

Dextrous Creation: Material Manifestations of Instrumental Symbolism in the Americas

© Christopher C. Fennell (University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign)

Orcid No. 0000-0002-1170-8755

The final version of this paper was published in *Materialities of Ritual in the Black Atlantic*, edited by Akinwumi Ogundiran and Paula Saunders, pp. 216–235, peer reviewed publication of Indiana University Press, Bloomington (2014) ([link](#)) (*Choice* highly recommended book).

Abstract: Archaeological studies of African-American sites in North America have presented analysts with tremendous challenges of interpreting the possible symbolic meanings of nineteenth-century material culture. A range of artifacts uncovered in the living and work spaces of African Americans in that time period raises issues of the interplay of individual and social group dynamics and implicates a spectrum of past expressive modes, from the emblems of sodalities to assertions of personal aspirations. This chapter explores these dynamics through a case study, examining the characteristics of small hand figures uncovered at such archaeological sites and the broad historical processes in which those diminutive items were likely embedded.

Key words: Instrumental and emblematic symbolism, Igbo, Edo, Nigeria, ikenga, ukhurhe, BaKongo, Kongo, dikenga, nganga, apotropaic, talismans, hand figures, fasteners, slavery, African diaspora, figas, Manus Dei, evil eye, Khamsa.

In a larger-scale study, entitled *Crossroads and Cosmologies*, I examined multiple data sets of material culture uncovered at African American occupation sites in the historic period (Fennell 2007). That larger study utilized theories concerning modes of symbolic expression, formation and maintenance of social group identities, and the role of individual creativity and innovation. I applied these analytic frameworks to the past creation and use of material expressions of core symbols within the diasporas of particular African and European cultures, such as the BaKongo, Yoruba, Fon, and Palatine German, among others. I explored the divergent ways those creative processes played out at sites in North America, the Caribbean, and South America. A multitude of independently developed beliefs and practices from Africa and Europe came to meet at the many crossroads of the Americas.

The selected case study examined in this chapter involves theoretical concepts that I developed in *Crossroads and Cosmologies*. Anthropologists have articulated concepts concerning the operations of “core” symbols within culture groups, which have also been referred to as “key” or “dominant” symbols (Ortner 1973; Schneider 1980; Turner 1967, 1973). Such core symbols express fundamental elements of a culture group’s cosmology and sense of identity within the world. Core symbols are communicated in myriad ways, including expression in ritual performances, spoken words, and tangible renderings in material culture (Fennell 2007).

Such material representations of key symbols span a spectrum of expressive modes within each culture. This continuum extends from emblematic communications to more

instrumental versions of the same core symbols (Fennell 2007; Firth 1973; Ortner 1973; Turner 1967, 1973). Emblematic versions of such key symbols summarize the identity of a culture group as a cohesive order, and are illustrated by symbols such as the Star of David for Judaism, a national flag, or the crucifix for Christianity. An instrumental expression of a culture's core symbol is typically abbreviated in composition and employed for more individual purposes. For example, a member of the Christian faith performs an instrumental representation of a key symbol when she moves her hand across heart and brow to gesture a cross as a sign of individual prayer and self-protection. Emblematic expressions of social group identities are usually deployed in settings of public ceremonies celebrating group solidarity. In contrast, the abbreviated, instrumental expressions of those core symbols are more often employed in private settings for individual purposes (Fennell 2007).

This chapter examines the contours of such expressive processes through a study of small hand figures discovered at several African American archaeological sites from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The sample size in this exercise is quite small—just twelve of these artifacts have been reported and documented in archaeological reports concerning African American residential and work spaces. Scholars in African Diaspora archaeology have viewed these artifacts as among “the most evocative” (Heath 2003: 12), the “most enigmatic” (Thomas 1998: 546), and highly challenging to interpret (Singleton 1991: 162–163). Due to the limitations of such a small data set, this chapter is not intended to offer conclusive explanations or interpretations of the meanings and uses of these particular artifacts. Rather, my goal is to open a series of research questions with which archaeologists can investigate these types of artifacts with more detailed and complex historical processes in mind.

I first provide a description of the hand figures uncovered archaeologically, based on the limited data published about them. I next ask a series of questions as to how, and for what purpose, those items were manufactured, and what may have influenced the design choices of those producers. These possible design influences entail a number of instances of core cultural symbols expressed as instrumental forms and later transformed into popular culture configurations for mass-production ornaments. The final sections of this chapter examine possible meanings that persons of African descent could have read into these objects, turning manufactured commodities into “found symbols” that related to separate lines of beliefs within African Diaspora cultures. Such found symbols consist of manufactured objects that include ornamentation attractive to an end-user who acquires and reinterprets the ornamental element as standing for a meaningful symbol within his or her belief system. Thus, the end-user did not purposefully manufacture this item with that ornamental element, but rather acquired an object that was manufactured by someone else, and the end-user reinterpreted the ornamental element for new purposes.

Functions and Puzzles in Small Things Recovered

A number of artifacts uncovered at nineteenth-century archaeological sites in the United States present evidence of both parallel and intersecting facets of European and African belief systems (see also Gundaker 2014; Leone et al. 2014). Several sites of the living and work areas of enslaved African Americans in the 1800s have contained the remains of small hand figures manufactured of copper alloy. For example, Anne Yentsch (1994: 32–33) and her archaeology team recovered a small fastener in the shape of an enclosed hand from residential fill at the site of the Charles Calvert House in Annapolis, Maryland. The Calverts were wealthy Anglo-

Americans, and they occupied this house for several decades starting in 1719. The Calvert House was also occupied by enslaved African Americans who worked there as servants. This hand figure artifact was only 1.3 cm in size, and Yentsch speculated that it functioned as a hook assembly to a clothing fastener. She further observed that a person of African American heritage may have interpreted such a figure as providing a symbolic invocation to protect against malevolent witchcraft. The archaeological context at the Calvert House site, however, did not provide evidence that this item was deposited in a location primarily occupied by African American laborers or by the Anglo-Americans in residence at the house (Yentsch 1994: 32–33).

Archaeologists working at several other sites have uncovered hand figure artifacts in contexts more specifically associated with the occupation and work areas of African Americans in the early to middle 1800s. These items exhibit similar characteristics: a hand closed in the form of a fist is set within an encompassing circle, and a crossbar bisects that circle perpendicular to the base of the wrist. The closed hand typically grasps a smaller circlet that extends out from the larger circle (Figure 1-a1).¹ This design was rendered in a single stamped figure, 1.3 cm or less in diameter, cut out of a sheet of brass or copper alloy. Hand figures of this configuration have been uncovered from the fill material within the living and work spaces once occupied by African American laborers at the Maynard Burgess House sites in Annapolis, Maryland; Thomas Jefferson’s Poplar Forest plantation in Virginia; Andrew Jackson’s Hermitage plantation in Tennessee; the Hildebrand and Wynnewood plantation sites in Tennessee; and the Zephania Kingsley Plantation in Florida (J. Davidson, pers. comm., Feb. 2013; Heath 2003; Heath et al. 2004; Leone 2005; McKee 1995; Russell 1997; Yentsch 1994). Another hand figure artifact (Figure 1-a2), discovered in a similar context at the Hermitage plantation in Tennessee, was different. This item was made of molded metal, with a slightly larger, closed hand that holds a loop of wire (McKee 1995; Russell 1997). Table 1 summarizes these locations of archaeological sites and the contexts in which such artifacts have been uncovered and reported.

