

Group Identity, Individual Creativity, and Symbolic Generation in a BaKongo Diaspora

Christopher C. Fennell¹

This article applies theories of group dynamics and individual agency to past material expressions of core symbols within particular African American religious beliefs. The past creation and use of such artifacts is analyzed using theories concerning modes of symbolic expression, the interplay of dominant and nondominant religions, formation and maintenance of social group identities, and the role of individual creativity and innovation within those processes. This analysis demonstrates the ways in which facets of the core symbolic expressions of the BaKongo people of West Central Africa evolved over time and across the trans-Atlantic region.

KEY WORDS: symbolic analysis; BaKongo diaspora; group identities; stylistic innovation.

INTRODUCTION

Archaeologists have recovered a variety of objects which appear to have been used for religious purposes by African American occupants of sites dating to the late seventeenth through nineteenth centuries in North America. Examples include pottery bowls with crosses incised on their bases, and white clay marbles, coins, and pewter spoons with "X" marks scratched into them. In addition, archaeologists have uncovered caches of quartz crystals, polished stones, pieces of chalk, ash, iron nails, blade-like fragments, bird skulls, crab claws, coins, and bone disks that were secreted along perpendicular axes under the brick and wood floors of dwellings (see, e.g., Brown, 1994; Ferguson, 1992, 1999; Franklin, 1997; Galke, 2000; Leone and Fry, 1999; McKee, 1995; Patten, 1992; Samford, 1996; Wilkie, 1995, 1997; Young, 1996, 1997). These objects typically appear in contexts which indicate they were used in private, often covert, settings. The symbolic composition

¹Department of Anthropology, University of Virginia, P.O. Box 400120, Charlottesville, Virginia, 22904; e-mail: ccf4f@virginia.edu.

of these items also appears to be significantly abbreviated in comparison to key symbols of African religions from the relevant time periods. These characteristics raise intriguing issues concerning the processes of symbolic expression and the blending of religious beliefs and practices over time.

This article explores the ways in which such artifacts likely served their creators and users as significant components of private religious rituals, as potential communicators of group identities, and as expressions of individual creativity in the forging of new social relationships. Moving beyond a simple assumption that African Americans retained static and conservative cultural traditions with which they shaped such material culture, this paper examines the creative uses of facets of African religious beliefs over time and in new social settings (see Posnansky, 1999, p. 22; Raboteau, 1980, pp. 4–8; Singleton, 1999, p. 8; Singleton and Bograd, 1995, p. 25). In particular, I examine an array of artifacts which appear to have been created as expressions of certain beliefs within the BaKongo religion of West Central Africa, and the changes over time and space in the modes of symbolic expressions derived from that belief system. This analysis avoids the tendency of assuming that there existed forms of “pan-African” religious beliefs and significant degrees of homogeneity among a variety of African religions which were in fact quite diverse and rich in their beliefs and practices (Morgan, 1998, pp. 610–611; Posnansky, 1999, p. 22; Thomas, 1995, pp. 149, 153).

This article sets forth an interpretative framework in which these artifacts can be viewed as possessing meaning and significance derived from a core symbol utilized as a material expression within the BaKongo religion. This interpretative exercise illustrates the dynamics of three interrelated processes. First, there exist core cultural symbols that are used in a broad spectrum of expressive modes. Second, such a core symbol is typically expressed in its most fully complex and embellished form in the emblematic expressions of public and group rituals. When a core symbol of a religious belief system is used for more private and personal ends, it is typically expressed as an instrumental symbol which uses only selected and abbreviated components of the full array of the core symbol’s composition. Finally, dominant social groups often suppress the public religious observances of nondominant groups. Members of such subordinated groups often tend to exercise their beliefs and practices primarily through invocations of instrumental symbolism in private settings.

These three processes unfolded when persons who subscribed to the BaKongo religion in West Central Africa were abducted into slavery and were able to continue their religious practices only in covert, individualized settings in the slave quarters of plantations and “big houses” located in North America. In such social settings, those persons could not easily continue the group rituals and public expressions of their religious beliefs and associated core symbols. They focused instead on individualized and private uses of those core symbols to invoke spiritual powers largely for self-protection and the cure or avoidance of maladies.

This article is organized in three parts. I set out in the first part of this study a theoretical framework concerning core symbols and their varied expressions within religious belief systems. This framework includes interpretative schemes for examining group and emblematic expressions of core symbols, more individual and instrumental expressions, and the varying deployment of such symbols by dominant and subordinated social groups. I employ these theoretical insights in the second part of this article to formulate a methodology for assessing the significance of religious artifacts uncovered at African American domestic sites in North America which date to the late seventeenth through nineteenth centuries. I construct an ethnographic analogy, using a rich set of ethnohistorical data concerning the past beliefs and practices of the BaKongo religion in West Central Africa during the relevant time periods. I then outline the patterns of symbolic expressions one might expect to see in new settings. In the third part of this study, I examine the way these processes played out at sites in North America.

INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP INVOCATIONS OF CORE SYMBOLS

In individual and private exercises of spiritual power, the creator of a particular material symbolic expression will often design it to embody an array of metaphors, making the symbolic expression polysemous by design (Douglas, 1975, p. 150, 1996, p. 10; Firth, 1973, p. 207; Wagner, 1975, pp. 90, 98, 122). Other persons within the same social networks who view and react to that symbolic expression will often see in it one or more of the metaphors intended by the designer, but may also read from it other metaphoric meanings not intentionally communicated by the author (Bruner, 1993, p. 332; Fabian, 1985, pp. 145–147). The symbolic expression can thus be created and used in a way that has a separate polyvalent impact (the variety of metaphoric meanings read into the expression by viewers of the symbol) that overlaps to some degree with the polysemous design of the author (Tilley, 1999, pp. 28–33; Turner, 1967, pp. 20–31).

However, these dynamics do not preclude us from analyzing the creation and use of particular symbolic expressions in different cultural settings and time periods. When particular forms of symbolic expression appear and reappear with some degree of consistency over time and in related cultural circumstances, that persistent pattern and its changes over time provide a subject for analysis (see Rosaldo *et al.*, 1993, pp. 5–6). While the spoken words of past rituals may be lost to us, the archaeological record often shows patterns of persistent material forms of symbolic expressions that can be interpreted in the context of one or more past cultural traditions and their associated meaning systems (Tilley, 1999, p. 31; Turner, 1973, p. 1101). Thus, analysts can detect patterns of expressions and attempt to describe and interpret the cultural traditions that inspired past actors in their creation and use of varied symbols and associated metaphors (Firth, 1973, p. 208; Janzen, 1985, p. 243; Thompson and Cornet, 1981, p. 45; Tilley, 1999, pp. 260–266).

Emblematic and Instrumental Expressions

A number of anthropologists have addressed ways of analyzing “core” cultural symbols, which have also been referred to as “dominant” or “key” symbols (e.g., Geertz, 1973, pp. 126–141; Ortner, 1973, pp. 1338–1339; Schneider, 1980, pp. 8, 113–114; Turner, 1967, pp. 20–31, 1973, pp. 1101–1104; Wagner, 1986, pp. 11–12). For example, Ortner (1973) analyzed key symbols within individual cultures as being characterized along a continuum of expressions. At one end of this spectrum are manifestations of a key symbol that I will refer to as “emblematic” expressions, which are meaningful and significant as expressions of group identity and solidarity. At the other end of the continuum are expressions that have a more limited, individualized, and instrumental purpose (Ortner, 1973, pp. 1339–1340).

Emblematic symbols typically have the effect of “summing up, expressing, [and] representing for the participants in an emotionally powerful way, what the system means to them” (Ortner, 1973, p. 1339). These emblematic expressions typically invoke “a conglomerate of ideas and feelings,” and an array of metaphoric meanings communicated by the different elements composing the emblem. This type of expression is emblematic in that it stands for all those ideas, feelings, and metaphors “all at once,” and “does not encourage reflection on the logical relations among these ideas, nor on the logical consequences of them as they are played out in social actuality” (Ortner, 1973, pp. 1339–1340). Ortner sees examples of such emblematic symbols in the American flag, the crucifix of Christianity, and the churinga of Australian Aborigine groups. Thus, emblematic symbols can be expressive of a variety of identity types, such as subscription to a particular cosmology, or membership in a particular social network, or membership in a specific nationality (Ortner, 1973, p. 1339–1340).

In contrast, an “instrumental” symbol has a more practical and immediate purpose, and is “valued primarily because it implies clear-cut modes of action appropriate to correct and successful living” (Ortner, 1973, p. 1341). These instrumental symbols are thus “culturally valued in that they formulate the culture’s basic means–ends relationships in actable forms” (Ortner, 1973, p. 1341; Turner, 1967, p. 32). Over time, actors may take components of an emblematic symbol and create a derivative, but more limited, instrumental symbol. In turn, that derived instrumental symbol may later become further developed and embellished so that it comes to function as a summarizing symbol for a different identity and worldview in a later social setting (Firth, 1973, pp. 236–237; Ortner, 1973, p. 1344; Wolf, 1972, p. 150).

This spectrum of emblematic versus instrumental, abbreviated expressions of a core symbol can be illustrated with the BaKongo cosmogram. The BaKongo people consisted of a cluster of ethnic groups who spoke the KiKongo language, who shared a cultural system called the BaKongo and who inhabited the area referred to historically as Kongo (MacGaffey, 2000b, pp. 35–36). That geographic area, depicted in Fig. 1, consisted of territories now located in the nations of

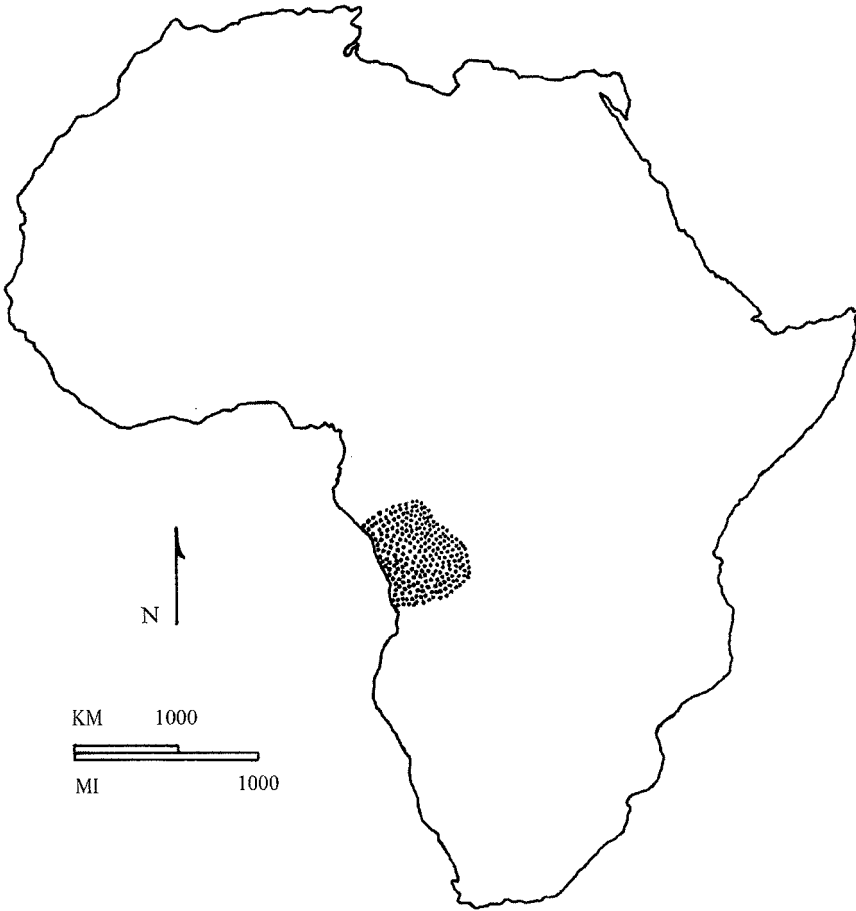


Fig. 1. Map of the area of the BaKongo people in West Central Africa.

the Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, the Republic of Congo, and Angola (Janzen, 1977, p. 112; MacGaffey, 2000b, p. 35). At the time of European contact in the late fifteenth century, the indigenous Kingdom of Kongo encompassed numerous chiefdoms in approximately 116,000 mi² of territory and included a population of 2–3 million people (Balandier, 1968, p. 29; Balandier and Maquet, 1974, p. 206).

