

# African Diaspora Archaeology Newsletter

---

Volume 10  
Issue 4 December 2007

Article 2

---

12-1-2007

## Multivalent Symbols of an Enclosing Hand

Christopher Fennell

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, cfennell@illinois.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.umass.edu/adan>

---

### Recommended Citation

Fennell, Christopher (2007) "Multivalent Symbols of an Enclosing Hand," *African Diaspora Archaeology Newsletter*: Vol. 10 : Iss. 4 , Article 2.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.umass.edu/adan/vol10/iss4/2>

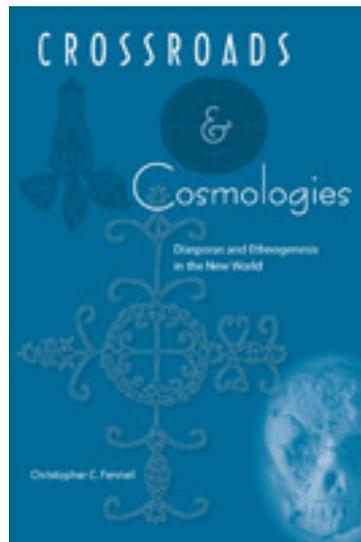
This Articles, Essays, and Reports is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst. It has been accepted for inclusion in African Diaspora Archaeology Newsletter by an authorized editor of ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@library.umass.edu](mailto:scholarworks@library.umass.edu).



## December 2007 Newsletter

### Multivalent Symbols of an Enclosing Hand

By Christopher C. Fennell\*



The following is an edited excerpt from *Crossroads and Cosmologies: Diasporas and Ethnogenesis in the New World*, University Press of Florida, Gainesville, 2007. Introductory sections of this excerpt outline a theoretical framework, portions of which are then applied in the last section of this excerpt in analyzing the possible meaning and significance of small brass figures of fists or enclosed hands uncovered archaeologically at a number of nineteenth-century work and occupation sites of African Americans. These objects, which have often been referred to as “fist charms” or “hand charms” in archaeological reports, illustrate a dynamic intersection of European-American and African-American belief systems.

## **Introduction**

This book employs anthropological theories concerning modes of symbolic expression, the formation and maintenance of social group identities, and the roles of individual creativity and innovation within those group dynamics. I examine “core” symbols within particular cultures impacted by diasporic movements across the Atlantic. Core symbols serve within a culture to express fundamental elements of a group’s cosmology and sense of identity within the world. Core symbols can be communicated through spoken words and ritual performances and are often depicted in tangible, graphic form through renderings in material culture (e.g., Ortner 1973; Turner 1967, 1973). Such graphic renderings of core symbols span a continuum of expressive modes within each culture. This spectrum extends from what I refer to as “emblematic” communications, on one end of the continuum, to more “instrumental” versions at the other end (see, e.g., Firth 1973; Ortner 1973; Turner 1967, 1973). Emblematic versions serve to summarize the identity of a culture group as a cohesive order, and are illustrated by symbols such as a national flag, the crucifix of Christianity, or the Star of David for Judaism. Instrumental expressions of the same core symbol are more abbreviated in their compositions and are used for more individual purposes. An example of such an instrumental version is seen when members of the Christian faith move their hands across heart and brow to gesture a cross as a sign of self-protection and individual prayer.

Core symbols within stable culture groups were deployed in such a broad spectrum of expressive modes. Emblematic expressions of social group identities were typically employed in settings that involved public ceremonies that celebrated group solidarity. More abbreviated and instrumental expressions of those symbols were often utilized in private settings and for individual purposes. I apply these concepts to analyze the creation and use of material

expressions of core symbols within the diasporas of various cultures from Africa and Europe, such as the BaKongo, Yoruba, Fon, and Palatine German cultures, among others. I explore the divergent ways these cultural processes played out among populations at sites in North America, the Caribbean, and South America in the fifteenth through nineteenth centuries. Focusing on African diaspora cultures, I find that the use of private, instrumental symbolism was prevalent in objects reflecting BaKongo and Yoruba religious beliefs uncovered at sites in North America. This contrasted significantly with the material culture and symbolism of African descendant groups in Caribbean and South American locations, such as Cuba, Haiti, and Brazil.

### **Shared Meanings and Culture Dynamics**

Archaeologists have recovered a variety of objects that appear to have been used for religious purposes by African-American occupants of sites dating in the late seventeenth through nineteenth centuries in North America. A number of those artifacts bear crossed lines and other attributes similar to the skull figure uncovered at the Demory site in Loudoun County, Virginia. Examples include: pottery bowls with crosses incised on their bases; white clay marbles, coins, and pewter spoons with “X” marks scratched into them; and caches of quartz crystals, polished stones, pieces of chalk, ash, iron nails and blade-like fragments, bird skulls, crab claws, coins and bone disks secreted under the brick and wood floors of dwellings (e.g., Brown 1994; Ferguson 1992, 1999; Franklin 1997; Galke 2000; Joseph, Hamby, and Long 2004; Leone 2005; Leone and Fry 1999; McKee 1995; Patten 1992; Samford 1996; Wilkie 1995, 1997; Young 1996, 1997; Zierden 2002).

These objects typically appear in contexts that indicate they were used in private, often surreptitious, settings. The symbolic composition of these items also appears to be significantly

abbreviated in comparison to key symbols of African cultures from the relevant time periods.

These characteristics raise engaging issues concerning the processes of symbolic expression and the blending of cultural beliefs and practices over time.

The analysis presented in this book explores the ways in which symbolically composed 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. This study investigates the creative uses of facets of particular cultural beliefs over time and in new social settings. I first examine an array of artifacts that appear to have been created as expressions of certain beliefs within the BaKongo religion of West Central Africa (Fig. 1.2), and I explore the changes over time and space in the modes of symbolic expressions derived from that belief system. Similar developments manifested in the material expressions of the Yoruba and Fon cultures of West Africa (Fig. 1.2) are also addressed. This analysis is designed to avoid an assumption that homogeneous, “pan-African” religious beliefs characterized a wide variety of African cultures that were in fact quite diverse and rich in their beliefs and practices (e.g., Lovejoy 2000: 16-17; Posnansky 1999: 22).