At this juncture, it would be reasonable to ask for a similar summary of archaeological sites where these hand figures have been uncovered and associated solely with European-American occupants. Comparisons and contrasts could then be examined with such additional evidence. Unfortunately, I am not aware of any such sites in published reports. This chapter thus proceeds on limited data, and seeks to expand available considerations of possible historical and cultural connections without drawing conclusive inferences. These small artifacts raise a number of inquiries: Were these items simply utilitarian objects? What was the purpose of each of these items as a manufactured object? If these were “popular culture” items of manufactured clothing ornaments or jewelry, what inspired manufacturers to utilize a design which included such a hand figure? How were these items perceived and utilized by the African American individuals who acquired and possessed them?

The examples of items with a hand set inside a circle (Figure 1-a1) were most probably a form of manufactured adornment called “stampings.” Consumers could sew these products onto clothing and accessories as ornaments or use them as part of hook-and-eye fastener assemblies (Bury 1991: 355–359). The second type of hand figure from the Hermitage site, consisting of a

¹ There are two versions. The first (Figure 1-a1) depicts a type of stamped brass fastener or ornament, usually .1 to 1.2 cm tall across both circles combined. The second (Figure 1-a2) depicts a likely watch charm, made of molded metal holding a loop of wire, approximately 1.9 cm tall from the base of the wrist to the top of the hand, uncovered at the Hermitage site.

larger, molded figure holding a loop of wire (Figure 1-a2), was very likely a manufactured watch charm or jewelry amulet. A smaller metal or glass ornament consisted of a molded metal hand figure holding a loop of wire that in turn carries a subsidiary ornament (Figure 1-b). This was also a commercially produced watch charm during the nineteenth century (Fales 1995: 165, 368; Israel [1897] 1968: 419). Hand figures have been incorporated in the design of manufactured jewelry for hundreds of years throughout Europe. Notable examples, dating from the fifteenth century onward, consist of hand-shaped clasps for necklaces and of charms with the design of a hand figure holding a loop of wire from which smaller ornamental items were suspended (Figure 1-c; see Fales 1995: 165, 182, 368; Hansmann and Kriss-Rettenbeck 1966; Hinks 1975: 36).

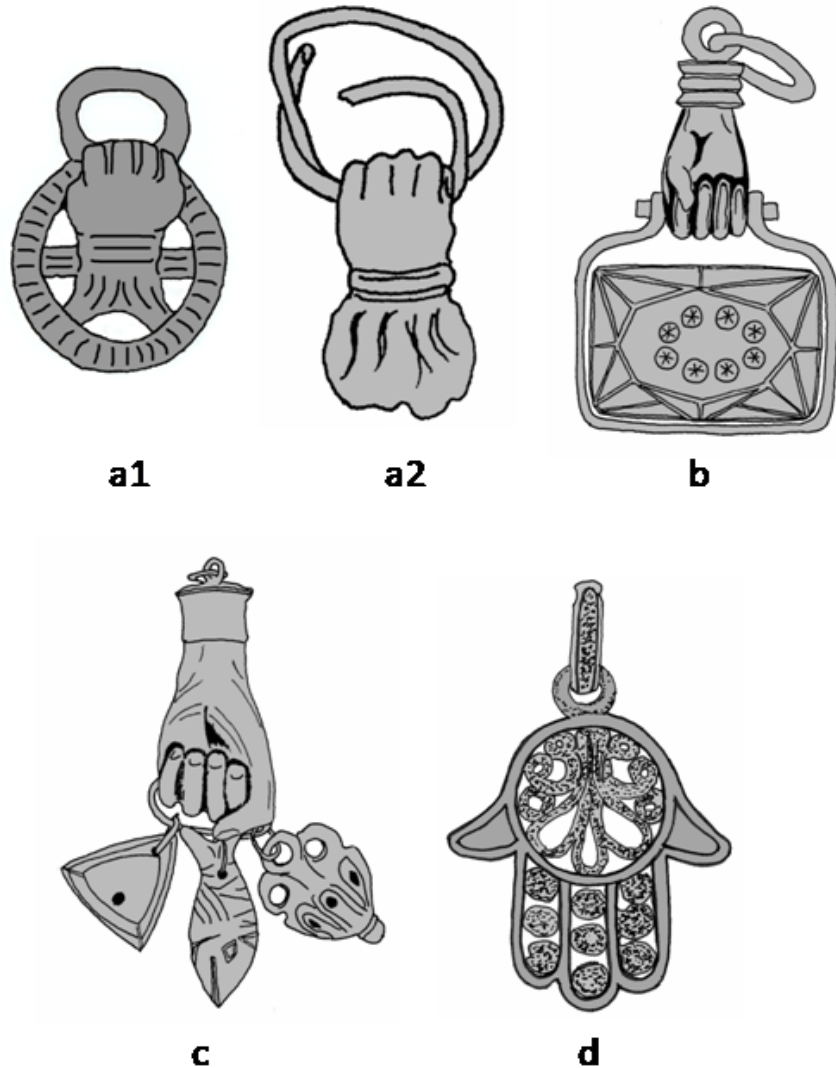


Figure 1 (a-d). Hand figures, images adapted by the author: **a1**, **a2**, types of small hand figures uncovered at archaeological sites in the United States; **b**, a nineteenth-century watch charm; **c**, a sixteenth-century European jewelry charm; **d**, a *Khamsa* or Hand of Fatima amulet.

Table 1. Summary of locations in United States in which small metal hand figures have been recovered in archaeological contexts.

| Site Name and Location | Site Description | Artifact Location | Occupant Affiliation | Date Range | Citations |
|--|-------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|-------------------------|---|
| Maynard Burgess House, Annapolis, Md. | Urban house | Residential fill | Free African Americans | Early to middle 19th C. | Leone 2005 |
| Charles Calvert House, Annapolis, Md. | Urban colonial house | Residential fill in cellar crawlspace | European Americans and enslaved African Americans | Early to late 18th C. | Yentsch 1994 |
| Zephania Kingsley Plantation, Ft. George Island, Fla. | Slave quarters | Middens adjacent to slave cabins | Enslaved African Americans | Early to middle 19th C. | J. Davidson, pers. comm., Feb. 2013; Lee 2013 |
| Hildebrand Plantation, near Memphis, Tenn. | Slave quarters | Residential fill | Enslaved African Americans | Early to middle 19th C. | Heath 2003; Heath et al. 2004 |
| Hermitage Plantation, near Nashville, Tenn. | Slave quarters | Residential fill | Enslaved African Americans | Early to middle 19th C. | McKee 1995; Russell 1997; Thomas 1998 |
| Wynnewood Plantation, Sumner County, Tenn. | Slave quarters | Residential fill | Enslaved African Americans | Early to middle 19th C. | Heath 2003; Heath et al. 2004; Lee 2013 |
| Thomas Jefferson's Poplar Forest Plantation, Forest, Va. | Slave quarters | Residential fill above chimney base | Enslaved African Americans | Early to middle 19th C. | Heath 2003; Heath et al. 2004 |

If these artifacts uncovered at archaeological sites were such commercially produced items of popular culture, what would have inspired the manufacturers of jewelry and clothing ornaments to employ such a design? Manufacturers often assimilated symbolic motifs derived from religious beliefs or emblems of guilds and benevolent societies when creating decorative designs for mass-produced, commercial ornaments and charms (Fales 1995; Hansmann and Kriss-Rettenbeck 1966; Israel [1897] 1968: 419–422; Mackey 1919: 317). Three symbolic

repertoires from Christianity and related European folk religion practices provide primary candidates for the past design inspirations of such enclosed or clenched hand figures: the *mano fica*, *Manus Dei*, and crucifixion of Christ.

