’s daughters, Katie Brown also remembered that she had not tied her hair up the way that Katie did, but wore a loose white cloth that she threw over her head like a veil which hung loose on her shoulders (Georgia Writers’ Project 1940:162).

Shad Hall, another descendent of Bilali spoke of “conjuring, shouts, harvest festivals, funerals, shadows, working hoes, flying Africans, and An Nancy (Anansi), the spider hero, and about an uncle named Bilali Smith” (Austin 1984: 278). Austin suggests that “Hall’s grandmother, at least, clearly attempted to keep her Islamic traditions alive even as she worried about spirits of the dead which might need to be driven away by the death of a white chicken.

This contradicts the tradition which claimed that Bilali's children were Christians" (1984: 278). More is known about Bilali's story however, than what can be gathered from his descendents.

Bilali was a respected Muslim from Futa Jallon, put in charge of hundreds of slaves on Sapelo Island, Georgia for a substantial amount of time beginning at least before the War of 1812. He continually participated in activities that identified him as a Muslim to a degree that warranted notice. Austin (1984: 265) provides a picture, relating that Bilali, "regularly wore a fez and a long coat just as he might have in Africa; he prayed the obligatory three times a day facing the East on his carefully preserved prayer rug; and he always observed Muslim fasts and feast-day celebrations," and that "[w]hen the time came, Bilali was buried with his rug and Quran." He and his wife's prayers using beads and the continued recognizable Muslim practices of his children have been passed on in the memories of his descendents. Further, "Timbo – and Futa Jallon, generally – was an intellectual center, and despite a common attitude expressed in American writing – one white preferred to think of Bilali as being 'copper-toned' – the more sedentary and scholarly Fulbe were likely to be black rather than brown. Indeed, black descendents remembered him as being 'coal-black.' He was in no way Arabian, as Harris insisted; he was African" (Austin 1984: 268).

In addition to the respect he gained for his managerial skills and his actions during the War of 1812 and the hurricane, what might have caused white slave-owners to insist he could not be African? Literacy. Bilali, like Omar ibn Said and many other enslaved African Muslims, was literate in Arabic, which for racist whites seems to have inspired the desire to explain away this written manifestation of intelligence as the product not of an African but of a member of some other people.

However the manuscript which Bilali penned does not compare to that of Omar ibn Said's autobiography. The manuscript was found to be "a collection of excerpts from a fairly well-known West African legal text of the Maliki school" predominant in Muslim West Africa from Morocco to the Gulf of Guinea" (Austin 1984: 272). It does, therefore, compare to some of Omar's other writings. On Bilali's manuscript, a linguist concluded: "From the first it seemed improbable to me that the document could be a diary or plantation record, since among the African Negro Moslems Arabic is only used to copy existing standard works, original composition being confined to chronicles of local dynasties" (Austin 1984: 288). The case of Omar ibn Said and others obviously defies this particular misconception.

What is the significance of Bilali's manuscript, of the memories of his life preserved by his descendents, of his story? Austin (1984: 292) asks: "Has it not told us that Bilali, sleeping the long sleep in Georgia soil with his beloved Koran and his prayer rug beside him, had a greatly different life and status in that far distant time and place? And more than that, that he was a disciple in that Muslim school of learning which the erudite Professor John Henry Wigmore aptly describes as 'the most highly organized plan of legal education and judicial training that any of the world's legal systems have ever known?'" I suggest that while Austin may be impressed, he falls short of communicating the significance of Bilali's legacy.

As remembered by Bilali's descendents, Islamic practice on the Sea Islands of Georgia persisted at least into the 1850s, if not longer. Katie Brown was born around 1851, and she remembered her grandmother's Muslim-style head covering, so unlike her own (Austin 1984: 278). Nero Jones, also a resident of Sapelo Island interviewed during the Georgia Writer's Project, recalled that his grandparents Gilbert and Calina prayed at particular times and on the beads, and to Austin (1984: 279) it seems "that these people were Muslim, and that Muslims married one another on Sapelo Island into a second generation at least."

Austin (1984: 279) goes on to note that those "Afro-Americans who did recall Bilali and his peculiar habits remembered them as recalled by women. Here women seem to be the carriers of their people's traditions and perhaps this was more often the case among Muslims than has hitherto been recognized." This may have been necessarily true where women were responsible for cooking and Muslim dietary restrictions were observed. Historian Michael Gomez (2005: 156) finds information on the subject somewhat limited, but notes that, "Corneila Baily offers a glimpse with her observation that Bilali's children would not eat 'wild' animals or 'fresh' meat, and that seafood such as crab was avoided, as were certain kinds of fish." Other memories include those of *saraka*, the rice cake mentioned above.

Some memories associated with women and Islamic practice have little to do with food, however, such as another provided by Shad Hall. In addition to his other memories of his grandmother Hester and the rest of Bilali's daughters, Hall also related that Hester and all of them prayed on the bead, and that they wore the string of beads sometimes on their waist, sometimes on their neck, and prayed at sun-up on their knees, facing the sun, bowing three times while kneeling on a little mat (Gomez 2005: 156).

It may at least be said that Muslim traditions as they were preserved on Sapelo Island were largely transmitted by women. In addition, where in other places traditional religious observance was suppressed by those enslaving Africans (either using potential conversion as an excuse for slavery or attempting to stem an avenue for organizing and rebellion); Sapelo Island may have provided a unique climate for Muslim beliefs to thrive. Austin (1984: 276) relates that it was the plan of Thomas Spalding (Bilali's captor) to treat his slaves like serfs, where "[e]ach had his own land to work; labor for the master was limited to six hours a day, and slaves worked by the task system – a fairly common practice on the islands off Georgia where slaves significantly outnumbered freemen." The task system allowed an amount of time away from assigned work from one's captors once the tasks were completed. This may have been the ideal system for a practicing enslaved Muslim, who could pause to pray as long as the task assigned was completed.

Gomez (2005: 159) observes that the "Muslim presence in coastal Georgia-South Carolina (and possibly elsewhere along the Atlantic) was therefore active, vibrant, and compelling." It is this vibrancy which for me suggests that the significance of Bilali's story is his legacy, a community where Muslim practice continued to thrive in captivity beyond Bilali himself.

Ibrahima Abd ar-Rahman or "Prince"

What is in a name? The life story below is drawn primarily from the tireless efforts of author Terry Alford (1977: xvii), who would not give up until he had discovered the story in full.⁵ The man at the center of that story was known for most of his life simply as "Prince," the name given him by those who enslaved him. But he was not born with a simple name. He was born Abd ar-Rahman Ibrahima, a Muslim name, and his family name. Many of those enslaved lost all they had, family, friends, and home, and even their names in their American captivity. Many descendants, Muslim or non-Muslim, unlike the rare Katie Browns or Shad Halls, cannot trace their roots. Muslim names often appear in lists of slave names or advertisements posted for runaway slaves (Gomez 2005: 147). But they were, like the names of their fellow Africans, often mispronounced and misspelled. Bilali (the name of the first black follower of the prophet

5. Alford spent many years of his life researching and traveled extensively, including to Africa, to complete the story.

Muhammad and Islam's first *muezzin*) became Bullaly. Abu Bakr (the name of the first Muslim caliph) became Boccarey. Mahmud became Mamado, Muhammad became Mahomet, and Wali (a legal guardian or protector under Islamic law) became Walley (Abdo 2006: 66). And then there is Samba ("second son" in the language of the Muslim Fulbe), which became simply Sam, or Sambo. Ultimately, they were often erased, one more dehumanizing act of slaveholding. Yet, that these stories exist means that this study treats more than the hypothetical. Slavery could cost one one's name, but could not silence the *shahadah*.

When exactly, it is not known, but sometime before 1730, a nomadic, cattle-herding people in West Africa began to settle in the land occupied by the Jalunke people. This group was the Fulbe (also called the Fula, Fulani, Foulahs or Poulas). The region became known as Futa Jalon (the land of the Fulbe and Jalunke). For a time relations between the two groups were peaceful, the farming Jalunke dairy products and meat from the herding Fulbe (Alford 1986: 3).

Yet differences divided them. The farming Jalunke were animists who worshipped many gods, while the Fulbe herders were mostly Muslim. Alford (1986: 4) reports that tensions grew, "to the extent that the Jalunke at last forbade the Fulbe to pray in public, and even forced them to hide their holy books in caves." In time, a Muslim cleric named Karamoko Alfa, called for a *jihad*, a struggle against these restrictions. A man named Sori took up the call and led the Fulbe into war, and by 1730, Alford writes, "the Muslim supremacy was established" (Alford 1986: 4).

A theocracy led by Karamoko Alfa was established, but his "excessive religious practices" drove him mad by 1748, and it was necessary to replace him. The new leader, popular with the army, and the people's choice, was Sori. He regularly waged campaigns on the country's frontiers and was often successful (Alford 1986: 5). They were not, however, simply a warring polity. They were heavily involved in trade with Europeans. "They came to the coast to trade ivory, rice, hides, livestock, and gold," and "slaves who had been taken as prisoners of war, who were exchanged for salt and European goods" (1986: 5). A town called Timbo became the political, religious, and scholastic center. Alford describes the town and the mosque. "The mosque, set among orange trees, was the most prominent structure in town, and the second oldest place in Futa. Built in the shape of a great cone, it was supported internally by wooden pillars sunk into a pressed clay floor. The faithful worshipped on sheepskin mats placed in rows three feet apart. Prominent families such as Sori's had rural residences near Timbo and were often there" (Alford 1986: 6). For a photograph of the mosque at Timbo see Figure 4.4.



Figure 4.4. Photograph of the mosque at Timbo in the 1930s (Alford 1986: after 108).

The family of Sori, ruler of Futa Jallon, included sons. Abd al-Rahman Ibrahima was one of these sons. Ibrahima began his studies in Timbo in 1769, at the age of seven. He learned Arabic and Pular (the language of the Fulbe), and to memorize the Qur'an. Constantly studying, in 1774, at the age of twelve, his father sent him outside Futa Jalon to continue studying at Macina and at Timbuktu (Alford 1986: 12). Macina lay approximately one thousand miles to the east, in what is today Mali. Jenne was its major city, noted for its sophisticated Islamic scholars. Timbuktu was twelve more days travel from Jenne. In Macina, Ibrahima would have observed towns much larger and more populous than anything in Fula (1986: 13).

At the age of seventeen, Ibrahima returned to Futa to join his father's army. In his absence his father, Sori, had been successful militarily (Alford 1986: 14). He continued wars to expand the Muslim faith and wealth of Futa. He assigned his son to the cavalry. In one campaign in 1781, young Ibrahima went out under the command of his uncle Sulimina against a Bambara army of five or six thousand, but Sulimina was killed early. This left inexperienced Ibrahima in charge (1986: 16). After laying an ambush for the enemy, he was victorious.

Alford observes that the “year of 1781 came to a portentous close. A one-eyed Irishman named John Coates Cox, a surgeon of a ship on the coast, went ashore to hunt and became separated from his companions.” Lost, attacked by insects, exhausted, and possibly suffering from a snake bite, Cox was found by residents of Futa and brought to Timbo. Sori saw that he was taken care of, and Alford speculates that he may have taken a wife and fathered a son in Timbo. Ibrahima befriended the doctor, and learned some English. After Cox was healed and had stayed for a time, Sori offered some soldiers to escort him back to the coast, and he found the same ship from which he had been lost (Alford 1986: 17, 18).

The year 1786 saw a time of peace, and Ibrahima married and fathered a son, al-Husayn (Alford 1986: 19). Yet the peace would not last. In another campaign under his command, he and his army were caught unaware. Many were killed, and he was among those captured and sold to the Malinke along the Gambia River. Ibrahima and fifty of his soldiers were sold to an English slaver, and suffered the long Middle Passage to the Caribbean. Only one remained with him for the remainder of his journey. In 1788 he and Samba, or Sambo, suffered another grueling voyage to New Orleans (Gomez 2005: 169). They were then brought north to Natchez, Mississippi, and sold to a planter named Thomas Foster. At some point after his arrival at the Foster’s farm, Ibrahima attempted to explain his identity to his captor, suggesting that his father would be willing to pay for his return.

The Fulbe were not accustomed to slavery, and had Foster attempted to return Ibrahima after a ransom payment had been paid by his father, it would not have been the first time an enslaved Muslim in America was liberated in such a way. One example is Ayuba b. Sulayman (or Job Ben Solomon). He became enslaved and arrived in Maryland in 1732, and was on his way back to Africa by 1733. It was found that his father was a leading cleric in the upper Senegal valley, and due to the intervention of a benevolent officer of the Royal African Company he was able to gain his liberty (Gomez 1998: 85, 71).

Foster, however, refused to hear any such explications, and it was probably from that day forward that Ibrahima became known as “Prince.” And Prince fled. He did not go far from Natchez. Once in the unfamiliar wilderness of a country in which he had no allies, he found himself at a loss. After a few weeks he returned to the Fosters’ farm and agreed to work. Thomas Foster was not a rich man, and Prince became invaluable to him. In 1794, Prince married Isabella, a Baptist who had also been purchased by Foster. With no hope of seeing the

wife and son he had left behind in Futa Jallon, he began anew. Together they had nine children, five sons and four daughters.