A core symbol of the BaKongo culture was an ideographic religious symbol, or cosmogram, which can be referred to as *Tendwa kia nza-n' Kongo* in the KiKongo language (Thompson and Cornet, 1981, p. 43). Ethnohistorical sources and material culture evidence demonstrate that this cosmogram existed as a long-standing symbolic tradition within the BaKongo culture before European contact

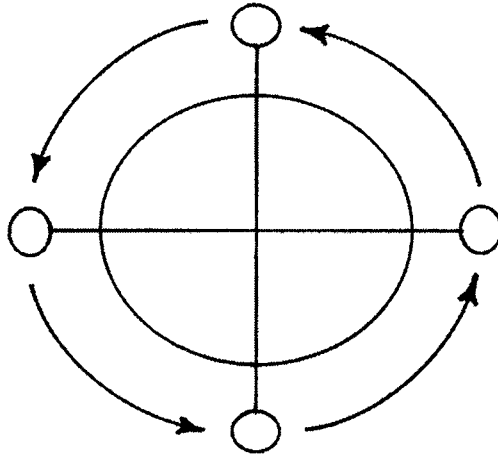


Fig. 2. Tendwa kia nza-n'Kongo, the BaKongo cosmogram.

in 1482 and that it continued in use in West Central Africa through the early twentieth century (Janzen, 1977, p. 81; MacGaffey, 2000a, pp. 8–11; Thompson and Cornet, 1981, pp. 27–30, 44–45; Thornton, 1998, p. 251). In its fullest embellishment, this symbol served as an emblematic expression of the BaKongo people, and summarized a broad array of ideas and metaphoric messages that comprised their sense of identity within the cosmos (see, e.g., Gundaker, 1998, pp. 8–10; Thompson, 1997, pp. 29–30).

Figure 2 depicts a rendering of the full cosmogram, which consists of intersecting vertical and horizontal axes, set within a circle or ellipse, with smaller circles or disks at the four ends of those crossed lines (Jacobson-Widding, 1991, pp. 182–183; MacGaffey, 1986, pp. 43–46; Thompson, 1997, pp. 29–30). The small disks represent the “four moments” of the sun and cosmos, with the top symbolizing the direction of north, the sun at noon, a masculine element, the land of the living, the apex of a person’s earthly life and power in that life, and the upper realm of the supreme creator. The bottom disk represents the direction of south, the sun at midnight, a female element, the land of the dead and the spirits, and the apex of a person’s spiritual power. The right-hand disk represents the direction of east, the sun at dawn, the power of potentiality and transition, and nascence of the spirit, soul, and earthly life in a cosmic cycle. The left-hand disk represents west, the sun at dusk, the power and transition of death and movement from the living to the spirit world. Movement in this depicted symbolic cycle is conceptualized as proceeding counterclockwise (Gomez, 1998, pp. 148–149; Janzen and MacGaffey, 1974, p. 34; Thompson, 1983, pp. 108–109).

The surrounding circle or ellipse conveys the cyclical nature of earthly life and the natural world, the spiritual journey of the soul, and the reincarnative evolution

of spirits. The crossed lines communicate an array of meanings concerning both the oppositional ordering of the cosmos and the invocation of spiritual powers into the land of the living. The vertical “power line” connects the Godhead above with the lower realm of lesser spirits, ancestor spirits, and the dead. The horizontal line is the “line of Kalunga,” which is the boundary line between the supreme God and the lesser spirits, and also the boundary between the land of the living and the realm of the spirits and the dead (Thompson and Cornet, 1981, pp. 28, 44; Thornton, 1983, p. 9). Both living persons and the souls of the dead are conceptualized as cycling through incarnations, the living becoming the dead, the dead forming souls and ancestors, and ancestors evolving into more powerful spirits, as depicted by the wheeling element of the surrounding circle and the progression of the four moments of the cosmos (Balandier, 1968, p. 155; Thompson, 1997, pp. 29–30).

The opposing realms of upper and lower unfold in additional metaphoric oppositions expressed in this emblematic version (Fig. 2). The upper land of the living is inhabited by people with dark complexions, opposed and mirrored by the lower realm of the land of the dead and spirits, inhabited by souls colored white. The east and west points are powerful points of transition, of birth, death, and rebirth, and are associated with red as the color of birth and death. The upper land of the living is conceptualized as a mountain range, mirrored at the Kalunga boundary by a comparable mountain range in the land of the dead. The Kalunga line is a boundary for which the surface of water is a metaphoric image, and the mirroring flash of water and other reflective surfaces invokes this immediate interrelation of the land of the living and the spirits. The crossed lines represent the BaKongo belief that spirits pervasively imbue the land of the living, and can be summoned to cross the boundary and come to the aid of an individual, a family, or a community to provide aid in subsistence and protection against disease, misfortune, and other harmful spirits (Janzen and MacGaffey, 1974, p. 34; Thompson and Cornet, 1981, pp. 27–30).

Figure 3 depicts more abbreviated and instrumental forms of the cosmogram (see Jacobson-Widding, 1991, p. 183; MacGaffey, 1988b, p. 516; Thompson and Cornet, 1981, pp. 43–44). The crossed lines provide a more focused and selective invocation of the intersection of the spirit world and the land of the living for immediate social action. Among the BaKongo people, this was the “simplest form” of cosmogram rendering, and was used when individuals took oaths of truthfulness or undertook private rituals to seek spiritual aid (MacGaffey, 1986, p. 118). These crossed lines were typically drawn upon the ground, and a person would stand at the intersection of the lines when swearing an oath, or a ritual specialist would draw the lines upon the ground to demarcate a private, ritual space in which a spirit would be summoned for the aid of an individual supplicant. The crossed lines could also be drawn or etched onto objects in combination with vocalized prayers to create protective objects and amulets. In its abbreviated form, consisting of crossed lines, the cosmogram was incorporated pervasively into instrumental rituals, which

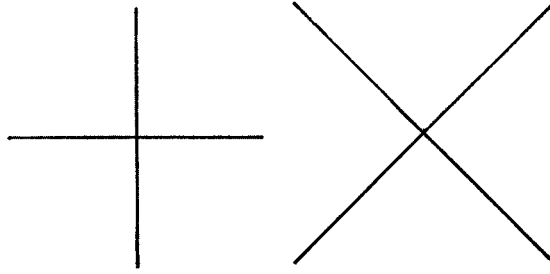


Fig. 3. Instrumental abbreviations of the BaKongo cosmogram.

were used extensively in public and private settings for community and individual supplications to the spirits (Jacobson-Widding, 1991, p. 201; MacGaffey, 1991, p. 4; Thompson and Cornet, 1981, pp. 37, 43–44).

Social Group Dynamics and Individual Agencies

A primary use for emblematic symbols is the communication of social group identities and membership. Theories for the analysis of social networks, such as ethnic groups, emphasize that such networks should not be viewed as essentialized or static in character, but rather as dynamic, socially constructed networks of relationships and related group identities (see, e.g., Cohen, 2000). One should analyze the degree of variation in the solidity, permeability, and dissipation of different social group identities and boundaries in different settings and across time. Thus, when analyzing the interaction of different social groups in particular contexts, one should focus on the degree to which members of each group utilize material expressions to signal their separate group identities and the ways in which those identities persist or change over time (see, e.g., Barth, 2000, pp. 27–35; Franklin and Fesler, 1999, pp. 2–4; Hegmon, 1992, pp. 527–528).

When a person who subscribes to a particular religious belief system creates and uses objects to invoke spiritual powers, such conduct could be expressive of that person's social group identity (Cohen, 1976, p. 102). This will not always be the case, because particular religions often crosscut many social group identities (Yinger, 1994, p. 264). However, if that religious belief system is one shared within a population that has the bounded characteristics of a social group, then such religious practices may be part of the key criteria of membership in a group identity as well (see Emberling, 1997, pp. 318–320; Wolf, 1972, p. 150).

If a belief or practice is to contribute to the public communication of a group identity, it should typically serve to express the distinctiveness of that group from

others (De Vos, 1975, p. 16; Hodder, 1982, pp. 186–187). Stylistic and symbolic expressions which serve to identify a group affiliation will most likely be displayed in public settings visible to outside groups as well as members, and will tend to exhibit a uniformity and clarity in their design and in the messages being communicated (Hegmon, 1992, pp. 520–522; Wiessner, 1983, p. 257; Wobst, 1977, p. 323). The emblematic forms of core symbols frequently possess these characteristics. Members of a particular social network will often utilize emblematic expressions of group identity when involved in intergroup competition or to facilitate the coordination of efforts by group members to achieve collective goals (Wiessner, 1990, p. 109).

In contrast, instrumental expressions of core symbols may often develop into the characteristics of “assertive” stylistic expressions, as analyzed by Wiessner (1983, 1990). Assertive stylistic expressions communicate more individual identities, often within intragroup settings (Wiessner, 1983, pp. 257–258). Individuals will often employ assertive and instrumental symbolic expressions in settings in which there is an intragroup competition among individuals or they are pursuing individual interests, such as self-protection (Hegmon, 1992, pp. 523–524; Wiessner, 1990, p. 109). Similarly, the belief systems exercised through personalized and instrumental religious expressions provide social actors with a means of self-initiative and methods for explaining and responding to misfortune, disease, malign events, and the conduct of adversaries who sought to subjugate them (Mbiti, 1990, p. 196; Orser and Funari, 2001, p. 63; Raboteau, 1980, p. 286; Wilkie, 1997, pp. 83–84).