I apply an interpretative framework that assesses whether these artifacts possessed meaning and significance derived from core symbols found in African cultures such as the BaKongo. My interpretative approach illustrates the operation of three interrelated processes. *First*, a core cultural symbol of a particular social group is typically expressed across a spectrum, ranging from “emblematic” to “instrumental” modes. An emblematic form of a core symbol often serves to express a social group’s collective identity. In contrast, instrumental forms of the



**Figure 1.2. Locations, cultural groups, and language areas in Africa discussed in this book include the following: (1) Senegambia, Mandinga, Bambara; (2) Sierra Leone, Mande; (3) Ashanti, Asante; (4) Gold Coast, Koramantin; (5) Dahomey, Fon, Yoruba, Ewe; (6) Bight of Benin; (7) Benin, Igbo; (8) Bight of Biafra; (9) BaKongo, Kingdom of Kongo, Ndongo, Angola; and (10) Barolong boo Ratshidi, Tshidi (image by the author).**

same core symbol frequently consist of abbreviated and private expressions for personal purposes. *Second*, such a core symbol is usually expressed in its most fully complex and embellished form in the emblematic expressions of public and group rituals. When a core symbol of a cultural belief system is used for more private and personal ends, it is often expressed as an instrumental symbol that uses only selected and abbreviated components of the full array of the core symbol's composition. *Third*, such an individual and private use of abbreviated forms of

core symbols can lead to stylistic innovation and the creation of new symbolic repertoires to express membership in social networks formed in new settings.

These three processes unfolded, for example, when persons who subscribed to the BaKongo religion in West Central Africa were abducted into slavery and were able to continue their cultural 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 beliefs and associated core symbols. They focused instead on individualized and private uses of those core symbols to invoke spiritual powers for self-protection.

With rare exception, there is little evidence of newly-elaborated core symbols of blended African cultures emerging in the material culture of African Americans in this time period in the United States. This contrasts significantly with the material culture and symbolism of African heritage groups in Caribbean and South American locations, such as Haiti and Brazil. In those locations outside the United States, new, highly embellished symbolism was developed out of the blending of diverse African religions, including the BaKongo, Yoruba, and Dahomean belief systems. These embellished symbols were often displayed publicly and in ways likely intended to signal new social networks and group identities. This process of the creation of new emblematic symbols involved an exercise in ethnogenic bricolage, a concept I explore further in the final chapter of the book. [ . . . ]

### **Core Symbols Across a Continuum**

Before examining an example of a core symbol from the BaKongo culture in detail, we should consider how anthropologists have observed and defined such expressions across

numerous cultures they have studied. The characteristics of core symbols, which have also been referred to as “dominant” or “key” symbols, have been the subject of extensive analysis (e.g., Geertz 1973: 126-41; Ortner 1973: 1338-39; Schneider 1980: 8, 113-14; Turner 1967: 20-31; 1973: 1101-04; Wagner 1986: 11-12). For example, Ortner (1973) analyzed key symbols within individual cultures as being manifested along a continuum of expressive modes. At one end of this spectrum are expressions of a key symbol that I refer to as “emblematic,” which are meaningful and significant as representations 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: 1339-40).

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: 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 representation 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: 1339-40). 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 nationality, ethnic group, or social network (Ortner 1973: 1339-40).

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: 1341). These instrumental symbols are thus “culturally valued in that they formulate the culture’s basic means-ends relationships in actable forms” (Ortner 1973: 1341; Turner 1967: 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 shared meaning system in a later social setting (Firth 1973: 236-37; Ortner 1973: 1344; Wolf 1972: 150).

Among archaeologists, an objection is often raised that questions whether an analyst examining the limited evidence available in the archaeological record can reasonably comment on the expressive intentions of past social actors. For example, in individual compositions for instrumental purposes, the creator of a particular material representation will often design it to embody an array of metaphors, making the symbolic expression polysemous by design (Douglas 1975: 150; 1996: 10; Firth 1973: 207; Wagner 1975: 90, 98, 122). The terms polysemous, polyvalent, and multivalent are used by anthropologists to indicate that multiple meanings and messages can be at play in a given context with regard to a particular symbol. Other persons within the same social networks who view and react to one person’s creation of a symbolic expression will often see in it one or more of the metaphoric messages intended by the designer. However they may also read from it other metaphoric meanings not intentionally communicated by the author (Bruner 1993: 332; Fabian 1985: 145-47). The symbolic expression can thus be created and used in a way that has a separate polyvalent impact -- the array of metaphoric meanings read into the representation by viewers of the symbol -- that overlaps to some degree with the polysemous design of the author (Tilley 1999: 28-33; Turner 1967: 20-31).

However, these dynamics do not leave archaeologists at a loss to say anything useful in attempting to analyze the creation and use of particular symbolic expressions in different cultural settings and time periods. When particular forms of symbolic representation 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 (Rosaldo, Lavie, and Narayan 1993: 5-6). While the spoken words of past social interactions may be lost to us, the archaeological record often shows persistent patterns of material forms of symbolic expressions that can be interpreted in the context of one or more past cultural traditions and associated meaning systems (Tilley 1999: 31; Turner 1973: 1101). Thus, analysts can detect patterns of representations and attempt to describe and interpret the cultural traditions that inspired past actors in their creation and use of particular symbolic motifs and the associated metaphors incorporated in those compositions. Persuasive interpretations and explanations can be formulated when supported by multiple lines of evidence addressing the attributes and context of the material culture in question.

The archaeologist's interpretative construction of the primary array of metaphors and meanings expressed in particular symbols over time will not fully capture the array of metaphors intended by specific creators of those symbolic communications. Nor will it perfectly capture the array of metaphors and meanings other readers within a past cultural tradition would have taken away from the symbol. Yet, an archaeologist's interpretative construction, if assembled with rigor and constrained by a closeness of fit to the available evidence, will overlap at least in part with the primary and repeated metaphors intended by past authors and read by past viewers of the material culture bearing those symbols (Firth 1973: 208; Hegmon 1992: 527; Tilley 1999: 260-66). [ . . . . ]