Gomez (2005: 173) writes that Samba “the companion of Abd ar-Rahman, had at least three sons, and he gave them all Muslim names.” Gomez (2005: 172) also claims that “Abd ar-Rahman and Samba, his fellow Pullo (singular of Fulbe) enslaved on the same farm, were able to associate closely with each other, and the two communicated with at least one other Muslim, a Mandinka in this instance, from Natchez.” Through other Muslims in Natchez and the use of traditional Muslim names, Prince and Samba preserved their Muslim identity.

Around 1807, the enslaved man known as Prince (see portrait, Figure 4.5) was in the town of Natchez selling vegetables. While on the street he saw a familiar man riding by on a



Figure 4.5. Portrait of “Abdul Rahaman” (Austin 1984: 122).

horse. It was none other than Dr. John Coates Cox, the white man who years before lost his way in Futa Jallon and was befriended by Ibrahima (Prince) and his father Sori. After recognizing his friend, Cox embraced him and brought him to his home. Cox attempted to purchase Prince’s

freedom from Thomas Foster, but Foster refused at any price. Though Cox had little money, he persisted. When Cox died, his son continued to attempt to secure Prince's freedom.

Over the years, the story of the enslaved African prince in Natchez aroused curiosity among those who heard it. One of these was a man named Andrew Marschalk who worked for the local newspaper. After they became acquainted, Marschalk suggested that Prince write a letter to his relatives in Africa. At first Prince refused, but eventually made an attempt in 1826. Marschalk, for reasons which may forever remain known only to him, seems to have been convinced that Prince belonged to a royal lineage of a rather large polity in comparison to Futa Jallon, that is, Morocco. Marschalk sent a copy of the letter to Senator Thomas Reed in Washington, who forwarded it to the U.S. Consulate in Morocco.

The assumption, which seems to have been common, was that since Prince wrote in Arabic, he could not really have been what was then called a Negro, but was rather, a Moor. Gomez (2005: 182) asserts that in fact "Abd ar-Rahman, if he did not initiate the idea, certainly did not dispute the claim that he was a Moor; on the contrary, he placed "the negro in a scale of being infinitely below the Moor." Various authors have commented on the attitudes, behaviors, and actions of enslaved Fulbe and Muslims in America who apparently made claims of superiority. Gomez (2005: 177) finds that it was not "startling to read of Abd ar-Rahman's comments to Cyrus Griffin," in which "he states explicitly, and with an air of pride, that not a single drop of negro blood runs in his veins," and that this "attitude was confirmed by the children of Bilali, all of whom were Muslims, and who were described as "holding themselves aloof from the others as if they were conscious of their own superiority." Prince, in his years of enslavement, would have been directly affected by racial ideology. He should have become fully aware of the connotations of "negro" as it was used in the Americas, where it implied more than physical characteristics. He would have been aware of and subject to its demeaning use. Gomez (2005: 178) goes on to assert:

It is instructive that Wyatt-Brown, in discussing three related yet distinct psychological responses by men to enslavement, cites Ibrahima Abd ar-Rahman as a prime example of a Fulbe man who, by virtue of his exclusionary early socialization vis-à-vis other ethnicities, embodies the first category of response, which was characterized by a "ritualized compliance in which self-regard is retained." That is, Ibrahima maintained his culturally inculcated dignity and pride as he reconciled himself to enslavement by

remembering his *pulaaku*, the essence of the distinctive Fulbe character and prescriptive code of behavior.

I suggest that a distinctive Fulbe character, while perhaps present, was not required in order for an enslaved man to refuse identifying himself in terms that would have suggested to the dominant society some false inherent racial inferiority.

Audrey Smedley (2007: 173-174), analyzing the issue of race in North America, has identified certain consequences of eighteenth-century, “scientific” race classifications:

They gave an aura of permanence and rigidity to conceptions of human group differences. . . . The classifications easily lent themselves to hierarchical structuring, fostering an impression of inequality among the different groups [S]uch classifications by reputable and widely renowned scientists (naturalists) such as Linnaeus and Blumenbach made humankind part of the natural order of things. They thus legitimized as “natural” and as God-given the inferior qualities ascribed to non-Europeans and helped to justify their lower positions in world societies.

The “letter,” which Prince penned, seems to have been no more than the *al-Fatiha*, the first *sura* of the Qu’ran. Later, he would write it in various instances “for whites who believed they were receiving the Lord’s Prayer in an exotic hand” (Gomez 2005: 172). Nevertheless, after receiving it the Sultan of Morocco requested that President Adams and Secretary of State Henry Clay release Prince. It was, at the least, evidence that the author was a fellow Muslim enslaved.

In 1828, Thomas Foster finally agreed to release Prince, and without payment. This agreement, however, came with the strict stipulation by Foster that he must return to Africa immediately, and could not remain in America to enjoy the rights of being a free man. Foster’s wishes went unacknowledged. Once the reality of a return to his homeland set in, Prince realized the enormity of leaving his family behind. In Natchez he raised \$200 to buy his wife Isabella’s freedom. His goal was to do the same for his children.

Marschalk thought it best that Prince see some of America before his voyage home, so he arranged for the old man and Isabella to make stops in a few cities before they reached Washington D.C. Marschalk also had a “Moorish costume” made for Prince, which he wore during his travels en route to Washington, soliciting donations to buy his family’s freedom. Various groups had him make personal appearances as a curiosity and, for those such as the

American Colonization Society, to further their own agenda. His story frequently made the press, and word eventually reached his previous owner that he had not left the country. Foster was exceptionally critical, but fortunately powerless to negatively affect the situation.

After it became evident in Washington that he was not, in fact, Moroccan, the American Colonization Society held a meeting and had him attend. They expressed hope that he could convert to Christianity, and were able to convince him to settle in Liberia. Despite their efforts, Prince and Isabella did not manage to raise enough funds to free their children before they departed for Monrovia, Liberia in 1829. In addition, despite the Colonization Society's hopes, it appears that Prince continued to practice Islam, and that after a brief interest in Christianity or perhaps a conscious dissimulation in order to gain support for his repatriation, he immediately reaffirmed his Muslim beliefs upon his return to Africa (Gomez 2005: 171).

Abd al-Rahman Ibrahim, the man known as Prince, never returned to Futa Jallon, his homeland. Nor did he discover if the wife and son he had left behind still lived. He lived for four months before falling ill, and passed away in Liberia before his American children could join him there.

Conclusion

Austin (1996: 25) has attempted to tell the story of African Muslims in antebellum America, and he suggests that as “more students look into relevant records, these people will undoubtedly become less exotic.” It is clear by the contemporary reactions to the individuals described above, often characterized by assumptions of royalty, ill-informed and often inspiring speculation, that they were treated as oddities. The incorporation of the African Muslim presence for considerations of the enslaved African experience in the Americas is not an effort to spice up the study by the inclusion of a curiosity. Rather, the stories above reflect the status quo for representations of those enslaved whose stories could not be molded and forced into a model which assumed the Middle Passage and subsequent captivity's effective erasure of traditional life ways and beliefs. This model is advocated by Albert Raboteau (2004: 86) when he claims that “[w]hile it is true that Africa influenced black culture in the United States, including black religion, it is also true that African ritual did not endure to the extent that they did in Cuba, Haiti, and Brazil. In the United States the gods of Africa died.”

“In the United States, the gods of Africa died.” Raboteau is sure of this, but struggles to understand it. Why were African gods and rituals able to survive in other countries, but not in the United States? In the process, Raboteau (2004) examines the early twentieth century arguments made by E. Franklin Frazier and Melville Herskovits, and raises some important points which are worth examining.

For Frazier, Raboteau (2004: 53) relates, deculturation began before Africans even set foot on the slave ships, and the “fact that many slaves were captured in intertribal warfare and the demands of plantation work force ensured that a large percentage of the slave population was young and male. And young males ‘are poor bearers of the cultural heritage of a people.’” In the stories related above, young males remembered, preserved, and sometimes passed on their cultural heritage.

A different argument from Melville Herskovits, a student of Franz Boas, railed against the myth of the African past (or lack of one). Raboteau (2004: 48) observes:

For Herskovits the destruction of this myth was not simply a matter of detached scholarship. It also has important practical ramifications in the struggle against racism. To deny that the black American had a culture and a history of significance and sophistication in Africa and to suggest that African culture has not advanced enough to endure contact with superior European culture was to imply that Negroes were an inferior people.

The stories told about the individuals above in their time, by branding these Muslims or their behavior as unusual or exotic simultaneously reflected the view of slaveholding society that captives were uncultured and ignorant. The implications of the knowledge that some of the enslaved were literate or monotheistic were unthinkable. Unintentionally, later studies continued to perpetuate this theme by remaining silent on the subject of the maintenance of traditional life ways and beliefs. Studies today, following the work of Leland Ferguson (2004) and others, are taking into consideration this continuity, via strategies of resistance and accommodation.

Raboteau (2004: 329) argues that although these corrective measures, such as taking into account continued BaKongo and Muslim practice are important, “other historians argue that the complexity of the patterns of slave capture in Africa, with networks stretching hundreds of miles inland, and the complexity of slave distribution after arrival in the Americas cast doubt on the proposition that integral African cultures were transplanted across the Atlantic.” He further observes that “the inaccuracy of the ethnic identifications supplied by slave traders and slave

masters and the anachronistic appellation of modern concepts of ethnicity and nationality to pre-colonial Africans made confident identifications of specific African slave populations seem implausible” (2004: 329). Here Raboteau seems to fall prey to the very idea against which Herskovits rails, that African culture was not advanced enough to endure European contact. Although the ethnic identifications made by traders may have been inaccurate, would Omar ibn Said or Ibrahima have incorrectly self-reported as having been from Futa Toro and Futa Jallon respectively?

Raboteau (2004: 332) concedes that “[c]learly there were Muslim slaves in the United States; their number we don’t know. The few descriptions of their religious lives are tantalizingly brief. Still, Islam among American slaves deserves more extensive treatment.” Raboteau is correct in that ways of worshipping, if they continued, would have to have changed. It is unlikely that traditional ways of worshipping would survive even a generation. Even rediscovery or revival of those traditions and beliefs by descendants and later generations is not the same as a continued, preserved, or maintained practice.

The verity or fallacy of Raboteau’s assertion is not the issue. It is simply a useful notion against which to consider the issues of the archaeology of an ideology, or of the enslaved African experience. Considering the maintenance of religion and individual religious identity in the climate that was American captivity may not be a productive endeavor for historical archaeology. It may be fruitful for historical archaeologists to concern themselves with questions about the preservation of cultural identities. Not simply African identities, but Muslim, Mandingo, Fula, Igbo, Coromantee, and others. Not static, but always changing. These considerations are beginning, but it will take time and good scholarship.

Scholars are seeing the evidence of continued beliefs and practices in the archaeological record. The critical archaeology described in Part II, which produced a clay bundle found in October of 2008 by the archaeologists at the University of Maryland under the direction of Mark Leone, is one such case. Dating to 1700, it was filled with lead shot, iron nails, copper pins and a stone axe (a symbol thought to be associated with Shango, recognized by the Yoruba and Fon people of Benin as their god of thunder and lightning), and was found on what would have been a street surface in Annapolis, Maryland (Wilford 2008). Such material connections must be arrayed against what Leone and Potter would call a “descriptive grid,” and a new set of questions may be formed in light of context and connections made.

Barbara Little (2007: 54) notes that “[p]art of what archaeology can do is provide access to more of the past. It can give voice to those who were muted by the colonial system and counter the long-standing legacy of colonial ideology that categorized the colonized as uncivilized and unworthy.” The theories and methods of historical archaeology reviewed in this part of my study, including the use of storytelling, may serve to give voice to such muted groups. In an effort to further give voice to the muted group that is the subject of this study, I suggest that in some cases it may be productive to recontextualize, to revisit the archaeological record in light of the documentary evidence, and vice versa. I suggest that in light of the stories told above, Islam should join the complex of identities over which archaeologists puzzle and about which they ultimately craft new stories.

V. Blue Beads and Little Things: Muslim Artifacts in America

As the previous discussion indicated, there were a considerable number of Muslims dispersed among enslaved African American populations in America. It is clear that although they found themselves confined in hostile settings, a significant number were not content to silence their faith. As Sylvaine Diouf (1999: 70) suggests: “They showed realism; under certain conditions, they opted for a surface assimilation that guaranteed them physical survival and, beyond this, the survival of their creed.” Others remained steadfast practitioners, active in a faith which shaped their world. The stories of some have survived, and some remain nameless.

