

University of Tennessee

Closing the Gap

Developing Gullah/Geechee Archaeology

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Introduction

The Gullah/Geechee sparked my interest as I learned about their community and agricultural methods and their retention of their African culture once forcefully immigrated to the Americas to work as slaves. Through this work, I hope to draw attention to establishing archaeology as an interdisciplinary field in order to establish a correct contextual history of artifacts instead of by simply prescribing them their standard use. In addition, through interdisciplinarity, archaeology can continue to make steps away from a Eurocentric focus to a more methodology that examines all the connections of the populations lives from their religion, ancestral history, and so much more instead of by the concept of contact first. This can heavily be seen in Plantation Archaeology with most sites focusing on the romanticized, white narrative instead of the Black landscape it truly is. White populations must acknowledge the inherent racism present around sites such as this and the institutions that continue to uphold such whether in academia or socially. Through the works of individuals such as Fairbanks, Singleton, and Ferguson; archaeology in the context of slavery and African Americans has seen major improvements since the 1960s, but we must continue to move forward. The Gullah/Geechee people residing in the Lowcountry of the Carolinas, Georgia, and Florida are one such nation. Historically, the Gullah/Geechee were slaves that worked on isolated plantations off of a task-based system that allowed them more freedoms than other slave settlements that worked off gang systems. This allowed them to retain a large number of Africanisms and sets them apart from other African Americans. In scholarly works, there remains no set nomenclature and many works do not accredit their culture to the areas they live in instead naming them only as African American and not Gullah/Geechee even on Gullah/Geechee sites. With a growing catalog of literature proving their African heritage, attention must be brought to this topic to enable future

scholarly works to do so proceeds in a manner that attributes findings to the correct cultural context instead of a generalized culture.

Plantation Archaeology

Information should not only be presented on a scientific level but on many to insure the spread of material to both an academic and nonacademic audience. In “Necessary but Insufficient: Plantation Archaeology Reports and Community Action”, Gibbs explores the idea of local context where the historical archaeologist “lives, works, and participates” (Gibbs, 51). The study of prevailing conditions and attitudes in the community can be examined but the idea of “their history and my/our history” must be considered (Gibbs, 52). That it is one’s social responsibility to act responsibly to reflect the needs and interests of their intended audience. Potter suggests four approaches to analyzing a plantation archaeologically: slavery and the conditions involved must be looked at from a larger social and historical context, slave life should not be separated from slavery, and archaeologists should control how the data is spread to the public. Nontechnical data releases allow it to be used on a community basis and can contribute more towards publicly funded archaeology and historical preservation and community debates on important issues. In addition, a look into writing in a narrative format versus technical writing must be examined for the emphasis on white presence and the dominant races views in relation to slavery. In part, this is due to a larger portion of data being available from the documents and histories written from the white perspective compared to how much of the history of slaves has been documented by word of mouth. Native meanings should be looked for in larger historical contexts and control should be upheld over the presentation of data and ideas according to Potter. This emphasizes how anthropologists and archaeologists should work

together on the presentation of data in order to create a less Eurocentric view of white and black relations during the time of slavery. Historic sites archaeology is the cross over point between modern anthropology and archaeology in its attempt to examine a subject from both an archival and a physical viewpoint to create hypotheses based off data from both pools of research (Schuyler, 89).

This Eurocentric focus began as early as the fifteenth century when European societies began to spread worldwide and affect the native populations they interacted with. The British colonial system is a major aspect of the ideology behind this due to the class distinctions it brought alongside the spread of Europeans (Paynter, 2). Today, historical archaeology is viewed as the “ways of life of post-Columbian people” in North America (Paynter, 3). Much of historical archaeology is the same as in other branches of archaeology through using source materials to understand past populations giving perspective to matters such as “faction process, state formation, world systems, and identity construction” (Paynter, 3). “Contact period” is used to describe the period of “impact and entanglement” that colonizing Europeans would interact with native populations (Paynter, 9). To move away from the Eurocentric perspective Paynter suggests “developing a critical archaeology, one that confronts the ideological structures and practices that promote inequality in this region and in the globe at large” in essence an archaeological field based on the principles of anthropology (3). Outside of the Eurocentric view, native cultures continued maintain their cultural identity by retaining their strong bonds with their homeland and were able to “be strong enough to resist erasure through the normalization processes of forgetting, assimilating, and distancing” (Orser Jr., 127). African cultures in America are just one example of this with archaeologist today acknowledging that America’s

history cannot be told without acknowledging the institutional racism inherent in the founding of the country (Orser Jr., 127).