Arrays of Ritual and Symbol in Dominant and Folk Religions

Such a continuum of core symbol expressions, extending from more emblematic examples to private and instrumental uses, becomes particularly relevant in social settings where multiple religions coexist. Each religion typically contains a spectrum of core symbol expressions. In many social settings, however, those persons who are in controlling positions in the society place their religious belief system in a dominant position over other beliefs and practices (Thomas, 1971; Yoder, 1965). For example, in the colonial and antebellum periods in North America, many European Americans propounded Christianity as the proper form of religious belief and observance that should be practiced by all members of society (Yoder, 1965). However, many plantation owners in this period believed that enslaved African Americans should not be converted to Christianity, for fear that conversion would necessitate emancipation. These varying interests did not lead to a view of African religions as approved alternatives, and instead often led European Americans to view the spiritual lives of enslaved African Americans with indifference (Berlin, 1998, pp. 60–61; Gomez, 1998, p. 288; Raboteau, 1980, pp. 66, 98–99; Wills, 1997, p. 14).

Dominant religions often have the effect of driving other religious belief systems “underground” (Morgan, 1998, p. 612; Shorter, 1972, p. 148; Yoder, 1990, p. 95). These nondominant religions are often referred to as “folk religions” by historians, folklorists, and anthropologists (e.g., Thomas, 1971; Yoder, 1965). The public exercise of group rituals of such folk religions typically becomes impracticable, because of the social pressures imposed by disapproving members of the dominant religion. Similarly, when persons who exercised a dominant religion in one region are removed from that context and placed into a new area in which they are not in control, they will often have to abandon the public display of group exercises of their religion. They will only be able to continue the exercise of their beliefs through individualized, instrumental expressions in private settings. In time, they may adopt the dominant religion which holds sway in that new setting and attend its public ceremonies, all the while practicing the beliefs of their previous religion in private surroundings (Gundaker, 1998, pp. 75–76; Thomas, 1971, pp. 221–232; Yoder, 1965, pp. 36–39).

Archaeologists, folklorists, and historians have often studied past social settings in which there was evidence of a continuing exercise of private, instrumental expressions of a religion in the space of households, and yet there was no evidence of the public display of group exercises of that belief system. When addressing such subjects, analysts often apply a variety of terms to such individualized practices, including phrases such as folk religion, superstition, conjuration, cunning, magic, divination, witchcraft, hoodoo, and voodoo (e.g., Deetz and Deetz, 2000; Fennell, 2000; Ferguson, 1999; Leone and Fry, 1999; Powdermaker, 1939; Wilkie, 1995, 1997). While such distinguishing terms are useful indications that only individualized invocations are under study, it is important to emphasize that these private uses involved just one manifestation of the beliefs and practices encompassed within a full and comprehensive religion. The past suppression of public and group exercise of one religion by the impact of another, dominant religion does not mean that individualized invocations of the nondominant religion represented the mere “debris” of that belief system (Turner, 1973, p. 1105). Those private, symbolic deployments instead served as vital and evolving continuations of what was a comprehensive religious worldview (Butler, 1990, p. 159).

ETHNOGRAPHIC ANALOGIES AND THE INTERPRETATION OF A BAKONGO DIASPORA

Can one credibly interpret the crossed lines scratched into bowl bases, marbles, spoons and coins, or the perpendicular axes demarcated by the position of buried caches of objects at African American sites in North America as the solemn expressions of the BaKongo cosmology? There often exists no direct documentary or archaeological evidence to demonstrate that one or more of the past inhabitants of those sites was abducted from the area of Kongo, or was in some way closely

associated with a member of the BaKongo culture. Such specific evidence would be required if one were to apply a direct historical approach and interpret these artifacts as particular expressions of core symbols of the BaKongo culture.

In the absence of direct evidence linking an occupant of these sites with someone known to have been enculturated in the BaKongo belief system, an analyst should instead formulate an explicit interpretative framework on the basis of an ethnographic analogy. One can then compare and contrast in a more systematic manner the ethnohistorical information concerning a specific African cultural system with the material culture evidence found at the relevant sites in North America. Such an approach using an ethnographic analogy requires one to compile a detailed account of the beliefs and practices of an identifiable culture in one place and time (often referred to as the “source” of the analogy), and then to compare and contrast the attributes of that belief system with the material culture of another time and place (Ascher, 1961; Stahl, 1993; Wylie, 1985).

While enslaved Africans were unable to replicate their past social structures in new settings in America, individuals could retain their previous learning and cultural knowledge and utilize those beliefs and practices to the extent possible under such adverse circumstances. Healers, diviners, priests, priestesses, and political leaders were frequently abducted into slavery along with average members of society, and those individuals brought with them even more specialized beliefs and practices as well (see Balandier, 1968, pp. 62, 68–69; Raboteau, 1980, p. 50; Sobel, 1987, p. 6). Sidney Mintz and Richard Price (1976, pp. 6–7, 21) argued persuasively that enslaved African Americans most likely forged new social relationships with one another by focusing on their common cultural and cosmological assumptions, creating innovative forms of expression in their new settings. One avenue for these creative efforts would have involved individuals’ greater use of instrumental symbols to invoke spiritual aid and protection for themselves and their new cohort, and a lesser focus on using emblematic symbols expressive of their past group identities.

A first step in constructing an ethnographic analogy is to demonstrate that the selected cultural system which will provide the source information for the analogy is relevant to the subject of material culture to which it will be applied (Stahl, 1993, pp. 248–250; Thomas, 1995, p. 153; Trigger, 1995, pp. 450–452; Wylie, 1985, p. 101). The BaKongo religion was practiced by a large percentage of the population in the Kongo and Angola areas of West Central Africa throughout the period of the slave trade. However, people abducted into slavery and brought to the North American colonies came from a variety of regions in Africa, and not just Kongo and Angola. Nonetheless, the general relevance of the BaKongo culture to the potential cultural beliefs and practices of occupants of slave quarters in North American sites is readily demonstrated.

Continuing studies of the Atlantic slave trade, building off the work of Curtin (1969), Richardson (1989) and others, have estimated that approximately 26% of enslaved Africans brought to North America came from West Central Africa, 24%

from the Bight of Biafra, 15% from Sierra Leone, 14% from Senegambia, 13% from the Gold Coast, and 4% from the Bight of Benin (Gomez, 1998, p. 29). Other studies similarly estimate that over one third of Africans abducted into slavery and taken to North America came from the region of West Central Africa (Eltis, 2001, p. 44, Table II; Morgan, 1998, pp. 62–68; Thompson and Cornet, 1981, p. 32). Significant numbers of persons were abducted from the Kongo and Angola regions and taken directly to the areas in which the North American archaeological sites in question were later uncovered (Eltis, 2001, pp. 36–37; Holloway, 1990, pp. 7, 11; Walsh, 2001, pp. 144–148, 167).

While this evidence is not sufficient to provide a direct historical link for each site, it demonstrates the relevance of using the attributes of the BaKongo beliefs and practices in formulating an ethnographic analogy for use in interpreting the potential meaning and significance of the material culture uncovered at such slave quarters sites in North America. After compiling a detailed description of this source for our analogy, we need to apply it to the artifacts and context of the North American sites to determine the degree to which the attributes of the source provide a closeness of fit for interpreting the meaning and significance of those objects. In addition, the context in which the artifacts are found at each site is of critical importance when formulating inferences of their meaning, use, and significance in those settings (Brown and Cooper, 1990, pp. 16–19; Posnansky, 1972, p. 34; Stine *et al.*, 1996, pp. 64–65).

An Account of BaKongo Religious Beliefs and Practices in West Central Africa

Extensive and detailed historical information about the BaKongo people, their culture, and religion are available from Europeans' ethnohistorical accounts dating back at least to the time of Portuguese colonists' arrival in Kongo in 1482 (see, e.g., Janzen, 1977, p. 77; MacGaffey, 1986, pp. 21–24, 2000a, pp. 7–8; Vansina, 1966, pp. 6–7). Numerous accounts of Christian missionaries and European officials in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries must be read critically to extract useful ethnographic information while avoiding reliance on biased characterizations (Balandier, 1968, p. 22; Vansina, 1966, pp. 8–9). Anthropologists and historians working with these ethnohistorical accounts and later ethnographic observations find notable continuity in the principal facets of the BaKongo religion from the sixteenth century through the late nineteenth century (e.g., Balandier, 1968; Hilton, 1985; Jacobson-Widding, 1979, 1991; Janzen and MacGaffey, 1974; MacGaffey, 1986, 2000a; Thompson, 1993; Thornton, 1983, 1998). Their observations are not based on mere assumptions of constancy or the “conservative” character of religions, but rather on the critical reading of numerous ethnohistorical accounts that span that time period (cf. DeCorse, 1999, p. 134). This continuity resulted largely from the particular historical dynamics of political strategies of BaKongo ruling

factions over time and the related effects of indirect European colonial rule and Christian missionary strategies (see, e.g., MacGaffey, 1986, p. 179).

Extensive documentary, material culture, and oral history evidence indicate that the core elements of BaKongo religion survived the period of the slave trade (Janzen, 1977, p. 81; MacGaffey, 2000a, pp. 8–11; Thornton, 1998, p. 251). Through much of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the BaKongo people were able to retain and speak the KiKongo language and to practice many of the central facets of the BaKongo religion, particularly in more private settings. Although members of the BaKongo culture adopted Christianity, they did so in a very selective manner, translating most of the Christian concepts and icons into the BaKongo worldview (Balandier, 1968, pp. 65, 80; Berlin, 1996, pp. 259–260, 1998, p. 73; Thornton, 1983, p. 63).

In addition to the BaKongo beliefs discussed earlier in this paper, primary elements of the BaKongo religion included a concept of a supreme Godhead, called *Nzambi Mpungu* in KiKongo, who was the creator of all things (Laman, 1962, p. 53; Raboteau, 1980, p. 9). The crossed lines of the cosmogram were viewed as “Nzambi’s writing” and should not be drawn by any person without solemnity (Laman, 1962, p. 56). However, Nzambi was viewed as a remote creator, uninvolved in the daily affairs of the living (Jacobson-Widding, 1991, p. 81; Vansina, 1966, p. 30). Nzambi created a variety of intermediary spirits, known as *basimbi* (also spelled *bisimbi* for the plural and *simbi* in the singular) to whom the living may make supplication for aid in subsistence and for protection from disease, misfortune, and the attacks of adversaries (Janzen and MacGaffey, 1974, pp. 34–35; MacGaffey, 1991, p. 6; Raboteau, 1980, p. 9). This BaKongo concept of intermediary simbi spirits was notably distinct from the Yoruba and Fon concepts in West Africa of a pantheon of subdeities, each with specific personalities (see, e.g., Raboteau, 1980, pp. 9–12).