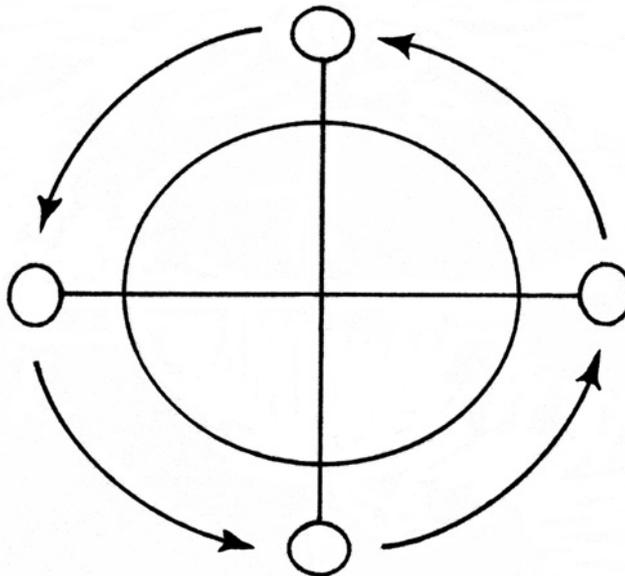
## A Core Symbol in the BaKongo Culture

The 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 groups who spoke the KiKongo language, shared a cultural system called the BaKongo, and inhabited the area referred to historically as Kongo (MacGaffey 2000c: 35-36). That geographic area consisted of territories now located in the nations of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, the Republic of Congo, and Angola, in a region that historians often refer to as West Central Africa (Janzen 1977: 112; MacGaffey 2000c: 35; see Fig. 1.2). This discussion will introduce a key facet of this culture, and the historical contexts in which it operated will be explored in greater detail in the next chapter.

A core symbol of the BaKongo culture was an ideographic religious symbol, or cosmogram, called *dikenga dia Kongo* or *tendwa kia nza-n' Kongo* in the KiKongo language (Fu-Kiau 2001: 22-23; Janzen and MacGaffey 1974: 34; Thompson and Cornet 1981: 43; see Fig. 3.1), which I will refer to as the *dikenga*. Ethnohistorical sources and material culture evidence demonstrate that the *dikenga* existed as a long-standing symbolic tradition within the BaKongo culture before European contact in 1482, and that it continued in use in West Central Africa through the early twentieth century (Janzen 1977: 81; MacGaffey 2000b: 8-11; Thompson and Cornet 1981: 27-30, 44-45; Thornton 1998: 251). In its fullest embellishment, this symbol served as an emblematic representation 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: 8-10; MacGaffey 1986: 136, 169-71; Thompson 1997: 29-30).

Figure 3.1 depicts a rendering of the full *dikenga*. The composition's multiple components summarize and represent a remarkable array of key ideas and metaphoric meanings.

The dikenga 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: 182-83; MacGaffey 1986: 43-46; Thompson 1997: 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 Godhead. 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



**Figure 3.1. Dikenga dia Kongo, a core symbol of the BaKongo culture (image by the author).**

movement from the living to the spirit world. Movement in this depicted symbolic cycle is conceptualized as proceeding counterclockwise (Gomez 1998: 148-49; Janzen and MacGaffey 1974: 34; Thompson 1983: 108-09).

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 (Fig. 3.1). 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. It also communicates the invocation of spiritual power from below into the land of the living above. 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: 28, 44; Thornton 1983: 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. These cycles are depicted by the wheeling element of the surrounding circle and the progression of the four moments of the cosmos (Balandier 1968: 155; Thompson 1997: 29-30).

The opposing realms of upper and lower unfold in additional metaphoric oppositions expressed in this emblematic version of the dikenga (Fig. 3.1). 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, demise 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, family, or community to provide aid in subsistence and protection against disease, misfortune, and harmful spirits (Janzen and MacGaffey 1974: 34; Thompson and Cornet 1981: 27-30).

A more abbreviated and instrumental form of the dikenga, consisting solely of the crossed axes, omits the surrounding cycle of lives and souls and the four moments of the cosmos with their multiple, metaphoric oppositions (Jacobson-Widding 1991: 183; MacGaffey 1988b: 516; Thompson and Cornet 1981: 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 dikenga rendering, and was used when individuals took oaths of truthfulness or undertook private rituals to seek spiritual aid (MacGaffey 1986: 118).

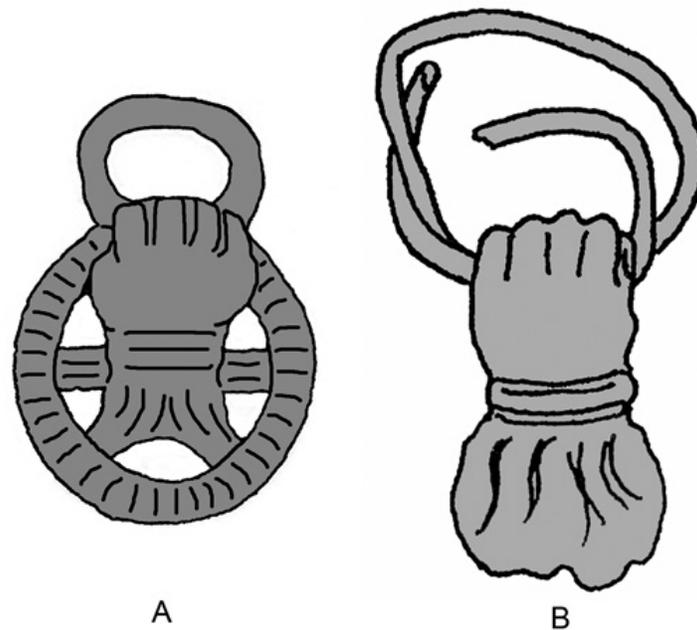
These crossed lines were typically drawn upon the ground, and a person would stand at the intersection of the lines when swearing an oath. Similarly, a ritual specialist would draw the lines upon the ground to demarcate a private, ritual space in which a spirit would be summoned for the aid of an individual supplicant. The crossed lines could also be drawn or etched onto objects in combination with vocalized prayers to create protective objects and amulets. Thus, an abbreviated version of the emblematic form of the dikenga typically served more private, and instrumental purposes (Jacobson-Widding 1991: 201; MacGaffey 1991: 4; Thompson and Cornet 1981: 43-44). [ . . . . ]

## **Multivalent Figures of an Enclosing Hand**

A set of artifacts uncovered at archaeology sites in North America likely illustrates the dynamic intersection of European-American and African-American belief systems. Several sites of the living and work areas of enslaved African Americans in the nineteenth century have contained the remains of small hand figures, typically manufactured of brass or another copper alloy. Anne Yentsch (1994: 32-33) and her colleagues recovered a hook-and-eye fastener in the shape of an enclosed hand from the fill of a crawlspace at the site of the Charles Calvert house in Annapolis, Maryland. The Calvert house was owned by a wealthy Anglo-American family for several decades starting in 1719, and was occupied by members of that family and by African Americans working as enslaved servants. The hand figure, only one-half inch in size, likely functioned as the hook assembly to an ornate clothing fastener. Yentsch (1994: 33) observed that an individual of African-American heritage could have perceived such an object as providing symbolic protection against witchcraft. However, the archaeological context did not provide evidence that the object was deposited in an area primarily utilized by the African-American servants, rather than by the Anglo-American occupants of the house (Yentsch 1994: 32).