In order to move plantation archaeology away from the Eurocentric, the origins of the slaves must be considered, Africa. African labor was the main source for Americas mercantile culture and just by removing them from their homes, their cultures were not erased. The “contact period” coincides with Eurocentric views, and a new ideology of “ethnohistoric interaction spheres” could be a step forward in historical archaeology (Paynter, 9). This would allow the focus to be on the studied culture and examine how the culture interacted from their perspective instead of from the standard view of when European culture was introduced to the area. Furthermore, slaves in the Americas were not simply from one culture but an amalgamation of their varied homelands with many arriving from Central and Western Africa. The global development of capitalism created a need for more workers, and since slaves worked for nothing, they were a sought-after resource in both European and American societies. The idea of capitalism and an increasing material culture is needed to understand the economics and culture of the time (Paynter, 9). With a broader, less white focused view, historical materials that were examined from a white perspective can gain new meanings that were hidden due to racial microaggressions hidden in the methodology of archaeology. Capitalism’s metanarrative archaeologists have approached as the “direction of landscape transformation using the language of improvement” following the way capitalism led to landowners changing the landscape in efforts to civilize themselves (Orser Jr., 120). Improvement is the key word of this theory. In order to ‘improve’ their lives, individuals would go into harsh, new environments purely for economic gain with no thought of the land or the people who already resided there. An exploitative culture arose as capitalism spread. This steady downhill spiral had six moments in

history according to Matthew's that shaped the United States around 1790: "class formation, revolution, marginalization, the creation of the United States Naval Academy, the failure of industry, and commodification" (Orser Jr., 122).

Living spaces are not simply an area which an individual lives, but a cultural landscape. These are regions that have been "shaped and modified by human actions and conscious design to provide housing, accommodate the system of production, facilitate communication and transportation, mark social inequalities, and express aesthetics" (Paynter, 12). By focusing on landscapes, historians have the ability to "merge information from resource management projects with that of pure research studies" (Paynter, 12). One important consideration must be taken when using written documents, the views of the writer. These documents can become problematic due to a hidden bias, so they must be carefully interpreted by historians (Paynter, 14). Oral histories potentially bring to light the people the written record forgot creating a more complete narrative, written from both the minority and dominant perspective. Biases can be overwrote by looking for "points of similarity, of confirmation: deed chains that can be matched with assemblage dates, social status indices that can be matched with probate and/or tax and/or census class assessments" (Paynter, 15). If disjuncture appears within the research, the material record suggests sample bias, which contributes to historians believing that anything that can be learned from objects is already written in records.

Historical archaeology revolves around material culture and details objects and works that "discloses who made what, when, where, and how it was used" (Paynter, 10). The reason these objects can be used to approach meanings is the reoccurring nature of them. "Objects recycle culture, returning it to the concrete and empirical world where it may be experienced, learned, and changed" (Paynter, 16). Although, they cannot be used just based off of their

appearance, but the context of where they were located. Anne Yentsch presents a strong methodology for doing this by using “cables of inference” (Paynter, 16). Cables of inference refers to building a net of interwoven textures of “past lives, structures, and histories”, no one culture is excluded, and all backgrounds are present when deriving meaning behind objects (Paynter, 16). Ferguson’s work with colonoware is another outstanding example weaving the story of African and African American people’s history with these ceramic vessels, while also including his own personal experiences around desegregation to create an urgency to his inquiry around the folk arts (Paynter, 17). These concepts coincide with the concept of “socio-spatial dialect” that has allowed archaeologists to “link individual archaeological sites and their inhabitants with a broader scale of human activity” (Orser Jr., 119). This allows for a global focus to be applied to the culturally diverse Europe without adopting a Eurocentric perspective.

To correct this erasure of people of color within history, the triumphalist history must be rectified. Critical archaeology is one way to bring the unwritten stories of the past to the forefront. Interpretations in archaeology are not simply based on the “social matrix from which they are excavated” but also the social setting during which they are examined (Paynter, 17). “There is a remarkable separation in capitalist societies between life as it is, life as it is thought to be, and life as it might have been” (Paynter, 18). Modern views cannot be erased from the interpreter’s view, and so historians must examine how today’s power structure forms their own biases. Historians must be able to look beyond stereotypes and generalizations in order to present the “segment of world society” on which their work focuses from a sociocultural perspective of gender, race, and class (Paynter, 21). The major separation of information is around archaeologist focusing more on what is present with only generally having a passing knowledge of the culture and written history of the given subject (Schuyler, 84). Ways to negate this in the

future is to have information available not just to the academic but to the public as well. The growing remembrance of once ignored groups illustrates why multicultural education and awareness is such an important matter. With this push only beginning in the 1960s causing what is seen today, the future holds untold possibilities for marginalized communities whether in the past or present (Orser Jr., 132).