An African Diaspora Archaeology concerned with the materiality of Muslim identity must necessarily be informed by the archaeology of religious ritual. Lars Fogelin (2007: 56) explores the various ways archaeologists have studied religion and ritual, and finds they often focus on ritual, since there is “a widespread archaeological understanding that ritual is a form of human action that leaves material traces, whereas religion is a more abstract symbolic system consisting of beliefs, myths, and doctrines.” This creates a dichotomy between religion and ritual, where religion is defined as belief and ritual as action. For many the division is not this simple, and some emphasize one over the other. Fogelin (2007: 56) finds that most recognize a dialectic between ritual and religion, where ritual elements recovered archaeologically can be used to infer belief systems, just as ethnohistoric data concerning the mythology of a particular society can be used to investigate its rituals.

In this article I am concerned with material remains which indicate religious ritual activity associated with Muslim identity. Fogelin’s discussion informs my understanding of ritual as it may potentially be interpreted in the archaeological record. I accept ritual both as an action producing material culture capable of retaining valuable social information, as well as one which may “construct, create, or modify religious beliefs,” allowing individuals to “remember, forget, or recreate elements of their religion through ritual practices” (Fogelin 2007: 58). I find both facets of ritual especially important for understanding rituals enacted by subordinated groups or individuals in the context of enslavement. The former is useful for a model concerned with understanding material culture which reflects the maintenance of a Muslim identity. The latter offers a model for understanding the ways those same material expressions may adjust or transform in captive contexts. The meaning of rituals may change for individuals enacting them

in new environments, especially in renegotiating them to ensure their relevance in new social spheres.

In this part of the study, I will examine artifacts recovered from contexts of African and African American enslavement in North America, and explore their similarity to material expressions of Muslim identity. I draw on Fennell's (2007) notion of tangible heritage as outline in Part II, to inform my understanding of material expressions of identity. As stated previously, the transmission of intangible cultural heritage was a critical mechanism for the transatlantic movement of particular traditions during the slave trade. One of these traditions was Islam.

An individual or group's cultural heritage provides them with a shared system of beliefs and practices. This system affords them a set of durable dispositions by which to view the world. Fennell (2007: 38) finds that "Material culture . . . functions in varying contexts as a primary medium for creating, confirming, or modifying cultural beliefs and practices." Despite a set of durable dispositions, individuals make the choice to actively express their identities, or particular facets of them.

Viewing material expressions as active elements can aid in understanding how expressions of identity may present themselves stylistically. H. Martin Wobst (1977) discusses the stylistic shaping of material expressions which serve to communicate intragroup affiliations in intergroup contexts. Style itself, then, is a symbolic mode of expression. Fennell draws on Wobst's work, which is particularly intriguing for considering symbolic expressions of religious tradition and ultimately Muslim identity.

Fennell's (2007: 39) notion of style includes aspects of form and appearance that are additional to those required by utilitarian function. Thus, style represents a conscious choice of any number of viable alternatives. Stylistic choice and innovation are evident in personal modes of symbolic expression which convey fundamental elements of cultural groups' cosmologies and senses of identity. Fennell (2007: 8) refers to these modes of expression as "core symbols," which may be emblematic or instrumental, where emblematic versions "serve to summarize the identity of a culture group as a cohesive unit." Instrumental symbols are often abbreviated forms for personal use.

Fennell (2007: 41) notes the complications which arise when there is a dominant religion and other religious belief systems are often driven "underground," and the "public exercise of group rituals of such folk religions typically becomes impracticable, due to the social pressures

imposed by members of the dominant religion.” The primary way the subordinated religious tradition could continue is through private, instrumental invocations of core symbols. Fennell (2007: 41-42) posits that “when persons who practiced a dominant religion in one region are removed from that context and placed into a new area where they are not in control . . . they often have to abandon the public display of group exercises of their religion,” but, “in time, they may adopt the dominant religion that holds sway in that new setting and attend its public ceremonies, all the while practicing the beliefs of their previous religion in private surroundings.” This predictive model fits what is known from the documentary evidence for enslaved Muslim practice in North America. As for other places in the Americas, Portuguese Brazil at least seems to have been an exception, with enslaved Muslims congregating openly until the Muslim Uprising in 1835.

Wobst claims that “a social actor would undertake the stylistic shaping of material culture to communicate social group identity only when it was efficient to do so,” since it would be “a dysfunctional waste of energy and matter for a social actor to invest time and labor in creating a stylistically shaped object to communicate with persons whom that individual interacts on a regular basis” (Fennell 2007: 40). This would be the case if the actor could easily communicate the information verbally, which is considered to have a lower cost than the production of material culture.

This conception of style, however, does not take into account power disparities. Fennell formulates style for the enslaved. He finds that “contrary to Wobst’s assumptions, talk is not always ‘cheap,’ and such verbal utterances are ephemeral and require a speaker’s repeated emission over time” (Fennell 2007: 40). This is the case where enslaved Muslims in the Americas continued to express their identity through prayer and utterance of the *shahada*. The communication of Muslim identity which the public utterance of the *shahada* or daily prayers conveyed survived only because strangers chose to record them, making them recoverable from the documentary record. This mode of expression is invisible materially, the message conveyed lasts only as long as the utterance.

In contrast to this, Fennell observes that “an object emits a stylistic message repeatedly and constantly as it is displayed to an audience that understands the language of the style” (2007: 40). Recitations of daily prayers by enslaved Muslims could not be used as a type of continuous identity expression in the same way that objects could. Further, objects that are “used and

displayed in a setting with relatively low visibility to outsiders may achieve high visibility and efficiency of communication to a different audience of insiders” (Fennell 2007: 40). In this way, material expressions of Muslim identity could communicate both a shared identity to other enslaved Muslims, as well as difference, and rejection of the dominant system to other captive Africans and African Americans. This tangible heritage could serve to convey strong statements about resistance and rejection of the dominant order. “For in the seemingly little and insignificant things that accumulate to create a lifetime, the essence of our existence is captured,” writes James Deetz (1996: 259), and it is thus “terribly important that the ‘small things forgotten’ be remembered.”

The following sections of this study each introduce a site associated with African and/or African American enslavement, artifacts recovered from the site, and their contexts. These sites were chosen for a variety of reasons; some due to their renown, such as the Hermitage and Poplar Forest, but all are ultimately presented as a result of the emphasis placed on the objects discussed in the literature about these sites. In the next part of this study, I evaluate whether the symbolic expression of Muslim traditions in contexts of captivity is a persuasive basis for interpreting their meaning and significance.

The Hermitage

The Hermitage, located outside Nashville, Tennessee, was the nineteenth-century plantation home of Andrew Jackson. The artifacts under consideration were excavated from contexts associated with five former African American dwellings at the site. I draw on Aaron Russell’s (1997) “Material Culture and African-American Spirituality at the Hermitage” to contextualize the finds. The structures included: two brick dwellings, the Yard Cabin (probably a log dwelling), the South Cabin (brick, located northeast of the mansion), and a log structure known as “KES” (see map in Figure 5.1 below). Each had intact antebellum deposits, and were occupied between 1821, when the Jackson family moved from their initial log dwellings to the present Hermitage mansion, and 1857-1858, when the Jacksons moved off the property, with the exception of KES, which was probably occupied before the completion of the Hermitage (Russell 1997: 66).

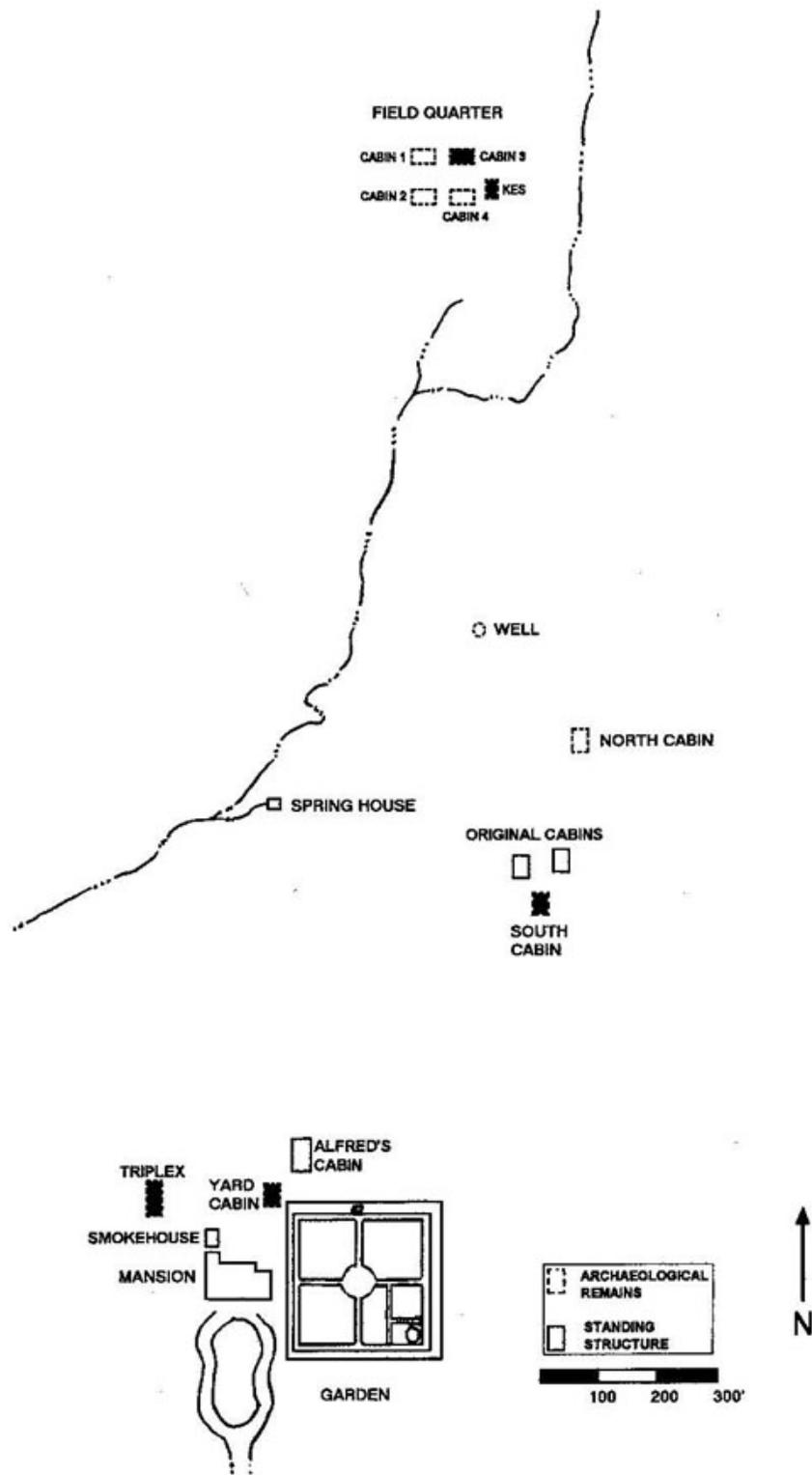


Figure 5.1. Map of standing structures and archaeological sites at the Hermitage: Home of President Andrew Jackson, Nashville, TN (Russell 1997: 65).

Russell (1997: 66) finds that “[w]hile all of the contexts examined are quite rich in artifacts, the generally mixed and disturbed nature of the deposits makes it difficult to define specific activity areas within the dwellings.” Thus he discusses the finds as a single assemblage, whether found in midden deposits or features such as root cellars within the dwellings. Due to these limitations, he concludes that “concrete interpretations of “spiritual” behaviors on the part of African Americans at the Hermitage cannot be made at the present time,” yet certain artifacts “seem to indicate the presence of an active system of beliefs among African Americans at the Hermitage” (Russell 1997: 66). Artifacts of interest at the Hermitage include small hand charms and blue glass beads.

Hand Charms. In the photograph below (Figure 5.2) are three metal hand charms in the form of clenched human fists recovered at the Hermitage. They are copper alloy charms, each measuring no wider than 1 cm, retrieved from cabin dwellings. One of the fists proceeds from,



Figure 5.2. Copper-alloy hand charms from the Hermitage, home of President Andrew Jackson, Nashville, TN (Thomas 1998: 346, image courtesy of the Ladies Hermitage Association).

and the other two are framed by a circular base. The wrist of each charm appears to wear a bracelet. In addition, two of the fists are clasping wire or thin metal which appear to have once been in the shape of rings.

Glass Beads. Of a total 64 glass beads recovered at the Hermitage as of 1997, hexagonal beads make up the majority of the assemblage (59 percent). The beads are blue, colorless, or

black, with blue predominating. Fifty-four percent of the hexagonal glass beads found were blue, and they were recovered from four of the dwellings, excluding only the site known as the Yard Cabin (Russell 1997: 69).

Poplar Forest

Poplar Forest is the site of a nineteenth century plantation. It was the sometime home and retreat of Thomas Jefferson. When Jefferson's wife inherited the plantation in 1773 there was already at least one enslaved family and several other enslaved individuals present at the property, and by 1819, 94 enslaved individuals lived and worked there (Heath 2004: 3). Archaeological endeavors at the site have been concerned both with Poplar Forest's architecture and landscape, as well as the lives of the enslaved men and women who lived and worked there day to day.