Several other hand figures have been uncovered at sites specifically associated with the occupation and work areas of African Americans in the nineteenth century. These objects share similar characteristics to the one found in Annapolis: a hand closed in the form of a fist is set within a surrounding circle and a cross bar bisects the circle perpendicular to the wrist at the base of the hand. The closed hand typically “holds” a smaller ring that extends out from the larger circle (see image “A” in Fig. 5.1). This design was often created out of a single stamped figure, one-half inch or less in diameter, of brass or copper alloy. Hand figures of this type have been uncovered from the sites of living quarters once occupied by African-American laborers at

Andrew Jackson's Hermitage plantation in Tennessee (McKee 1995; Russell 1997) and Thomas Jefferson's Poplar Forest plantation in Virginia (Heath et al. 2004). Another hand figure uncovered at the Hermitage plantation is different. This version was made of molded metal, with a slightly larger, closed hand that is not set within a circle, and instead holds a loop of wire (McKee 1995; Russell 1997; see image "B" in Fig. 5.1).

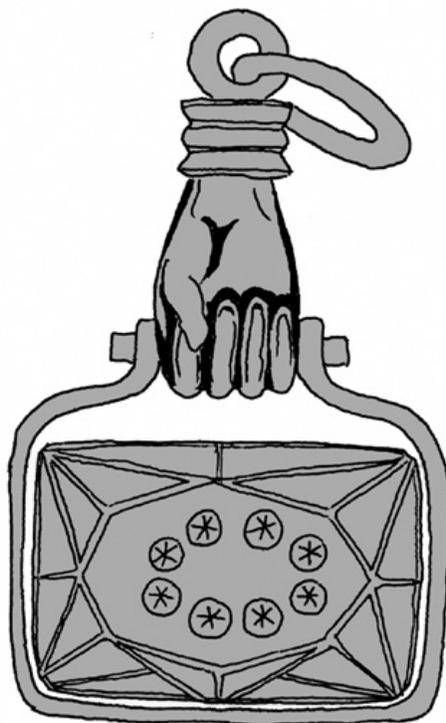


**Figure 5.1. Types of small hand figures uncovered at archaeology sites, including the Calvert house in Annapolis, the Poplar Forest plantation in Virginia, and the Hermitage plantation in Tennessee. Item "A" depicts a type of stamped brass fastener or ornament, usually .40 to .50 inches tall across both circles combined. Item "B" depicts a likely watch charm, approximately .75 inches tall from the base of the wrist to the top of the hand, made of molded metal holding a loop of wire, uncovered at the Hermitage site (see Heath et al. 2004; McKee 1995; Russell 1997; Yentsch 1994) (images by the author).**

These small artifacts open a number of interesting questions: Were these items simply utilitarian objects, or used in some other way? What was the purpose of each of these items as a manufactured object -- were they ornate clothing fasteners, jewelry, or something else? If these were "popular culture" items of manufactured jewelry or clothing fasteners, what inspired the

manufacturers to use a design that included such an ornate hand figure? How were these items used and perceived by the African-American individuals who possessed them?

The examples of items with a hand set inside a circle were most likely a form of manufactured ornament referred to as “stampings.” These products were sewn onto clothing and accessories as adornments or used as part of hook-and-eye fasteners (Bury 1991: 355-59). The other example from the Hermitage, which was a slightly larger, molded hand figure that held a loop of wire, was most likely a manufactured watch charm or jewelry charm. A smaller metal or glass ornament would have originally hung from the loop of wire as part of this watch charm (Fales 1995: 165, 368; Israel 1968: 419; see Fig 5.2). Hand figures have been incorporated in



**Figure 5.2. Example of a commercially produced watch charm incorporating a molded metal hand figure holding a loop of wire (see Israel 1968) (image by the author).**

manufactured jewelry designs for centuries. Prominent examples, dating from the early and middle nineteenth century, include hand-shaped clasps for necklaces, and jewelry charms with the design of a hand figure that held a loop of wire from which smaller charms were suspended (e.g., Fales 1995: 165, 182, 368; Hinks 1975: 36; see Fig. 5.3).



**Figure 5.3. Example of an European jewelry charm incorporating a figure of a hand holding a loop of wire from which other charms are suspended (see Hansmann and Kriss-Rettenbeck 1966) (image by the author).**

If these items uncovered at archaeology sites were such manufactured objects of popular culture, what would have inspired the manufacturers of jewelry and clothing fasteners to use such a design? Jewelry manufacturers often utilized symbolic motifs derived from religious beliefs or from the emblems of benevolent societies and guilds when creating design motifs for

mass-produced and commercialized charms and ornaments (Fales 1995; Hansmann and Kriss-Rettenbeck 1966; Israel 1968: 419-22). Three symbolic motifs from European folk religions and Catholicism rise as primary candidates for the past design inspirations of the enclosed hand figures: the *mano fica*, *Manus Dei*, and the protective symbolism of the wounds of Christ.

A *mano fica* charm, also called a *figa* or *higa*, is in the shape of a hand closed into a fist, with the thumb thrust between the first two fingers in a gesture of fertility and vitality (Deagan 2002: 89-99). The fertility symbolism of this charm is evident in its name as well as the gesture. The Italian word *fica* means vulva, which in turn was derived from the Latin word *ficus*, for the fruit of the fig tree (Moss and Cappannari 1976: 8).