African American Archaeology

The Gullah Geechee culture is made up of two aspects: the tangible and intangible otherwise known as the living culture. They are experiencing a disappearing physical culture that was offset by the creation of the Gullah/Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor partially due to archaeologists misnaming the culture of the region as African American or sea island instead of Gullah Geechee. The intangible portions of the Gullah Geechee examined from an archaeological viewpoint include cultural events, spectacles, and heritage but only from social interactions. The tangible comes from sites and monuments, traditional crafts and technology, and ecological features involved with their intangible culture (Barnes & Steen, 176). Their culture originated from a British colony in 1670 that had slaves in South Carolina that were brought directly from Africa (Barnes & Steen, 180). In the 1680s, it was found rice thrived there calling for more African slaves who had experience with rice eventually leading to the enslaved living in self-sufficient centralized settlements structured around a task system with two more crops becoming staples: indigo and 'cotton'. This allowed for their culture to develop in "distinct and regional forms" (Barnes & Steen, 183). 1790s allowed for sea island cottons introduction becoming the staple crop but rice culture was still a large aspect of their culture. Evidence of their verbal culture can be seen in the knowledge of uprisings that was used as a basis for their

own against their owners (Barnes & Steen, 189). Resistance through the form of education and practicing religion was influential in maintaining and creating their own culture (Barnes & Steen, 190). Emancipation also brought isolation to freed slaves allowing for local variations to occur as many would pool money together to purchase plots of land before education caused many to deny their culture for a better life with Penn School being the inciting incident. Much previous research was tarnished by racial views but has evolved with many helping to externally define the Gullah identity through their stories and much more.

Archaeological investigations were performed on Behavior Cemetery alongside the Gullah-Geechee communities of Sapelo Island, Georgia as an example of community-oriented archaeology known as the Behavior Cemetery Project (Honerkamp & Crook, 103). The goals were to record all extant grave markers and make the information easily accessible, determine future grave locations, and investigate the spatial and temporal parameters of the 19th century slave site within the cemetery (Honerkamp & Crook, 103). Mortuary practices had high cultural significance during the antebellum time-period to slaves as a form of resistance to plantation owner's discipline and control. There is a possibility that Behavior Cemetery was the burial grounds for a nearby settlement under the same name: Thomas Spalding's Sapelo Plantation of Behavior (Honerkamp & Crook, 104). Slaves built housing of wattle-and-tabby-daub huts with social and economic autonomy leading to it mainly being a village that was designed and built by enslaved Gullah/Geechee (Honerkamp & Crook, 104). Many began to leave in groups over a wide variety of years, possibly as family groups. Burial locations were determined by Gullah and Geechee beliefs with many located by groves of trees away from any cabins or churches. Their grave site culture involves the appeasement of spirits, so spirit offerings are placed on the grave with the areas sporting eerie shadows and black dogs (Honerkamp & Crook, 106). Geechee will

go out of their way to avoid them. The layout was informal with family plots and to enter the cemetery permission must be asked of the spirits. Bodies facing head to the west and feet to the east. This is evidence of what could a long-standing tradition that was originally an African custom. Adults and children were given different burials according to their tradition of catching sense (Honerkamp & Crook, 106). Through community archaeology, Honerkamp and Crook were able to identify areas where bodies could be buried without disturbing previous residents along with a plan of further upkeep. In addition, they will be avoiding the area of archaeological importance for future ventures and had a high flow of information with the residents in the area throughout the entire process (Honerkamp & Crook, 112).

White Authority and Critical Resource Management

US physical anthropology was eugenicist, patriarchal, and white supremacist in the first half of the twentieth century (Blakley, 1). The 1966 National Historic Preservation Act was created to mitigate the destruction of archaeological sites. African American archaeology was not the preservation of areas they had lived in such as plantations, but random sites such as highways and building construction that white American archaeologists who studied native “prehistory” would work on the exhumed sites along with an increasing number of historic site (Blakley, 2). “As these researchers began to study African American sites, they rarely attended African American studies programs at their universities” showing a lack of training for the materials they would be interacting with (Blakley, 2). The white voice muffles the critiques of their black counterparts in anthropology in order to sustain the systematic racism present in the field (Blakley, 2). As late as 1989, archaeologists continued to subscribe to Boasian acculturation in relation to the Black image. Scholars Singleton and Bailey held a conference “Digging the

Afro-American Past” in order to “introduce archaeologists and African American studies to one another”, and even during this white archaeologist’s argued for the thin, racist historical perspective they continued to analyze African American and slavery’s past from (Blakley, 2).

World War II was the stage that African Americans used to spread their own historiography with the rise of civil rights movements and international colonial independence (Blakley, 2). More literature was available on people of color and a desire for more was present alongside the desegregation of “all-White institutions of higher learning” during the late 1960s (Blakley, 2). “Douglass, Firmin, Du Bois, Woodson, Leo Hansberry, Hurston, and Cobb and later African and diasporic intellectuals (Diop, Fanon, Cesaire, Eric Williams, Willis, Drake, and Johnnetta Cole, as examples) constructed a critical epistemology of racism, accumulation, and power” in order to challenge the neutrality of anthropology through activist scholarship (Blakley, 3). Cobb recognized that “Black science contributors” were labeled as “nonpersons” (Blakley, 3). White bias, white authority, and critical resource management in “anthropology’s canon, hiring, and teaching remains extensive in the United States” (Blakley, 4). In between 1991 and 2009, one site has been revolutionary in the visibility methodology of archaeology with communities of color. In Philadelphia, a mass reburial occurred that would transfer African American remains from the First African Baptist Church cemetery to Eden cemetery. Blakley worked with the “descendant communities” in order to determine the deposition of the dead and established the idea of using bioarcheology for the betterment and service of these communities (Blakley, 4). When working with communities, the job of the archaeologist is to compile varied evidence in order to compile a complex story addressing the individual’s “origins, transformation, physical quality of life, and resistance” (Blakley, 5). The Smithsonian’s want to complete this project without working with the resident communities shows the “white

