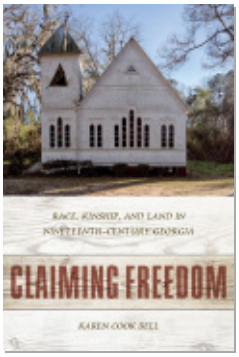
1. The Slave's Dream



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THE SLAVE'S DREAM

Besides the ungathered rice he lay,
His sickle in his hand;
His breast was bare, his matted hair
Was buried in the sand.
Again, in the mist and shadow of sleep,
He saw his native Land.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, "The Slave's Dream"

The landscape served as the canvas upon which enslaved men and women forged a life and identity during the antebellum and postbellum period. This chapter establishes in lowcountry Georgia a sense of place, defined as a "feeling and understanding of a particular locale inscribed over time" by those who lived and traveled there.[1] The ambivalence of the landscape as a place of terror and community is narrated through the individual and collective voices of African Americans who reenvisioned their objective reality by challenging the isolation of their physical geography; they engaged in what Toni Morrison fashioned as remembering and (dis)remembering elements of their African culture through revisions of the past and through political activity.[2] In this chapter, political activity is understood as an organized collective action that affects power relations. Sterling Stuckey, Lawrence Levine, and Eugene Genovese have each looked beyond subversive acts for evidence of the deeper cultural and social resistance found in folkways, religious practices, and family life.[3]

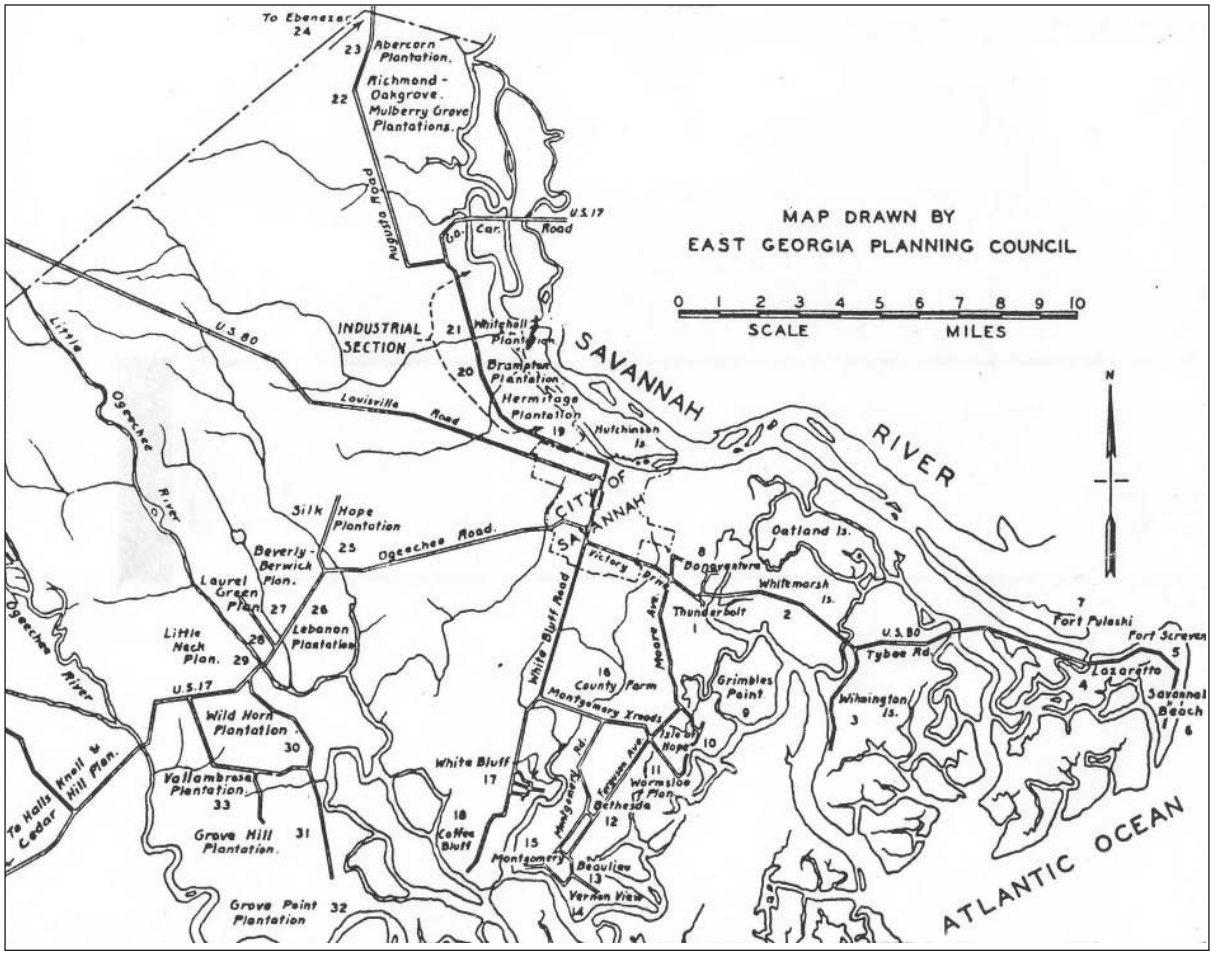
Lowcountry Georgia emerged as the principal area for antebellum rice production. As late as 1860, twelve of the seventeen largest slave owners in the United States were rice planters.[4] Moreover, rice plantations were larger than other staple crop plantations in the South and in several respects resembled Caribbean estates. By 1830 rice had surpassed cotton as king in Georgia's five coastal counties: Chatham, Liberty, McIntosh, Glynn, and Camden. This region is divided into six natural

ecosystems: barrier islands, coastal marine, estuaries and sounds, mainland upland, rivers, and swamps. The growth of rice in Georgia depended on the tide-flow method, the unusual requirements of the soil, and the knowledge and skill of enslaved Africans and African Americans. The tide-flow method required the flooding and draining of rice fields on the basis of tidal fluctuations. Because rice growth requires fresh water, rice lands were located above the saltwater lines on freshwater rivers. Furthermore, rice lands were positioned where the freshwater level could be raised by each high tide.[5]