Figas have served as popular amulets throughout the Mediterranean region for centuries, and were often used as protection against the perceived dangers of “evil eye” curses (Elworthy 1900: 176-77; Tait 1986: 211-13). Beliefs in a form of evil eye curse have been widespread across cultures for millennia. This belief consists of the fear that some individuals can cast curses by malevolent intent and motivations of envy, communicated by a fixed gaze cast upon a targeted person, crops, livestock, or other property (Maloney 1976: v-vii; Roberts 1976: 221-26). Protections against such remote expressions of malevolence typically involve regular wearing of protective amulets such as a *figa*.

The *figa* symbol likely was adopted as one form of protective charm against the evil eye due to its association with fertility and vitality. Parents often placed figas on children to protect them during the vulnerable period of youth (Deagan 2002: 89; Elworthy 1895: 255-58). Figas were brought to the New World with Spanish colonization of the Americas. Examples have been uncovered at archaeology sites throughout the Spanish colonial sphere, at locations in South

Carolina, Florida, the Caribbean, and South America, dating from the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries (Deagan 2002: 89, 95-99).

Were figa charms the historic referent that jewelry manufacturers had in mind when they designed the hand figures that were uncovered at the Hermitage and Poplar Forest plantations? It seems unlikely. Jewelers certainly knew how to make a figa charm, and they produced many of them over centuries, with the distinctive gesture of the thumb inserted between the fingers (Elworthy 1900: 176-77; Tait 1986: 211-13). That configuration is not included in the enclosed hand figures of interest here (Fig. 5.1).

The symbolism of the wounds of Christ and the Manus Dei present more likely sources for the design inspiration of such manufactured charms depicting an enclosed hand within a circle (Stafford 1942: 32-34; Webber 1971: 140-44). A symbolic motif focused upon by Catholic denominations and related folk religion invocations, the five wounds of Christ consisted of the piercing of the messiah's hands, feet, and heart in the course of crucifixion (Deagan 2002: 83-84; Strauss 1975: 62-63; Webber 1971: 140-44; Yoder 1990: 81, 100). These manifestations of the passion of Christ's sacrifice were used in extensive devotional art to symbolize the creation of grace as a flowing source of spiritual power and benevolence created by the crucifixion. The image of the hand is often depicted with the fingers closing over the wound of a spike hole (see, e.g., Yoder 1990: 81, 100).

Amulet symbols of an *open* hand have been used to convey messages of sacredness, power, and benediction in a number of cultures for millennia (Elworthy 1900: 169-74; Webber 1971: 49-54). For example, the "Hand of Fatima" is the name within Islam for a symbol consisting of an open, extended hand, communicating benevolence, abundance, and good fortune. This symbol, and similar ones that predated Islam, were incorporated into personal

charms used to ward off malevolent forces such as the evil eye (e.g., Hansmann and Kriss-Rettenbeck 1966: 197; Hildburgh 1906: 459).

Within Christian symbolism, the *Manus Dei*, or “Hand of God,” has been rendered as an open, extended hand overlaying a “tri-radiant nimbus” (Stafford 1942: 33; Webber 1971: 49-54). The three rays, representing the Holy Trinity, bisect one half of the circular nimbus, which is itself a symbol of sanctity and divinity (Stafford 1942: 33; Webber 1971: 50). The open hand typically fills the other half of the nimbus and partially overlays the three rays. Another Christian symbol included the cupped, enclosed hand of God, holding the souls of the righteous, and overlaying a similar nimbus bisected by radiant lines (Stafford 1942: 32-34; Webber 1971: 49-54). The latter symbol relates to gospel passages observing that the “souls of the righteous are in the hand of God” (Webber 1971: 50). By the time of the twelfth century, a similar symbol of Christ’s sacrifice and benevolence, consisting of an extended hand of beneficence framed by a tri-radiant nimbus, was engraved as an emblem over the main door of the Cathedral of Ferrara in Italy (Elworthy 1900: 195).

Symbolism related to Christ as the messiah more directly employed depictions of an enclosing hand. For example, small metal figures of an enclosed hand were incorporated into strings of paternoster beads. “Pater Noster” stands for “Our Father” and the “Lord’s Prayer,” and these bead strings were the predecessor of rosary beads within Catholic denominations (Deagan 2002: 65; Lightbrown 1992: 528-29; Winston 1993: 621). These bead strings were held in the hand, worn about the neck, arm, or wrist, or attached to clothing with a brooch. An individual would use these beads in the practice of repeating prayers as an act of devotion and penance (Deagan 2002: 65-66; Winston 1993: 621-22). Prayers typically consisted of the “Ave Maria” or the “Lord’s Prayer,” and one repeated those prayers while mediating on the life events of the

messiah (Winston 1993: 620-22, 631-32). An example of such paternoster beads created sometime in the late fifteenth to early sixteenth century was comprised of small wood beads with several small metal figures, including an enclosed hand, three nails, a hammer, a crown of thorns, a cloak, and the head of Christ bearing a crown of thorns (Lightbrown 1992: 528-29).

No doubt based on the religious symbolism of the wounds of Christ, many folk religion charms were created throughout southern and central Europe, at least from the fifteenth century onward, that consisted of an enclosed hand holding a loop of wire from which smaller charm objects were suspended. The smaller charm objects attached to these compositions varied greatly, but often included other symbols of Christianity (such as a fish, a cross, a triangle shape for the Trinity, or a church censor), fertility (such as phallic figures), and images of human anatomy or livestock for which cures and protection were sought (e.g., Hansmann and Kriss-Rettenbeck 1966: 162-67, 199, 211; see Fig. 5.3).

When archaeologists brushed the dust away from the small hand ornaments uncovered in the soils of Tennessee and Virginia, they uncovered items that were likely the product of generations of symbolic references extending far back into European history. Emblematic symbols within Christian religious denominations were incorporated into the instrumental folk religion charms of Europeans over a course of centuries. With the rise of mass-produced goods, manufacturers in the nineteenth century incorporated popular images from folk religion charms into small items stamped out by a machine or configured as watch charms. Customers in North America may have purchased such mass-produced items from local merchants because they found the ornamentation attractive without assigning it any of the past symbolism that could have attended it.

Yet, at the Tennessee and Virginia plantation sites, these small hand ornaments appear to have been owned and utilized by individuals of African-American heritage. What meanings might those individuals have associated with these small hand ornaments? Such enslaved laborers could have obtained these items through barter and trade with others in the plantation community, or by purchasing them from local merchants (Heath 1999: 50-58; Thomas 2001: 20-23).