objectification of the African American past and living present, instrumental stereotyping, deafness and entitlement, and adamant control and containment constituting avarice and blindness to the evidence of Black humanity and competence” (Blakley, 5). No geneticists even proposed the question about the cultural or historical origins of the African Americans located in the burial grounds that led to further research in the field of chemistry (Blakley, 11). By white populations denying their role in institutional racism in order to assuage their guilt, the voice of the minority cannot be heard. The concept of blindness to Black scientist continues today with Gadsby and Chidester in 2007 approaching another archaeological site in a similar manner to the one Blakley describes in Philadelphia down to the methodology, but no mention of their work at the African Burial Ground Project is made going as far as to use the term “descendent community” (Blakley, 12). A total of twelve authors ignores this act of academic plagiarism, and shows archaeologists denial of Black scholarship (Blakley, 12).

African American archaeology and cultural resource management enjoy a symbiotic relationship as critical resource management aids in identifying and evaluating sites for historical importance. This includes anything from major sites to smaller areas such as small farmsteads, tenant sites, and much more. Sites have mainly been viewed from a Euro perspective, but they should be looked at more from the Africana viewpoint as more African behaviors have been identified in resistance to Euromerican norms. Today, there is a focus on coastal plantations due to them being the longest standing as they were not as heavily tore down for the land. At Wapoo Plantation, trench and mud-walled architecture was present and at other sites African American-made colonoware was found. African Americans before and shortly after the Industrial Revolution also have been found to have created African style villages along with creating their own earthenware in keeping to historical practices. This was all possible due to the isolation they

experience around South Carolina as they functioned under minimal supervision, and even as times changed, they kept to this style of living just further away from the main house (Joseph, 23).

They experienced a forced removal of their culture as the Euroamerican ideology began to use material culture to exhibit class and social status. Although their physical culture was pushed back, they continued their ritual practices and beliefs. Many items of which were recovered from artifact caches that further emphasize that archaeologists must examine areas within the context of the location as many of these would have no meaning outside of where they were located (Joseph, 21). Evidence of communal behavior was also found in James City that Wheaton and colleagues view as being the most African element of the city. In an excavation at Springfield in Augusta, Georgia, houses with pit features were located similar to Yoruba houses along with yard pit features seen in Nchumuru settlements and Yaughan and Curriboo plantations (Joseph, 23). A preference for hollowware was also noted supporting Otto's observation at Cannon's Point that the African American diet shared many West African attributes for liquid-based meals (Joseph, 23). Other objects were also found such as a pipe, a coin, a shoe, a plate, and beads. These all showed a prevalence of African culture in the area (Joseph, 24). Joseph emphasizes that critical resource management archaeologists must study sites within a cultural perspective and must take into account knowledge of African cultural behavior (31).

Better Homes in America had a large influence on the Gullahs way of living as they began to intermingle their culture with that of white America with its national cultural standards. This is one of the biggest examples of cultural erasure the Gullah/Geechee were faced with during the 1940s. A look into the foundation of the culture of the island and Penn School along with tourism and truck farming are performed. The natives had begun to leave the Island of St.

Helen in order to pursue jobs in larger cities as many were unable to find good work or afford taxes on the island losing most of its population to death and migration along with its younger generation (Hutchinson, 105). Penn School was not run by natives but by outsiders and by teaming with Better Homes helped to push the American Ideal of scientific order upon the native's traditions. This was done by encouraging traditional crafts while discouraging island dialect and belief systems (Hutchinson, 106). Better Homes with Penn was for the national housing program, the established educational reform, and the existing island culture. The housing at the time was highly varied and different than that of the national ideal with problems that many Gullah women dealt with that the movement never addressed (Hutchinson, 108).

The movement caused a shift from interior arts and crafts to the standard commercial future and furnishings as a move towards modernism. The media at the time revealed economic and racial prejudices in their publishing's with many wanting Penn to advance "American" culture on the islanders and to speak "proper English" (Hutchinson, 110). Penn built and showed an example house with assumptions of family size, cleanliness, along with modern equipment when at the time, outhouses was a major advance in sanitation. To purchase the homes they were showing, islanders would have to leave the island to afford such. The reality of their lives versus the national leader's ideals were not taken into consideration when establishing the "standard living ideal (Hutchinson, 111). They were responsible for remodeling many islander homes, but this exposure to the "modern" way might have led to even more young people departing the island. Overall, the project was a failure as it did not stem outmigration and solidify home ownership (Hutchinson, 114).