The soil required for growing good rice crops consisted of clay and swamp muck. As a part of the subsoil, clay retained water well when flooded and thus prevented the fields from losing large amounts of water through leakage. The region's five large rivers, Savannah, Ogeechee, Altamaha, Satilla, and St. Mary's, were vital to the growth of rice and served as the focal point for settlement.[6] In coastal Georgia, transformation of the landscape emanated from the knowledge systems of Africans who were transplanted from rice-growing regions in West Africa. By 1860 three principal watershed rice districts had emerged: the Savannah-Ogeechee district, located between the Savannah and Ogeechee rivers; the Midway district, located between the Savannah and Altamaha rivers; and the Altamaha district, which stretched from the Atlantic between the Altamaha and St. Mary's rivers. By definition, a watershed is the land area which contributes surface water to a river or other body of water. The boundaries of a watershed are formed by a high point and all water flows down to the lowest point or watershed outlet. Settlement in watershed areas is characterized by a complex system involving social, ecological, and physical factors. The water served as a powerful unifying force in watershed districts.[7]

Along the Savannah and Ogeechee rivers, over 12,000 enslaved Africans labored on lowcountry plantations.[8] These plantations included Vallambrosia, Grove Point, Grove Hill, and Wild Horn, which were established by descendants of wealthy South Carolina planters. Daniel Blake of South Carolina purchased 1,321 acres of land, which comprised Vallambrosia plantation, from Stephen Elliott in 1827.[9] A few years later, Arthur Heyward, who married Blake's daughter, purchased the land and expanded it to 2,692 acres.[10] During this same period, Stephen Elliott consolidated Grove Hill plantation from the initial 840 acres purchased in 1797 to 1,340 acres. Elliott's son, Reverend Stephen Elliott Jr., sold the plantation to William and Stephen Habersham in 1849.[11]

Stephen Habersham began acquiring land in the Ogeechee area in 1848, when he purchased 900 acres from Francis H. MacLeod's estate.[12] MacLeod inherited Wild Horn plantation in the early 1800s from his grandfather Francis Harris, a speaker of the Colonial Assembly and a partner in the mercantile firm Habersham and Harris. Harris enlarged his initial 500-acre land grant to 3,400 acres.[13] Similarly Grove Point plantation initially consisted of 500 acres granted to South Carolina planter-merchant James Powell, who received a total of fifteen land grants



Plantation districts
Savannah-Chatham
County

in Georgia, totaling 6,645 acres.[14] In 1846 John R. Cheves purchased Grove Point plantation, which consisted of 1,500 acres.[15]

The Midway watershed community included Bryan, Liberty, and McIntosh counties; the latter was at the geographic center of Georgia's rice coast in 1860. Two of the earliest cotton and rice plantations were constructed on St. Catherine's Island in Liberty County and on Sapelo Island in McIntosh County. Jacob Waldburg developed extensive holdings on St. Catherine's Island, which at its peak, in 1853, included 255 enslaved Africans and African Americans. Waldburg also owned properties in Savannah.[16] Similarly Thomas Spalding owned extensive rice, cotton, wheat, and sugar cane plantations on Sapelo Island, where 300 enslaved Africans and African Americans labored in 1853.[17] According to the 1860 census, 41,084 Georgia slaveholders had an average of 11.2 slaves each, with owners in Liberty and McIntosh counties holding double the state average.[18] By 1850 the largest planters in the Midway district, holding over 200 slaves, included Pierce Butler, with 505 bondmen and bondwomen on Butler's Island; and Randolph Spalding, with 252 enslaved persons.[19]

The Altamaha River estuary served as a natural divider for the islands south and north of the Altamaha, where the third watershed district developed. As the Altamaha approached the sea, it partitioned into several channels that joined, separated, and rejoined each other in the marshland of the river's delta.[20] The marshlands and tidal rivers surrounding St. Catherine's, Ossabaw, Sapelo, St. Simons, and Jekyll islands provide the intellectual framework for examining the interrelationship of land, space, and the creation of narratives of freedom.

The rice coast communities emerged as a result of three inwardly related and complementary historical developments: extensive headright privileges granted in the Georgia state constitution, the forced migration of thousands of Africans, and the concomitant transformation of the natural landscape. To encourage settlement of Georgia's new counties, the state constitution provided headrights for prospective settlers in 1777. Each household head would receive two hundred acres, and the state provided fifty acres for each additional free person or slave. A 1783 amendment allowed applicants to acquire up to one thousand acres in the coastal counties.[21] By 1790 the population of the counties, with the exception of Chatham, remained under five hundred, with enslaved Africans making up the majority of the population.[22]

On Glynn County's St. Simons Island, the landscape epitomized the individual and collective ordeal of slavery. Separated from the sea by Little St. Simons Island, which confronts the Atlantic Ocean and Altamaha Sound with an expanse of hammock land, marshes, dunes, and sand beaches, St. Simons contained Hampton, Hopeton, Retreat, and Cannon's Point plantations. These rice coast communities developed under the influence of Thomas Butler King, Hugh F. Grant, John H. Couper, Thomas Spalding, and Pierce Butler. Within the Altamaha watershed

district, 1,700 acres of land formed the nucleus of Butler's St. Simons properties, an expanse of land stretching across the northern end of Little and Greater St. Simons islands.[23] Butler's holdings consisted of four cotton plantations on St. Simons Island and a rice plantation on Butler's Island. Six hundred acres on the Altamaha delta that consisted of mostly marshland to the north and west of Hampton became known as Five Pound Tree, which symbolized the fractured lives and the submerged voices of enslaved African Americans in that it served as an isolated home for the unruly. Coterminous with Five Pound Tree was an expanse of two thousand acres of marshland that became what was called the Experiment plantation.[24]

Butler's Island serves as a spatial paradigm in which to view the conception of space within the coastal environment. Lying south and west of Darien and located ten miles upstream from Hampton, Butler's Island contained 1,500 acres of land, with more trees than marshland. Enslaved Africans banked and then cleared the land with hand tools for the cultivation of rice.[25] The high bank around the perimeter was nine miles in length. The removal of soil from the island side of the bank resulted in a large ditch that became a combination of aqueduct and canal. They placed floodgates and trunks (wood culverts) strategically in the high bank to facilitate the introduction of fresh water with the rise and fall of the river. Additionally they prepared a vast grid of banks, canals, and ditches, and drains and quarter drains from the heavy growth of the river swamp.[26]