Members of the BaKongo people made supplications and requested the aid of particular simbi spirits, ancestor spirits, or the souls of the dead by creating physical containers, such as bowls, gourds, or cloth bags, into which a manifestation of one of those spirits could be summoned and focused (Laman, 1962, pp. 34, 44–45, 67; MacGaffey, 1991, pp. 1–6, 2000a, pp. 82–83). These physical objects were called *minkisi* in KiKongo (*nkisi* in the singular). Minkisi were created by ritual specialists called *banganga* (*nganga* in the singular). The compositions of various types of minkisi were replete with metonymic and metaphoric meanings that were summarized and represented in the components of the cosmogram (MacGaffey, 1991, pp. 4–6; Thompson and Cornet, 1981, p. 37). The minkisi were typically created and used in association with a ritual space demarcated by crossed lines drawn upon the ground, and the cross-line motif was often incorporated into the decorative design of individual nkisi objects themselves (Laman, 1962, pp. 149, 152, 156, 1968, p. 37; MacGaffey, 2000a, pp. 107–108; Van Wing, 1941, p. 86). These rituals included both divination, to determine the causes of misfortune or illness, and enactment of supplications to obtain protection, cures, or retribution

(Thornton, 1983, pp. 59–62). A great variety of *minkisi* were created over time, some designed to contain more powerful spirits capable of lethal actions, and others to contain more benign spirits for the purposes of specific tasks of healing or for protecting an individual or household (Janzen and MacGaffey, 1974, p. 37; MacGaffey, 1991, pp. 5–6, 33–34; Van Wing, 1941, pp. 86–87).

A *nkisi* was thus viewed as the container for a manifestation of an invoked spirit, and the object itself was not worshiped as an idol (Jacobson-Widding, 1979, p. 132; Janzen, 1977, p. 71; Van Wing, 1941, p. 86). The *nkisi* was animated by the powers represented metaphorically and metonymically by the *bilongo* substances placed within it and upon it. White clay, soil, or ash provided metaphors of the purity of God, the spirits and the dead. Reflective surfaces of seashells, quartz crystals, and mica or mirror fragments were metaphoric for the water boundary of the living and the world of spirits, and thus communicated the invocation of spiritual forces into the world of the living. Seashells, nut shells, and some types of roots also provided metaphors for wombs and containers of lives, souls, and spirits. Bird skulls or feathers supplied metaphors for spirits through the connotation of flight and the realm of the sky. Animal claws and teeth provided metaphors of the power and forcefulness of particular spirits. Fragments of clinging vines and roots were used as symbols of the ability of a summoned spiritual force to locate other, malevolent spirits, and to bind and subdue them (MacGaffey, 1986, pp. 132, 137–148, 1993, pp. 32–42; Van Wing, 1941, p. 86).

Other items used as *bilongo* invoked metaphors through the punning association of the item's name and a word for a desired attribute of a summoned spirit or a word descriptive of the affliction that the spirit would be able to cure (Jacobson-Widding, 1979, p. 140; Janzen and MacGaffey, 1974, p. 6; MacGaffey, 1991, p. 5). For example, the *bilongo* might include a nut named *nkiduku* to invoke *kidukwa*, the KiKongo word for protection (MacGaffey, 2000b, p. 44). The *nganga* who created a *nkisi* likely recited these names of the *bilongo* in a solemn, ritualized manner, while composing the object (Jacobson-Widding, 1979, p. 140; MacGaffey, 2000b, p. 38). These *bilongo* expressed the invocation of the spirit world into the land of the living and the relevant attributes of the summoned spirit (Janzen and MacGaffey, 1974, pp. 35–36; Laman, 1962, p. 68; MacGaffey, 1988a, pp. 190–191).

The *banganga* ritual specialists were often viewed as possessing and exercising a sacred form of power that could be contrasted with the political power of the ruling class. However, they were not viewed as a caste of priests. Any member of the BaKongo people could become a *nganga* if they experienced a *simbi*'s calling and dedicated themselves to the proper use of *minkisi* (Jacobson-Widding, 1979, p. 68; Laman, 1957, p. 132). The *banganga* were feared for their powers, but they were also viewed with respect and appreciation for their abilities to cure and bring blessings on communities and individuals seeking aid (Laman, 1957, p. 132; Van Wing, 1941, pp. 86–91). A *nganga* who created, possessed, and worked with a greater number and variety of *minkisi* would be able to provide a greater array of

specific divination, healing, and protective measures to those who sought her aid. She would in turn obtain higher status and earnings if her efforts were believed to be effective (Janzen and MacGaffey, 1974, p. 37; Laman, 1957, p. 132).

Minkisi were often employed for a variety of private purposes, as well as for more public displays and applications (Laman, 1953, p. 83; MacGaffey, 1986, pp. 136, 169–171; Thompson, 1993, pp. 48–54). When a nkisi was employed for the use and protection of a village, “nkisi-houses” were often built with “low walls, so that anyone could see the nkisi and call upon him” for aid (Laman, 1953, p. 83). Some nkisi houses were carefully concealed, so they could not be desecrated by outsiders, and would be accessible only to members of the community (Laman, 1953, p. 83). A nganga might take up residence within such a nkisi house at times, necessitating an expansion of the structure. Banganga also frequently kept many of their minkisi in their own dwelling houses and conducted related rituals in their homes or transported the minkisi to the houses of persons who sought their services (Laman, 1953, p. 83; MacGaffey, 2000a, p. 82; Van Wing, 1941, pp. 88–89).

Some forms of minkisi were created and used in prominent, public rituals (Janzen and MacGaffey, 1974, p. 37). For example, the powerful *nkisi Nkondi* was often used in public rituals of oath taking, consecration of political and social agreements, and enactment of laws or treaties among multiple chiefdoms (Laman, 1957, pp. 113, 117, 159–160; MacGaffey, 2000a, pp. 109–110). In efforts to protect an entire village from disease or misfortune, two banganga might convene at a crossroad leading into the village, draw a cross upon the ground, pour water onto the crossed lines, and undertake other ritual measures to protect the village (Laman, 1962, p. 156). Similarly, households or villages could be protected by burying selected minkisi in their vicinity and avenues of approach (Janzen and MacGaffey, 1974, p. 45).

Forms of the nkisi Nkondi were often viewed as “hunter” minkisi, which contained manifestations of a powerful simbi spirit which could track down, bind, and vanquish malevolent spirits and other forces that were assailing the persons who made supplication to Nkondi for aid (MacGaffey, 1988a, p. 199). The container was typically designed as an anthropomorphic or zoomorphic figure in a pose conveying power and lethal capabilities. These containers ranged in size from a few inches to a few feet in height, with larger forms typically used for more public rituals (MacGaffey, 1993, pp. 33, 75–76). The bilongo of such a nkisi often included fragments of binding vines, animal teeth, and claws as metaphors for its lethal powers. Other metaphoric bilongo, such as fragments of reflective crystals and white clay, were often included, as well as decorations of crossed lines on the exterior of the wooden body of the nkisi. The bilongo were typically placed inside a cavity created in the body of the sculpture, and enclosed with a reflective piece of seashell, mica, or mirror (MacGaffey, 1993, pp. 32–42, 75–79).

Personal supplications for aid from nkisi Nkondi were often undertaken in a private ritual attended by the nganga who possessed and interacted with the nkisi and the person seeking help. The nganga would typically draw crossed lines upon

the ground, oriented along the cardinal directions, to demarcate the ritual space in which this supplication would be made (Jacobson-Widding, 1991, p. 201). The intersection of these lines represented the desired intersection and communication between the spirit world and the land of the living (Thompson, 1990, p. 153). The nganga and supplicant would first swear their righteous and truthful purposes by taking oaths while standing upon the crossed lines and addressing the Nkondi (Thompson and Cornet, 1981, p. 44).

If the supplicant were ill, the nganga would often have him lie on the crossed lines with feet pointing west, perhaps adding a circle to surround the person and crossed lines (Jacobson-Widding, 1991, p. 201; MacGaffey, 1986, p. 118). The nganga would then symbolically drive the illness out of the person and into obliteration in the direction of the west (Laman, 1962, pp. 144, 149; MacGaffey, 1986, p. 118). In the course of the ritual the nganga would often place the nkisi at the intersection of the crossed lines as well (Thompson, 1990, p. 153; Thompson and Cornet, 1981, p. 151). The nganga and supplicant would then recite prayers to request specific aid from Nkondi and to incite it into action. In addition, they would drive a small iron wedge or iron nail into the body of the wooden Nkondi to record this act of supplication and oath taking, and to further animate the nkisi to exercise its powers (Laman, 1957, pp. 113, 117, 159–160; MacGaffey, 2000a, pp. 98–99, 106–107; Thompson and Cornet, 1981, p. 38).

European colonization and Christian missionary activities from the late fifteenth century through the late nineteenth century failed to destroy this rich belief system expressed in the BaKongo cosmogram and *minkisi* (Balandier, 1968, pp. 50–51; Thornton, 1983, pp. 67–68). Catholic missionaries were most active in the region from the time of initial European contact onward, with the assistance of Portuguese colonial interests. Protestant missionaries sponsored by the English and Dutch also became active in the region in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (MacGaffey, 2000b, p. 38). The BaKongo people converted to Christianity and adopted its beliefs only in a highly selective manner throughout this time period. This process of selective adoption was aided by the fact that European missionaries often used KiKongo terms for key Christian concepts, thus translating Christian beliefs into the BaKongo counterparts (Thornton, 1977, pp. 512–513, 1983, p. 63).

The BaKongo easily understood and assimilated the Catholic concepts of saints, seraphim, and the holy spirit as entities translatable into the BaKongo belief in *basimbi* and other intermediate spirits (Thornton, 1998, p. 259). In contrast, the BaKongo largely rejected Catholic concepts of heaven and hell, which were highly inconsistent with their traditional cosmology (Hilton, 1985, p. 94). Priests were viewed as performing the same roles as *banganga*, and the crucifix, statues of saints, Eucharist, and church buildings were viewed the same as *minkisi* and related ritual buildings (Balandier, 1968, p. 54; Hilton, 1985, p. 94; Thornton, 1977, pp. 512–513, 1983, p. 63). By the mid-seventeenth century, the BaKongo people had come to view the crucifix as the principal *nkisi* of the Christian *banganga* (the priests), and they erected wooden crosses throughout the region (Balandier,

1968, pp. 102, 242, 254; Hilton, 1985, p. 102). Thus, the symbol and object of a Christian cross was not adopted as a cosmological symbol that displaced the BaKongo cosmogram, but rather as a new form of nkisi container. The missionary priests also found that baptism was the primary Christian sacrament of interest to the BaKongo people, because of the BaKongo belief in the transformative character of the water boundary, and the priests frequently used baptisms as a favored way to attract potential converts (Thornton, 1977, p. 514). The blending of the cosmogram with the Christian cross and other sacraments thus occurred in many forms, typically in a way that served to reinforce the BaKongo cosmology, rather than displace it.

Predicting Patterns of Symbolic Expressions in New Settings

This body of ethnohistorical information about the BaKongo culture and religion in West Central Africa provides the elements for constructing an ethnographic analogy for use in analyzing and interpreting the potential meaning, significance, and use of artifacts of spirituality created by members of a BaKongo diaspora. The principal elements of material culture delineated and characterized in this analogy consist of the BaKongo cosmogram and related forms of minkisi. More specifically, the BaKongo cosmogram was manifested in different forms depending upon the specific context and use to which it was placed. When used for public rituals to express group identity and solidarity, the cosmogram would often appear in its fully embellished, and emblematic form of expression, with crossed lines, surrounding cyclical ellipse or circle, and four moments of the cosmos. When used in community or private rituals for the purpose of invoking spiritual aid to protect or heal a village, household, or individual, the cosmogram would typically be expressed in an abbreviated form of crossed lines and associated with forms of minkisi positioned along the axes or intersection of that cross.