Trailblazers: Fairbanks, Ferguson, and Singleton

Charles Fairbanks set the stage in 1969 for a modernization of archaeological studies of people of African descent paving the path of interdisciplinary work by working with Robert Ascher, a cultural anthropologist, at Rayfield Plantation on Cumberland Island (Ascher & Fairbanks, 3) . In 1984, he returns to the development of the archaeology of slave settlements in “The Plantation Archaeology of the Southeastern Coast”. His work was influential to bringing attention to beginning investigations of slave settlements along with establishing the methodology of working from both an archaeological and historical perspective. Before him, little work had been done in urban Black settlements or piedmont slave settlements (Fairbanks, 1). Much of the history of slavery that was documented was that of aberrant or nonstandard behavior in slave settlements. Through archaeology a closer look can be taken to determine their daily lives through what they left behind: food remains, living spaces, tools, housing, and other materials found around the sites. Few sites have been uncovered but states no Africanism could be found including at Kingsley (Fairbanks, 2). Evidence of home prepared meals with weapons was at the site. At Ryefield on Cumberland Island, food remains were wildly varied along with ceramics and more firearms. Again, no African artifacts were found (Fairbanks, 2). An examination of slave trash piles showed them eating rice, “spoon-meat”, pilau or pilaf, and other various animals that had been hunted by trapping and nets: frequently raccoons (Fairbanks, 3). Coastal Blacks continue this tradition today during the Marsh Hen Tide (Fairbanks, 3). At the Hampton Plantation, there is an emphasis on the use of tabby and shells in building along with possible African artifacts and styles of living in their double pen house (Fairbanks, 4). At Butler’s Island, another house with a frame structure was found to have a massive central fireplace with a raised floor (Fairbanks, 6). Ceramics were found at all sites outside of Georgia but is believed to be of Native American origin. In relation to Brown’s work, the grave sites

mentioned show similar relation to their orientation and use of grave offerings with patterns of wooden headstones. The biggest conclusion is that archeologists and historians need to work together to ensure the truth of the data presented (Fairbanks, 12). In this article, there seems to be a lack of acknowledging that the Gullah culture could have been a possible influence on the sites presented. Together Fairbanks and Ascher, performed an examination of Georgian slave cabins through excavations on Cumberland Island that was a part of the Gullah Geechee islands, which is written as being of the sea islands. Their importance was for their 'sea island' cotton that brought twice the price compared to others. They lived in cabins of standard settings with an emphasis on the tabby building material. The slaves mentioned seem to be African in birth with references to a bead being a major signifier of such (Ascher & Fairbanks, 8). They ate from two categories the "get-it-yourself" where they hunted and foraged from the land and what the slave owner supplied: evidence of handiwork such as bone buttons and pig remains (Ascher & Fairbanks, 8). This work is a first look into understanding artifacts contextually instead of from what their standard use would be.

Theresa Singleton's work mirrors that of her predecessor Ray Crook's declaration that "African-American archaeology in this tidewater regions [from southern North Carolina to northeastern Florida] is Gullah-Geechee archaeology" (Singleton, 152). Singleton's work was influential in establishing that the people who lived at these sites are the "forebears of the present-day Gullah-Geechee communities" (Singleton, 152). This emphasizes the importance of the archaeological work done within Gullah/Geechee archaeological sites as they are not a pre-historic culture, but a living one. Her predecessors had made the area of the Georgia coast a testing ground for slavery archaeology, and Singleton hoped to enable Gullah/Geechee communities in reclaiming their heritage by working with anthropologists and archaeologists

who are researching in the area. By working hand-in-hand with the communities, it allows academics and the Gullah/Geechee community an unprecedented ability to share information and findings in order to better substantiate their African heritage through archaeological findings (Singleton, 152).

In 2019, Ferguson and Goldberg published “From the Earth: Spirituality, Medicine Vessels, and Consecrated Bowls as Responses to Slavery in the South Carolina Lowcountry” whose main focus is that of Africanisms present throughout the South Carolina Lowcountry that means the Gullah/Geechee communities and are listed as such both in the article. Ferguson innovated the field of colonware through finding and establishing that the previously believed Native American hand-built, low fired pottery was not in fact them but African slaves who were practicing the art of pottery in the Carolina Lowcountry by comparing the pottery found on African American sites to those of West and Central Africa. Ferguson links the concepts of gender and power to that of the pottery, and states that they most likely were “incorporated in the ethnogenesis of the Gullah people of Carolina” (Ferguson & Goldberg, 173). This work built upon Ferguson’s previous book *Uncommon Ground* where he had investigated similar findings in 2002, but did not connect the Gullah/Geechee people to the sites and materials he was studying. This was rectified in his most recent work, but it labels the Gullah/Geechee as simply being African American and does not contextualize their culture within the Heritage Corridor they reside within (Ferguson & Goldberg, 173). In addition, his work was not just based off of archaeological findings, he worked with communities and went to Africa to investigate the meaning behind colonware from where its creators originated. Ferguson’s work has incited further scholarly investigation around identifying the African style of colonware within the South Carolina Lowcountry (Sattes *et al.*, 1).