The transition from long-staple cotton to rice production occurred following the perfection of the cotton gin in 1793. The exclusion of salt water from the incoming flood tides made the growth of rice possible along the Altamaha. From the beginning, enslaved African Americans directed the interior landscape by constructing a canal three hundred yards long, four feet wide, and eight inches deep that improved communications and access to Hampton.[27] Both the task labor system and the gang labor system were employed on Butler's Island and St. Simons Island. The growth of long-staple cotton required the use of the gang labor system. Moreover, seven horses and seven workers were required to operate the cotton gin, which freed the cotton of most of its seed. An ancillary step called moting required women to pick broken seeds and debris out of the cotton by hand and to winnow the cotton over a fan for further cleaning. On St. Simons Island, the cotton gin produced four hundred to five hundred pounds of clean fiber daily. The cotton was forced into three-hundred-pound bags by the compressing screw, and if it was sent on to Savannah or Charleston, it would be further compressed by more efficient equipment.[28]

On Butler's Island, four settlements determined the spatialized power relations within the natural landscape. The four settlements consisted of the overseer's house, located on the highest, most accessible land; the garden; the plantation complex, which consisted of the machine shops, the rice mill, and the sugar mill; and the slave quarters. Near the Champney River, located on the back side of the Altamaha, were the garden, the plantation complex, and the larger slave quarters.[29]

These settlements were protected from flooding within the island by their own lesser banks. As in other watershed communities, the river landing and its wharf were an integral part of this landscape. In the Altamaha watershed community of Camden County, Robert Stafford established extensive landholdings on Cumberland Island, consisting of over 4,200 acres for the cultivation of rice and sea island cotton worked by 348 enslaved Africans in 1850. By 1860 the Altamaha watershed community included 2,785 enslaved Africans and African Americans who worked 8,000 acres of land.[30]

Within the established watershed communities, resistance to enslavement became an integral part of the landscape. Materials as divergent as slave narratives, the post-Civil War petitions of former slaves, plantation records, and journals yield a composite picture of the complexities of the slave system that underscores the diversity of responses to the system. Collectively these materials demonstrate that narratives of resistance and freedom were a form of discourse within certain limits and with a conceptual language that established human agency. These narratives represented an attempt to construct an identity, a set of relationships, and boundaries for negation, resistance, and reinterpretation of their lived experience.[31] Resistance and freedom persisted in the consciousness of enslaved Africans and African Americans in lowcountry Georgia.

TABLE 1. Rice Production in Lowcountry Georgia, 1860

COUNTY	POUNDS PRODUCED
Chatham	25,934,160
Camden	10,330,068
McIntosh	6,421,100
Glynn	4,842,755
Liberty	2,548,382

SOURCE: *U.S. Census Manuscript Agricultural Returns,* 1860.

Within the first generation of Africans in the lowcountry, a substantial number were West Coast Africans from the Senegambian region and Sierra Leone. The nearly two dozen ethnic groups with representation along the west coast from Senegal to Sierra Leone, and from Angola at various times, provided the ideological superstructure upon which to express resistance and freedom.[32]

THE HURT OF THIS HURT WORLD

Narratives were central to the formation and expression of ideas of resistance and freedom within the community of the enslaved. As a central epistemological category, narratives represented a category of human experience and thinking, a body of ideas that explained relations, structures, and the conjuncture of discourse and

power. Narratives that exemplified possible ideal ways of existence were the most ubiquitous in the identity of lowcountry African Americans. These utopian narratives were an integral part of the private transcripts of the enslaved.[33] Perhaps nowhere was this more evident than on Butler's Island. The degradation of the men, women, and children who labored on Butler's Island underscored the dichotomous nature of the task labor system, which until very recently has been equated with slave autonomy.[34] The records of Pierce Butler reveal a dismal experience. On Butler's Island, 50 percent of children age two to twelve months died as a result of being underweight and exposed to malaria, influenza, whooping cough, lockjaw, and winter fevers. On Stephen Habersham's, Grove Hill plantation, slave deaths occurred each month, with children under the age of five making up the majority of deaths recorded. Moreover, the health of women on the plantation was poor because women returned to field labor soon after giving birth. Women also suffered from a variety of ailments, including fallen wombs, spinal injuries from backbreaking work in rice fields, fevers, pulmonary illness, rheumatism, and foot rot caused by standing knee-deep in water.[35]

The belief that the enslaved could transcend their physical oppression by returning to Africa produced the symbol of a reversed transatlantic migration to escape an abhorrent reality. Narratives of flight back to Africa, preserved as intergenerational narratives within lowcountry communities, underscored the persistence of Africa in the consciousness of the enslaved. A persistent memory of Ryna Johnson, an enslaved woman on Hopeton plantation, and of several others in the St. Simons Island and Sapelo Island communities, was the legend of Butler's Island Africans who, resentful of the overseer's lash, flew back to Africa.[36] Similarly the narratives of Prince Sneed, Serina Hall, and Solomon Gibson, whose ancestors labored on St. Catherine's Island, reveal a parallel migration to Africa.[37]

Ideas are the environment in which people live, and thus the metaphor of returning to Africa expressed a determination to dream of and hope for a better life literally and symbolically beyond their present situation in slavery. The historical reenvisioning of returning to Africa remained a persistent theme in the ideology of African Americans who lived within the Georgia-South Carolina lowcountry continuum. Phyllis Green, a former slave in Charleston, South Carolina, described an event that took place on James Island, in which Africans who refused to submit to the seasoning process feigned accommodation and began their flight back to Africa. These oft-repeated narratives were represented as historical events, not myths, and underscore several themes of resistance, such as refusing to assimilate, plotting return back to Africa, pretending to accommodate, and flying home to freedom. In a similar vein, narratives of freedom through death provided the theoretical underpinnings for an alternate conception of historical reality. On St. Simons Island, newly purchased captive Africans sold to John Couper and Thomas Spalding by the Savannah firm of Mein and Mackay endured a second "voyage through death" down

the coast from Savannah. Their confinement below deck created the conditions that led to a revolt against the crew and Couper's overseer. Landing near the marshlands, the Igbos began singing and wading through the waters of the Altamaha River, where twelve drowned in an attempt to reverse their forced migration.[38]