Gestures of Fertility and Vitality

A *mano fica* charm (also called a *higa* or *figa*) is typically shaped as a hand closed into a fist with the thumb inserted between the first two fingers in a gesture connoting copulation and reproductive vitality (Deagan 2002: 89–99). The fertility symbolism of this charm is also evident in its name. The Italian word *fica* denotes a vulva, and was derived from the Latin word *ficus*, which denotes the fruit of the fig tree (Moss and Cappannari 1976: 8). Figs served as popular talismans across the Mediterranean region for hundreds of years, and because they were believed to possess supernatural powers, were frequently employed as protection against the perceived dangers of “evil eye” maledictions (Elworthy 1900: 176–177; Tait 1986: 211–213). Beliefs in a form of evil eye imprecation have been widespread across numerous cultures for thousands of years (Allen 2009: 81–82; Dundes 1981). This conviction consists of the perception that individuals can invoke curses based on malevolent intent and motivations of envy, deployed by a fixed-gaze cast upon a targeted person, livestock, or parcel of crops (Maloney 1976: v–vii; Roberts 1976: 221–226). Protections against such expressions of malevolence include regular wearing of amulets such as a *figa* to deflect evil.

The *figa* symbol was likely assimilated as a form of apotropaic charm because of its association with vitality. Parents often placed *figas* on their children to protect them during vulnerable periods of youth (Deagan 2002: 89; Elworthy 1895: 255–258). Spanish colonization of the Americas introduced *figas* to locations in the New World. Examples of these items have been uncovered at archaeological sites throughout the Spanish colonial sphere, dating from the sixteenth century onward, at locations ranging from South Carolina and Florida to the Caribbean and South America (Deagan 2002: 89, 95–99). Did *figa* charms supply the historic referent that adornment manufacturers had in mind when they designed the hand figures that were later uncovered at African American sites in Maryland, Virginia, Tennessee, and Florida? It seems improbable. Jewelers certainly knew how to manufacture them, and those commercial operations produced many over the centuries with the distinctive gesture of the thumb thrust between two fingers (Elworthy 1900: 176–177; Tait 1986: 211–213). That design configuration is not incorporated in the enclosed hand figures of interest here (Figure 1-a).

Omnipotence and Grace

Symbolic representations of the wounds of Christ and the *Manus Dei* provide more probable sources for the design inspiration of such manufactured charms depicting an enclosed hand within an encompassing circle (Stafford 1942: 32–34; Webber 1971: 140–144). A symbolic motif utilized by Catholic denominations and related vernacular religion invocations, the wounds of Christ consist of the piercing of the messiah’s heart, feet, and hands in the course of crucifixion (Deagan 2002: 83–84; Strauss 1975: 62–63; Webber 1971: 140–144). These representations of the passion of Christ’s sacrifice are employed in devotional art to symbolize the creation of grace as a pervasive source of spiritual power and benevolence made manifest by the messiah’s crucifixion (see Wagner 1986: 96–125). In such compositions, the image of the

hand is often depicted with the fingers closing over the wound created by a spike hammered through the palm into the cross (see Yoder 1990: 81).

Talisman symbols incorporating an *open* hand have been employed to connote messages of sacredness, benediction, and power in a number of cultures for thousands of years (Elworthy 1900: 169–174; Webber 1971: 49–54). For example, the “Hand of Fatima” is the name within denominations of Islam for a symbolic composition consisting of an open, extended hand, communicating abundance, benevolence, and good fortune (see below). This motif, and similar ones that predated Islam, were later integrated into personal, apotropaic talismans utilized to ward off malevolent forces such as the evil eye (Hansmann and Kriss-Rettenbeck 1966: 197; Hildburgh 1906: 459).

The *Manus Dei* (or “Hand of God”) has been rendered within Christian symbolic traditions as an open, extended hand overlaying a tri-radiant nimbus (Stafford 1942: 33; Webber 1971: 49–54). The three rays of this composition represent the Holy Trinity and bisect one half of a circular nimbus (an encompassing halo), which is in turn a representation of divinity and sanctity (Stafford 1942: 33; Webber 1971: 50). The contours of the open hand fill the other half of the nimbus and partially overlay the tri-radiant motif. A similar symbol of God’s benevolence, expressed by an open, extended hand framed against a tri-radiant nimbus, was carved as an emblem in the twelfth century over the main door of the Cathedral of Ferrara in Italy (Elworthy 1900: 195). In the following centuries, such earlier key symbols of Christianity, which focused on a direct relationship with the Godhead, were “obviated” and displaced by new symbols concerning the sacrifice and wounds of Christ, as well as the related concept of grace as a free-flowing pool of spiritual power created by the crucifixion (Wagner 1986: 96–125).

Christian symbolism that focused on the sacrifices of the messiah more directly employed renderings of an *enclosing* hand. For example, strings of *paternoster* (denoting “Our Father”) beads included small metal figures of an enclosed hand. *Paternoster* beads were a predecessor of rosary beads within Catholic liturgical practices (Deagan 2002: 65; Lightbrown 1992: 528–529; Winston 1993: 621) and of the Islamic prayer beads called *tesbih*. These bead strings—held in the hand; worn about the neck, arm, or wrist; or attached to clothing with a brooch—were used in the practice of repeated prayers as acts of devotion (Deagan 2002: 65–66; Winston 1993: 621–622). In Catholic rituals, prayers typically consisted of the Lord’s Prayer and Ave Maria (Hail Mary), and devotees repeated those prayers while meditating on the experiences of the messiah (Winston 1993: 620–22, 631–632). An example of such *paternoster* beads created in the late 1400s to early 1500s consisted of small wooden beads surrounding several small metal figures, including a hammer, three spikes, an enclosed hand, a cloak, and the head of the messiah bearing the circlet of thorns (Lightbrown 1992: 528–529).

Most likely based on the symbolism of the wounds of Christ, many vernacular religious amulets were created in southern and central Europe, at least from the 1400s onward, which consisted of an enclosed hand holding a loop of wire on which subsidiary items were appended. The smaller charm elements attached to these compositions varied greatly, but often included other symbols of Christianity (such as a cross, fish, church censor, or triangle shape for the Trinity), fertility (such as phallic figures), or images of human anatomy or livestock for which cures and protection were sought (Figure 1c; Hansmann and Kriss-Rettenbeck 1966: 162–167, 199, 211).