Nomenclature

The Gullah/Geechee were developed out of African and African American adaptations to the conditions of enslavement and through this a new set of behavioral practices will be defined for the institution of slavery and the postbellum development of African American culture to aid in the interpretation of the African American adaption archeological record across southern plantations and farms. Brown further emphasizes the isolation the Gullah/Geechee experienced and their differences when compared to other African American slaves with them holding cultural autonomy allowing them to keep a greater degree of their culture when compared to other slave sites (81). This includes their language and religious beliefs and practices with an in-depth look into their religious culture and family. Excavations were performed on the Levi Jordan Plantation in Brazoria County, Texas (Brown, 85). The architecture of their buildings, artifacts located, and their cemetery plot all show African origins with an analysis of their Conjuror's Cabin, Cemetery, and Prays House (Brown, 85-7). This shows a prevalence of African religion and thought that is present further west than the studies that are focused along the Gullah/Geechee Heritage Corridor (Brown, 87-8). In the title of the article, Brown names the Gullah/Geechee as a tenant community in the article title, giving no hint that the works focus is that of the Gullah/Geechee. Within the article itself, Brown uses various versions of the Gullah/Geechee name to describe them including Gullah, Gullah and Geechee, and Geechee. This alludes to the Gullah/Geechee being two separate groups instead of the cohesive nation that it is.

In 2008, Ray Crook published "Gullah-Geechee Archaeology: The Living Space of Enslaved Geechee on Sapelo Island". Within this article, he uses a wide variety of spellings and

ways to say Gullah/Geechee without deciding upon one manner. In the title alone there is two different variants: Gullah-Geechee and Geechee. Throughout the article, he repeatedly names them as the Geechee and in one instance as Gullah (Crook, 2008). In a more recent paper by Ray Crook alongside Nicholas Honerkamp, they published an article titled “Archaeology in a Geechee Graveyard”. Returning to Crook’s frequent use of naming the Gullah/Geechee as Geechee alongside his previous use of Gullah-Geechee. Within the work, Gullah is defined as the language the Geechee speak otherwise known as “Sea Island Creole English” (Honerkamp & Crook, 1). Furthermore, Gullah is also defined as a separate group that live above the Savannah River, while the Geechee are those who live below (Honerkamp & Crook, 1). The use of Gullah-Geechee can also be seen in Singleton’s publication “Reclaiming the Gullah-Geechee Past”. Ferguson and Goldberg’s work in 2019 show a better format for scholarly work by listing Gullah in the keywords along within the abstract although the Gullah/Geechee people are not named within the title. The use of slave, plantation, Lowcountry, Southeastern Coast, Gullah, Geechee, Gullah-Geechee, and Gullah/Geechee as of now all indicate the Gullah/Geechee Nation. This wide variety of naming and forms of acknowledgement shows a need for a set nomenclature around the correct format of Gullah/Geechee to be created and used in future scholarship in order to make research accessible and searchable for others interested in the field whether to the public or members of academia.

“Plantation represents the American system of exploitation-historically and at present-specific to people of color” (Hargrove, 138). The US Southeast, also known as the Lowcountry, is where many look to experience the fantasy of the antebellum south, specifically the plantation. The Gullah/Geechee inherited the islands and port cities after Emancipation after being brought from Central and West Africa in order to be exploited for their knowledge and skilled labor

where they continued to practice their cultural heritage a legality in the courts, due to the Gullah/Geechee practice of common land ownership, lost them the land they had owned from 1900 to 2018 (Hargrove, 139). In an interview with Queen Quet, Cheiftess of the Gullah/Geechee Nation, Hargrove presents the question “when you hear the word plantation, what comes to mind?” (Hargrove, 139). Queen Quet states that it depends on the individual. If they are of her community, she knows that means they have been a part of the community for at least 300 years along with the traditions of the family. If they say they are of Hilton Head Plantation, then it indicates that they wish to be segregated from the original community, while also dictating the lives of individuals who live outside of their gates (Hargrove, 140). The length of time the Gullah/Geechee have lived, worked, and died on this land shows the ownership inherent to them that they do not possess due to a white conception of slavery and ownership that continues to this day. Plantation always means that this is simultaneously a Black landscape.