The struggle to resist enslavement created the conditions for severe punishments. Severe punishments for a variety of perceived offenses occurred frequently on the Butler's plantation. These punishments were gender neutral and deprived both men and women of their humanity and their dignity. Women such as Judy, Sinder, and Sophy, whose bodies were violated by the overseer and manager of the island, Roswell King Sr., and who bore children as a result of this violation, endured severe floggings at the behest of Mrs. King. Mrs. King meted out further punishment at Five Pound Tree, where the women were exiled for a week of additional floggings.[39] For women, slavery was even more terrible because overt resistance was not a viable option. The threat of retribution through physical violence such as whippings or the moral anguish that would result from separation from their family or surroundings if they were sold away was omnipresent. Sexuality, as Catherine Clinton has argued, was a central and significant element in the system of power devised by the slave society. The sexual abuse of slave women by white men marked the distinct convergence of racial, sexual, and economic systems. The life of Elizabeth Bernardey, a mulatto slave of Robert Stafford of Cumberland Island, is illustrative. By 1850 Stafford had owned 348 slaves and owned the largest tracts of land on the island, which totaled over 4,200 acres. Over the course of their thirty-year relationship, Bernardey gave birth to six children fathered by Stafford.[40]

Cruel and unusual punishments provided the impetus for flight from plantations. Implacable hostility was coeval with the task labor system, which was the cornerstone of lowcountry plantation management. Severe beatings, whippings, and floggings were convergent with chains, irons, and incarceration. Under these conditions, enslaved Africans seized opportunities for self-emancipation. The sea islands provided fluid egress for runaways to flee to the nearby pine lands and assimilate with the Seminoles in Spanish Florida. During the waning years of the war of 1812, 138 enslaved Africans from Butler's Island seized the opportunity to escape slavery when British forces occupied nearby Cumberland Island and several lesser islands.[41]

THE ILLUSION OF ISOLATION

The task labor system shaped the experiences of enslaved Africans on the plantation of Reverend Charles C. Jones.[42] The task system assigned each slave a certain amount of work each day, and depending on the season and the required tasks, it could be characterized by arduous labor and unhealthy weather conditions. A quarter acre to hoe in heavy rains, which occurred frequently in the lowcountry, meant slaves such as Sina and Eve on the Jones's Montevideo plantation and Patty and

Nancy on Stephen Habersham's Grove Hill plantation spent long hours completing their assigned task. Like men, women performed digging and cleaning tasks. Women used long-handled scoops "in which mud which had been accumulated in the ditch was dragged out."[43] On St. Simons Island, enslaved women on Kelvin Grove plantation performed much of the physical labor. The slave population on Kelvin Grove consisted of eighty-one slaves, of whom forty-five (56 percent) were women. Twenty-three were field hands who cultivated rice and Sea Island cotton. In 1853 Jane, Sarah, Hamit, Hester, and Nanny ginned and moted cotton, which yielded above sixty pounds per slave each day. While the task labor system provided slaves with "an economy of time" to plant and tend gardens and raise livestock, control and coercion remained the central elements of the system.[44]

The task labor system did create an internal slave economy that informed African American postwar strategies to secure economic independence and establish land-based communities. However, the ownership of property, like other aspects of slavery, remained outside of the law, which impeded formal recognition of this property when slavery ended. Public display and acknowledgement of property owned by slaves reinforced the informal economic system. The institutions that permitted the enslaved to accumulate property had been in place for generations and expanded during the nineteenth century. In the rural lower South, it was primarily an extension of slave gardens and livestock raising. In the urban areas of the lower and upper South, it evolved from African Americans hiring out their time. Gardens were used to supplement diets and in the process became the de facto land and property of the enslaved.[45]

The most extensive body of evidence relating to the property owned by enslaved Africans and African Americans are the records of the Southern Claims Commission, which was created by Congress to identify northern, and later Southern, loyalists who had lost personal property to Union soldiers during the Civil War and to provide restitution to them. The commissioners of the Claims Commission and their agents certified the loyalty of each claimant and the amount, nature, and value of the property taken, and reported their judgment on each claim in writing to Congress.[46] The issue of property ownership by enslaved African Americans has become central in the historiography of slavery. The work of Phillip D. Morgan, Thomas F. Armstrong, Loren Schweninger, and Dylan Penningroth has provided new insights that continually expand the framework for examining the complexity of slave life. Within this framework, questions concerning the relationship between kinship and property ownership have arisen. In his study of social relations and property ownership, Dylan Penningroth argues that property was one of the things that made social ties. Property's value, according to Penningroth "lay in the social relationships it embodied."[47]

The claims of African Americans reveal a great deal about kinship and the process by which a collective identity was forged. These narratives are a part of the

politics of remembering life during slavery and other injustices. As a means of empowerment and identity formation, the testimony of formerly enslaved claimants and their witnesses underscores the fact that oppression created solidarity, irrespective of property-owning status. The oppression of slavery created and reinforced social ties and community. Thus kinship and race were inextricably interlinked. Moreover, the very nature of living life in a system of perpetual bondage meant that conflict within the slave community was diminished. Above all else, the majority of enslaved African Americans endeavored to survive slavery. This common experience and identity, as Wilson Moses has argued, was "the basis of a racial unity, unknown among the various African groups before the transatlantic slave trade."[48]

In this vein, the testimonies of claimants and their witnesses represent an indispensable link to an understanding of resistance to enslavement. These narratives of freedom hermeneutically convey what enslaved Africans and African Americans experienced during their enslavement. The images evoked and their vernacular style of speech originated from within their collective experience. African Americans such as Sandy Austin and Sambo Jefferson both revealed and concealed their protests against slavery. Austin, an enslaved laborer on the Joseph LeCounte plantation in Liberty County, saved his time under the task labor system to work for himself. He raised hogs and poultry for several years and expanded his property to include a mare by raising livestock and "selling the increase." Embedded within Austin's claim is the manner in which he secured de facto rights from LeCounte to own property.[49]