Archaeologists have speculated that an African-American owner of one of these objects may have obtained and used it as a protective charm because it looked similar to a figa charm (e.g., McKee 1995: 40; Singleton 1991: 162). Figa charms were in fairly widespread use in the Americas by the middle of the nineteenth century (Singleton 1991: 162-63). African Americans in Virginia or Tennessee could have learned of this cultural tradition if they had spent time in more southerly plantation regions or had interacted with others who subscribed to such beliefs (Russell 1997: 67). However, the hand charms found in Tennessee and Virginia lacked the figa's distinctive gesture of thumb thrust between the fingers (Fig. 5.1). This notable difference of configuration makes this interpretation less persuasive.

Archaeologists have also suggested that the African-American owners of these small hand figures may have viewed them as representative of the Hand of Fatima (McKee 1995: 40; Russell 1997: 67). Many West Africans of Islamic heritage were abducted into the trans-Atlantic slave trade, and may have communicated knowledge of Islamic charms to others with whom they associated in the slave quarters of North American locations (Chireau 2003: 46; Fett 2002: 42). However, the fist-shaped artifacts from Tennessee and Virginia were quite distinct in appearance from charms that depicted the open and extended Hand of Fatima.

Another possibility is that these uncovered artifacts had been viewed as symbolic for a form of conjuration composition that was itself called a “hand” in African-American folk religion traditions of the nineteenth century (McKee 1995: 40; Singleton 1991: 163). Under these cultural traditions, one created a material composition as part of a protective invocation to ward off malevolent spiritual forces. Interviews with formerly enslaved persons frequently recounted that such material compositions were referred to by a number of terms, including hand, gris-gris, mojo, and jack (Chireau 2003: 47; Russell 1997: 66-67). The small hand ornament may have been viewed as a symbolic substitute for another material composition that would have been called a “hand.” Such “punning” idioms were a prominent feature of nineteenth-century African-American folk religion practices. When creating a material composition to invoke spiritual forces, African-American practitioners often chose compositional elements based on similarities in the names or shapes of those ingredients with characteristics of the maladies to be averted or cured (e.g., Brown 1990: 22).

If such a punning substitution of symbols was involved in the use of these hand ornaments, the process could have been even more involved than has been yet been suggested. Such punning idioms were also a significant feature of BaKongo cultural practices in which ritual specialists created material compositions as part of their supplications for healing and protection (Jacobson-Widding 1979: 140; Janzen and MacGaffey 1974: 6; MacGaffey 1991: 5; 2000c: 44). In addition, the phonetic root of “hand” resonates with relevant terms of the BaKongo culture. In the KiKongo language, the “word magician, *nganga*, comes from *vanga*, to make, and could be translated ‘operator’” (MacGaffey 1970b: 28). Similarly, words for “activation” and “to operate” can be rendered as *vanda* and *handa* in KiKongo (Janzen and MacGaffey 1974: 6, 46). Another phonetic similarity lay in the KiKongo word *kànda*, which

meant “palm of the hand” (Denbow 1999: 418; MacGaffey 1986: 126). Thus, the use of the word “hand” for a ritual composition could have involved a punning derivation from phonetically similar KiKongo terms to communicate an act of dexterous creation. Indeed, another term for conjuration objects in North America was *wanga*, which was derived in this way from the KiKongo language (Hall 1992: 302; Long 2001: 4, 39). In contrast, words like *gris-gris* have roots in the Mande language of West Africa (see Fig. 1.2) and the past impact of Islamic cultures in that region (Chireau 2003: 46; Hall 1992: 163).

One might suggest at this juncture that persons of BaKongo heritage may have perceived Christian imagery in the small figure of an enclosing hand, because many of the BaKongo people were introduced to Catholicism by the Portuguese missionaries while in the Kongo. However, there is little evidence to indicate that the missionaries utilized such symbolic images of the hand in the course of their activities. Missionaries instead primarily utilized the symbols of the crucifix and the water of baptism (e.g., Thornton 1977: 513-14).

It is possible that an African-American individual had acquired and used one of these small hand ornaments as a ritual symbol because he perceived the significance of the figure of a creative hand within the heritage of BaKongo cosmology. If that were the case, he may also have subscribed to other beliefs related to the BaKongo culture, including the relationships between the realm of the spirits and the living, and key BaKongo symbols that summarize those relationships. These small hand ornaments would be of compelling interest to a person who subscribed to BaKongo cosmology. The hand figure -- which would represent the creative capabilities of the *nganga* -- is centered within an encircling cycle of the cosmos and rests upon a horizontal cross bar (see image “A” in Fig. 5.1) that could be read as the “Kalunga” boundary line of the living and spirit worlds. Moreover, the hand reaches up from that boundary and grasps

the top point of the surrounding circle, which is a position on the cosmic cycle that is symbolic of powerful acts of the living (Robert F. Thompson, pers. comm.).

Thus, these small ornaments likely embody intersecting lines of history that reach from the symbols of Christ's passion spreading across the Mediterranean to the expressions of self-determination through individualized ritual invocations by enslaved African Americans in the New World.

### Note

\* Chris Fennell is assistant professor in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where he is also an affiliate faculty member of the Center for African Studies, the African American Studies and Research Program, the Department of Landscape Architecture, and the College of Law.

### Acknowledgements

My sincere thanks to Anne Yentsch, Larry McKee, and Robert Farris Thompson for their comments on this analysis. I am also grateful to Dr. McKee for alerting me to the number of such small brass stampings of hand figures that have been uncovered in other archaeological investigations of past African-American occupation sites in the course of cultural resource management projects.

### References Cited

Balandier, Georges. 1968. *Daily Life in the Kingdom of the Kongo: From the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century*. Translated by H. Weaver. London: George Allen & Unwin.

Brown, David F. 1990. "Conjure/Doctors: An Exploration of a Black Discourse in America, Antebellum to 1940." *Folklore Forum* 23 (1/2): 3-46.

Brown, Kenneth L. 1994. "Material Culture and Community Structure: The Slave and Tenant Community of Levi Jordan's Plantation, 1848-1892." In *Working Toward Freedom: Slave Society and Domestic Economy in the American South*, edited by Larry E. Hudson, Jr., 95-118. Rochester, N.Y.: University of Rochester Press.