Through acknowledging that the land was that of the Gullah/Geechee, the archaeological trends at sites throughout Florida, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Georgia must be acknowledged as Gullah/Geechee heritage. In Behavior Cemetery, located on Sapelo Island in Georgia, there were various culturally significant artifacts on the site. One example is that of spirit offerings “such as dishes or pitchers on top of the graves” (Honerkamp & Crooks, 106). This is a continuation of what was originally an African culture. When the physical body is buried, the soul continues on to the afterlife, but the spirit stays earthbound and may cause mischief if not appeased. “Personal items and other objects are placed on the grave in order” to keep the spirit from roaming (Honerkamp & Crooks, 106). Another marker of Gullah/Geechee culture is the way the bodies are buried: feet facing eastward towards Africa, a custom shared by Central Africans due to their belief in the cosmos (Honerkamp & Crooks, 108). In addition, the

tombstones themselves further emphasize the Gullah/Geechee presence as the adults all have permanent markers, while the children who passed away had either transitory markers or were buried at their close relative's feet. This is due to the cultural concept of "catching sense" (Honerkamp & Crooks, 109). This spans from ages two to twelve where the child learns about the community and their social responsibilities beyond their family. The process is complete when the child joins the church and becomes an adult in the eyes of the community.

Rayfield plantation was located in Georgia, and in 1914 the settlement covered one-third of the island and cultivated sea island cotton and food stuffs (Ascher & Fairbanks, 5). The patterns seen at this location were similar to other places along the coast that also produced sea island cotton showing the presence of the Gullah/Geechee. The format of the houses also confirms this as they lived in shared, large buildings with a centered shared fire pit. Furthermore, through examining the chimney, it was found to be made of tabby. Tabby is a "combination of sand, lime, and oyster shell in equal portion by measure" that the Gullah/Geechee are known to use as a building material (Ascher & Fairbanks, 7). Furthermore, the majority of the bricks were made of tabby. Another aspect found on location is a "standard, hexagonal, blue, and drawn" bead (Ascher & Fairbanks, 8). Ascher and Fairbanks theorize this bead was carried from Africa to America by an individual that had been sold into slavery as similar trade beads appeared in Africa around the turn of the nineteenth century. The "white rim, blue color, and hexagonal shape" possibly describes an "ambassador bead" coming from the belief that it could be used as a "passport for bearers of messages between tribal chiefs" (Ascher & Fairbanks, 8). Another theory is that it showed the alliances from the east to west coast of Africa, while yet another saying it is connected with the purchase of slaves at the beginning of the 1800s (Ascher & Fairbanks, 8). The freedoms of the slaves on this site also coincide with other Gullah/Geechee

plantations as they were able to hunt and supplement the food the owner supplied them, and the scraps would go into a community deposit to mix with other garbage (Ascher & Fairbanks, 12). The presence of bone buttons supports this theory as they would have to be made with a simple tool (Ascher & Fairbanks, 5).

Singleton through oral traditions discovered that on Sapelo Island some of the enslaved were able to build African-style houses at the Spalding Plantation (Singleton, 164). The construction of the building was that of wattle-and-daub, using “tabby mortar for daub or plaster made of tabby mortar” (Singleton, 164). Wattle-and-daub is an African style of building made of basket weaving, which the Gullah/Geechee are known for (Singleton, 164). Another example is the subfloor pits found at the site that were used for “storage of food and personal items” along with possibly being a sacred shrine (Singleton, 165). With the frequency these pits are found in the Lowcountry, the subfloor pits are mainly believed to be a sacred place or shrine (Singleton, 164). The style of housing also mirrors that of other Gullah/Geechee plantations with the housings being large-shared family units with a large fireplace (Singleton, 166). The Gullah/Geechee were founded in isolated slave settlements with many of them being dispersed away from the plantation itself, and this led to them creating a close-knit community through which they could identify (Singleton, 170). This isolationism led to the origins of “cultural practices, traditions, and memories” that they could share with other settlements (Singleton, 170). Continuing after Emancipation, slave settlements had a tradition of identifying with the settlement of the sea island, and not the island wide community (Singleton, 170). Colonoware from Ossabaw Island was found within a tabby cabin along with an assortment of items including a lead fish-net sinker. The Gullah/Geechee people are known for their net making, and

due to them working on a task-based system, they would have time to procure their own food from the waterways (Singleton, 174).

The Gullah/Geechee believed in “magic and signs and spirits”, and to them it was a part of everyday life (Singleton, 175). African religious beliefs permeate every aspect of their lives and is a fundamental premise of Africa. Across the United States at African American sites finds of unknown history have been located: “pierced coins, crystals, smoothed or water-worn pebbles, shells, and worked animal bone fragments often with perforations” (Singleton, 175). While their purpose many be unclear, these objects and others have been found grouped together in caches around buildings and doorways implying a religious significance (Singleton, 175). Subterranean pits in slave house around Virginia have had caches found within them, and they believe them to be an ancestral shrine (Singleton, 175). Artifacts at Gullah/Geechee sites have previously classified them in a function over culture approach leading to the misidentification of “potential symbolic uses” (Singleton, 175). On many such objects a perforation would be the only signal it had a use outside of the expected. Pierced coins are an example as they would be worn on a string and worn around the neck or ankle for good luck, protection, or to ward off ill health. If the coin was silver and turned black, it was a sign that the wearer had been conjured. This is an oral tradition of the Gullah/Geechee people (Singleton, 176). Beads are also significant and may have been worn as amulets, charms, or for jewelry. Martin, a slave from Alabama and Georgia, had a bead given from his mother that she had said she would never part with. The meaning was lost to him, but the importance of it was not (Singleton, 177).