Hand Charms. Nearly identical to the hand charms found at the Hermitage, the charm in Figure 5.3 was recovered at Poplar Forest, site of Thomas Jefferson's home. The charm was



Figure 5.3. Hand charm recovered at Poplar Forest, courtesy Thomas Jefferson's Poplar Forest (Heath 2004: 36).

stamped out of sheet brass, and was recovered from the fill above the chimney base of an antebellum slave cabin (Heath 2004: 34, 35). Like the smaller objects uncovered at the Hermitage, this item is no wider than 1 cm. It depicts either a raised, clenched fist, or a hand grasping the circle in which it is framed.

Sapelo Island

Sapelo Island, Georgia was the same site on which Bilali and his descendents were enslaved under Thomas Spalding (see Part III). Spalding and his family operated the main plantation on Sapelo beginning in 1802 (Crook 2008: 3), and slavery continued on the island up through the Civil War. The family “owned” nearly 500 enslaved individuals. Over short periods in 1994, 1997, and 1999, Ray Crook led excavations of two cabin dwellings of enslaved African Americans on the island (see Figure 5.4 for a map showing locations of excavated cabins).

The first cabin excavated (Cabin 1) is located in an area known as Behavior, the other (Cabin 2) in one known as New Barn Creek. Both settlements are associated with the Spalding Plantation. The mean-ceramic date of material from Cabin 1 at Behavior is 1851.58, and that derived from the surface collection of Cabin 2 in New Barn Creek is 1838.51 (Crook 2008: 13, 18).

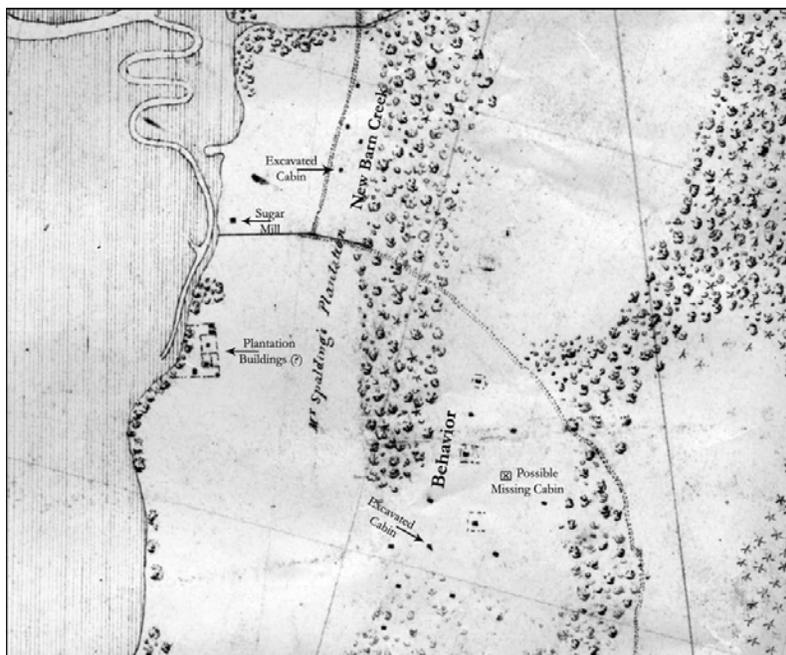


Figure 5.4. Cabins at Behavior and New Barn Creek, 1857 appended map (Crook 2008: 11).

Blue beads. Extensive descriptions of the artifacts are not yet available. Among the items recovered at Cabin 1 were blue faceted glass beads. Cabin 2 yielded blue and also green faceted glass beads (Crook 2008: 13, 23). The bead presented for Cabin 1 is a deep blue, while

the example presented from Cabin 2 is of a lighter shade, and does not appear to be of the same design.

Kingsley Plantation

Kingsley Plantation, of Fort George Island, Florida (see Figure 5.5 below for a map of a portion of the plantation) **was** named for Zephaniah Kingsley, a plantation owner known both for his atypical views on race and his tendency to encourage those enslaved on his plantation to continue to practice their traditional beliefs and life ways. Kingsley and his wife Anna occupied the island from 1814 to 1839 (Davidson 2007: 6).

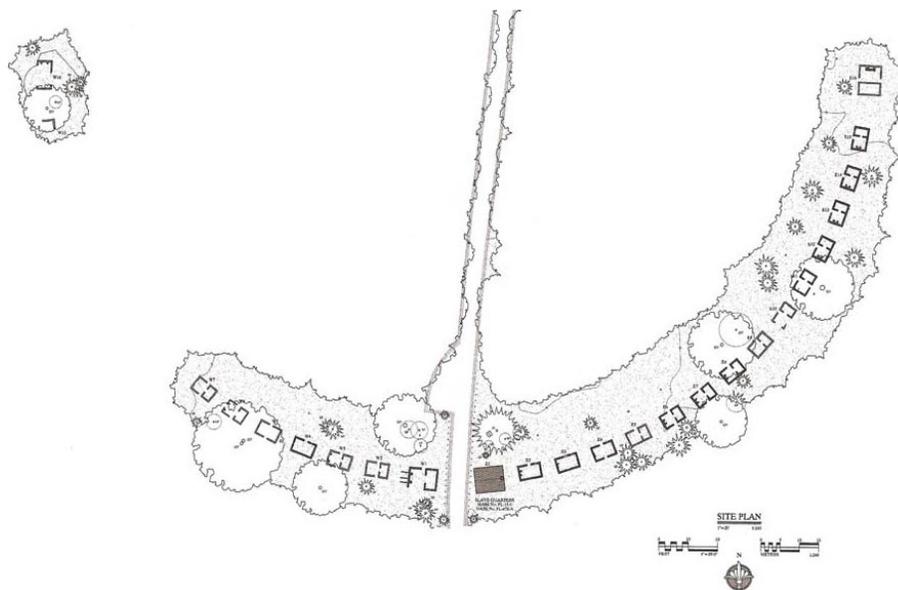


Figure 5.5. Map showing arc of slave cabins south of Kingsley Plantation house – the Historic American Buildings Survey (Davidson 2007: 35).

While trading in enslaved laborers in Cuba, Kingsley purchased Anna, a slave girl who became his wife. In 1806 Anna (Anta) Madgigaine Jai was only 13 and recently taken from the Wolof Empire (present-day Senegal) (Davidson 2007: 14). The Wolof nobility were, at least nominally, Muslim (Fage 1977: 486). Kingsley held somewhat unconventional beliefs about race for his time. He believed the mixing of the races was a way “of improving the strength and health of the general populace and as the surest means to resolving divisive problems of racial difference” (Cartwright 2004: 177). He and his family eventually relocated from Florida to

Haiti, since Kingsley's beliefs were in conflict with the race laws against those of African descent. He formally freed Anna when she turned 18, and they had four children together and lived as husband and wife for the rest of their lives (Davidson 2007: 14).

Kingsley did employ enslaved Africans, yet the captive experience on his plantation was markedly different from that experienced where planter's attempted to sharply curtail African beliefs and cultural expressions. When Kingsley arrived on Fort George Island in 1814 he brought over 66 enslaved individuals with him, for whom he advocated humane treatment, encouraging them to live in family units and practice their African customs (Landers 1996: 137). He permitted those he enslaved a significant degree of autonomy. This is evident in the case of Gullah Jack. Kingsley imported Gullah Jack from Mozambique in 1806, and described him as a "conjurer" or "priest in his own country, M'Choolay Morcema," and he wrote that Jack "had his conjuring implements with him in a bag which he brought on board the ship and always retained them" (Landers 1996: 169). It appears Kingsley was fully aware and accepting of traditional African religious practices. This is in contrast to the Protestant sects he tried to root out among the enslaved, which he found more disruptive (Landers 1996: 169).

Of note is the fact that at Kingsley Plantation in 1968, Charles Fairbanks of the University of Florida conducted the earliest attempt at an African American archaeology in the United States that specifically addressed issues pertaining to slave life (Davidson 2007: 4). Recently, in 2006 and 2007, James Davidson recovered several items during excavations focusing on several cabins at the Kingsley Plantation.

Blue beads. During 2007, five beads were recovered from the excavation of one cabin, four of which were blue (see Figure 5.6). Three blue glass beads came from a single unit positioned directly in front of the doorway, while the fourth blue bead from was recovered from a doorway leading into the cabin's bedroom (Davidson 2007: 99). Another cabin also yielded a blue bead from a unit within the doorway of that structure (Figure 5.6). Each of the beads was of a distinctive manufacture, differing also in shape and color. All of these beads were found below the tabby floor of the cabins (Davidson 2007: 99).

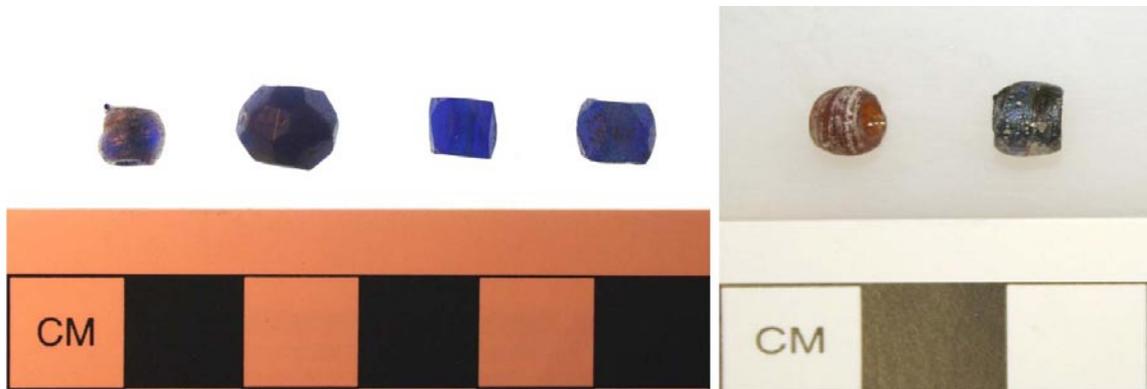


Figure 5.6. Blue beads recovered from beneath cabin floors, Kingsley Plantation (Davidson 2007: 100-101).

Analyzing Tangible Heritage

These four sites suggest the presence of tangible heritage, of material expressions of Muslim identity. More may be found in the grey literature of Cultural Resource Management (CRM) reports and unacknowledged in artifact lists in other publications (Baram 2009: pers. comm.). Glass beads are one of the few types of artifacts which reflect expressions of Muslim identity about which scholars have made suggestions.

Blue Beads

Blue beads are consistently represented more often than any other bead color on African American sites. Glass beads are usually recovered in small quantities, yet it has become apparent that they are typical of African American sites (Stine et al. 1996; Russell 1997). The following is my exploration of blue beads as tangible heritage. The tradition of Islam, as well as other traditions present in West Africa during the sixteenth through nineteenth centuries will be considered in terms of their significance for informing the creation and shaping on this tangible heritage.

Stine, Cabak, and Groover (1996), while undertaking an evaluation of assumptions concerning blue as the most common bead color on slave sites and the assertion that these objects were symbolically laden for African Americans, assembled a data set based on bead

distribution. They found blue to be the most consistently occurring, most uniformly represented bead color at African American sites across the United States, even when it is not always the most prevalent bead color at each site (Stine et al. 1996: 50). After assembling this data, the group chose to consider the numbers for South Carolina and Georgia in greater detail.

The beads were considered based on their frequency, color, and temporal and spatial context. Blue beads comprise 36 percent of the total sample for plantation sites in South Carolina and Georgia (1996: 52). They were found to be much more prevalent during the colonial and antebellum periods than after the Civil War. Analysis indicates that blue beads were predominantly lost or intentionally placed in and around African American residences.

The prevalence of blue beads at African American sites has been interpreted in several ways. The trend has been toward interpretations which favor beads as symbolically meaningful, rather than as exclusively for adornment. There is some debate as to whether this trend is grounded in historic validity or if the meaning being assigned to beads is merely a creation of archaeologists (Stine et al. 1996:49). The interpretations of Stine and her co-authors (1996: 49) are based upon five interrelated facts:

- (1) between the 16th and 19th centuries Central and West African cultural groups used beads, in addition to other items, for adornment and as personal charms for protection from misfortune and illness;
- (2) these African-derived practices were in turn transplanted and reinterpreted by African Americans in the South;
- (3) enslaved African Americans participated in informal economies that provided limited access to material goods such as beads;
- (4) belief in the evil eye was present among slaves in the study region; and
- (5) the color blue, a recurring and abundantly documented motif in African-American folklore along the Sea Islands, is considered to be a potent form of spiritual protection.

Each of these components is necessary for a discussion of blue beads as a manifestation of the materiality of African American spirituality. African American participation in informal economies and associations with belief in the evil eye are specifically useful for this discussion.