Contemporaneous with Austin, Sambo Jefferson had amassed a considerable amount of property, consisting of ducks, hogs, geese, rice, corn, and fence rail valued at $1,478. Jefferson, who was born a slave in South Carolina, had been freed by his master three years before the Civil War. During his enslavement, Jefferson cultivated five acres of cleared land for his own benefit. He continued to plant during the war, and through this process, he was able to secure property that consisted of 31 hogs, 49 ducks and geese, 178 bushels of rice, 75 bushels of corn, 43 ground nuts, and 2,000 fence rails.[50]

The communitarian character of social relations in the lowcountry is evident in the language and social practices bondmen and bondwomen revealed in their testimonies. These networks of communication and community informed power relations and the appropriation of economic spaces. Since the late eighteenth century, planters had acknowledged that the crops bondmen and bondwomen produced on their own time were their property. Interaction, exchange, and creativity allowed slaves such as James Anderson, who resided in Riceboro, to accumulate property, which consisted of hogs, cows, corn, potatoes, chickens, and clothing. Similarly Richard LeCounte "began raising chickens, and fowl and kept selling until he had saved up enough money to buy a cow." LeCounte raised chickens and fowl for over thirty years and negotiated with his owner, Joseph LeCounte, who purchased

chickens and hogs from Richard for cash.[51] This supplement enhanced the social and economic position of Richard LeCounte and other bondmen and bondwomen who adroitly used the task system to mediate the oppression of slavery.

The accumulation of personal property was both symbolic and functional. Symbolic property, such as beads, pots, foodstuffs, and other homemade items, imparted feelings of self-worth and pride. Symbolic property represented a past material world that provided tools that not only were used for cooking and shelter, but also served as symbols that reinforced enslaved people's view of themselves as culturally distinct from others. In a similar manner, functional property, such as wagons, mules, chickens, and cows, engendered a sense of independence in its owners. Through the competence exhibited in their ability to acquire and make things, as well as through the trust manifested in their personal relationships, the LeCounte family derived a measure of power in their relations with planter Joseph LeCounte to raise hogs and poultry and to buy and sell rice, which they produced on their own. Like their brother Richard, Adam, Hercules, and Joshua LeCounte had owned property for many years and had secured additional food, shelter, and clothing by daily manipulation of the task system.[52]

The task labor system allowed women to manipulate their time to secure their own economic and social spaces. Slavery was a "system of many systems" that affected women on multiple levels. As Deborah Gray White has argued, "women deliberately dissembled their objective reality and masked their thoughts and personalities in order to protect valued parts of their lives from white and male invasion."[53] However, the hidden realm of women's lives was the primary realm in which they resisted the process of reduction. Their political, social, and economic struggle for full humanity is revealed in their narratives, which reveal that women's domestic responsibility informed their social reality. Within slave communities, women emerged as cultural interlocutors. They maintained a place of honor and a degree of political power derived from the contributions they made to the material and cultural life of the quarters. Women sustained family and kinship networks, anchored slave communities, and shouldered the dual burdens of field labor for their owners and domestic responsibilities for their households on a daily basis. The status of women in the slave community increased as a result of their work as nurses, midwives, and educators. On Retreat plantation Old Sarah, Ruthy, Polly, Lady, and Old Betty occupied nonagricultural positions as cooks, seamstresses, nurses, and housemaids.[54]

Women's marketing activities also provided a measure of economic influence within the community. The marketing activities of bondwomen had two significant consequences. First, they allowed the women to establish an economic link to the markets in Savannah, Sunbury, and Darien. River and coastal trading vessels provided important access to trade centers, enabling women to supplement their standard of living. Second, as consumers and producers, women traders resisted

the legal constraints on their mobility. Linda Roberts, on January 30, 1875, testified that she had recently lost her husband and was relying on her children and grandchildren for support. But before the war, she had owned 20 head of cattle (valued at $400), 30 hogs, 40 beehives, 18 ducks, 50 chickens, 20 bushels of corn, 100 bushels of rice, a saddle and bridle, and a horse and buggy.[55] Family inheritance provided the means by which women such as Rachel Norman of Liberty County secured property. Rachel, who inherited livestock upon the death of her father and mother, resided in Riceboro on the estate of James Williams. Her property consisted of five heads of cattle, 15 bushels of corn, 12 bushels of rice, 12 chickens, and four hogs valued at $169.50. She had raised cattle for over twelve years prior to the arrival of Union forces.[56]

The shared narrative of Binah Butler and Moses Stikes reveals bondwomen's strength and endurance, and their commitment to earn as much as they could to support themselves. Butler and Stikes cultivated seven acres of land. They established a partnership and went to work raising garden vegetables to sell in the city, each owning half of all they earned. Both Binah and Moses hired out their time and paid wages to their master. Binah paid $10 per month, and Moses paid $21 per month. According to Binah, "it was hard work to keep ourselves and make money on anything more than what [we] would pay master. I was glad when the [Union Army] came; I hated to leave what we had but we were satisfied to get our freedom."[57] Binah and Moses claimed $864 of property, which included horses, fence rails, garden vegetables, hogs, chickens, cows, and rice. Gender influenced the credibility of claimants. According to the statistics of the Southern Claims Commission, only ten claims submitted by bondwomen in Liberty County were approved for recompense. Although in Chatham County fourteen claims by women were approved, former bondwomen had no successful claims in Bryan, McIntosh, Glynn, and Camden counties.[58]

MEMORY AND (DIS)REMEMBERING

The historical memory of the descendants of enslaved African Americans provides an important window through which to examine the language and religion of resistance in the discourse and cultural logics of the antebellum era. The emergence of a dissident subculture embodied by a complex system of religious and linguistic systems represented the third form of resistance along the South Carolina-Georgia continuum. In the case of language, African languages continued to inform the manner in which enslaved Africans expressed cultural autonomy. Enslaved Africans retained much of their African cultural identity as a result of three related factors. First, the ratio of the African and African American population to the white population remained disproportionately high; second, the importation of new Africans persisted in the years following the 1808 ban on the slave trade, reinforcing African cultural traditions and reducing assimilation; third, the lowcountry

environment, with its string of barrier islands, separated the island communities from the mainland white population.[59] The language developed by lowcountry African Americans emerged as a central component in their ontological praxis. The communitarian character of the slaves' language and social practices provide salient insights into how bondmen and bondwomen understood and communicated their experiences and struggles through their use of language. The lucidity of their symbolic and metaphorical language provides crystalline insights into the ways in which they transformed their experiences into images that tell their stories of both oppression and liberation.[60]