Within the territories of the Kongo kingdom and chiefdoms, the more emblematic uses of the cosmogram were often associated with public rituals conducted by political and religious specialists. However, it is unlikely the political and religious organizational structures of the BaKongo cultures would be replicated by those abducted into slavery and transported to New World settings (see Mintz and Price, 1976, pp. 6–7, 21). In such circumstances of subjugation, members of the BaKongo diaspora would likely exercise their beliefs and expressions of cosmology and self-identity in private and covert settings (Orser, 1994, pp. 39, 42; Raboteau, 1980, p. 215). The BaKongo people had practiced a broad spectrum of such private rituals within West Central Africa, often by demarcating the appropriate spaces with the crossed lines of the cosmogram, and using minkisi objects in association with that space. While minkisi were at times maintained within public “nkisi-houses,” they were frequently utilized within the dwellings of the banganga or their clients, or positioned to protect individual households and villages.

Banganga within Kongo held positions of heightened status and played vital roles in a variety of political rituals, public religious rituals, and invocations of spiritual aid for individuals seeking healing, self-protection, or retribution. While many banganga were no doubt abducted into slavery, it is less likely that they were able to enjoy comparable status within plantation settings in the New World (Raboteau, 1980, p. 50; Sobel, 1987, p. 6; Thomas, 1995, p. 154). In time, they could adjust to their new circumstances and begin performing the services of a healer, diviner, and specialist in invocations of spiritual aid within their immediate communities (Genovese, 1976, p. 221; Orser, 1994, p. 37). In turn, they could teach their evolving beliefs and practices to other members of their communities, with some facets of the BaKongo traditions continuing, some changing, and others falling away.

The degree to which such beliefs and practices were exercised, in both frequency and intensity, was dependent in part on the degree to which plantation owners and overseers precluded slaves from engaging in such conduct (Levine, 1977, p. 60; Raboteau, 1980, pp. 53, 66). The rate of change in those beliefs and practices depended, in turn, upon the degree to which particular slave communities consisted of a significant number of persons enculturated in the BaKongo culture, or instead consisted of persons enculturated in a number of varied cultures of West and West Central Africa. In many New World settings, Africans and African Americans enculturated in the traditions of diverse cultures interacted within local slave communities. The religions of the Yoruba, Fon, Bambara, and BaKongo, to mention just a few, are notable in their richness and diversity of beliefs, practices, and modes of ritual and symbolic expression (see, e.g., Gomez, 1998; Morgan, 1998, pp. 610–611; Thomas 1995, p. 153).

The broad spectrum of minkisi designs created by the BaKongo people presents particular challenges to the effort of predicting discernible patterns in related material culture in New World settings. Because of the compositional emphasis on metaphoric meanings, both the containers and contents of minkisi are often made of naturally occurring and fairly prosaic materials. Containers made of wood or natural fibers will typically decompose in the archaeological record. Bilongo consisting of pieces of vines or other organic materials will similarly perish. Bilongo which invoke the reflective flash of the water boundary, such as quartz crystals, shells, or polished stones, are naturally occurring objects which might have been collected and deposited in New World house sites without any relationship to such religious beliefs and practices. White clay and white chalk have similar characteristics. Such objects as crystals, shells, and polished stones also could have been collected and deposited by persons who subscribed to European American religious beliefs and practices entirely separate and independent from the BaKongo (Fennell, 2000, pp. 286–287; Perry and Paynter, 1999, p. 303). Similarly, other African religions treated objects of white color or grave dirt as religiously symbolic as well (Mbiti, 1970, p. 155; Raboteau, 1980, p. 34; Thompson, 1983, pp. 134–138).

The particular context in which artifacts are found is critically important to the strength of an interpretation that those objects were created pursuant to beliefs and practices derived from the BaKongo religion. Such an interpretation will be stronger if a variety of bilongo-like objects are located in a concentrated collection, rather than being dispersed throughout the space of a dwelling. The interpretation will be even stronger if there exist multiple concentrations of bilongo-like objects, located in a spatial pattern that indicates the demarcation of the crossed lines of a cosmogram along the cardinal directions within a private space. However, these elements of evidence from artifact attributes and spatial distributions alone should not suffice. Archaeologists should look for multiple lines of supporting evidence to establish that the site was inhabited by persons likely to have been enculturated in BaKongo beliefs.

Archaeologists should proceed with similar care when interpreting crossed lines inscribed upon artifacts as representing expressions of the BaKongo cosmogram. A significant number of such artifacts have been found at historic-period sites in the United States. These are often small, everyday items with crossed lines scratched into them, such as ceramic bowls and pots, white marbles, pewter or silver spoons, and coins (e.g., Ferguson, 1992, 1999; Franklin, 1997; Young, 1996, 1997). Some of these objects include white material, such as the bright color of pewter and silver metals when scratched, or objects made of kaolin (Young, 1996, 1997). This bolsters the interpretation of these objects as expressions of BaKongo beliefs, because it presents two known metaphoric features that were often used in combination by the BaKongo in West Central Africa.

However, the presence alone of crossed lines on small amulet-like objects could as easily be interpreted as the product of other European American or African American beliefs. Anglo-American and German American religious traditions included the use of a cross mark or “saltire” as an invocation sign on objects designed to create protective charms or curses (Fennell, 2000, p. 299–302; Smith *et al.*, 1964, p. 156). Other African religions also utilized the symbol of crossed lines and the crossing of paths as representations of an invocation of the spirit world (Gundaker, 1998, p. 65; Stuckey, 1987, p. 92). The interpretation of crossed lines on particular artifacts or in the spatial configuration of features upon the ground as a primarily BaKongo expression will be stronger if evidence exists of other, accompanying metaphoric references that are also consistent with BaKongo beliefs and practices. The surrounding circular motif of the shape of an inscribed marble, coin, or bowl base provides reinforcing evidence of related metaphors. Additional supporting evidence should be sought, however, because the symbol of a circle as representative of cosmic cycles was not unique to the BaKongo.

INSTRUMENTAL SYMBOLISM IN NORTH AMERICA

In his extensive study of “slave religions” in the Americas, Albert Raboteau (1980, p. 86) stated that “in the United States the gods of Africa died.” He contended

that various forms of “African theology and African ritual did not endure” in the slave communities of North America “to the extent that they did in Cuba, Haiti, and Brazil” (Raboteau, 1980, p. 86). More recently, Laura Galke (2000), one of the archaeologists who worked on the Carroll House site in Annapolis, Maryland, declared that Raboteau was mistaken. Surely, she argued, the numerous findings of minkisi-like objects at slave sites in the United States show that the BaKongo religion was alive and well in America in the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries. In essence, they are both correct.

Documentary, oral history, and archaeological evidence shows no evidence that the BaKongo religion was observed in public displays of group-oriented rituals using emblematic forms of the core symbol of the BaKongo. Instead, only private and covert forms of ritual were undertaken, each employing instrumental and abbreviated forms of the religion’s core symbol to obtain protection and well-being for the individuals involved. The institution of slavery and the dominant religion of Christianity had pushed the BaKongo beliefs off the stage of publicly displayed group rituals. However, adherents to the BaKongo religion were able to continue practicing forms of the private, instrumental rituals that the BaKongo people had observed regularly in West Central Africa.

The artifacts uncovered at the Carroll House in Annapolis provide a persuasive example of such a continuation of private minkisi rituals in North America. Documentary evidence showed that Charles Carroll of Carrollton maintained this house as one of his family’s principal residences from the mid-1700s through 1821. He maintained up to 19 enslaved African Americans at this location in the early 1780s and a lesser number in the early 1800s (Galke, 2000, pp. 22–23; Jones, 2000, p. 2). Many enslaved Africans imported into the Maryland and Chesapeake areas came from the region of West Central Africa (Walsh, 2001, p. 148). Thus, there was a considerable probability that Carroll obtained persons enslaved from the BaKongo area, although direct evidence is lacking.

A diverse array of objects was located in four concentrated collections under the floor boards of one room in the basement level of the Carroll House. Supporting evidence indicated that this room was likely used as the living and work space of enslaved African Americans who worked as house servants (Galke, 2000, pp. 22–23; Jones, 2000, p. 2). The objects could have been viewed as reflecting multiple metaphors of significance within the BaKongo tradition. Quartz crystals, polished stones, and glass fragments invoked the flash of the water boundary. Disks of white bone invoked the color of the spirit world and the dead, and the circular form of the cosmic cycle. A fragment of a pearlware bowl, with an asterisk mark as a decoration, could have been viewed both as a symbolic container of other bilongo-like objects and as providing an invocation of the crossed lines of the cosmogram (Galke, 2000, pp. 23–24; Jones, 2000, p. 2; Logan, 1995, pp. 154–155).

Crossed lines appear as well on the round bases of colono ware pottery uncovered at African American sites in the Carolinas and Virginia (Ferguson, 1992, pp. 111–116, 1999, pp. 121–123; Orser, 1994, pp. 38–39). This form of earthenware

pottery was produced as a result of a blending of African American and Native American ceramic forms and production techniques (Ferguson, 1992, 1999; Mouer *et al.*, 1999). Many of these incised pottery fragments were recovered from rivers at locations in South Carolina that were occupied in the past by enslaved Africans and African Americans who worked on nearby plantations (Ferguson, 1999, pp. 121–123). A large percentage of those enslaved persons imported into South Carolina came from West Central Africa (Holloway, 1990, p. 7).

Four attributes of these colono ware artifacts thus correlate with the potential composition of a nkisi-like object produced pursuant to inspirations from BaKongo beliefs. Ceramic pots and bowls were used as containers for some forms of minkisi by the BaKongo people. The crossed lines scratched within the circumference of a surrounding, circular bowl base could invoke elements of the cosmogram. The use of such objects at sites along the edges of bodies of water also could have been consistent with private rituals invoking the boundary with the spirit world or invocations of simbi spirits associated with bodies of water (Ferguson, 1999, pp. 124–126; see Denbow, 1999, p. 420). Leland Ferguson (1998, pp. 4–6) believes one can infer that the small jars and bowls were likely used in the preparation of medicines in ritual undertakings, and the vessels were later cast into the water. However, the use of cross and circle motifs, and the association of water with religious rituals were beliefs and practices common to a number of Native American, African American, and European American religions (Ferguson, 1999, pp. 118, 124, 127; Stuckey, 1987, pp. 34–35, 92). Ferguson (1999, p. 127) suggests that the multivocal character of these core symbols facilitated cultural interactions and the sharing of ideas among African Americans and Native Americans who worked and lived together under the burdens of enslavement.