Bruner, Edward M. 1993. "Epilogue: Creative Persona and the Problem of Authenticity." In *Creativity/Anthropology*, edited by Smadar Lavie, Kirin Narayan, and Renato Rosaldo, 321-34. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.

- Bury, Shirley. 1991. *Jewellery 1789-1910: The International Era*. Woodbridge, UK: Antique Collectors' Club.
- Chireau, Yvonne P. 2003. *Black Magic: Religion and the African American Conjuring Tradition*. Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press.
- Deagan, Kathleen A. 2002. *Artifacts of the Spanish Colonies of Florida and the Caribbean, 1500-1800. Vol. 2, Portable Personal Possessions*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Denbow, James. 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): 404-23.
- Douglas, Mary. 1975. *Implicit Meanings: Essays in Anthropology*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Elworthy, Frederick T. 1895. *The Evil Eye: An Account of This Ancient and Widespread Superstition*. London: John Murray.
- Elworthy, Frederick T. 1900. *Horns of Honour and Other Studies in the By-Ways of Archaeology*. London: John Murray.
- Fabian, Johannes. 1985. "Religious Pluralism: An Ethnographic Approach." In *Theoretical Explorations in African Religion*, edited by Wim van Binsbergen and Matthew Schoffeleers, 138-63. London: KPI.
- Fales, Martha G. 1995. *Jewelry in America, 1600-1900*. Woodbridge, UK: Antique Collectors' Club.
- Fett, Sharla M. 2002. *Working Cures: Healing, Health and Power on Southern Slave Plantations*. Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press.
- Ferguson, Leland G. 1992. *Uncommon Ground: Archaeology and Early African America*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Ferguson, Leland G. 1999. "'The Cross Is a Magic Sign:' Marks on Eighteenth-Century Bowls from South Carolina." In *I, Too, Am America: Archaeological Studies of African-American Life*, edited by Theresa A. Singleton, 116-31. Charlottesville, Va.: University Press of Virginia.
- Firth, Raymond. 1973. *Symbols: Public and Private*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.
- Franklin, Maria. 1997. "Out of Site, Out of Mind: The Archaeology of an Enslaved Virginian Household, ca. 1740-1778." Ph.D. Diss., University of California, Berkeley. Ann Arbor, Mich.: UMI.

- Fu-Kiau, Kimbwandènde Kia Bunseki. 2001. *African Cosmology of the Bantu-Kôngo: Tying the Spiritual Knot; Principles of Life and Living*. 2nd ed. Brooklyn, N.Y.: Athelia Henrietta Press/Orunmila.
- Galke, Laura 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, Clifford. 1973. *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books.
- Gomez, Michael A. 1998. *Exchanging Our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South*. Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press.
- Gundaker, Grey. 1998. *Signs of Diaspora, Diaspora of Signs: Literacies, Creolization, and Vernacular Practices in African America*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Hall, Gwendolyn M. 1992. *Africans in Colonial Louisiana: The Development of Afro-Creole Culture in the Eighteenth Century*. Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press.
- Hansmann, Liselotte, and Lenz Kriss-Rettenbeck. 1966. *Amulett und Talisman: Erscheinungsform und Geschichte*. Munich: Callwey.
- Heath, Barbara, Randy Lichtenberger, Keith Adams, Lori Lee, and Elizabeth Paull. 2004. "Poplar Forest Archaeology: Studies in African American Life; Excavations and Analysis of Site A, Southeast Terrace and Site B, Southeast Curtilage, June 2003-June 2004." Report to the Public Welfare Foundation, June 15, 2004. Forest, Va.: Corporation of Jefferson's Poplar Forest.
- Hegmon, Michelle. 1992. "Archaeological Research on Style." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 21: 517-36.
- Hildburgh, W. L. 1906. "Notes on Spanish Amulets." *Folklore* 17 (4): 454-71.
- Hinks, Peter. 1975. *Nineteenth Century Jewellery*. London: Faber and Faber.
- Israel, Fred L., ed. 1968. *1897 Sears Roebuck Catalogue*. New York: Chelsea House Publishers.
- Jacobson-Widding, Anita. 1979. *Red-White-Black as a Mode of Thought: A Study of Triadic Classification by Colours in the Ritual Symbolism and Cognitive Thought of the Peoples of the Lower Congo*. Stockholm: Uppsala University. Distributed by Almqvist and Wiksell, Stockholm.
- Jacobson-Widding, Anita. 1991. "The Encounter with the Water Mirror." In *Body and Space: Symbolic Models of Unity and Division in African Cosmology and Experience*, edited by Anita Jacobson-Widding, A., 177-216. Stockholm: Uppsala University. Distributed by Almqvist and Wiksell, Stockholm.

- Janzen, John M. 1977. "The Tradition of Renewal in Kongo Religion." In *African Religions: A Symposium*, edited by Newell S. Booth, Jr., 69-116. New York: NOK Publishers.
- Janzen, John M., and Wyatt MacGaffey. 1974. *An Anthology of Kongo Religion: Primary Texts from Lower Zaire*. Publications in Anthropology No. 5. Lawrence, Kans.: University of Kansas.
- Joseph, J. W., Theresa M. Hamby, and Catherine S. Long. 2004. "Historical Archaeology in Georgia." University of Georgia, Laboratory of Archaeology Series, Report No. 39. Georgia Archaeological Research Design Paper No. 14. Stone Mountain, Ga.: New South Associates.
- Leone, Mark P. 2005. *The Archaeology of Liberty in an American Capital: Excavations in Annapolis*. Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press.
- Leone, Mark P., and Gladys-Marie Fry. 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.
- Lightbrown, Ronald W. 1992. *Mediaeval European Jewellery*. London: Trustees of the Victoria and Albert Museum.
- Long, Carolyn M. 2001. *Spiritual Merchants: Religion, Magic, and Commerce*. Knoxville, Tenn.: University of Tennessee Press.
- Lovejoy, Paul E. 2000. "Identifying Enslaved Africans in the African Diaspora." In *Identity in the Shadow of Slavery*, edited by Paul E. Lovejoy, 1-29. London: Continuum.
- MacGaffey, Wyatt. 1970a. *Custom and Government in the Lower Congo*. Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press.
- MacGaffey, Wyatt. 1986. *Religion and Society in Central Africa: The BaKongo of Lower Zaire*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- MacGaffey, Wyatt. 1988b. "BaKongo Cosmology." *The World & I*, Sept. 1988: 512-21.
- MacGaffey, Wyatt. 1991. *Art and Healing of the BaKongo, Commented by Themselves: Minkisi from the Laman Collection*. Stockholm: Folkens Museum-Etnografiska. Distributed in North America by Indiana University Press, Bloomington, Ind.
- MacGaffey, Wyatt. 2000b. *Kongo Political Culture: The Conceptual Challenge of the Particular*. Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press.
- MacGaffey, Wyatt. 2000c. "The Kongo Peoples." In *In the Presence of Spirits: African Art from the National Museum of Ethnology, Lisbon*, edited by Frank Herreman, 35-59. New York: Museum for African Art.