The persistence of African languages is documented in the accounts of planters and of the progeny of bondmen and bondwomen in the lowcountry. Both John Couper and his son James Hamilton Couper, who owned several plantations on St. Simons Island and along the Altamaha River, including the well-known Hopeton plantation, wrote in 1827 that bondmen and bondwomen continued to speak and understand the Foulah language. The gradual creolization of African and English words to create a new linguistic category referred to as Gullah represented an important development in lowcountry communities. Through this language a rich expressive culture emerged in which bondmen and bondwomen articulated their feelings, hopes, and dreams and forged and maintained kinship networks. These networks were characterized by a common bond that included both blood relationships and social and economic relationships. As Margaret Washington Creel and Charles Joyner have demonstrated, the creation of Gullah allowed enslaved Africans to endure the collective tragedy of slavery.[61]

TABLE 2. *Population of Lowcountry Georgia, 1860*

COUNTY	AFRICAN AMERICAN	EUROPEAN AMERICAN	PERCENT AFRICAN AMERICAN
Bryan	2,379	1,636	59.2
Chatham	15,532	15,511	*50.0
Liberty	6,083	2,284	72.7
McIntosh	4, 417	1,429	74.2

*The white population of Chatham County was concentrated in the city of Savannah. The plantation districts held substantial black majorities.

SOURCE: *Compendium of the Ninth U.S. Census, 1870* (Washington, D.C.), 139.

In addition to language, religion played a key role in building and sustaining a dissident subculture in the lowcountry. Religion and religious activities helped Africans in diaspora societies cope with slavery. The fusion of Christianity with African religious beliefs has been viewed by scholars, most notably Albert Raboteau,

Robert Farris Thompson, Mechal Sobel, Melville Herskovits, and Sidney Mintz, as a form of cultural resistance. Captive Africans created a strong religious collective that shielded them from the physical and psychological effects of slavery. Their experiences were also based on an African worldview and cultural structure that was expressed in both Islamic and Christian terms.[62]

African traditional religion adhered to a form of monotheism. According to John Mbiti, within the African ontology there was always a supreme Creator. In Akan the creator was *Onyame;* in Bantu, *Nzambi;* in Mende, *Ngewo;* and in Gola, *Daya.* Second in the hierarchy were spirits capable of appearing within the world as living guardians. Humans, animals, and objects constituted the penultimate forces in the African cosmology. Creation stories, a supreme Being, spirits, and priest-healers were central to African religions, and enslaved Africans found similar features in Christianity that intensified conversion. In Liberty County, enslaved African Americans such as Lucy, who converted to Christianity while a slave of Reverend Charles C. Jones, embraced Christianity because it nurtured and kept alive the promise of equality and freedom and thus had both a liberatory and political meaning.[63]

Within lowcountry communities, slave preachers risked their lives to preach a message of liberation and resistance. The master of Preacher George in Chatham County threatened him with five hundred lashes if he continued to preach subversive messages to slaves. George disregarded his master's threat and continued to preach. After the discovery of George's activities, he was forced to flee across the Savannah River. He was captured after hiding in a nearby barn and burned alive before an assembly of slaves who were forced to travel twenty miles to the Greenville town square to watch what Moses Roper, a former slave and abolitionist, described as a "horrid spectacle."[64] Attending unsupervised religious slave meetings led to severe punishment. Enslaved men and women risked punishment and death if they undermined the power of the planter and the system of slavery. Tom Bucknie, a slave in Chatham County, received 150 lashes "washed with brine," for attending religious meetings. Bucknie continued to "attend the meetings and pray for his master," despite repeated threats and severe whippings.[65]

In addition to African traditional religion, the universe of African religious systems included Islam, which was introduced to West Africa in the eleventh century.[66] The ardor with which bondmen and bondwomen continued to adhere to Islamic traditions in the lowcountry represents a significant manifestation of self-determining identity and resistance. Evidence derived from narratives of the descendants of first- and second-generation Africans provides an incomplete but substantive picture of African-born Muslims, their progeny, and associated communities of believers who pursued their religion with diligence and purpose in an atmosphere charged with the teachings of Christianity and the attraction of African traditional religions. In addition, grandchildren and subsequent progeny spoke of

African-born Muslims with pride, suggesting a strong and clear identification with an Islamic heritage, if not an embrace of the religion.[67]

This community of extended multigenerational families, tied by bonds of kinship, was shaped by the cultural and ideological parameters of religious practices. First-generation Africans provided the cultural and linguistic homogeneity to sustain religious traditions. The capture and forced migration of Salih Bilali from Maasina in the Upper Niger valley floodplain is illustrative. Born in 1765, Salih was captured by slavers in 1790, during the period in which the Bambara were consolidating their control of the Upper Niger. After his confinement at Anamoboe, along the Gold Coast, slave traders purchased him. He arrived in North America in 1800 and became head driver on John Couper's Cannon's Point plantation on St. Simons Island. Although he had been given the name Tom, Salih remained a devout Muslim and continued to refer to himself as Salih.[68] The private language and intergenerational naming practices employed by Africans provide historical depth to their lived experiences. According to linguist Annette Kashif, the private, or "basket," names of Gullahs were invariably African homophones. Even though their memories regarding the meanings of their names faded with the passage of time, they continued to use these names, which were personal names in West African languages, because their older relatives did the same.[69]

In another context, eighty-eight-year-old Ben Sullivan of St. Simons, the grandson of Salih Bilali, remembered that in addition to his father, Bilali, and grandfather, two other Muslims in the community, "ole Israel" and Daphne continued to adhere to Islamic practices. Sullivan's narrative, which is written in dialect, places Islam at the center of religious life within the slave community. Islamic identity informed their use of language (in this case Arabic), their worldview, their ideas of time and space, their work, their social customs, and their historical traditions. According to Sullivan, "ole Israel he pray a lot wid a book [probably the Qur'an] he hab wut he hide, an he take a lill mat an he say he prayuhs on it. He pray wen duh sun go up an wen duh sun go down. . . . He alluz tie he head up in a wite clawt an seem he keep a lot uh clawt on hand."[70] Similarly Daphne prayed regularly, bowing "two an tree times in duh middle uh duh prayuh," and was usually veiled.[71] Sullivan, who was born during the 1840s, remembered many Africans whom he referred to as not "tame," an indication that a strong African ontology continued to shape their social reality. Within this African ontology, the desire to create and maintain structures that reflected an African identity persisted and conflicted with the worldview of planters, as Africans like "ole man Okra," of St. Simons Island built homes that were similar to their African homes and used their native languages to tell and retell narratives of Africa as a retention and coping strategy.[72]

Similar practices occurred in other areas of the lowcountry. On Sapelo Island, a Fulfulde-speaking slave from Timbo in the Guinea highlands, Futa Jallon, wrote in Arabic and instilled Islamic traditions into his twelve sons and seven daughters.