Such a blending of multivocal, instrumental symbolism appears at the Levi Jordan Plantation site in Brazoria, Texas. No direct evidence established that persons enculturated in the BaKongo religion lived at that site (Brown, 1994, p. 96–98; Thomas, 1995, p. 153). However, general information on the history of the Atlantic slave trade shows that members of the BaKongo culture were likely imported into the region, either directly or through points in the Caribbean (Brown, 1994, p. 97; Brown and Cooper, 1990, p. 12). The artifacts uncovered in four caches in a so-called “curer’s cabin” present a number of salient attributes. The four caches are composed of concentrated collections of objects deposited at the four cardinal directions along the perimeter of the room. This is notable, since the room itself was not oriented along the cardinal directions (Brown, 1994, pp. 108–114). Thus, the deposits could have been intended to demarcate the crossed lines of a cosmogram within the space of this cabin. The objects could have been components of minkisi which were placed along the axes and intersection of this cosmogram when ritual invocations were undertaken.

One deposit consisted of a concentration of small iron wedges, which could be described as contrived fragments of a knife blade. The archaeologists working on this site propose that these are the remains of a form of nkisi Nkondi—a hunter

nkisi into which one would drive an iron wedge to record the taking of an oath and a request for aid (Brown, 1994, pp. 111–112; Brown and Brown, 1998, pp. 2–3). If such a nkisi had been created in this space, the body would most likely have been made of wood, which would perish in the archaeological record. A cavity within the wooden figure would have held a cache of bilongo objects, some of which may have been inorganic and some organic and perishable over time. Close to the iron wedges the archaeologists found waterworn pebbles, fragments of mirrors, several sea shells, and a part of a small white porcelain doll (Brown, 1994, pp. 108–109, 113; Brown and Brown, 1998, pp. 2–3).

The archaeologists refer to this cabin as a curer's cabin in part because of the variety of minkisi-like deposits within it. This variety suggested that an experienced curer or healer had lived there and performed his or her services for others in private rituals undertaken in the space of the cabin. This view supports the likelihood that a nkisi of the Nkondi style may have been created and used there, because such a nkisi was viewed by the BaKongo people as very powerful and as manageable only in the hands of an experienced ritual specialist. Such hunter minkisi, if misused, were believed to inflict harm on those persons who mishandled them (Janzen and MacGaffey, 1974, p. 37).

Adjacent to the concentration of iron wedges were two round bases of cast-iron kettles with a piece of white chalk, fragments of medicine bottles and a glass thermometer, and two bullet casings sealed into a tube form. Objects uncovered in the other deposits included silver coins stacked along a line running north–south at the northern point in the room (Brown, 1994, pp. 108, 109, 113; Brown and Brown, 1998, p. 2). On the south side of the room, a cavity created and covered by bricks inside the hearth contained a concentrated deposit of burned shells, burned iron nails and spikes, and white ash (Brown, 1994, pp. 113–114; Brown and Brown, 1998, pp. 3–4). These could be interpreted as objects consistent with other minkisi deposits and items used in divination, with the iron kettles used as trays on which crossed lines would be drawn with white chalk when commencing a divination ritual. The series of coins, fragments of glass, burned shell, iron nails, and ash could invoke the flash of the spirit world, land of the dead and ancestors, and cycles of the cosmos, while being placed to demarcate the axes of a cosmogram (Brown, 1994, pp. 108–115; Brown and Brown, 1998, pp. 2–4).

The west end of this configuration presented artifacts that did not directly fit the predictable attributes of BaKongo-inspired religious items. At this location, the archaeologists uncovered two iron kettles deposited upright, with one inside the other and ash placed in between their bases. The upper kettle contained soil, small bone fragments, seashells, and metal objects. Fragments of a third, smaller kettle rested on top of the two larger kettles, and heavy iron chain was wrapped around the circumference of the larger kettle. Other objects were located in the space immediately surrounding these kettles, including seashells, metal buttons, bone fragments, a bolt, several spikes, a bayonet, a hinge, and a piece of a plow.

It was not clear whether all of these objects were placed in this area purposefully (Brown, 1994, pp. 113–114; Brown and Brown, 1998, pp. 2–3).

This configuration of nested iron kettles wrapped in heavy chain does not correlate directly with the known forms of minkisi design typically utilized by the BaKongo people. While BaKongo beliefs included the use of iron materials as a form of bilongo object, such a concentrated use of iron containers was seldom employed. It is a design far more consistent with the *amula* compositions of the Yoruba religion, which were typically dedicated to the *orisha* named *Ogun* (Brown and Brown, 1998, p. 3). Although the archaeologists made this interpretation by examining forms of *amula* known in New World settings, such as examples from Cuba (Brown and Brown, 1998, p. 3; Thomas, 1995, p. 153; Thompson, 1983, pp. 54–56), their interpretation is supported by historical information concerning the Yoruba religion as practiced in earlier periods in West Africa as well.

The Yoruba religion possessed a large pantheon of subdeities, called *orisha*, to which believers could make supplication and prayers for an *orisha*'s protection or intervention into the affairs of the living (Cuthrell-Curry, 2000, pp. 460–461; Thorpe, 1991, pp. 90–91). Members of the Yoruba religion prayed to individual *orisha* in the privacy of their home, in public shrines within their villages, and at regular, larger-scale ceremonies (Mbiti, 1970, pp. 240, 268; Thorpe, 1991, pp. 92, 99). *Ogun* was the god of war and iron, and supplicants would make offerings of iron to *Ogun* at shrines within their homes when seeking this deity's aid and protection (Thorpe, 1991, p. 94). Amulas were objects composed primarily with elements of iron to make supplication to *Ogun* and focus the protective powers of that deity into the space in which an *amula* was placed (see, e.g., Thompson, 1983, pp. 54–56).

The artifacts of this cabin thus appear to present evidence of the interaction of distinct traditions and practices derived from separate African religions. It is in such a setting that the powerful utility of instrumental and abbreviated symbolism becomes apparent. The fully embellished and emblematic cosmogram of the BaKongo would have little direct import as a summarizing symbol to someone who was instead educated in the Yoruba religion and culture. Yet, a configuration of four altars at each of the cardinal points within a private space would be consistent with the Yoruba practice of individual, ritual supplications to the *orisha* (Mbiti, 1970, p. 240; Thompson, 1997, pp. 30–31). Thus, the spatial layout of the four ritual caches in the curer's cabin would make sense to a member of the Yoruba culture as well, but because of the application of different religious metaphors that could be read off the same symbolic configuration.

Focusing on such dynamics will increase our appreciation of the cultural flexibility of such past actors and their innovativeness in creating new social networks and shared symbolic expressions under difficult circumstances (see Gundaker, 2000, p. 128; Howson, 1990, pp. 90–91; Long, 1997, p. 27; Sacks, 1979, p. 144). In individual uses, we see evidence of the symbolism being selected in the form of

simpler, instrumental compositions. Consider the possible choices of an African American individual who was educated in the traditions of the BaKongo religion, lived in slave quarters, and interacted with persons more familiar with other African religious traditions. By reducing the extensive array of design components from the fully embellished BaKongo cosmogram (cross, circle, and four disks) down to a simpler form of cross symbol, this person would increase her ability to communicate in a religiously meaningful way with those other African Americans with whom she interacted (see Firth, 1973, pp. 211, 215–216, 222, 238–240; Sacks, 1979, pp. 6–7).

Over time, their interactions could solidify into new social networks for which they could develop emblematic symbols to express their new group identity. Those emblematic symbols could be composed of the components of their previously varied instrumental symbolism. Yet, in the African American communities of North America, we do not see evidence of such a development which blends the instrumental symbolism of different African religions to form new emblems of group identity. Instead, the vast majority of religious artifacts recovered at African American sites in the United States reflect private, instrumental symbolism. Why?

Two primary dynamics inhibited the development of new, emblematic symbolism from the components of instrumental symbols of multiple African religions. First, in the early generations of slaves in North America, from the seventeenth through the early eighteenth century, heightened levels of surveillance and control of slaves' lives largely precluded their ability to develop and deploy such new, emblematic symbols. Plantation owners and overseers in the North American colonies typically implemented a much greater level of control over the daily lives of their labor force than did many plantation operators at locations in the Caribbean and South America (Genovese, 1976, pp. 179, 211; Raboteau, 1980, p. 53). Second, from the early eighteenth century onward, many enslaved persons in North America adopted evangelical Christianity as a new set of beliefs and practices which they could employ to promote group solidarity and to undertake associated conduct and symbolic expression in open, public display (Blassingame, 1972; Harding, 1997).

Historians often emphasize a third factor as well: the United States formally outlawed the importation of slaves after 1808 (see, e.g., Genovese, 1976, p. 211). As Raboteau (1980, p. 92) stated, in "North America, a relatively small number of Africans found themselves enslaved amid a rapidly increasing native-born population whose memories of the African past grew fainter with each passing generation." However, this factor is of questionable significance. Scofflaws no doubt continued a considerable amount of illegal importation of slaves into the United States throughout the antebellum period. Moreover, the question remains of the degree to which persons enculturated in particular African traditions succeeded in passing those beliefs and practices onto others within their community in America, regardless of where those other persons were born.

The earlier generations of Africans and African Americans could only practice rituals derived from their African religions when outside the scope of surveillance.

The twentieth-century narratives of former slaves report that such meetings, when held, were typically convened in hollows, hush arbors, and other secret locations in the vicinity of the plantations (Long, 1997, p. 26; Perdue *et al.*, 1976, pp. 53, 94, 124; Raboteau, 1980, p. 215; Rawick, 1978, p. 23). These limitations greatly inhibited the formation of new styles of group ritual and group expression that could have been developed out of a blending of different African religious traditions. Such a blending of African traditions occurred instead in those parts of the Caribbean and South America in which European American colonial institutions were less fixed and surveillance was less strict (Barrett, 1977, p. 193; Mulira, 1990, p. 35).

In that same period, up through the early eighteenth century, plantation owners in North America typically preferred that their slaves exercise no religious observances, fearing such conduct would lead to instances of group solidarity and resistance among the slaves. They feared that slaves' conversion to Christianity could weaken the case for enslavement, that labor time would be lost, and that slaves might become restive (Berlin, 1998, pp. 60–61; Genovese, 1976, p. 211; Levine, 1977, p. 60). By the early eighteenth century, an increasing number of colonies passed laws declaring that conversion to Christianity would have no effect on a person's status as a slave. In addition, successive waves of evangelical movements within the Christian faith spread across the colonies, promoting conversion of as many persons as possible (Berlin, 1998, p. 138; Gomez, 1998, p. 21; Levine, 1977, pp. 60–61).

The core symbols of Christianity contained motifs which resonated with the symbolism of a number of African religions. Crossed lines would have been read in varying ways by members of different African religions, such as the Fon, Yoruba, Asante, or BaKongo. However, that symbol was still meaningful in a spiritual sense to members of each of those religions, even if interpreted differently in the details (Raboteau, 1980, pp. 34, 85; Stuckey, 1987, pp. 34–35, 92; Thompson, 1997, pp. 21–27). Through the dynamics of these interactions and constraining social influences, many African Americans continued to practice African religious beliefs in private, instrumental uses, while shaping evangelical Christianity into a new form for public observance and the promotion of their group interests and solidarity (Genovese, 1976, p. 211).