Maloney, Clarence. 1976. Introduction to *The Evil Eye*, edited by Clarence Maloney, v-xvi. New York: Columbia University Press.

McKee, Larry. 1995. "The Earth is Their Witness." *The Sciences* 35 (2): 36-41.

Moss, Leonard W., and Stephen C. Cappannari. 1976. "*Mal'occio, Ayin ha ra, Oculus fascinus, Judenblick: The Evil Eye Hovers Above.*" In *The Evil Eye*, edited by Clarence Maloney, 1-15. New York: Columbia University Press.

Ortner, Sherry B. "On Key Symbols." 1973. *American Anthropologist* 75 (5): 1338-46.

Patten, Drake. 1992. "Mankala and Minkisi: Possible Evidence of African American Folk Beliefs and Practices." *African-American Archaeology* 6: 5-7.

Posnansky, Merrick. 1999. "West Africanist Reflections on African-American Archaeology." In *I, Too, Am America: Archaeological Studies of African-American Life*, edited by Theresa A. Singleton, 21-37. Charlottesville, Va.: University Press of Virginia.

Roberts, John M. 1976. "Belief in the Evil Eye in World Perspective." In *The Evil Eye*, edited by Clarence Maloney, 221-78. New York: Columbia University Press.

Rosaldo, Renato, Samar Lavie, and Kirin Narayan. 1993. "Introduction: Creativity in Anthropology." In *Creativity/Anthropology*, edited by Samar Lavie, Kirin Narayan, and Renato Rosaldo, 1-8. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.

Russell, Aaron E. 1997. "Material Culture and African-American Spirituality at the Hermitage." *Historical Archaeology* 31 (2): 63-80.

Samford, Patricia. 1996. "The Archaeology of African-American Slavery and Material Culture." *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 53 (1): 87-114.

Schneider, David M. 1980. *American Kinship: A Cultural Account*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Singleton, Theresa A. 1991. "The Archaeology of Slave Life." In *Before Freedom Came: African-American Life in the Antebellum South*, edited by Edward D. C. Campbell, Jr. and Kym S. Rice, 155-75. Charlottesville, Va.: University Press of Virginia.

Stafford, Thomas A. 1942. *Christian Symbolism in the Evangelical Churches*. New York: Abingdon-Chokesbury Press.

Strauss, Gerald. 1975. "Success and Failure in the German Reformation." *Past and Present* 67: 30-63.

- Tait, Hugh, ed. 1986. *Jewelry: 7000 Years*. New York: Harry N. Abrams.
- Thompson, Robert F. 1983. *Flash of the Spirit: African and Afro-American Art and Philosophy*. New York: Random House.
- Thompson, Robert F. 1997. "Translating the World into Generousness." *Res* 32 (Autumn): 19-36.
- Thompson, Robert F., and Joseph Cornet. 1981. *The Four Moments of the Sun: Kongo Art in Two Worlds*. Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art.
- Thornton, John K. 1977. "Demography and History in the Kingdom of the Kongo, 1550-1750." *Journal of African History* 18 (4): 507-30.
- Thornton, John K. 1983. *The Kingdom of the Kongo: Civil War and Transition, 1641-1718*. Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Thornton, John K. 1998. *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1800*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Tilley, Christopher. 1999. *Metaphor and Material Culture*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
- Turner, Victor. 1967. *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.
- Turner, Victor. 1973. "Symbols in African Ritual." *Science* 179 (4078) (March 16): 1100-05.
- Wagner, Roy. 1975. *The Invention of Culture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Wagner, Roy. 1986. *Symbols That Stand for Themselves*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Webber, F. R. 1971. *Church Symbolism: An Explanation of the More Important Symbols of the Old Testament and New Testament, the Primitive, the Medieval, and the Modern Church*. Detroit, Mich.: Gale Research.
- Wilkie, Laurie A. 1995. "Magic and Empowerment on the Plantation: An Archaeological Consideration of African-American World View." *Southeastern Archaeology* 14 (2): 136-48.
- Wilkie, Laurie A. 1997. "Secret and Sacred: Contextualizing the Artifacts of African-American Magic and Religion." *Historical Archaeology* 31 (4): 81-106.
- Winston, Anne. 1993. "Tracing the Origins of the Rosary: German Vernacular Texts." *Speculum* 68 (3): 619-36.

Wolf, Eric R. 1972. "The Virgin of Guadalupe: A Mexican National Symbol." In *Reader in Comparative Religion: An Anthropological Approach*, edited by William A. Lessa and Evon Z. Vogt, 149-53. New York: Harper and Row.

Yentsch, Anne. 1994. *A Chesapeake Family and Their Slaves: A Study in Historical Archaeology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Young, Amy L. 1996. "Archaeological Evidence of African-Style Ritual and Healing Practices in the Upland South." *Tennessee Anthropologist* 21 (2): 139-55.

Yoder, Don. 1990. *Discovering American Folklife: Studies in Ethnic, Religious and Regional Culture*. Ann Arbor, Mich.: UMI Research Press.

Young, Amy L. 1997. "Risk Management Strategies Among African-American Slaves at Locust Grove Plantation." *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* 1 (1): 5-37.

Zierden, Martha. 2002. "Frontier Society in South Carolina: An Example from Willtown (1690-1800)." In *Another's Country: Archaeological and Historical Perspectives on Cultural Interactions in the Southern Colonies*, edited by J. W. Joseph and Marth Zierden, 181-97. Tuscaloosa, Ala.: University of Alabama Press.

**Return to December 2007 Newsletter:**

**<http://www.diaspora.uiuc.edu/news1207/news1207.html>**