Archaeologists who peeled back the layers of soil in the sites in Maryland, Virginia, Tennessee, and Florida revealed such small hand ornaments, thereby uncovering items that were very likely the product of symbolic iterations extending far back into European history. Emblematic symbols within Christian denominations were incorporated into the instrumental, vernacular amulets of Europeans over hundreds of years. Manufacturers of mass-produced commodities in the 1800s assimilated popular images from these vernacular religion talismans into small items stamped out by a machine or molded as watch charms. Many consumers in North America likely acquired such mass-produced goods from their local merchants because they viewed the ornamentation as attractive, and not necessarily because they interpreted it with any of the past symbolism that could have been read from the composition.

Potential African American Reinterpretations of Manufactured Designs

At those house and work sites in Maryland, Virginia, Tennessee, and Florida, these small hand-shaped ornaments appear to have been possessed and used by African American individuals. What meanings might someone of African descent in the early and middle 1800s have associated with these figures? Such free and enslaved African Americans may have obtained these items by purchasing them from local merchants or through barter and trade with others in their communities (Heath 1999: 50–58; Thomas 2001: 20–23). These African Americans may have utilized the ornaments as attractive adornments without assigning them particular symbolic significance. Such persons may also have subscribed to Christian beliefs and viewed the hand-shaped items as expressive of a related religious theme, such as one of those discussed above. The following discussion explores several other ways these ornaments may have been viewed by African Americans at those sites. The strength of these potential interpretations is limited by the scant documentary evidence available for each archaeological site as to the particular cultural heritage of its African American occupants.

Figs and Self-Protection

Some analysts have offered the conjecture that an African American possessor of one of these figures may have used it as an apotropaic amulet because it resembled a *figa* charm (McKee 1995: 40; Singleton 1991: 162). *Figas* were in use in the Americas by the middle 1800s (Singleton 1991: 162–163). African Americans in the areas of Maryland, Virginia, Tennessee, or Florida could have learned of the beliefs accompanying *figas* if they had spent time in more southerly plantations that had been impacted by Spanish colonial influences, or had socialized with others who practiced such beliefs (Russell 1997: 67). The hand figures uncovered at these archaeological sites, however, lacked the *figa*'s distinctive gesture of thumb inserted between two fingers (see Figure 1-a). This notable difference of configurations in the compositions makes an interpretation focusing on *figas* less persuasive.

Potential Islamic Influences

Analysts have also proposed that the African American bearers of these small hand figures may have viewed them as expressive of a symbolic motif referred to as the Hand of Fatima or *Khamsa* (Allen 2009: 84; McKee 1995: 40; Russell 1997: 67). Thousands of West Africans of Islamic heritage were abducted into the transatlantic slave trade, and they may have eventually transmitted knowledge of Islamic beliefs and amulets to others with whom they associated in the plantations of North America (Allen 2009; Chireau 2003: 46; Diouf 1998; Fett

2002: 42). The artifacts from these Maryland, Virginia, Tennessee, and Florida sites, however, were quite distinct in appearance from talismans that depict the open and extended Hand of Fatima (Figure 1-d). This difference in configuration also makes this potential explanation less persuasive.

Multivalence and Individual Action

An historical analysis focusing on potential phonemic and phonetic associations of these hand-shaped artifacts provides another possible interpretation of their perceived significance. These artifacts may have been viewed as symbolic for a form of “conjunction” composition that was itself called a “hand” in some African American vernacular religions in the 1800s (McKee 1995: 40; Singleton 1991: 163). Within these African American cultural traditions, such compositions were created as part of an apotropaic invocation to deflect malevolent spiritual forces. The records of interviews with formerly enslaved persons frequently included accounts referring to such material compositions by a number of terms, including *mojo*, *jack*, *hand*, and *gris-gris* (Chireau 2003: 47; Russell 1997: 66–67; Singleton 1991: 163). These small hand-shaped ornaments may have been viewed as symbolic substitutes for another material composition that would have been called a hand.

Such punning idioms were a prominent feature of African American vernacular religion and spiritual practices in the 1800s, and continue today (see Gundaker 2014). When creating a material composition to make supplication to spiritual forces, African American practitioners often selected elements based on similarities in the shapes or names of those items with characteristics of the dangers or maladies to be deflected or cured (e.g., Brown 1990: 22). If such a punning association of symbolic elements was involved in the utilization of these hand-shaped adornments, the process could have also involved continuing developments of particular African cultural beliefs.

In fact, as many chapters in this volume show, punning techniques were a prominent feature of the rituals of the African populations in Western Africa and the African Diaspora groups in the Caribbean. For example, the BaKongo ritual specialists often employed such methods to create material compositions as part of their supplications for protection and healing (Jacobson-Widding 1979: 140; Janzen and MacGaffey 1974: 6; MacGaffey 1991: 5; 2000a: 44). The BaKongo people inhabited an area in West Central Africa that today encompasses the nations of Angola, Gabon, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and the Republic of Congo. They were part of the multiethnic cultural area known as the Kongo region (Janzen 1977: 112; MacGaffey 2000a: 35). This network of ethnic groups and chiefdoms in the region shared the KiKongo language and were united under the Kingdom of Kongo starting in approximately the fourteenth century. Portuguese colonial interests began operation in the Kongo in the late fifteenth century. In the course of the transatlantic slave trade, millions of BaKongo people were abducted into bondage and transported to plantations throughout the Americas (Fennell 2007: 48–54). In the period 1700–1866 alone, over 100,000 captives from the region of West Central Africa were brought into North America (Eltis 2009). BaKongo people accounted for high percentages of the captured Africans brought into the areas of Maryland, Virginia, and the plantations of the mid-Atlantic region of the United States (Holloway 1990; Walsh 2001).

The phonetic root of “hand” resonates with relevant terms of the BaKongo culture. The KiKongo words *vanda* and *handa* denote meanings of “activation” and “to operate” (Janzen and MacGaffey 1974: 6, 46). Similarly, the “word magician,” *nganga*, comes from *vanga*, to make,

and could be translated ‘operator’” (MacGaffey 1970: 28). An additional phonetic resonance can be found in the KiKongo word *kànda*, which means “palm of the hand” (Denbow 1999: 418; MacGaffey 1986: 126). Employment of the word “hand” for a ritual composition could thus have involved a punning derivation from phonetically similar KiKongo words to represent an act of dexterous creation to invoke the protection of spiritual forces. Indeed, *wanga* was another term for conjuration objects among African Americans in North America, and that phrase was derived in this manner from the KiKongo language (G. M. Hall 1992: 302; Long 2001: 4, 39).