Stine, Cabak, and Groover begin by presenting the demographics. By their sources, of the estimated 10 million Africans brought to the Americas from the sixteenth through the mid-nineteenth centuries, approximately 40 percent originated in Kongo and Angola, from tribes such as the Ibo, Ewe, Biafada, Bakongo, Wolof, Bambara, Ibibio, Serer, and Arada (1996: 53). Specific origins, as opposed to regional ones, are difficult to reconstruct. Slave traders and

holders were aware of ethnic differences, and are said to have often broken up families and those belonging to the same ethnic groups (Stine et al. 1996: 53).

Due to these demographics, Stine and her co-authors find that “African-American culture in the South during the era of slavery should therefore be regarded as a fusion of African-inspired cultural forms and practices,” expecting bead use to represent “a pan-cultural phenomenon derived from African origins” (1996: 53). This is a valid proposition, mirroring studies whose concern is creolization or Fennell’s (2007) *ethnogenic bricolage*. They concede it is reasonable that beliefs and practices associated with beads survived the Middle Passage, albeit undergoing a transformation in the contexts of Southern enslavement, yet assert “It is not only difficult but counterproductive to attempt to identify direct, one-to-one correspondences between artifact patterning and artifact types at specific plantation sites and specific ethnic groups in Africa” (Stine et al. 1996: 53). The decisiveness of this statement is questionable in light of the story of Bilali and his descendents using beads during prayer at the Spalding Plantation on Sapelo Island (see Part III).

A review of some secular and religious uses of beads in West Central Africa coinciding with the period of the slave trade is beneficial for this consideration of beads as tangible heritage. In the past and the present, beads have been used for adornment in West Africa. They may also convey social meaning and information concerning wealth, age grade, marital status, artistic attitudes, and political, religious, and cultural affiliation, be important trade items or used as currency, but also held spiritual significance, associated with ceremonies such as rites of passage, religious practice, or worn as amulets and charms (Stine et al. 1996: 53).

It is tempting, due to the demographic realities outlined above, to simplify what was actually a rich mosaic of cultural traditions in West Africa during the modern period. Beads would not have communicated the same messages throughout the region. They would not have held the same meaning from place to place. Nevertheless, it is true that beads were often used for making amulets and charms.

Charms may manifest in a variety of forms, spoken or material. Stine et al relate that charms, amulets, and fetishes are any material object thought to contain spiritual power, but are principally of two types, personal (worn around the neck, arm, wrist, or ankle to protect the wearer) and household (placed on the house or property to protect the structure, contents, and residents) amulets (Stine et al. 1996: 54). Charms may not be material manufactured exclusively

for this purpose, but instead, mundane material culture reinterpreted and shaped by particular beliefs. Items used in West Africa for these purposes may include beads, animal bones or teeth, stones, iron, broken pottery, feathers, bits of skin, leaves, hair, and fingernails (Stine et al. 1996: 54).

Thus, in West Africa, beads were often used as amulets or charms to achieve protection. Stine, Cabak, and Groover's study, among others (e.g., Russell 1997; Adams 1987) indicates blue beads are associated with African American sites, and that further inquiry into the role these artifacts played in the lives of African Americans is a propitious endeavor. Before I turn to an exploration of the meaning and uses of blue beads in West Africa and the Americas, a discussion concerning the participation of enslaved persons in an informal economy to obtain items such as beads is in order.

Enslaved African Americans may have obtained beads through purchasing them by way of their captors, through theft, as heirlooms from other captive Africans, or trade with merchants. They could also have manufactured their own. If individuals in the enslaved community had no autonomy in choosing the material made available to them, then the distribution reflected by Stine, Cabak, and Groover's (1996: 54) study would reflect only the tastes of their captors, or the choices made available by merchants. The available data suggests that slaves were able to make choices concerning their material life, and those choices affected the supply made available by merchants.

It is tempting to view enslaved individuals as solely producers and never consumers. However, enslaved African Americans had multiple avenues by which to participate in purchasing and trade. Thus, Stine and her co-authors (1996: 57) find that just as with trade with Native American and Euroamerican groups it is "not unreasonable to infer that the distribution of beads characteristic of African-American sites is likewise quite possibly the result of cultural preferences and consumer choice rather than mere market availability."

As consumers maintaining various exchange interactions, enslaved people of African descent "had access, albeit differential and circumscribed, to material goods" (Stine et al. 1996: 59). At the Hermitage, Russell (1997: 69) finds that the assemblage suggests African Americans there had fairly open access to beads, though no archaeological or documentary evidence reveals the method of acquisition. It is clear that these individuals had not only access to goods, but autonomy in their decisions about what to purchase.

This apparent autonomy is interesting in itself, but it may potentially have significance for interpretive efforts. If, as it appears, enslaved African Americans were obtaining material with specific characteristics, then perhaps these artifacts should be evaluated in light of their potential social and symbolic significance. Beads may be one of many examples of commonplace objects serving a spiritual purpose. Despite the intention of the objects' manufacture, they may have been reinterpreted to serve as symbols for new purposes. I consider beads the significance of beads due to their potential meaning associated with the use of charms, and belief in the evil eye.

The prevalent use of beads as charms in West Africa was noted above. Evidence of their use by enslaved individuals, especially in the southern United States, is abundant in the documentary and archaeological records. Though they are discussed primarily in conjunction with the use of charms and spirit management, the use of beads for other purposes has been documented.

Interviews from the Works Progress Administration (WPA) project which focused on recording the beliefs and practices of African Americans along coastal Georgia mention the use of prayer beads by enslaved Muslim African Americans. These include memories of Bilali and his family using prayer beads on Sapelo Island by their descendents (Georgia Writer's Project 1940: 184), as well as those related by a "Mrs. Holmes, from Amite County, Mississippi," who "remembers her grandfather praying on a long string of beads," after which "he would then put one of the beads in a cup of tea which he said would cure rheumatism" (quoted in Stine et al. 1996: 62). As detailed in Part II of this study, the Muslim community in Brazil is also documented as having used prayer beads.

Stine and her colleagues (1996: 60), considering the African belief systems which may have informed meanings attributed to beads by enslaved individuals in the Americas, relate that "African and rural African-American belief systems were characterized by an animistic orientation in which the world was inhabited by both benign and malign spirits," where "individuals could both benefit and suffer from the whims of these forces, and conjurers were seen as powerful people who could control the supernatural." Characterizing these belief systems as animist might seem to preclude the possibility of their being applied by Muslim, Jewish, or Christian practitioners. This is, however, far from the case. One explanation is that African converts to monotheistic religious traditions may have combined their traditional belief

systems with the dominant system, borrowing what was considered desirable from each. Material culture reflecting emphasis placed on spirit management predates these monotheistic religious traditions and exists in each of them. Christianity has historically recognized spirit possession. Concerns about the evil eye in Judaism are longstanding and widespread. Belief both in *djinn* and the evil eye are not rare in the Islamic world.

One of the most significant sources documenting the concern with good and bad spiritual forces and means by which it was believed they could be managed come from projects commissioned by the WPA. Personal charms in the South are recorded as having been “worn on the neck, finger, wrist, waist, or ankle, tied or sewn to garments, and carried in the pockets, shoes, or hats,” “were used to prevent illness, ward away evil, and bring good luck in all aspects of life,” and examples of personal charms “consist of metal wire, heavy cord, or a leather strap worn on the ankle, wrist, or neck, nutmeg worn on a string around the neck to cure headaches, and a silver coin worn around the ankle, neck, or in the shoe” (Stine et al. 1996: 60). These reported uses bear remarkable resemblance to descriptions of charm and amulet use in West Africa during the period of the transatlantic slave trade. They appear to embody a transmitted tangible heritage into the twentieth century. Household charms were also used; they were intentionally placed in various places around the house, including under or near doorsteps, under the bed or pillow, on a gatesill or doorsill, or over the door (Stine et al. 1996: 60).

Many of artifacts from the four sites discussed above, particularly blue glass beads, were found in contexts which Stine and her co-authors mention are typical of household charms. The blue beads from the Hermitage, Sapelo Island, and the Kingsley Plantation were recovered in household contexts. In addition, each blue bead found at the Kingsley Plantation was recovered from the context of a doorway. It seems unlikely that this is coincidence, particularly given the fact that the beads were placed below the tabby floor of the structure, rather than lost during occupation of the cabins. Another interesting facet of the Kingsley finds is that each of the blue beads is of a different manufacture. For the excavator, Davidson (2007: 99), this suggests that “these beads were selected from various sources and suppliers for their color, culled from a variety of colors.” Some effort was expended in order to procure a blue bead for each doorway.

The use of blue beads or the color blue as protection against the evil eye exemplify charms used for protection or risk management. Both beads and hand charms may have held significant meaning associated with beliefs about the evil eye. In turn, it is worthwhile to

consider the potential of these beliefs about the evil eye in the context of a larger system of beliefs belonging to a Muslim tradition.

The evil eye as a folk belief complex is quite widespread, though it may not appear the same way in every culture in which it is found. And at the same time, it is less a belief in a single phenomenon than the core of a belief complex (Herzfeld 1981). It is prevalent in the Middle East and Mediterranean, is found from India to Ireland, was carried in the minds of immigrants to the Americas, and is mentioned in the Bible as well as in Sumerian and other ancient near-eastern texts (making it at the least more than five thousand years old) (Dundes 1992: vii).

Evil eye beliefs may be best explored when situated in their social context. At a general level, however, a description is needed. Simply defined, belief in the evil eye implies an acceptance of the notion that an individual's gaze may cause harm or misfortune to befall another individual or their property, as well as that such an individual's bestowal of praise on another person or their belongings may warrant the same sort of damage.

Michael Herzfeld (1981) explores the evil eye as a dominant symbol in a Greek village in terms of beliefs about misfortune, and finds these beliefs are inextricably connected to ideas about causation, and chance or fate. Herzfeld (1981: 561) has usefully demonstrated the effectiveness of an approach which "treats the formal symbolic system as a code from which individual behaviors – those of accusers and accused alike – derive their meaning." Beliefs about the evil eye, situated in the context of a broader Muslim tradition, may explain behaviors related to bead acquisition and use among enslaved African American communities.

The presence of blue beads on African American sites has been interpreted to be indicative of the evil eye belief by William Adams (1987) during investigations of the plantation at Kings Bay, Camden County, Georgia. The evil eye belief complex did not appear among Christian Euroamericans. Only among Italians in the 1880s and Israelis in the 1980s, can it appear in non-African traditions (Baram 2009: pers. comm.). Multiple lines of evidence point to the persistence of beliefs in the evil eye among enslaved Africans and African Americans. According to Stine, Cabak, and Groover (1996: 62), these include the presence of practicing Muslim slaves (which this study details), historical references to the evil eye, and archaeological evidence.

As a result of the Georgia Writer's Project (1940), as well as others, there has been much discussion of the development and nature of Gullah culture. This is evident in the framing of Ray Crook's (2008) discussion of the archaeological finds at Sapelo Island. It would be worthy to consider, however, that Islam may have been an influential tradition on the Sea Islands of Georgia and South Carolina which has gone unrecognized in considerations of the formation of Gullah culture. I concur with historian Michael Gomez's (2005: 79) assertion that the history of Africans in this region "is more complicated than previously understood; its study can no longer be limited to the Gullah language and associated handicrafts and artifacts, notwithstanding their importance."

On St. Helena Island, South Carolina, a reconstruction-era schoolteacher recorded that the Gullah "believe in the evil eye, and also in the power of a good eye for healing" (Stine et al. 1996: 61). A Georgia Writer's Project informant in the 1930s reported that some African American residents of Edisto Island, "would rather encounter the devil himself than the [witches] known as hags, for if one of them should cast her eye in their direction bad luck would overtake them. Some believe that a hag can bewitch a person by merely looking at them. This is known as the 'evil eye' and is very much feared" (quoted in Stine et al. 1996: 61). It may be the influence of a Muslim tradition which inspired these beliefs.

Interestingly, Stine and her colleagues (1996: 61, 62) claim that the "firmest archaeological evidence to date for the presence of the evil eye belief at a single plantation has perhaps been recovered from the Hermitage in Nashville," recognizing the predominance of blue beads and the three brass hand charms "which figure prominently in the evil eye complex." As with other sites, if enslaved African Americans were autonomously obtaining these beads, they would have affected the supply offered by traders and merchants. It is likely these characteristics were considered desirable because they conveyed particular meanings. Russell (1997: 71) suggests that "[e]ven if bead choice and distribution at the Hermitage was entirely in the hands of the Jacksons, the particular beads selected may represent the continuation of a previous trade 'negotiation' between Europeans and Africans." If the beads were acquired by African Americans independently, it demonstrates their participation in the local economy, "as well as their choice to expend limited economic resources on beads" (Russell 1997: 71).

Hand Charms

Hand charms were discovered at the Hermitage, as well as Poplar Forest. I suggest that like blue beads, these hand charms are one of many examples of commonplace objects serving a spiritual purpose. Despite the intention of their manufacture, in the hands of enslaved African Americans their meaning may have been transformed. They would have become symbols serving new purposes, such as the ability to ward off evil. The similarity of these charms to the Islamic symbol known as the “Hand of Fatima” has been recognized by Samuel Smith (in Russell 1997: 67). However, many religious traditions incorporate symbols of hands, and these particular artifacts were very likely manufactured for a mundane, rather than a spiritual purpose.