Bilali Mohomet, or Ben Ali, a Fula Muslim from present day Guinea-Conakry, wrote from memory his own version of a Muslim religious text, the *Risala* of Ibn Abu Zayd.[73] A contemporary of Salih Bilali, Ben Ali worked as a driver on the Spalding plantation. Although Ben Ali was African-born, his wife and children may not have been. According to Sapelo Island historian and Ben Ali's descendant Cornelia Bailey, Bilali's wife, Phoebe, came from the islands, meaning that she was either born or seasoned in the Caribbean. Ben Ali came with his entire family to Sapelo, where he underwent the seasoning process. He resisted those aspects of Western culture that conflicted with his African identity and accepted Western languages as alternate forms of communication. Ben Ali transferred this African and Islamic identity to his children, who were also multilingual Muslims. In addition to speaking Foulah and having knowledge of Arabic, they spoke French and English.[74]

Details of Bilali's religious practices are provided by Katie Brown, the great-granddaughter of Ben Ali, and one of the oldest inhabitants of Sapelo Island at the time of her interview in the 1930s. She enumerated Bilali's seven daughters as "Margaret, Bentoo, Chaalut, Medina, Yaruba, Fatima, and Hestuh."[75] Margaret was the grandmother of Brown, who went on to say: "Margaret an uh daughter Cotto use to say dat Bilali an he wife Phoebe pray on duh bead. Dey wuz bery puhticuluh bout duh time dey pray and dey bery regluh bout duh hour. Wen duh sun come up, wen it straight obuh head on wen it set, das duh time dey pray. Dey bow tuh duh sun an hab lill mat tuh kneel on. Duh beads is on a long string. Belali he pull bead an he say, Belamb, Hakabara, Mahamadu. Phoebe she say, Amen, Ameen."[76] In 1860 writer Georgia Bryan Conrad visited Sapelo Island in 1860 and described Ben Ali and his family as worshipers of Mahomet; she wrote: "they were all tall and well formed with good features."[77]

Ben Ali and his daughters maintained Islamic traditions within their families, as well as an interplantation communication network with other Muslims in the lowcountry. Shad Hall of Sapelo Island, a descendant of Bilali through his grandmother Hester, described Ben Ali's daughters who practiced Islamic rituals as follows: "Hestuh an all ub um sho pray on duh bead. Dey weah duh string uh beads on duh wais. Sometime duh string on duh neck. Dey pray at sun-up and face duh sun on duh knees an bow tuh it three times, kneelin on a lill mat."[78] In the context of communication, Brown referred to Salih Bilali of St. Simons as "cousin Belali Sullivan," an indication that Salih Bilali and Ben Ali had created a network based on a shared Islamic heritage and provenance. Both men originated from the kingdom of Bambara, spoke Foulah, and held positions as drivers. According to James Hamilton Couper, Salih Bilali (Tom) and Ben Ali were intimate friends.[79]

Although the data is fragmentary, the number of enslaved Muslims on Sapelo Island and St. Simons Island was significant. For example, in May 1802 two Muslim men named Alik and Abdalli escaped from Sapelo Island. Both men were probably African-born, as one spoke "bad English," while the other's command

of the language was only slightly better.[80] Similarly, in March 1807, "Toney" Jacob, and eighteen-year-old Musa also escaped from Sapelo Island, having belonged to Alexander Johnston. It is conceivable that all three men were Muslims.[81] An 1827 document detailing the sale of Hopeton plantation on St. Simons Island by John Couper to James Hamilton Couper and his son James, 381 slave names are listed. On this list, the Muslim name Fatima is repeated six times, and Mahomet twice. Maryam is mentioned once.[82] In Liberty County, planter Joseph LeCounte recalled "an old native African named Philip," a Muslim who demonstrated the outward expressions of the religion "by going through all the prayers and prostrations of his native country."[83]

Islamic traditions retained and practiced by enslaved Africans and African Americans provided the religious underpinnings for the continuation of these practices by their progeny. The narratives of Sophie Davis of White Bluff, Chatham County; Ed Thorpe of Harris Neck, Liberty County; Rosa Grant of Possum Point, Chatham County; and Lawrence Baker of Darien, Liberty County reveal that their ancestors were also Muslim. Sophie Davis, whose ancestors were enslaved on St. Catherine's Island, remembered Africans who were brought to the island on slave ships. "They would pray at the rising and setting of the sun and would say Menna Mina, Mo."[84] Like the Bilali families, these early Muslims also prayed three times daily in the prescribed fashion, ending their prayers with "Ameen, Ameen, Ameen."[85] Rosa Grant said of her grandmother Ryna that "Friday wuz duh day she call huh prayuh day." This reference to the Muslim observance of Friday prayer, when Muslims congregate at noon, signified an attempt to keep alive the significance of the day.[86]