African Diaspora historians might also propose that persons of BaKongo heritage would have perceived Christian imagery in the small figure of an enclosing hand. Many of the BaKongo people abducted into the transatlantic slave trade had been introduced to Catholicism by Portuguese missionaries while in the Kongo. Little evidence exists, however, to indicate that those missionaries employed such images of the hand in the course of their proselytizing. Missionaries in the Kongo instead focused primarily on symbols such as the water of baptism and the cross of the crucifixion (Fennell 2007: 54–63; Thornton 1977: 513–514). Christian denominations in North America also typically deployed a similar focus on symbols of baptism and the crucifix (Fennell 2007: 92–95; Raboteau 2004: 34; Stuckey 1987: 34–35).

A key cultural symbol of the BaKongo people was called *dikenga dia Kongo* or *tendwa kia nza-n’Kongo* in the KiKongo language (Fu-Kiau 2001: 22–23; Janzen and MacGaffey 1974: 34; Thompson and Cornet 1981: 43). This core symbol, which I refer to as the *dikenga*, served as a fundamental summarizing symbol for the BaKongo cosmology from the fourteenth through the early twentieth centuries (Janzen 1977: 81; MacGaffey 2000b: 8–11; Thompson and Cornet 1981: 27–30, 44–45; Thornton 1998: 251). In its fullest expression, the *dikenga* operated as an emblematic representation of the BaKongo people and their culture, and summarized an array of concepts that comprised their sense of identity within the world (Gundaker 1998b: 8–10; MacGaffey 1986: 136, 169–171; Thompson 1997: 29–30).

A full rendering of the *dikenga* consists of intersecting horizontal and vertical lines, set within an ellipse or circle, with smaller circles at the four ends of those crossed lines (Figure 2; Jacobson-Widding 1991: 182–83; MacGaffey 1986: 43–46; Thompson 1997: 29–30). This emblematic composition summarized a remarkable array of layered, metaphoric meanings for the BaKongo people, and only a limited sample of those interrelated meanings is described here (Fennell 2007). The small disks represent the “four moments” of the cosmos and cycles of existence, with the top symbolizing (among other things) the land of the living, a masculine element, and the height of a person’s life and exercise of power within the land of the living. The bottom disk symbolizes (among other things) a female element, the land of the dead and the spirits, and the greatest extent of a person’s exercise of spiritual powers. The right-hand disk stands symbolically for the power of potentiality and transition, the nascence of the spirit, soul, and earthly life in a cosmic cycle. In turn, the left-hand disk connotes movement from the living to the spirit world, and the power and transformations of death. The horizontal axis represents the “Kalunga” boundary line between the land of the living and the realm of the spirits, and the intersecting vertical axis connotes that the living may make supplication to summon the aid of the ancestors and spiritual forces to cross that permeable boundary. Such entreaties were usually made by a ritual specialist, an *nganga*, who created material compositions as part of those invocations for aid and wisdom (Fennell 2007: 31–33; Gomez 1998: 148–149; Janzen and MacGaffey 1974: 34; Thompson 1983: 108–109; Thompson and Cornet 1981: 27–30).

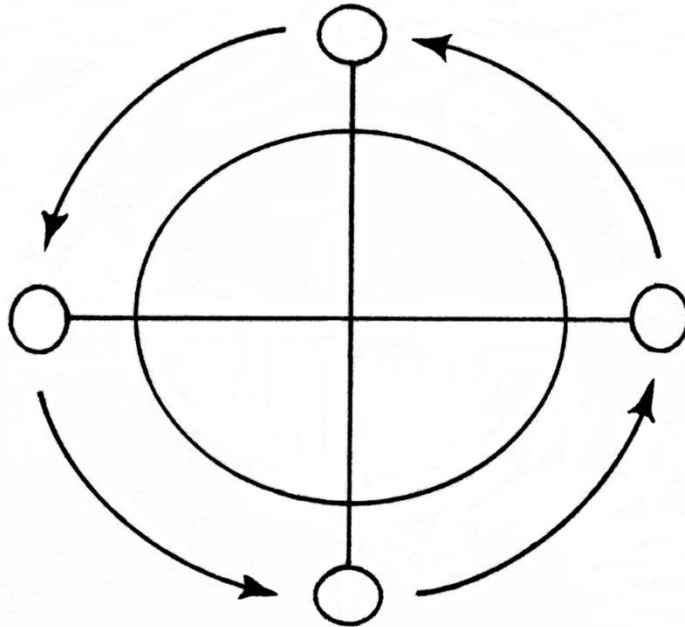


Figure 2. *Dikenga dia Kongo*, a key cultural symbol of the BaKongo people. Image by the author.

Consider again the shape and design of the small hand ornaments uncovered at African American sites in Maryland, Virginia, Tennessee, and Florida (Figure 1-a1). An individual who subscribed to aspects of BaKongo heritage might have acquired and used one of those ornaments as a ritual symbol because she or he perceived a significance to the figure of a creative hand operating within an encompassing circle. These small hand figures would have been of engaging interest to an individual who subscribed to facets of BaKongo cosmological beliefs. The hand figure, representative of the creative capabilities of the *nganga*, is centered within an encircling cycle of the cosmos and rests on a horizontal crossbar (Figure 1-a1) that could be interpreted as expressing the permeable boundary line between the living and spirit worlds. Moreover, the hand within that composition reaches up from that horizon and grasps the top point of the encompassing circle, which is a position within the BaKongo cosmic cycle that represents the powerful actions of the living (Fennell 2007: 77–78; R. F. Thompson, pers. comm., Sept. 2005).

Some analysts may view it as questionable to look for such particular cultural connections among specific African cultures and the beliefs and practices of African Americans in the 1800s in the United States. Historians have often contended that the 1808 abolition of international slave trading by the United States dramatically curtailed the arrival of newly captive Africans after that time (e.g., Genovese 1976: 211). They have, in turn, argued that, in the absence of newly arriving Africans, the connections among particular African cultures and the beliefs and practices of African Americans in the 1800s became increasingly attenuated, with African components decreasing over time. Recent research, however, demonstrates that slave traders engaged in extensive smuggling of captive African laborers into the United States after 1808.

For example, the DeWolf family operated extensive plantation holdings with facilities in Rhode Island, the Caribbean, and West Africa, and managed slave vessels that transported over ten thousand captive Africans to North America. Studies show that the DeWolfs continued those operations into the 1820s, bringing slave vessels with newly abducted Africans into Rhode Island ports by bribing officials and through other illicit means (Coughtry 1981; Farrow et al. 2005). Similarly, hundreds of newly captured Africans from the Kongo area were brought into South Carolina on a single slave vessel as late as 1858 (Baldwin 1993: 82–83). Obviously, these accounts are not directly connected to the sites in Maryland, Virginia, Tennessee, and Florida in which hand figures have been uncovered archaeologically. But these examples contribute to a growing body of evidence of the continuing importation of Africans into the United States after the 1808 ban. In addition, the cultural beliefs and practices of earlier-arriving captive Africans could have influences among African Americans in particular locations for generations, and not become as quickly attenuated as some historians would contend.