Fennell (2007) has reviewed traditions which may have inspired the use of hand charms by enslaved African Americans. He finds that the “examples of items with a hand set inside a circle were most likely a form of manufactured ornament referred to as ‘stampings,’” which were “sewn onto clothing and accessories as adornments or used as part of hook-and-eye fasteners” (2007: 72). The hands on the right and in the center of the photograph from the Hermitage (Figure 5.5) are examples. He interprets the other, larger example from the Hermitage as a manufactured watch charm or jewelry charm, and observes that jewelry manufacturers “often used symbolic motifs derived from religious beliefs or from the emblems of benevolent societies and guilds when creating design motifs for mass-produced and commercialized charms and ornaments” (Fennell 2007: 72).

The hand charms have also been compared to *figas* commonly found on Spanish and Brazilian colonial sites in the Americas. *Figas* were probably used as votives to ward away evil, and though the charms from the Hermitage do not match the form of *figas*, their symbolic meanings may have been similar (Thomas 1998: 546). Regardless of the terminology used, this indicates multiple interpretations which have suggested that the hands served as charms to ward off evil, akin to belief in the evil eye.

The precise motivations for enslaved African Americans’ acquisition and use of items such as blue beads and metal hand charms are unknown. However, given the considerations outlined above, I think it is reasonable to view them in terms of tangible Muslim heritage. Various traditions came together in environments of captivity, of hostility, in the Americas. It would have been a complex environment in which to attempt to communicate one’s identity, where the terms of negotiating identities could not, at least initially, be mutually accepted upon.

Russell (1997: 65) contends that a “consequence of this experience was that previous and specific cultural elements were selected, rejected, modified, and magnified by African Americans and a largely uniform African-American culture emerged,” and he finds this “particularly true for coastal South Carolina and Georgia,” as does Leland Ferguson (1992).

In the captive environment, identities and the subtleties of the means of understanding and conveying those identities had to be reevaluated before effective communication could take place. Drawing on widely understood symbolic expressions, such as the use of blue to ward off the evil eye, may have been a tangible way to express one’s fundamental beliefs about how to negotiate the world. Again, as Fennell (2007: 40) states, “an object emits a stylistic message repeatedly and constantly as it is displayed to an audience that understands the language of the style.” Beads, hand charms, and similar material culture may have been one way to communicate an intragroup affiliation in the intergroup environment of captivity. After reviewing the above considerations, I suggest that for an archaeology concerned with the lives of enslaved African Americans and their identities, a Muslim tradition is a viable system of meaning for interpreting a portion of the recovered material culture at sites of their enslavement in the Americas.

Applying a Model for Diaspora Analysis to the Enslaved Experience and Material Culture Expressions in New York

The remainder of this discussion is devoted to examining objects recovered at a site of African American enslavement on Long Island, their contexts, and what is known about the site’s occupants. Up until this point, all the artifacts considered in this article and available publications were recovered on southern plantations. Yet slavery was not just a southern institution.

Compared to the South, slavery in the north typically occurred on a smaller scale (slave owners tended to own fewer slaves than their southern counterparts). However, slavery was a part of everyday life in the North. Of the enslaved African American experience in the North, Ira Berlin (1993: 122) suggests that while “small numbers and close proximity to whites forced blacks to conform to the forms of the dominant Euro-American culture, the confidence of whites in their own hegemony allowed black slaves a good measure of autonomy.” Thus slavery in the

North should not be seen as a guarantee of acculturation to European American beliefs and life ways.

James Garman (1998) has addressed a common misconception about the nature of captivity in the New England which may well apply to the North as a whole. According to Garman (1998: 134), the “history of the color line in New England is hindered by a biased documentary record, an archaeological record still in its infancy, the pervasive influence of Colonial Revival antiquaries, whose racist work shaped the views of generations of white New Englanders.” I have witnessed the effect of this dynamic, both in my primary education on African enslavement in North America and as a college student spending a summer in New York excavating at a site once home to enslaved African Americans.

Robert Fitts (1998) recognizes it as well. He found that at the end of the twentieth century, some prominent historians still argued that New England slavery was characterized by “a relatively mild form of servitude and a kind of household kinship” (Fitts 1998: 3). Unfortunately, this presentation of northern slavery continues into the twenty-first century. The interpretation is a nineteenth-century creation which has been repeated so often that it is generally accepted. Slavery in the North, as it was in the South, was first and foremost a system of coerced labor. Fitts (1998: 3) stresses that it “was characterized by the conflict between the master’s desire to control their slaves and the bondsmen’s resistance to this domination,” and laments that “for a variety of political, social and intellectual reasons . . . nineteenth and twentieth-century historians created a sanitized history of Northern slavery which removed this inherent conflict.” During the presentation of the case below, one should bear in mind both the nature of slavery in the North and the legacy of scholars construing enslavement in this region as a “mild form of servitude” or “a kind of household kinship.”

History and Landscapes of Latting’s Hundred

I will focus on two strands of beads found at a house known as Latting’s Hundred in Huntington, New York. The beads were shown to me by the house’s resident and owner, a local historian named Reginald Metcalf, who was kind enough to give a tour of his home to the summer 2008 Hofstra University field crew of the Joseph Lloyd Manor archaeological site.

Huntington can appear at once to be a sleepy Long Island town and a bustling one, made so by those attracted to the myriad shops and eateries downtown. There are ordinary pizza and

coffee shops, some high-end stores, some locally-owned, an array of ethnic cuisine, and the requisite international chains. The north side of town leads along a winding road with views of Long Island Sound, to Lloyd Harbor, named for the Joseph Lloyd Manor site where I participated in a Hofstra University field school during the summer of 2008. Dawdle in town and you'll discover that some very old structures survive, such as the Arsenal, built about 1740. You may encounter the Old Burying Ground, an old and crowded cemetery. Death's heads, cherubs, urns, and willows are on display. It is rife with poison ivy in the summer. It is here that we, that is Jenna Coplin and Christopher Matthews of Hofstra University, and the other students and I met Rex Metcalf.

It was afternoon, and Rex led us on a tour of the cemetery, outlining Huntington's history as he went. Since eight o'clock that morning, before our rendezvous with Rex, we had toured another manor house preserved by the Lloyd Harbor Historical Society, and then spent the day hiking Camusett State Park. We trekked approximately five miles, one of which was rocky coastline, in an effort to gain a better sense of the land once owned by Joseph Lloyd, whose backyard we were excavating. Among the clear blue sky, salt marshes, woods, fields, and the harbor, we may well have found the most breathtaking part of Long Island. We were not, however, all wearing appropriate footwear for such an excursion. Upon meeting up with Rex, we managed to pay rapt attention, listening as he detailed Huntington's military encounters with the British, and introducing us to some of the more colorful characters laid to rest in the cemetery. By the time we reached his house, weariness was descending heavily on our limbs.

Rex has lived at Latting's Hundred his whole life, preserving the first floor of the house and its many artifacts, as well as offering tours of it, serving as historian as his father did before him. The house has a rich history. For example, when enslaved people were to be officially manumitted in Huntington, they came to Latting's Hundred. As Rex relates, they walked in the back door as slaves and out the front door as free men and women. So goes the oral tradition.

Lattings' Hundred began as a one-room plan in 1653. A five-room addition was later added, resulting in a saltbox dwelling in 1702. It is not, however, a typical New England saltbox house, which would feature a central chimney with a central lean-to kitchen, flanked by a buttery eastward and a bedroom westward, and a main winding stairwell that runs from attic to cellar. A Long Island variant, Latting's Hundred features end chimneys with a central lean-to buttery, flanked by a kitchen eastward and a bedroom westward, and a main winding stairwell that does

not go to the cellar. The house is named for Richard Latting, for whom the house was originally built. He was banished from Huntington in 1660 for political trouble making and general unpopularity.

Over the years, the house changed hands. Most relevant for this discussion are the Scudder, Lewis and Platt families, related through marriage and intimately connected with the enslaved occupants of the house. Thanks to the sensibilities of the Lewis family in particular, a significant amount is known for the eighteenth century onward through family papers, furniture, artifacts and oral history. Letters and stories of the children and grandchildren of Abigail Scudder Lewis have been able to provide intimate family information.

Rachel grew up enslaved by the Lewis family with her brother Sampson. The Lewis children could not remember the names of Sampson and Rachel's parents, only that they were both born in Africa. They were brought to Long Island shortly before 1710, after living on the island of Barbados for a few years. They were approximately twenty years old when they arrived in Huntington, and had both passed away by 1750. Rachel was raised by her African-born parents. Her childhood would have afforded them ample opportunity to impart to her their memories of African religion and culture.

The Lewis family claimed that Abigail Scudder and Rachel were born on the same day, April 25, 1713, but there is no known original document to prove it. Abigail and Rachel were life-long companions. Shortly before Abigail's marriage to Captain Joseph Lewis, Esq. in 1731, Rachel was given to her as a servant. Rachel was eighteen, and had an infant son named Peter. Subsequently, they left the Scudder homestead and established the Lewis household at Latting's Hundred in Huntington.

Captain Lewis was purportedly a hard master. He established an inn at Latting's Hundred in 1757, and delegated its management to Abigail and Rachel. Rachel had already established herself as an authority figure in the eyes of the Lewis children, and helped Abigail run the Inn with a firm hand. Peter, her son, grew up with the Lewis children, was educated with his mother, and became butler of the household.

Captain Lewis died in 1765, at which point his son Joseph Jr. inherited his extensive merchant empire. Abigail and Rachel continued to be responsible for the Inn and household, while Joseph focused on running a shipping business, general store, two grist mills, paper mill and some farmland.

Joseph and Peter were conscripted by British occupation troops to transport sick soldiers to the hospital in 1781. Less than three weeks later they both contracted smallpox. On the same day, Abigail Scudder Lewis and Rachel lost their sons. They died at Latting's Hundred on September 24, 1781.

Abigail did not recover from the loss and succumbed to dementia. The estate was inherited by Abigail's grandsons, Joseph C. and Richard Lewis. Due to their youth, their eldest uncle, Henry S. Lewis, was granted power of attorney to help manage the legal and business affairs of Henry, Joseph, and his incapacitated mother, which he did from his home nearby in the town of Centerport. Thus, Rachel became the force necessary to hold the family together from day to day. She was entrusted with the continued maintenance of the Inn and household. Peter and Joseph, Abigail, and finally Rachel were buried together in the Old Burying Ground. It lies just half a mile to the West of Latting's Hundred, the site of our rendezvous with Rex.

I will not relate here a tour of the house in full. Rather, I will discuss the events in the parlor, and then return to other finds of interest from Latting's Hundred. The parlor was the second to last room with which Rex would acquaint us. As we reclined, Rex related that during renovations made to the house, an unusual find was made. He then removed two long strands of glass beads. They were strung like necklaces, though where they were joined or tied together was not immediately evident. One was comprised primarily of clear, circular, slightly flattened beads, interspersed at intervals with bright blue translucent beads of the same make. The other strand appeared of the same length, yet it was the reverse of the first, comprised primarily of the same blue, translucent beads, and interspersed at intervals with clear beads. The necklaces, as Rex identified them, had lain on top of the northwest end wall sill, just behind the parlor chimney stack, in a small open area accessible at head height in the cellar. They were discovered during repairs in 1978 to the eighteenth century exterior weatherboard siding.

The room of weary students showed polite interest. I believe the lack of excitement over the find was due not to any fault in Rex's ability to be an engaging host, for he is one. He is an excellent storyteller, and overflowing with intriguing facts. No, as the field crew looked at the beads, they were interested. It is just that the last ounce of their energy had simply already been expended. It was lingering on a death's heads and cherubs in the cemetery, or wondering whether they would live to regret not taking better care to avoid all that poison ivy. The field

crew was interested. I was more than interested. I wanted to know what they were and what they meant. They seemed familiar.

Beads Uncovered at Latting's Hundred

The two strands of beads were discovered behind the chimney in a gradually accumulating layer of dust and dirt with no other artifacts (see photograph, Figure 5.7). They are similar in form. The first consists of 99 glass beads, arranged in 9 sets of 10 blue beads, with every eleventh bead being a colorless or white bead. The second numbers 102 beads, strung primarily in groups of 10, but also of 11, clear beads, with every eleventh or twelfth bead being a blue bead. They are smooth, flattened, and oval in shape. They were strung with linen thread, though this was ruined by dry rot. The beads were washed and restrung in their original order (Metcalf Nov. 2008: pers. comm.).