The Lowcountry “interpretation of spirits common to the Bakongo and related peoples (Kikongo speakers) of West Central Africa created the foundations of the spiritual identity of the Gullah/Geechee creating a multi-source creole culture (Ferguson & Goldberg, 174). The

emphasis is on the symbolism and medical practices of the Bakongo people with much of this evidence arising from “local folk-made pottery” (Ferguson & Goldberg, 175). Evidence suggests that these vessels were used for food preparation, containers for charms, and as “quotidian vessels required for preparing and administering folk medicines” (Ferguson & Goldberg, 175). The term colonoware refers to “unglazed, folk-crafter earthenware produced in, and affected by, the colonial government” and is not attached to the idea of race and ethnicity however the activities linked to these artifacts states otherwise exhibiting traits of use similar to Native America and Africa (Ferguson & Goldberg, 176-7). The pottery is primarily small bowls and jars, and large bowls and pots that are traditional to African and Native American cultures are rare. The way the pottery was designed with rounded bottoms and no marks or decoration contrary to European styled pottery that had flat bottoms. A disappearing presence once one moves away from the Lowcountry leads to the conclusion that a large portion of this pottery came from plantations and a small minority of it may have come from free Indian camps (Ferguson & Goldberg, 177). The marks that were present on the colonoware bowls examined showed the Bakongo cosmogram that was confirmed as it would always appear on the center of a bowl (Ferguson & Goldberg, 178).

The Gullah culture was that of a rice growing people, to them the world was water. They worked near rivers along plantations and waterways that were most often guided by enslaved plantation boatmen (Ferguson & Goldberg, 182). They were never far from water, and this may have led to their retention of cosmology within their religion that considered the “bodies of water as the home or pathway to the spirit world” mirroring the worldviews of the Bakongo people (Ferguson & Goldberg, 182). Two of the most common symbols of African culture is “iron as masculine, powerful and used aggressively; and feminine earthenware as passively used,

vulnerable, and with its power employed primarily in nurturing kin and community” and heavily influence the history of the Lowcountry (Ferguson & Goldberg, 187). Regardless of cultural differences, this example of iron and pottery exemplify a general view of the cultural traits of the Gullah/Geechee community. In addition, iron and iron working was of major importance to the running of plantations with plantation owners and managers appropriating skilled laborers for their sites (Ferguson & Goldberg, 187).

Colonowares significance can be seen when a look into the materials the folk-pottery is made of is performed: clay, water, and temper. The materials came directly from the earth, the dwelling place of ancestors and primordial spirits who were “progenitors of the natural world” (Ferguson & Goldberg, 192). By looking at colonoware from this perspective, two other factors must be included: iron's symbolic significance for West and West-Central African cultures along with their use for herbal medicines (Ferguson & Goldberg, 192). Within bodies of water, colonoware with markings inscribed upon them have been found across the Lowcountry as tangible remains of pleas sent to the primordial spirits of earth (Ferguson & Goldberg, 192).

The Gullah/Geechee culture has always been based around cooperative work their large number of African retentions. Cooperative Sea Island work patterns show similarities to those of West Africa with Bascom confirming this in the 1930s when comparing them to those of the Yoruba people. Through interviews of individuals from Sapelo Island and Hilton Head Island in South Carolina, the practice of singing in unison while working mirrored the African style of working to the drumbeat (National Park Service, F30). While the practice was only “preserved in memory”, it was still present in the culture with people always being willing to help their community members. Dr. Alpha Bah corroborates this point of corroborating to accomplish a piece of work no matter the task being West African in nature, and it is common knowledge that

this is how the Sea Island communities work among scholars who have conducted research in the area (National Park Service, F30).

For the continuation of Gullah/Geechee culture and the protection of Gullah/Geechee rights, a move to support grassroots efforts must be pursued. The Gullah/Geechee Sea Island Coalition established in 1996 by Queen Quet does just that (“Coalition”, 1). The Coalition works with citizens of the Gullah/Geechee nation to advocates for the “rights of all Gullah/Geechee people around the world”, promotes the Gullah/Geechee cultural history, heritage, and language, works toward protection and reaquisition of Sea Island land, and “celebrates Gullah/Geechee culture through artistic and educational means electronically and via “grassroots scholarship.”” (“Coalition”, 4). The Coalition operates out of the “Hunnah Home Gullah/Geechee Research & Retreat Center” that is open to researchers and educational groups (“Coalition”, 8). When studying the past, the descendent communities must also be involved, and by supporting these grassroots efforts the communities’ researchers work with are able to benefit along with the researcher themselves. When studying living cultures, to understand the past, one must work with the present population.

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