CONCLUSION

By focusing on the spectrum of emblematic and instrumental expressions of core symbols, this study makes two contributions to studies of African diasporas. First, the artifacts of African American religious practices found in North American sites did not represent the shreds and tatters of past African religions. Rather, those artifacts represented the continuing use and development of a form of private ritual undertakings which was a vital component of those religions even when they were practiced as dominant belief systems in West Central Africa. Points of

correspondence and contrast are highlighted by analyzing those artifacts through the application of a detailed ethnographic analogy.

In addition, the stylistic abbreviation that accompanied such private, symbolic expression not only served to communicate a component of the core symbol, but also resulted in a truncated form of symbolic expression that was increasingly multivalent. Private creativity in the use of instrumental religious symbolism thus generated material expressions which were very likely meaningful to persons educated in other African religions as well, such as the religions of the Yoruba and Fon peoples, among others. This stylistic abbreviation thus facilitated the formation of new social relationships within communities of enslaved Africans and African Americans. In time, using the building blocks of private symbolism, these nascent social networks could develop new symbolic embellishments expressive of their evolving group identities.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This paper presents a continued focus on the interrelationships of group and individual identities and the symbolic analysis of material culture, for which I have received very helpful comments, critiques, and encouragements from Anna Agbe-Davies, Kenneth Brown, Fred Damon, Michael Dietler, Leland Ferguson, Garrett Fesler, Maria Franklin, Grey Gundaker, Jeffrey Hantman, Michael Klein, Adria LaViolette, Mark Leone, Wyatt MacGaffey, Charles Perdue Jr., Paul Shackel, Brian Thomas, Robert Farris Thompson, Roy Wagner, Mark Warner, and Anne Yentsch. I am grateful to reviewer Kenneth Kelly for his extensive comments, and to editor James Delle. My sincere thanks to Lee Fennell for her invaluable support and comments. Any shortcomings remain the author's responsibility.

REFERENCES CITED

- Ascher, R. (1961). Analogy in archaeological interpretation. *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 17: 317–325.
- Balandier, G. (1968). *Daily Life in the Kingdom of the Kongo: From the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century*, (H. Weaver, Trans.), George Allen & Unwin, London.
- Balandier, G., and Maquet, J. (1974). *Dictionary of Black African Civilization*, Leon Amiel, New York.
- Barrett, L. (1977). African religion in the Americas: The "islands in between." In Booth, N. S., Jr. (ed.), *African Religions: A Symposium*, NOK Publishers, New York, pp. 183–215.
- Barth, F. (2000). Boundaries and connections. In Cohen, A. P. (ed.), *Signifying Identities: Anthropological Perspectives on Boundaries and Contested Values*, Routledge, London, pp. 15–36.
- Berlin, I. (1996). From Creole to African: Atlantic Creoles and the origins of African-American society in mainland North America. *William and Mary Quarterly* (3rd Series) 53(2): 251–288.
- Berlin, I. (1998). *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.
- Blassingame, J. W. (1972). *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South*, Oxford University Press, New York.
- Brown, K. L. (1994). Material culture and community structure: The slave and tenant community at Levi Jordan's plantation, 1848–1892. In Hudson, L. E., Jr. (ed.), *Working Toward Freedom: Slave*

- Society and Domestic Economy in the American South*, University of Rochester Press, Rochester, NY, pp. 95–118.
- Brown, K. L., and Cooper, D. C. (1990). Structural continuity in an African American slave and tenant community. *Historical Archaeology* 24(4): 7–19.
- Brown, K. N., and Brown, K. L. (1998). Archaeology and Spirituality: The Conjuror/Midwife and the Praise House/Church at the Levi Jordan Plantation. Paper presented at the *Society for Historical Archaeology Annual Conference*, Atlanta, Georgia, January 9, 1998.
- Bruner, E. M. (1993). Epilogue: Creative persona and the problem of authenticity. In Lavie, S., Narayan, K., and Rosaldo, R. (eds.), *Creativity/Anthropology*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY, pp. 321–334.
- Butler, J. (1990). *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.
- Cohen, A. (1976). *Two-Dimensional Man: An Essay on the Anthropology of Power and Symbolism in Complex Society*, University of California Press, Berkeley.
- Cohen, A. P. (ed.) (2000). *Signifying Identities: Anthropological Perspectives on Boundaries and Contested Values*, Routledge, London.
- Curtin, P. D. (1969). *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census*, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison.
- Cuthrell-Curry, M. (2000). African-derived religion in the African-American community in the United States. In Olupona, J. K. (ed.), *African Spirituality: Forms, Meanings, and Expressions*, Crossroad Publishing, New York, pp. 450–466.
- DeCorse, C. R. (1999). Oceans apart: Africanist perspective on diaspora archaeology. In Singleton, T. A. (ed.), *“I, Too, Am America”*: *Archaeological Studies of African-American Life*, University Press of Virginia, Charlottesville, pp. 132–155.
- Deetz, J., and Deetz, P. S. (2000). *The Times of Their Lives: Life, Love and Death in Plymouth Colony*, Freeman, New York.
- 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.
- De Vos, G. A. (1975). Ethnic pluralism: Conflict and accommodation. In De Vos, G. A., and Romanucci-Ross, L. (eds.), *Ethnic Identity: Cultural Continuities and Change*, Mayfield Publishing, Palo Alto, CA, pp. 5–41.
- Douglas, M. (1975). *Implicit Meanings: Essays in Anthropology*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London.
- Douglas, M. (1996). *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology*, Routledge, London.
- Eltis, D. (2001). The volume and structure of the transatlantic slave trade: A reassessment. *William and Mary Quarterly* (3rd Series) 58(1): 17–46.
- Emberling, G. (1997). Ethnicity in complex societies: Archaeological perspectives. *Journal of Archaeological Research* 5(4): 295–344.
- Fabian, J. (1985). Religious pluralism: An ethnographic approach. In van Binsbergen, W., and Schoffeleers, M. (eds.), *Theoretical Explorations in African Religion*, KPI, London, pp. 138–163.
- Fennell, C. C. (2000). Conjuring boundaries: Inferring past identities from religious artifacts. *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* 4(4): 281–313.
- Ferguson, L. G. (1992). *Uncommon Ground: Archaeology and Early African America*, Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, DC.
- Ferguson, L. G. (1998). Early African-American pottery in South Carolina: A complicated plainware. Paper presented at the *63rd Annual Meeting of the Society for American Archaeology*, Seattle, WA, March 25, 1998.
- Ferguson, L. G. (1999). “The cross is a magic sign”: Marks on eighteenth-century bowls from South Carolina. In Singleton, T. A. (ed.), *“I, Too, Am America”*: *Archaeological Studies of African American Life*, University Press of Virginia, Charlottesville, pp. 116–131.
- Firth, R. (1973). *Symbols: Public and Private*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY.
- Franklin, M. (1997). *Out of Site, Out of Mind: The Archaeology of an Enslaved Virginian Household, ca. 1740–1778*. PhD Dissertation, Department of Anthropology, University of California, Berkeley, and UMI, Ann Arbor, MI.
- Franklin, M., and Fesler, G. (1999). The exploration of ethnicity and the historical archaeological record. In Franklin, M., and Fesler, G. (eds.), *Historical Archaeology, Identity Formation, and the Interpretation of Ethnicity*, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg, VA, pp. 1–10.

- Galke, L. J. (2000). Did the Gods of Africa die? A re-examination of a Carroll House crystal assemblage. *North American Archaeologist* 21(1): 19–33.
- Geertz, C. (1973). *The Interpretation of Cultures*, Basic Books, New York.
- Genovese, E. (1976). *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made*, Vintage Books, New York.
- Gomez, M. A. (1998). *Exchanging Our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill.
- Gundaker, G. (1998). *Signs of Diaspora, Diaspora of Signs: Literacies, Creolization, and Vernacular Practices in African America*, Oxford University Press, New York.
- Gundaker, G. (2000). Creolization, complexity and time. *Historical Archaeology* 34(3): 124–133.
- Harding, V. (1997). Religion and resistance among antebellum slaves, 1800–1860. In Fulop, T. E., and Raboteau, A. J. (eds.), *African-American Religion: Interpretive Essays in History and Culture*, Routledge, New York, pp. 108–130.
- Hegmon, M. (1992). Archaeological research on style. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 21: 517–536.
- Hilton, A. (1985). *The Kingdom of the Kongo*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, UK.
- Hodder, I. (1982). *Symbols in Action*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK.
- Holloway, J. E. (1990). The origins of African-American culture. In Holloway, J. E. (ed.), *Africanisms in American Culture*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, pp. 1–18.
- Howson, J. E. (1990). Social relations and material culture: A critique of the archaeology of plantation slavery. *Historical Archaeology* 24(4): 78–91.
- 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*, Uppsala University, Stockholm. (Distributed by Almqvist and Wiksell, Stockholm)
- Jacobson-Widding, A. (1991). The encounter with the water mirror. In Jacobson-Widding, A. (ed.), *Body and Space: Symbolic Models of Unity and Division in African Cosmology and Experience*, Uppsala University, Stockholm, pp. 177–216. (Distributed by Almqvist and Wiksell, Stockholm)
- Janzen, J. M. (1977). The tradition of renewal in Kongo religion. In Booth, N. S., Jr. (ed.), *African Religions: A Symposium*, NOK Publishers, New York, pp. 69–116.
- Janzen, J. M. (1985). The consequences of literacy in African religion: The Kongo case. In van Binsbergen, W., and Schoffeleers, M. (eds.), *Theoretical Explorations in African Religion*, KPI, London, pp. 225–252.
- Janzen, J. M., and MacGaffey, W. (1974). *An Anthology of Kongo Religion: Primary Texts From Lower Zaire*, Publications in Anthropology No. 5, University of Kansas, Lawrence.
- Jones, L. (2000). Crystals and conjuring at the Charles Carroll house, Annapolis, Maryland. *African-American Archaeology* 27: 1–2.
- Laman, K. E. (1953). *The Kongo I*, Studies Ethnographica Upsaliensia IV, Almqvist and Wiksells, Uppsala, Sweden.
- Laman, K. E. (1957). *The Kongo II*, Studies Ethnographica Upsaliensia IV, Almqvist and Wiksells, Uppsalla, Sweden.
- Laman, K. E. (1962). *The Kongo III*, Studies Ethnographica Upsaliensia IV, Almqvist and Wiksells, Uppsalla, Sweden.
- Laman, K. E. (1968). *The Kongo IV*, Studies Ethnographica Upsaliensia IV, Almqvist and Wiksells, Uppsalla, Sweden.
- Leone, M. P., and Fry, G. (1999). Conjuring in the big house kitchen: An interpretation of African-American belief systems based on the uses of archaeology and folklore sources. *Journal of American Folklore* 112(445): 372–403.
- Levine, L. W. (1977). *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought From Slavery to Freedom*, Oxford University Press, New York.
- Logan, G. C. (1995). African religion in America. In Leone, M. P., and Silberman, N. A. (eds.), *Invisible America: Unearthing Our Hidden History*, Henry Holt, New York, pp. 154–155.
- Long, C. H. (1997). Perspectives for a study of African-American religion in the United States. In Fulop, T. E., and Raboteau, A. J. (eds.), *African-American Religion: Interpretive Essays in History and Culture*, Routledge, New York, pp. 22–35.
- MacGaffey, W. (1986). *Religion and Society in Central Africa: The BaKongo of Lower Zaire*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- MacGaffey, W. (1988a). Complexity, astonishment and power: The visual vocabulary of Kongo minkisi. *Journal of Southern African Studies* 14(2): 188–203.