Legacies of *Ikenga*

The figure of an enclosing hand also could have resonated with the expressive configuration of a West African symbolic motif—the *ikenga* of Igbo culture (Figure 3). The historic-period cultures of Igbo-speaking peoples were located in what is today southeastern Nigeria. British, French, and Portuguese commercial interests in the slave trade focused on this area starting in the sixteenth century, creating an exacerbation of regional conflicts (Kolapo 2004; Okpoko and Obi-Ani 2005; Walsh 2001: 145). A pattern of intergroup conflicts, raids, kidnappings, and contrived criminal charges led to a stream of captives flowing out of the slave ports located along the Bight of Biafra (Eltis 2009; Gomez 1998: 132; Hall 2005: 129–130). In the period 1700–1866, over 75,000 captives from that region were brought to the plantations of North America (Eltis 2009). Like the BaKongo, the Igbo people made up significant percentages of the captured Africans brought into the areas of the Chesapeake and mid-Atlantic regions (Chambers 1997: 73–77; Gomez 1998: 115; Northrup 2000: 14; Walsh 2001: 145–149, 156–159). Many of those enslaved Africans carried with them knowledge of a rich cultural repertoire that included the “cult of the hand” represented by the symbolic expressive motifs of personal *ikenga* figures and household shrines.

The *ikenga* expression of the cult of the hand celebrates an individual’s accomplishments and aspirations of achievement (Figure 3; Dean 1983: 33; Lorenz 1987: 71–72; Vogel 1974: 2–4). This cultural tradition among the Igbo and neighboring cultural groups, especially the Edo, extends back to at least the fifteenth century in West Africa (Ben-Amos 1995: 80–81; Boston 1977: 2; Dean 1983, 33; Lorenz 1987: 71–72; Oditia 1973: 76; see also Ogundiran 2014). *Ikenga* sculptures varied in size from several centimeters to a meter or more in height. Many figures of this type were made by members of Igbo households, or by specialist carvers within their communities, for use in personal altars maintained in private dwellings (Boston 1977: 14; Dean 1983: 33; Vogel 1974: 4). Such a form of symbolic composition focusing on individual accomplishment and employed within private spaces comprised a form of instrumental expression of a key cultural symbol (Fennell 2007: 28–31).

Figure 3. *Ikenga*, Igbo culture, wood composition with a representation of a machete in the right hand and ivory tusk in the left, 61cm, adapted by the author from Boston 1977: 29.



In the design of *ikenga* figures, both the right and left hand grasped objects that, in turn, conveyed statements concerning the aspirations of the individual's capabilities and accomplishments. The right hand of an *ikenga* usually closed around the hilt of a machete or other weapon, while the left hand held objects of wealth, such as an ivory tusk (Bentor 1988: 70; Boston 1977: 29, 41, 68; Dean 1983: 33). As seen in this example, elongated horn elements extended off of a headdress component, symbolizing power and vitality. *Ikenga* were not used solely to symbolize aspirations of victory in arms and aggression; they were also employed as supplications for success in subsistence, household health and vitality, protection against malevolent forces, and overall social and spiritual competence (Bradbury 1961: 133–134; Boston 1977: 78; Dean 1983: 33; Ottenberg 1983: 51; Peek 1986: 47; Vogel 1974: 2).

The symbolic tradition of the cult of the hand also manifests as an element in the *ukhurhe* compositions among the Edo people of Benin. The *ukhurhe* was an ornate, carved wooden staff with a segmented design. These staffs, which often included rattle components as well, were usually incorporated into private altars within dwellings (Dean 1983: 37–40; Von Luschan

[1919] 1968). An element in the *ukhurhe* design among higher-status individuals included the figure of an enclosing hand holding a mudfish (Figure 4; Dean 1983: 40, figure 26; Von Luschan [1919] 1968: figure 716). This element represented the owner's capacity to control spiritual forces as symbolized by the coiled and dynamic form of the mudfish (Dean 1983: 37). Such compositions as the *ikenga* and *ukhurhe* among the Igbo and Edo respectively "explicitly refer to individual power as symbolized by the hand" (Dean 1983: 37). Many individuals of Igbo heritage undoubtedly worked as enslaved laborers in the regions in which small hand ornaments were later recovered. Persons with such cultural heritage may have found the small hand ornaments of engaging interest due to these past referents among West African cultures.

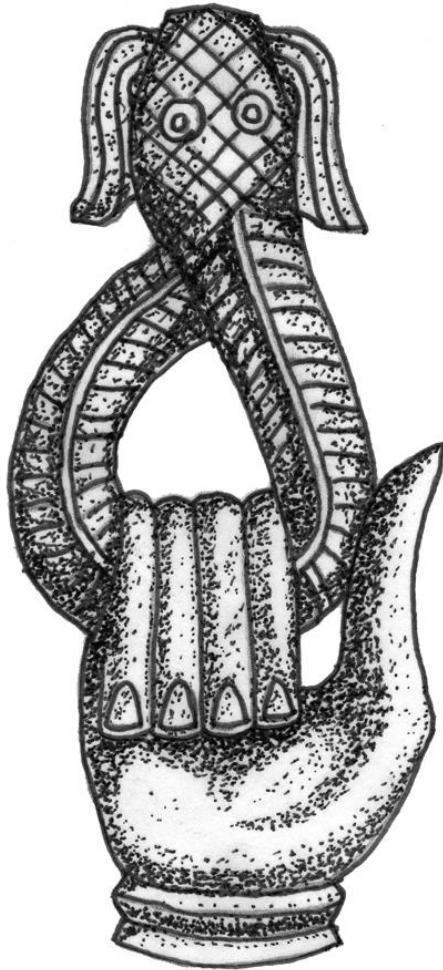


Figure 4. *Ukhurhe* rattle staff (Benin), showing a hand holding a mudfish, 19cm, adapted by the author from Dean 1983: 40.

Concluding Observations

This case study arrives at no conclusive account for these small hand-shaped figures uncovered at African American sites dating from the early and middle 1800s. By posing a systematic series of questions and exploring possible answers, however, I hope this analysis has pointed to intriguing potentials. A spectrum of data sources show that these small ornaments likely embodied intersecting lines of history reaching from the symbols of Christ's passion spreading across the Mediterranean to the expressions of self-determination through individualized ritual invocations by enslaved Africans in the Americas.

An analyst can often be more confident with some interpretations than others. As the title for this chapter indicates, these manufactured figures were very likely shaped by European design choices derived from instrumental symbolism within Christian traditions. This cultural connection became attenuated in time as a shift occurred from individually created charm compositions in Europe to mass production of a popular cultural commodity shipped out to merchants in North America. Yet, shifts from the individually sacred to the profane can later be reversed. Commercially produced objects can be reinterpreted by persons choosing to utilize them as found symbols within their own individual expressions, derived from distinct cultural repertoires. Until we obtain more data and contexts to explore the set of probabilities outlined above, the linear argument that a core cultural symbol of a messiah's sacrifice in Europe was transformed into a profane clothing commodity in the Americas, and that this was in turn redeployed as an instrumental symbol analogous to the dexterous force of an *nganga* or *ikenga* to ward off malevolence, will have to remain a conjecture.