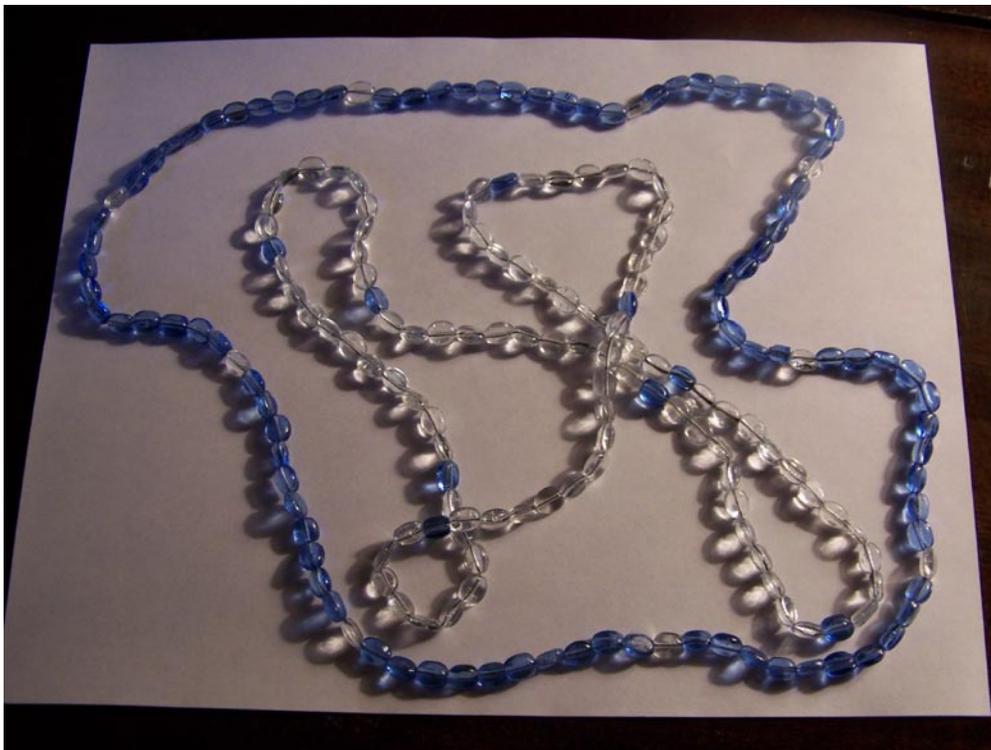


Figure 5.7. Strands of beads found at Latting's Hundred, Huntington, New York (Photograph by author).

The extensive information concerning the beads' manufacture which is related here was obtained by Rex Metcalf. The beads are English, and made of Flint Glass, which was invented

by George Ravenscroft in 1676. They consist of a mixture of sand, potash and lead oxide, and were an improvement over Venetian Soda Glass which required a higher firing temperature and was more brittle and prone to oxidize. Blue beads were colored by adding the proper amount of cobalt oxide to the mix, while clear, also called “white” beads were rendered colorless by adding the proper amount of manganese oxide to the mix.

No two beads were identical, but they were intended to measure three eighths inch long by one-quarter inch wide by one-eighth inch thick. Flow marks and tiny bubbles are visible in the glass. First they were molded in long, narrow molds with the addition of a wire to form the thread holes. Then they were removed from the mold and dumped into a cube shaped box with fine sand and tumbled to remove any burrs and rough spots. At length they were sifted out and annealed in a special chamber of the furnace to give them their luster.

The beads were introduced around 1680, began to fall in favor after 1750, and went out of production about 1830. Precise dating is impossible given their lack of context since there were no changes in their form or method of manufacture throughout their period of production.

They were available in general stores and traded to Native American groups, but were vastly outnumbered by Venetian and Dutch trade beads, which dominated the African and American Indian Trade. They were sold individually or sometimes strung into six foot fathoms. They were usually used for necklaces and bracelets, but fathoms were occasionally wrapped around the waist and tied. Some portraits of Eastern Woodland people appear to show beads of the same form (Metcalf Nov. 2008: pers. comm.).

With questions lingering, we moved to our tour’s final destination. Here we learned that also during renovations of the house, what is believed to have been a *nkisi* bundle was found. The use of *minkisi* (plural of *nkisi*) is associated with the BaKongo people in their negotiation with spirits, and employed by ritual specialists. The items which make up *minkisi* are imbued with metonymic (having a literal and tangible relationship with the subject it is employed to represent) and metaphoric meanings, and a *nkisi* usually consisted of a container, such as a bag or a jar, and was animated by the powers represented by the objects which made up the *nkisi* (Fennell 2007: 57).

Artifacts interpreted as *minkisi* are being recovered at sites and appearing in the archaeological literature with increasing frequency. Perhaps the most recent example is the clay bundle recovered in October of 2008 by the archaeologists at the University of Maryland under

the direction of Mark Leone. Dating to 1700, it is filled with lead shot, iron nails, copper pins and a stone axe, and was found on what would have been a street surface in Annapolis, Maryland (Wilford 2008). One of the interpretations of the object being considered is that it was inspired by BaKongo religious practices.

Back at Latting's Hundred, we passed through the kitchen, adjacent to the buttery. The artifacts which comprise the bundle were located on top of a central sill which formed the front side of a hatchway to the cellar. The hatchway was located on the threshold between the buttery and the kitchen, in the southwest corner. It allowed access to an enclosed ladder stairwell to the cellar below. The artifacts were wedged closely together, between the sill and the flooring. After being hidden in this space, a piece of homespun linen was rolled up and stuffed into place to conceal the artifacts. The architectural context survived undisturbed until 1978, when extensive dry rot forced the Metcalfs to make repairs. The artifacts were discovered and saved under the assumption that they were placed there by carpenters.

The items found include: 2 bent iron nails with simple curve; 2 matched brass waistcoat buttons; 1 flat bone disc button; 1 glass Indian Trade seed bead with red exterior over white core; 2 bent iron nails with compound curve; 2 bent brass hand-headed pins; 1 small scallop shell; 1 upholstery tack with brass head and iron shank; 1 sliver of rawhide; 2 shards of green bottle glass; 2 shards of salt glazed stoneware with cobalt blue spirals over white clay body; 1 quartz crystal spearhead with broken point (Native American Archaic Period). The items are dateable to the eighteenth century. What they symbolize, if anything, is unknown, but a description and photograph of the artifacts, as well as information detailing their provenience has been forwarded to anthropologist Warren Perry of Central Connecticut State University for further consideration.

The buttery served as storage for various foods and kitchen apparatus. Rex explained some of these, and further grounded our knowledge of Joseph Lloyd Manor in a broader understanding of Long Island, early Huntington, and in essence, the world that the Lloyds and those enslaved by them were part of. He showed us examples of local pottery from various periods and some examples of what was commonly imported from England. Seeing whole pieces which resemble the fragments we were pulling from the ground was valuable to our understanding of the material we were excavating.

We thanked Rex and went our separate ways from Latting's Hundred. We would meet again the next day in Lloyd Harbor as usual, ready to excavate. That night I loaded all the

pictures I had taken onto my computer. I pulled up the picture I had taken of the beads, enlarged it, and carefully counted each strand. The blue strand contained exactly ninety-nine beads. They did look like prayer beads, Muslim prayer beads.

Enslaved Identity at Latting's Hundred

The most likely candidates for the presence of the artifacts recovered at Latting's Hundred, both what has been presented as a *nkisi* bundle and the two strands of beads, are Rachel and her son Peter. If the artifacts reflect the expression of a West African tradition, they were more likely placed by Rachel. As previously stated, she was raised by both her African parents, and resided at the house for many more years than Peter. Lewis family papers from the eighteenth century suggest that the parents of Rachel and her brother Sampson were "Coromantee." The term Coromantee has been interpreted in a variety of ways. It is associated with a faction of the Asanti Empire (part of present day Ghana). "Coromantee" as a designation, however, may have been placed on any enslaved person placed on a ship embarking from the port of Koromantin. Thus, though Rachel and Sampson's parents' origins lie somewhere along the Gold Coast, their heritage remains somewhat elusive.

Sampson apparently became a devout Christian. He is recorded as having voluntarily sought and been granted full membership at the Old First Church of Huntington, New York. No such conversion seems to have occurred in Rachel. She and her parents remained unbaptized throughout their lives. Rex Metcalf believes she clung to a BaKongo spirituality imparted by her parents, and that the archaeological evidence of the *nkisi* bundle and the two strands of blue and white beads found at Latting's Hundred points directly to her.

I suggest that the enslaved individuals at Latting's Hundred may have been influenced by a Muslim tradition. Convincing cases have been made where the interpretation of the archaeological record espoused expressions of BaKongo spirituality and identity. However, the application of this interpretation to Latting's Hundred raises two concerns. The recognition of the persistence of African spiritual beliefs among enslaved populations in America, and the number of studies concerned with the phenomenon is encouraging. Ferguson's (1992) *Uncommon Ground*, which explored the use of African American pottery and other artifacts in ways consistent with BaKongo spiritual beliefs and practices, was a landmark work. However, I am concerned about the trend toward reading any apparent expression of African spirituality in

the archaeological record as an expression of BaKongo beliefs. Not only because this may preclude the interpretation of these expressions as reflections of any other tradition (my first concern), but also because it limits interpretations by forcing them to be consistent with one or another tradition or system of beliefs. This conflicts directly with the notions of creolization or Fennell's (2007) *ethnogenic bricolage*. It is too convenient and too simplistic.

In order to evaluate the interpretation of the artifacts recovered at Latting's Hundred as expressions of cultural identity or a system of belief, I return to Fennell's model for Diaspora analysis. Now that I have introduced various sites associated with African and/or African American enslavement and artifacts of interest recovered at each, I devote the next part of my study to reflection, evaluating whether the symbolic expression of Muslim traditions in contexts of captivity provides a persuasive basis for interpreting their meaning and significance.

VI. Interpreting Material Expressions of Identity

“Don’t read what we have written; look at what we have done” – James Deetz

The historical archaeologist James Deetz considers material culture the most immediate source of information we have concerning America’s past. He emphasizes that “[i]f we bring to this world, so reflective of the past, a sensitivity to the meaning of the patterns we see in it, the artifact becomes a primary source of great objectivity and subtlety” (Deetz 1996: 259). Moving beyond the documentary record, archaeologists may find in the seemingly banal remnants of everyday life in the past meaningful material with which people shaped their lives. And yet, a framework is necessary to guide and weigh the strength of these interpretations.

In *Crossroads and Cosmologies* (2007), Fennell presents what he calls “a model for Diaspora analysis,” essentially guidelines for interpreting cultural expressions in the archaeological record. Fennell uses a particular African cultural tradition, BaKongo, to demonstrate this model. Theoretically the approach should be feasible for inquiries into the cultural expressions of other traditions in Diaspora. In this part of the article, I apply Fennell’s model to material culture recovered at Latting’s Hundred in Huntington, New York. I consider an interpretation of artifacts at this site and others which views them as material culture expressions of Muslim identity.

Fennell (2007: 47) states that, in the absence of direct evidence linking occupants of the site(s) of interest with individuals known to have been enculturated in the belief system of interest, an analyst should formulate an explicit interpretive framework based on an ethnohistorical analogy. Used here, such an ethnohistorical account consists of a detailed compilation of the beliefs and practices of a particular people and their culture in one time and place, to be employed in a subsequent comparison and contrast to the attributes of material culture uncovered in another location and context (Fennell 2007: 47). This model allows for the systematic comparison of the ethnohistorical information concerning the tradition of Islam in West Africa with the recovered material culture evidence. In Part II of this study, I laid the groundwork for constructing this analogy by exploring the materiality of Muslim identity and how it might manifest in the archaeological record. Ideally the source or basis of the analogy should be a detailed account of the beliefs and practices of the culture with which one is

concerned in one place and time. In this way, the attributes of the source of the analogy and the one under archaeological scrutiny may be directly compared and contrasted.

The first step in constructing the ethnohistorical analogy “is to demonstrate that the cultural system selected to provide the source information is relevant to the subject of material culture to which it will be applied” (Fennell 2007: 47). I have noted previously that large numbers of enslaved individuals were taken from areas where Islam was the dominant religious tradition or from areas where they would have been exposed to it. These individuals formed a significant part of the enslaved population, some estimate 10-15 percent. On this basis I contend that an Islamic cultural system present in West Africa during the sixteenth through nineteenth centuries is relevant to the material culture of sites of African captivity in the Americas.

Ideally the basis of my ethnohistorical analogy would be a detailed account of the beliefs and practices of several Muslim cities in West Africa during the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries. Focusing on just one site might be too limiting given the sizeable geographic area from which Africans were taken captive. And yet, although sources such as Terry Alford’s (1986) biographical work on the life of Ibrahima Abd ar Rahman details specifically the establishment of the Fulbe in Futa Jallon, Ibrahima’s education in Timbo and later at Macina and Timbuktu, and even the atmosphere of Timbuktu, he does not write of the small things. Perhaps he, as I, simply did not have access to details of the personal practices of West African Muslims during the transatlantic slave trade. Did Ibrahima or his mother, or his siblings, carry blue beads to ward off the evil eye? It is likely we will never know, yet it is reasonable to infer that the answer is yes.