- MacGaffey, W. (1988b). BaKongo cosmology. *The World & I*, Sept. 1988: 512–521.
- MacGaffey, W. (1991). *Art and Healing of the BaKongo, Commented by Themselves: Minkisi From the Laman Collection*. Folkens Museum-Etnografiska, Stockholm, Sweden. (Distributed in North America by Indiana University Press, Bloomington)
- MacGaffey, W. (1993). The eyes of understanding: Kongo minkisi. In Williams, S. H., and Driskell, D. C. (eds.), *Astonishment and Power*, Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, DC, pp. 21–106.
- MacGaffey, W. (2000a). *Kongo Political Culture: The Conceptual Challenge of the Particular*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington.
- MacGaffey, W. (2000b). The Kongo peoples. In Herreman, F. (ed.), *In the Presence of Spirits: African Art from the National Museum of Ethnology, Lisbon*, Museum for African Art, New York, and Snoek-Ducaju and Zoon, Gent, Belgium, pp. 35–59.
- Mbiti, J. (1970). *Concepts of God in Africa*, SPCK Press, London.
- Mbiti, J. (1990). *African Religions and Philosophy*, Heinemann Press, Oxford, UK.
- McKee, L. (1995). The earth is their witness. *The Sciences* 35(2): 36–41.
- Mintz, S. W., and Price, R. (1976). *An Anthropological Approach to the Afro-American Past: A Caribbean Perspective*, ISHI Occasional Papers in Social Change, Vol. 2, Institute for the Study of Human Issues, Philadelphia.
- Morgan, P. D. (1998). *Slave Counterpoint: Black Culture in the Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake & Lowcountry*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill.
- Mouer, L. D., Hodges, M. E., Potter, S. R., Renaud, S. L., Noël Hume, I., Pogue, D. J., McCartney, M. W., and Davidson, T. E. (1999). Colonoware pottery, Chesapeake pipes, and “uncritical assumptions.” In Singleton, T. A. (ed.), *“I, Too, Am America”: Archaeological Studies of African-American Life*, University Press of Virginia, Charlottesville, pp. 83–115.
- Mulira, J. G. (1990). The case of voodoo in New Orleans. In Holloway, J. E. (ed.), *Africanisms in American Culture*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, pp. 34–68.
- Orser, C. E., Jr. (1994). The archaeology of African-American slave religions in the antebellum South. *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 4(1): 33–45.
- Orser, C. E., Jr., and Funari, P. (2001). Archaeology and slave resistance and rebellion. *World Archaeology* 33(1): 61–72.
- Ortner, S. B. (1973). On key symbols. *American Anthropologist* 75(5): 1338–1346.
- Patten, D. (1992). Mankala and minkisi: Possible evidence of African American folk beliefs and practices. *African-American Archaeology* 6: 5–7.
- Perdue, C. L., Jr., Barden, T. E., and Phillips, R. K. (eds.) (1976). *Weevils in the Wheat: Interviews With Virginia Ex-Slaves*, University Press of Virginia, Charlottesville.
- Perry, W., and Paynter, R. (1999). Artifacts, ethnicity, and the archaeology of African-Americans. In Singleton, T. A. (ed.), *“I, Too, Am America”: Archaeological Studies of African-American Life*, University Press of Virginia, Charlottesville, pp. 299–310.
- Posnansky, M. (1972). Archaeology, ritual and religion. In Ranger, T. O., and Kimambo, I. N. (eds.), *The Historical Study of African Religion*, Heinemann, London, pp. 29–44.
- Posnansky, M. (1999). West Africanist reflections on African-American archaeology. In Singleton, T. A. (ed.), *“I, Too, Am America”: Archaeological Studies of African-American Life*, University Press of Virginia, Charlottesville, pp. 21–37.
- Powdermaker, H. (1939). *After Freedom: A Cultural Study in the Deep South*, Viking Press, New York.
- Raboteau, A. J. (1980). *Slave Religion: The “Invisible Institution” in the Antebellum South*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK.
- Rawick, G. P. (1978). Some notes on a social analysis of slavery: A critique and assessment of “The Slave Community.” In Gilmore, A. (ed.), *Revisiting Blassingame’s “The Slave Community”: The Scholars Respond*, Greenwood Press, Westport, CT, pp. 17–26.
- Richardson, D. (1989). Slave exports from West and West-Central Africa, 1700–1810: New estimates of volume and distribution. *Journal of African History* 30: 1–22.
- Rosaldo, R., Lavie, S., and Narayan, K. (1993). Introduction: Creativity in anthropology. In Lavie, S., Narayan, K., and Rosaldo, R. (eds.), *Creativity/Anthropology*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY, pp. 1–8.
- Sacks, S. (1979). *On Metaphor*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- Samford, P. (1996). The archaeology of African-American slavery and material culture. *William and Mary Quarterly* (3rd Series) 53(1): 87–114.

- Schneider, D. M. (1980). *American Kinship: A Cultural Account*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- Shorter, A. (1972). Symbolism, ritual and history: An examination of the work of Victor Turner. In Ranger, T. O., and Kimambo, I. N. (eds.), *The Historical Study of African Religion*, Heinemann, London, pp. 139–149.
- Singleton, T. A. (1999). An introduction to African-American archaeology. In Singleton, T. A. (ed.), *“I, Too, Am America”*: *Archaeological Studies of African-American Life*, University Press of Virginia, Charlottesville, pp. 1–17.
- Singleton, T. A., and Bograd, M. D. (1995). *The Archaeology of the African Diaspora in the Americas. Guides to the Archaeological Literature of the Immigrant Experience in America*, No. 2, Society for Historical Archaeology, Tucson, AZ.
- Smith, E., Stewart, J., and Kyger, M. E. (1964). *The Pennsylvania Germans of the Shenandoah Valley*, Schlechter’s Printing, Allentown, PA.
- Sobel, M. (1987). *The World They Made Together: Black and White Values in Eighteenth-Century Virginia*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ.
- Stahl, A. B. (1993). Concepts of time and approaches to analogical reasoning in historical perspective. *American Antiquity* **58**(2): 235–260.
- Stine, L. F., Cabak, M. A., and Groover, M. D. (1996). Blue beads as African-American cultural symbols. *Historical Archaeology* **30**(3): 49–75.
- Stuckey, S. (1987). *Slave Culture: Nationalist Theory and the Foundations of Black America*, Oxford University Press, New York.
- Thomas, B. W. (1995). Source criticism and the interpretation of African-American sites. *Southeastern Archaeology* **14**(2): 149–157.
- Thomas, K. (1971). *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, Charles Scribner’s Sons, New York.
- Thompson, R. F. (1983). *Flash of the Spirit: African and Afro-American Art and Philosophy*, Random House, New York.
- Thompson, R. F. (1990). Kongo influences on African-American artistic culture. In Holloway, J. E. (ed.), *Africanisms in American Culture*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, pp. 148–184.
- Thompson, R. F. (1993). *Face of the Gods: Art and Altars of Africa and African Americas*, The Museum for African Art, New York.
- Thompson, R. F. (1997). Translating the world into generosity. *Res* (Autumn) **32**: 19–36.
- Thompson, R. F., and Cornet, J. (1981). *The Four Moments of the Sun: Kongo Art in Two Worlds*, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.
- 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. (1983). *The Kingdom of the Kongo: Civil War and Transition, 1641–1718*, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison.
- Thornton, J. K. (1998). *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400–1800*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK.
- Thorpe, S. A. (1991). *African Traditional Religions*, University of South Africa, Pretoria.
- Tilley, C. (1999). *Metaphor and Material Culture*, Blackwell, Oxford, UK.
- Trigger, B. G. (1995). Expanding middle-range theory. *Antiquity* **69**: 449–458.
- Turner, V. (1967). *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY.
- Turner, V. (1973, March 16). Symbols in African ritual. *Science*, **179**(4078): 1100–1105.
- Van Wing, J. (1941). Bakongo magic. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* **71**(1): 85–98.
- Vansina, J. (1966). *Kingdoms of the Savanna*, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison.
- Wagner, R. (1975). *The Invention of Culture*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- Wagner, R. (1986). *Symbols That Stand for Themselves*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- Walsh, L. (2001). The Chesapeake slave trade: Regional patterns, African origins, and some implications. *William and Mary Quarterly* (3rd Series) **58**(1): 139–170.
- Wiessner, P. (1983). Style and social information in Kalahari San projectile points. *American Antiquity* **48**(2): 253–276.
- Wiessner, P. (1990). Is there a unity to style? In Conkey, M. W., and Hastorf, C. A. (eds.), *The Uses of Style in Archaeology*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, pp. 105–112.

- Wills, D. W. (1997). The central themes of American religious history: Pluralism, puritanism, and the encounter of black and white. In Fulop, T. E., and Raboteau, A. J. (eds.), *African-American Religion: Interpretive Essays in History and Culture*, Routledge, New York, pp. 8–20.
- Wilkie, L. A. (1995). Magic and empowerment on the plantation: An archaeological consideration of African-American world view. *Southeastern Archaeology* **14**(2): 136–148.
- Wilkie, L. A. (1997). Secret and sacred: Contextualizing the artifacts of African-American magic and religion. *Historical Archaeology* **31**(4): 81–106.
- Wobst, H. M. (1977). Stylistic behavior and information exchange. In Cleland, C. E. (ed.), *Papers for the Director: Research Essays in Honor of James B. Griffin*, Anthropological Papers, No. 61, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, pp. 317–342.
- Wolf, E. R. (1972). The virgin of Guadalupe: A Mexican national symbol. In Lessa, W. A., and Vogt, E. Z. (eds.), *Reader in Comparative Religion: An Anthropological Approach*, Harper and Row, New York, pp. 149–153.
- Wylie, A. (1985). The reaction against analogy. In Schiffer, M. B. (ed.), *Advances in Archaeological Method and Theory*, Vol. 8, Academic Press, New York, pp. 63–111.
- Yinger, J. M. (1994). *Ethnicity: Source of Strength? Source of Conflict?* State University of New York Press, Albany.
- Yoder, D. (1965). Official religion versus folk religion. *Pennsylvania Folklife* **15**(2): 36–52.
- Yoder, D. (1990). *Discovering American Folklife: Studies in Ethnic, Religious and Regional Culture*, UMI Research Press, Ann Arbor.
- Young, A. L. (1996). Archaeological evidence of African-style ritual and healing practices in the upland South. *Tennessee Anthropologist* **21**(2): 139–155.
- Young, A. L. (1997). Risk management strategies among African-American slaves at Locust Grove plantation. *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* **1**(1): 5–37.