Both the First and Second Great Awakenings shaped the religious consciousness of enslaved Africans. Although the process of conversion varied according to the local environment and African ethnicity, Christianity appealed to lowcountry African Americans for two principal reasons. First, Christian customs, rituals, and beliefs paralleled the indigenous religious beliefs of West Africans, and West African religious thought and practice shaped their lives even through their conversion to Christianity. As did other diaspora communities, they syncretized elements of Christianity with their own sacred beliefs and traditions, and in doing so they influenced the contours of American religious culture. They retained a strong communion with the ancestors and developed a form of Gullah Christianity that excluded European Americans and provided recompense for past and present injustices. Because they lived continually in the presence of death, funerals were important ceremonies that symbolized the continuation of life after death. Thus decorating grave sites with important objects from this life, passing a child over the gravesite of the deceased, and orienting burial sites toward the east to symbolize the rising of the sun were important manifestations of the continuation of the spirit. Moreover, the sacrament of baptism conformed with their beliefs about bodies of water, which

they regarded as sacred, and they performed the African circle dance known as the ring shout at funerals. Second, Christianity nurtured and kept alive the promise of equality and freedom and thus had both a liberatory and political meaning. The spirituals and shout songs of lowcountry African Americans demonstrate that they practiced a form of liberation theology that identified God with the condition of the oppressed and with the struggle for liberation.[87]

The gradual fusion of Christian and African beliefs in lowcountry watershed communities is evident in their dietary practices. In this context, sage observations of Islamic dietary practices in African American narratives reinforced the dissident subculture created by bondmen and bondwomen. Ophelia Baker of Chatham County provides a glimpse of this fusion by stating that members of the Holy Sanctified Church were forbidden to eat certain kinds of fish. Similarly Cornelia Bailey observed that Ben Ali's children would not eat wild animals or fresh meat and that some kinds of seafood, such as crab, were avoided.[88] Collectively, the testimonies of Ben Sullivan, Cornelia Bailey, Katie Brown, Rosa Grant, Ophelia Baker, and Sophie Davis provide the contours of Muslim life in early Georgia: prayer mats, prayer beads, veils, head coverings, Qur'ans, dietary laws, and ritualized daily prayer characterized their experiences. The composite picture represents a consistent and serious pursuit of Islam.[89]

As in the West African societies from which bondwomen and bondmen were transported, kinship relations informed the social, religious, and political foundation of the slave communities in lowcountry Georgia. As Steven Hahn argues, the obligations and responsibilities of kinship were crucial to the achievement of their short-term political objectives, which included protecting themselves and each other from slavery's violence and exploitation, carving out spheres of activity in which they could provide for themselves, and establishing relations and values suitable to a world of enslavement. The noncolonized imagination of bondmen and bondwomen was the space within which they turned a system based on the absolute power and personal domination of the master into one based on reciprocities. Their narratives of resistance and freedom reveal a uniquely political will to achieve autonomy, maintain dignity, secure use-rights to land, and engage in petty commodity markets.[90]

In the Chesapeake and lower Mississippi Valley, the vast majority of African Americans adhered to non-Islamic beliefs. In their struggle to retain a sense of identity, enslaved Africans had to determine which aspects or traits of their African heritage to retain and which to discard. The Christianization of Africans was an uneven process. It was welcomed by some and rejected by others. The demographic figures for Darien Baptist Church, near Sapelo Island, reveal that a significant number of enslaved Africans, 943, attended services in 1860.[91] In the process of acculturation, there were pressures to find points of agreement or similarity in religious expression, and the need to establish a community was intense. As the late nineteenth

century progressed, planters became increasingly concerned with controlling the religious expression of their captive population. The number of Christian converts among bondmen and bondwomen increased rapidly as a result of their own desire to embrace an Africanized version of Christianity and of a post-1830 campaign within the "militant South" to use religion as a means of social control. As Africanized Christianity became more of a force, Islam in the lowcountry was contested and transformed. This transformation welded Christian and Islamic identities as evidenced by the practices of "Preacher Little, an itinerant preacher on Sapelo Island." A Mohammedan-looking man who wore a black skull cap, Preacher Little of the First African Baptist Church epitomized this fusion.[92]

Country markings, likewise, reveal the extent to which ideas concerning religion and African identity persisted. Rosanna Williams of Tatemville, Chatham County, received her father's country marks at a very young age. Her father, Lunnon Dennerson, and grandfather Golla Dennerson, whom Rosanna described as "King uh his tribe," labored on Charles Grant's plantation on the islands near Brunswick, Georgia. Rosanna, like other third-generation Africans, confidently expressed her family's origins in Liberia and revealed the circle marking on her chest as a symbol of her Gola identity.[93] As late as the 1930s, lowcountry African Americans continued to identify their African and Islamic roots with specificity. H. H. Miller, an educated, aged wealthy resident of Tatemville, recounted that he knew "many of the 'Golla' tribesman who were brought to this country" when he was a boy. The majority of these Africans may have been transported aboard the slave ship *Wanderer* and sold to local planter McMullen. According to Tonie Houston, Charles Lamar, the owner of the vessel, purchased these Gola Africans and sold them to McMullen.[94] The extensive Gola presence in lowcountry communities is apparent in naming practices, which affix the prefix Gola to the given name of African Americans, and in the continued use of words from the Gola language. Among the terms remembered by Houston were *musango* for tobacco, *mulafo* for whiskey, *sisure* for chicken, *gombay* for cow, and *gulluh* for hog.[95]

The process of religious acculturation proceeded unevenly during the antebellum period. However, with emancipation African Americans in the lowcountry demonstrated a passionate embrace of Christianity. On Sapelo Island, the progeny of African-born Muslims eventually began attending the Tuesday, Thursday, and Sunday night prayer houses established by each community on the island, while continuing their own Muslim gatherings With the establishment of the First African Baptist Church in May 1866, the open and collective pursuit of Islam became increasingly rare; however, remnants of the faith persisted. Despite pressure to convert to Christianity, the majority of African-born Muslims successfully resisted coercion to abandon their faith.[96]

The varied discourses of slave resistance illustrate that enslaved men and women created alternate geographies for themselves in lowcountry Georgia.

Enslaved Africans brought their bodies, their minds, and their cultures to the Americas, and they employed all three to address conflicting ideas of slavery and freedom. They carved out marginal spaces within slavery to engage in strategic resistance, and they established alliances based on ethnicity, occupation, kinship, and mutual oppression to contest their bondage. Slave insubordination crystallized into open defiance as they sought to gain individual and collective freedom by challenging the fissures within slavery. During this critical period, enslaved men and women reimagined, reformulated, and transformed the legal contexts in which they lived.[97] This form of political and strategic resistance, which allowed enslaved men and women to claim freedom for themselves, continued during the Civil War.