Hopefully future investigations will yield an expansion of the data set under consideration here. Interpretations of the meaning and function of such hand figures at particular sites will be aided by more documentary and contextual evidence concerning the site occupants and their particular cultural heritages. Only with multiple lines of evidence concerning each site can we confidently infer whether such an artifact was utilized simply as a fastener, as a social adornment, or as an expression of ideological convictions.

Acknowledgements

I extend sincere thanks to Kofi Agorsah, James Davidson, Lori Lee, Mark Leone, Larry McKee, Robert Farris Thompson, and Anne Yentsch for their comments on this analysis.

References

- Allen, K. 2009. "Looking East: Muslim Identity in the Archaeological Record of American Enslavement." *African Diaspora Archaeology Newsletter*, September. Available online at <http://www.diaspora.uiuc.edu/news0909/news0909.html#2>.
- Baldwin, C. K. 1993. *Great and Noble Jar: Traditional Stoneware of South Carolina*. Athens: University of Georgia Press.
- Ben-Amos, P. G. 1995. *The Art of Benin*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Bentor, E. 1988. "Life as an Artistic Process: Igbo Ikenga and Ofo." *African Arts* 21 (2): 66–71, 94.
- Boston, J. 1977. *Ikenga Figures among the North-west Igbo and the Igala*. Lagos, Nigeria: Federal Department of Antiquities, and Ethnographica, London.
- Bradbury, R. E. 1961. "Ezomo's Ikegobo and the Benin Cult of the Hand." *Man* 61: 129–138.
- Brown, D. F. 1990. "Conjure/Doctors: An Exploration of a Black Discourse in America, Antebellum to 1940." *Folklore Forum* 23 (1/2): 3–46.

- Bury, S. 1991. *Jewellery 1789-1910: The International Era*. Woodbridge, UK: Antique Collectors' Club.
- Chambers, D. B. 1997. "'My Own Nation:' Igbo Exiles in the Diaspora." *Slavery and Abolition* 18 (1): 72–97.
- Chireau, Y. P. 2003. *Black Magic: Religion and the African American Conjuring Tradition*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Cole, H. M. 2013. *Igbo*. Milan: Five Continents editions.
- Coughtry, J. 1981. *The Notorious Triangle: Rhode Island and the African Slave Trade, 1700-1807*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Deagan, K. A. 2002. *Artifacts of the Spanish Colonies of Florida and the Caribbean, 1500-1800*. Vol. 2, Portable Personal Possessions. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Dean, C. 1983. "The Individual and the Ancestral: Ikegobo and Ukhurhe." In P. Ben-Amos and A. Rubin, eds., *The Art of Power, The Power of Art: Studies in Benin Iconography*, 33–40. Museum of Cultural History, Monograph No. 16. Los Angeles: University of California.
- Denbow, J. 1999. "Heart and Soul: Glimpses of Ideology and Cosmology in the Iconography of Tombstones from the Loango Coast of Central America." *Journal of American Folklore* 112 (445): 404–423.
- Diouf, S. 1998. *Servants of Allah: African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas*. New York: New York University Press.
- Dundes, A., ed. 1981. *The Evil Eye: A Folklore Casebook*. New York: Garland.
- Eltis, D., and M. Halbert, eds. 2008. *Voyages: Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database*. Available from <http://www.slavevoyages.org/>.
- Elworthy, F. T. 1895. *The Evil Eye: An Account of This Ancient and Widespread Superstition*. London: John Murray.
- Elworthy, F. T. 1900. *Horns of Honour and Other Studies in the By-Ways of Archaeology*. London: John Murray.
- Fales, M. G. 1995. *Jewelry in America, 1600-1900*. Woodbridge, UK: Antique Collectors' Club.
- Farrow, A., J. Lang, and J. Frank. 2005. *Complicity: How the North Promoted, Prolonged, and Profited from Slavery*. New York: Ballantine Books.
- Fennell, C. C. 2007. *Crossroads and Cosmologies: Diasporas and Ethnogenesis in the New World*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida.
- Fett, S. M. 2002. *Working Cures: Healing, Health and Power on Southern Slave Plantations*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Firth, R. 1973. *Symbols: Public and Private*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

- Fu-Kiau, K. 2001. *African Cosmology of the Bântu-Kôngo: Tying the Spiritual Knot; Principles of Life and Living*. 2nd ed. Brooklyn, NY: Athelia Henrietta Press/Orunmila.
- Gomez, M. A. 1998. *Exchanging Our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Gundaker, G. 1998. *Signs of Diaspora, Diaspora of Signs: Literacies, Creolization, and Vernacular Practices in African America*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Gundaker, G. 2014. "Ritualized Figuration in Special African American Yards." In A. Ogundiran and P. Saunders, eds., *Materialities of Ritual in the Black Atlantic*, edited by Akinwumi Ogundiran and Paula Saunders, 236–257. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Hall, G. M. 1992. *Africans in Colonial Louisiana: The Development of Afro-Creole Culture in the Eighteenth Century*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press.
- Hall, G. M. 2005. *Slavery and African Ethnicities in the Americas: Restoring the Links*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Hansmann, L., and L. Kriss-Rettenbeck. 1966. *Amulett und Talisman: Erscheinungsform und Geschichte*. Munich: Callwey.
- Heath, B. 1999. *Hidden Lives: The Archaeology of Slave Life at Thomas Jefferson's Poplar Forest*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia.
- Heath, B. 2003. "Archaeology at Thomas Jefferson's Poplar Forest." *Council for Northeast Historical Archaeology Newsletter* 56: 11–13 (October).
- Heath, B., R. Lichtenberger, K. Adams, L. Lee, and E. Paull. 2004. "Poplar Forest Archaeology: Studies in African American Life; Excavations and Analysis of Site A, Southeast Terrace and Site B, Southeast Curtilage, June 2003-June 2004." Report to the Public Welfare Foundation, June 15, 2004. Forest, VA: Corporation of Jefferson's Poplar Forest.
- Hildburgh, W. L. 1906. "Notes on Spanish Amulets." *Folklore* 17 (4): 454–471.
- Hinks, P. 1975. *Nineteenth Century Jewellery*. London: Faber and Faber.
- Holloway, Joseph E. 1990. "The Origins of African-American Culture." In J. E. Holloway, ed., *Africanisms in American Culture*, 1–18. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Israel, F. L., ed. 1968. *1897 Sears Roebuck Catalogue*. New York: Chelsea House Publishers.
- Jacobson-Widding, A. 1979. *Red-White-Black as a Mode of Thought: A Study of Triadic Classification by Colours in the Ritual Symbolism and Cognitive Thought of the Peoples of the Lower Congo*. Stockholm: Uppsala University. Distributed by Almquist and Wiksell, Stockholm.
- Jacobson-Widding, A. 1991. "The Encounter with the Water Mirror." In A. Jacobson-Widding, ed., *Body and Space: Symbolic Models of Unity and Division in African Cosmology and Experience*, 177–216. Stockholm: Uppsala University. Distributed by Almquist and Wiksell, Stockholm.