Thus, the source of my analogy is based on the basic pillars and proscriptions of the Islamic faith which guide and shape Muslim practices worldwide. I rely on this in conjunction with the evidence of Muslim practices among enslaved African Americans in the Americas which has survived in the documentary record. As I outlined in a previous discussion, Leone and Potter (1988) offer a method in which the documentary record may be used to create descriptive grids against which the archaeological record may be arrayed. The comparison and contrast of attributes of the source of the analogy with the artifacts in Fennell’s model mirrors this method. I draw on the archaeology of Islam and the history of enslaved African Muslims in America as the source of my analogy.

In Part III, I presented some guidelines for observing the materiality of Muslim identities. I have also provided a basis for understanding Islam, including a description of the Five Pillars of the faith: the *shahadah* (profession of faith), *salat* (prayer), *zakat* (almsgiving), *sawm* (fasting), and the *hajj* (pilgrimage).

The only material evidence for the *shahadah* may be inscriptions. Arguably, any tangible heritage created by a Muslim reflects the *shahadah*, as it reinforces their very identity as a Muslim. Although it does not require it, *salat* may be reflected by a variety of material culture. *Salat* may be evident architecturally, in places of prayer or structures with an eastern orientation or feature denoting the direction of Mecca. Prayer mats or rugs, if they survive archaeologically, are an indication of this activity. Additionally, strings of beads may be indicative of prayer beads. These are certainly recoverable archaeologically. *Zakat* could be evident in inscriptions, and potentially recognized by the presence of currency or other valuables in given contexts. *Hajj* is recognizable by architecture associated with pilgrims, such as hostels, as well as routes, wells, or milestones (Insoll 2003: 13).

It is improbable that *sawm* (fasting) would be recognizable archaeologically; however adherence to some Muslim proscriptions concerning diet may be identifiable with the aid of zooarchaeological evidence. In circumstances where significant faunal remains are recovered in a context of African American enslavement and pig bones are entirely lacking, the absence may reasonably be considered significant. It should certainly be considered potentially meaningful if it is corroborated by other material evidence indicating a Muslim presence, or direct documentary evidence linking Muslim individuals to the site.

The next step is to apply the source to the artifacts and context “to determine the degree to which the attributes of the source provide a closeness of fit for interpreting the meaning and significance of those objects” (Fennell 2007: 49). With the above considerations and the information presented in previous sections of this study, I intend to consider the objects from Latting’s Hundred.

Fennell argues that instrumental expressions of core symbols are more likely to have been used by individuals in enslaved communities than emblematic ones. Though prayer can, and often does occur in a group setting in Islam, it is just as common for it to be a solitary activity. The private and personal nature of the activity, however, does not preclude the use of associated material culture. Prayer rugs or mats are frequently used in Islam. As noted in Part

III, enslaved Muslims in Brazil were using them. They are an instrumental symbolic expression, since they are inextricably tied to one's prayer activities and Muslim identity. They are not emblematic; they are not presented to the outside world as an identifying symbol of a group identity. This is also true of prayer beads.

Strands of beads, typically numbering 99 or 100, are widespread in the tradition of Islam. The beads found at Latting's Hundred display attributes consistent with Muslim spiritual expression. One strand consists of 99 beads, while the other is close, at one hundred and two. Insoll (1999: 117) describes prayer beads as "a comparatively rare example of Muslim religious paraphernalia," explaining that "the simplicity of worship in Islam precludes a large body of ritual material culture." They are not universally used, and thus should not be expected to be present at every site with a Muslim presence. They may be generally associated with Muslims, but also more specifically with certain groups such as Sufi orders, among which their use is very widespread (Insoll 1999: 118). An exploration of the prevalence of Sufism in West Africa during the period of the transatlantic slave trade could be fruitful. Insoll (1999: 118) concludes that "[p]rayer beads thus provide another example of an object that is both intimate and yet specifically Muslim in character, individual in association, durable in nature and with definite archaeological implications."

The choice of the colors blue and clear (white) for the strands found at Latting's Hundred may also be meaningful. As previously discussed, and as W. H. Adams suggested for the site of Kings Bay Plantation in Georgia, the presence of blue beads which seem to correlate with slave sites, could be related to their Islamic use as items to ward off the evil eye (Adams 1987: 118). The combination of the use of blue beads, associated with evil eye beliefs, and their form, which is reminiscent of beads used during prayer, renders Islam a persuasive system of beliefs for interpreting these artifacts.

The assortment of artifacts recovered from the sill of the hatchway leading to the cellar has been proposed as a *nkisi* bundle. If the assortment is a reflection of a BaKongo belief system, it is unlike traditional *minkisi* in that the objects were not placed within any kind of container to house the spirit which was invoked. Of the objects found, some have been or are typically included in *minkisi*. According to Fennell (2007: 58, 61), quartz and shiny shells (whether the shell included fits this description is unknown) signified the water boundary between the living world and that of the spirits, nails or fragments of iron are sometimes used,

and in relation to the red seed bead, “red was symbolic of transformation and movement between worlds.” Without convincing lines of supporting evidence which establish that the site was inhabited by individuals likely to have been enculturated in BaKongo beliefs, I remain wary of such an explanation for these objects.

I suggest that the possibility of Islam having shaped material culture expressions at Latting’s Hundred should be considered in an interpretation of artifacts from the site. While I find an interpretation which views the beads at Latting’s Hundred as material expressions of a Muslim identity persuasive (what Fennell would label tangible heritage), I can not conclude that they embody an instrumental mode of symbolic expression. There are several reasons why drawing on Islam as a system of beliefs with which to understand the meaning and significance of the attributes of the objects may not provide the strongest interpretation.

The first is the source of the analogy, which in this case is weak. Ideally it would consist of a thorough consideration of Islam as it was practiced in the West African polities in which it was prevalent and the materiality of Muslim identity as it manifested there. This would reveal the dynamics of the emblematic and instrumental symbolic expressions employed within the belief system. Further, the sources available fall short of definitively identifying where the parents and/or grandparents of enslaved individuals at the site originated, even though they are given the designation “Coromantee.” And finally, the other inhabitants of the site, the Lewis family, and the belief system to which they subscribed should be taken into account. The Lewis family was of European American descent, yet their religious beliefs, if any, are unknown. The documentary record reveals no reason why one should suspect any covert spiritual practices or expressions from the members of the Lewis family.

There are not enough lines of evidence to support an interpretation which views the objects from Latting’s Hundred as material expressions of a Muslim tradition. An interpretation which views material culture such as beads and hand figures at sites of African enslavement (such as those described in the previous section) as tangible heritage of a Muslim tradition, however, remains worthwhile.

It is clear from the documentary record that a significant number of those Africans enslaved in America were Muslim. The ethnographic data detail beliefs concerning the evil eye among enslaved individuals and their descendents, and the use of the color blue for protection as a facet of these beliefs. Archaeological evidence for the presence of evil eye beliefs is

convincing, as Stine, Cabak, and Groover (1996: 61-62) find for the Hermitage, recognizing the predominance of blue beads and the three brass hand charms. The similarity of these charms to the Islamic symbol known as the “Hand of Fatima” is noticeable.

Small, and known for their protective attributes, these objects would have served as stylistic expressions, instrumental forms for private purposes, simultaneously communicating users’ beliefs and concerns about protection. The extent to which the beliefs and practices which produce such objects could have been observed was dependent in part on the degree to which plantation owners allowed or attempted to prevent enslaved persons from engaging in these behaviors.

It is here that Fennell’s *ethnogenic bricolage* comes into play. Where individuals from different cultures were interacting in captive settings in the America, they would have ceased utilizing emblematic forms of the core symbols of their former culture groups, both due to their waning utility and imposed restrictions by slave owners. Instead, instrumental expressions of those core symbols would continue to be employed in for private use.

Hand charms and blue glass beads may have served as material expressions of Muslim traditions among enslaved African Muslims in America. These objects may have served a variety of functions, both for personal protection and to convey messages about identity. Their very presence indicates that those interested in African Diaspora archaeology should acknowledge the influence of Muslim traditions on the objects of their study.

VII. Conclusion

“In the United States the gods of Africa died.” This was Albert Raboteau’s (1980: 86) claim in his study of “slave religion” in the Americas, where he also contended that various forms of “African theology and African ritual did not endure” in the slave communities of North America “to the extent that they did in Cuba, Haiti, and Brazil.” A review of the scholarship reveals that Raboteau’s assertion continues to influence views of enslaved African American spiritual practice, even though it was made at a time when much less attention had been devoted to the subject in North America. New data has come to light, and thus new possibilities.

Barbara Little (2007: 9) finds it troubling that the past is used to support the status quo, suggesting that we “tend to ignore evidence in favor of what we think we know or want to believe.” The goals of archaeological research, research conducted in the present but concerned with the past, is necessarily shaped by the concerns of the present. I began this study by invoking Little’s (2007: 22) recognition of the thread which runs through the concerns of historical archaeology, to discover the present meaning of the historical past and to make the past meaningful and useful.” The focus of archeological research continues to adjust and transform to meet its goals.

As Michel-Rolph Trouillot (1995: 72) asserts, “[w]hen reality does not coincide with deeply held beliefs, human beings tend to phrase interpretations that force reality within the scope of these beliefs. They devise formulas to repress the unthinkable and to bring it back within the realm of accepted discourse.” In light of the academic tradition inspired by Raboteau’s assertion that as their followers were enslaved the gods of Africa died in America and the nature of archaeological research as it reflects the concerns of the present, it is not surprising that the subject of enslaved Muslims in African Diaspora has not received more attention. It remains unthinkable, bound up among the conflicting sentiments which surround the enslavement of other human beings and the dehumanization of a significant number who may have also been literate, and of a monotheistic tradition.

Islam may be more important in America’s early development than previously understood, and may have influenced African American culture in ways which have thus far gone unconsidered. In 1522, the first African slave revolt in the Americas, led by Wolof, occurred in Hispaniola (Diouf 1998: 20). The Muslim legacy of the so-called New World is a lasting one, if not at first easily seen.

In the American South, Trinidad, and Jamaica, there is a religious tradition known as the shout or ring-shout, during which men and women turn in a circle while clapping their hands and shuffling their feet (Diouf 1998: 68). One explanation of the phenomenon is that it is derived from an African dance. It has also been posited that it may be a reference to pilgrimage.

When Muslims goes on *hajj*, or pilgrimage to the holy city of Mecca, they honor one of the five pillars of their faith. Once there, they circumambulate a holy shrine, known as the *Ka'ba*. One circumambulation the *Ka'ba* seven tours, and this is called *tawaf*, while just one tour is called *sha'wt* or *saut* (pronounced in Arabic as the English “shout”) (Diouf 1998:69). It remains conjecture, but for Muslims who knew that they would never be able to make *hajj*, it may have been an effort to in some way honor a major event of the pilgrimage.

This linguistic hypothesis, related by Diouf (1998), was proposed by Lorenzo Turner. Diouf (1998: 69) finds that the theory is reinforced by observation of the ring-shout itself: “Just as the pilgrims do in Mecca, the shouters turn counterclockwise. As in Mecca, they do so around a sacred object, such as the church itself (in the Sea Islands) or a second altar built especially in the middle of the church (in Jamaica and Trinidad).” There is a continuity of Muslim traditions in America. Just as Islam has had lasting influence in coastal Georgia, where Sapelo Island’s residents continue to pray and be buried facing east, its legacy may still be seen in other African American religious traditions today.

There is much work yet to be done concerning the tangible and intangible heritage recoverable from the archaeological record at sites of enslavement in the Americas and the evaluation of cultural interpretations of these sites. I have presented Fennell’s model as a way of addressing the latter of these concerns. In order for this model to be applied successfully to the material culture of enslaved African Muslims, a more adequate source for an ethnohistorical analogy must be developed. This is just one of the facets this study has presented which would benefit from further research.

Future research on the subject which may prove to be fruitful would explore sites outside of North America in more depth. Archaeological investigations of enslaved African communities in Brazil may prove particularly interesting considering what is known of Muslim practice in that country from the documentary record. Charles Orser’s (1996) review of Brazil may provide a significant basis for such explorations. This is also true, to a lesser degree, of sites throughout the Caribbean. Further research on the tradition of Islam in West Africa and

particular movements which were popular during the period of the transatlantic slave trade could strengthen the ethnohistorical analogy.

I have suggested that there was a significant Muslim presence among the enslaved African and African American population in the Americas, and explored the circumstances which resulted in their enslavement. I have presented the stories of a few of these individuals in order to offer a window through which living people might be recognized. This is particularly important for an analysis of the materiality of their lives, which may indicate expressions of their identity and their beliefs. In this article I attempted an exploration of material culture and its potential to reflect a distinctly Muslim identity.

If nothing else, what should be taken away from this study is that Islam should join the complex of identities over which archaeologists puzzle for enslaved African America and about which they ultimately craft new stories. At the outset of this article, I outlined the ways in which archaeology may be a critical, emancipatory, and explanatory endeavor. When this project was conceived, I could not envision it as separable from explanatory and emancipatory aims. It was only later that I realized this study could have consisted of artifact description and analysis entirely apart from these concerns. And yet, the emancipatory potential of archaeology was my inspiration. Without it, this study would not exist.

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