- Janzen, J. M. 1977. "The Tradition of Renewal in Kongo Religion." In N. S. Booth, Jr., ed., *African Religions: A Symposium*, 69–116. New York: NOK Publishers.
- Janzen, J. M., and W. MacGaffey. 1974. *An Anthology of Kongo Religion: Primary Texts from Lower Zaire*. Publications in Anthropology No. 5. Lawrence: University of Kansas.
- Kolapo, F. J. 2004. "The Igbo and Their Neighbors During the Era of the Atlantic Slave-Trade." *Slavery and Abolition* 25 (1): 114–133.
- Lee, L. 2013. "Beads, Coins, and Charms at a Poplar Forest Slave Cabin (1833-1858)." *Northeast Historical Archaeology* 40: 104–122.
- Leone, M. P. 2005. *The Archaeology of Liberty in an American Capital: Excavations in Annapolis*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Leone, M. P., J. E. Knauf, and A. Tang. 2014. "Ritual Bundle in Colonial Annapolis." In A. Ogundiran and P. Saunders, eds., *Materialities of Ritual in the Black Atlantic*, edited by Akinwumi Ogundiran and Paula Saunders, 198–215. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Lightbrown, R. W. 1992. *Mediaeval European Jewellery*. London: Trustees of the Victoria and Albert Museum.
- Long, C. M. 2001. *Spiritual Merchants: Religion, Magic, and Commerce*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press.
- Lorenz, C. A. 1987. "The Ishan Cult of the Hand." *African Arts* 20 (4): 70–91.
- MacGaffey, W. 1970. "The Religious Commissions of the BaKongo." *Man*, new ser., 5 (1): 27–38.
- MacGaffey, W. 1986. *Religion and Society in Central Africa: The BaKongo of Lower Zaire*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- MacGaffey, W. 1991. *Art and Healing of the BaKongo, Commented by Themselves: Minkisi from the Laman Collection*. Stockholm: Folkens Museum-Etnografiska. Distributed in North America by Indiana University Press, Bloomington.
- MacGaffey, W. 2000a. *Kongo Political Culture: The Conceptual Challenge of the Particular*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- MacGaffey, W. 2000b. "The Kongo Peoples." In F. Herreman, ed., *In the Presence of Spirits: African Art from the National Museum of Ethnology*, Lisbon, 35–59. New York: Museum for African Art.
- Mackey, A. G. 1919. *An Encyclopedia of Freemasonry*. New York: Masonic History Company.
- Maloney, C. 1976. "Introduction." In C. Maloney, ed., *The Evil Eye*, v–xvi. New York: Columbia University Press.
- McKee, L. 1995. "The Earth is Their Witness." *The Sciences* 35 (2): 36–41.

- Moss, L. W., and S. C. Cappannari. 1976. "Mal'occio, Ayin ha ra, Oculus Fascinus, Judenblick: The Evil Eye Hovers Above." In C. Maloney, ed., *The Evil Eye*, 1–15. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Northrup, D. 2000. "Igbo and Myth Igbo: Culture and Ethnicity in the Atlantic World, 1600-1850." *Slavery and Abolition* 21 (3): 1–20.
- Odita, E. O. 1973. "Universal Cults and Intra-Diffusion: Igbo Ikenga in Cultural Retrospection." *African Studies Review* 16 (1): 73–82.
- Ogundiran, A. 2014. "Cowries and Rituals of Self-Realization in the Yoruba World." In A. Ogundiran and P. Saunders, eds., *Materialities of Ritual in the Black Atlantic*, edited by Akinwumi Ogundiran and Paula Saunders, 68–86. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Ortner, S. B. 1973. "On Key Symbols." *American Anthropologist* 75 (5): 1338–1346.
- Ottenberg, S. 1983. "Igbo and Yoruba Art Contrasted." *African Arts* 16 (2): 48–55, 97–98.
- Peek, P. M. 1986. "The Isoko Ethics of Ivri." *African Arts* 20 (1): 42–47, 98.
- Roberts, J. M. 1976. "Belief in the Evil Eye in World Perspective." In C. Maloney, ed., *The Evil Eye*, 221–278. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Russell, A. E. 1997. "Material Culture and African-American Spirituality at the Hermitage." *Historical Archaeology* 31 (2): 63–80.
- Schneider, D. M. 1980. *American Kinship: A Cultural Account*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Singleton, T. A. 1991. "The Archaeology of Slave Life." In E. Campbell, Jr. and K. Rice, eds., *Before Freedom Came: African-American Life in the Antebellum South*, 155–175. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia.
- Stafford, T. A. 1942. *Christian Symbolism in the Evangelical Churches*. New York: Abingdon-Chokesbury Press.
- Strauss, G. 1975. "Success and Failure in the German Reformation." *Past and Present* 67: 30–63.
- Tait, H., ed. 1986. *Jewelry: 7000 Years*. New York: Harry N. Abrams.
- Thomas, B. 1998. "Power and Community: The Archaeology of Slavery at the Hermitage Plantation." *American Antiquity* 63 (4): 531–551.
- Thomas, B. 2001. "African-American Tradition and Community in the Antebellum South." In T. Pauketat, ed., *The Archaeology of Traditions: Agency and History Before and After Columbus*, 17–33. Gainesville: University Press of Florida.
- Thompson, R. F. 1983. *Flash of the Spirit: African and Afro-American Art and Philosophy*. New York: Random House.
- Thompson, R. F. 1997. "Translating the World into Generousness." *Res* 32 (Autumn): 19–36.

- Thompson, R. F., and J. Cornet. 1981. *The Four Moments of the Sun: Kongo Art in Two Worlds*. Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art.
- Thornton, J. K. 1977. "Demography and History in the Kingdom of the Kongo, 1550-1750." *Journal of African History* 18 (4): 507–530.
- Thornton, J. K. 1998. *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1800*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Turner, V. 1967. *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Turner, V. 1973. "Symbols in African Ritual." *Science* 179 (4078) (March 16): 1100–1105.
- Vogel, S. 1974. *Gods of Fortune: The Cult of the Hand in Nigeria*. New York: Museum of Primitive Art.
- Von Luschan, F. 1968. *Die Altertümer von Benin*. Berlin and New York: Hacker Art Books (originally published in 1919).
- Wagner, R. 1986. *Symbols That Stand for Themselves*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Walsh, L. S. 2001. "The Chesapeake Slave Trade: Regional Patterns, African Origins, and Some Implications." *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 58 (1): 139–170.
- Webber, F. R. 1971. *Church Symbolism: An Explanation of the More Important Symbols of the Old Testament and New Testament, the Primitive, the Medieval, and the Modern Church*. Detroit, MI: Gale Research.
- Winston, A. 1993. "Tracing the Origins of the Rosary: German Vernacular Texts." *Speculum* 68 (3): 619–636.
- Yentsch, A. 1994. *A Chesapeake Family and Their Slaves: A Study in Historical Archaeology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Yoder, D. 1990. *Discovering American Folklife: Studies in Ethnic, Religious and Regional Culture*. Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press.
- Young, A. L. 1996. "Archaeological Evidence of African-Style Ritual and Healing Practices in the Upland South." *Tennessee Anthropologist* 21 (2): 139–155.