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THEY HAD NO KING: ELLA BAKER AND THE POLITICS OF DECENTRALIZED ORGANIZATION AMONG AFRICAN-DESCENDED POPULATIONS

by

JOHN HORHN

Under the Direction of Akinyele Umoja, PhD

ABSTRACT

The evolution of African stateless societies and the diverse impact of their cultures, on political thought previous to and post-modernity, are not well understood. Scholars acknowledge the varied influence of precolonial African culture on the artistic, spiritual, and linguistic expressions of African-descended populations. However, observations regarding the impact of such acephalous societies on the political thought of the African Diaspora remain obscure. The organizational techniques of such societies are best described as a form of kinship-based anarchism. This study seeks to examine the persistence of such organizational techniques among African-descended populations in the United States. The political life and background of Ella Baker will be used as a historical case study to illustrate the possible strands of continuity that may exist between the organizational habitude of African acephalous societies, and modern African-American grassroots political structures.

KEY TERMS: Social anarchism, Grassroots organizing, Kinship, Stateless/Acephalous societies, Marronage, Ethnogenesis, Mesic islands, Ella Baker, Great Dismal Swamp

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JOHN HORHN

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2016

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DEDICATION

I would like to thank my family whose unwavering support enables me to step forward and introduce my ideas to the broader public. I would like to thank the women of my family, in particular my mother Lydia Horhn, for cultivating my adaptability in the face of perpetual change. I would like to thank my father, Sen. John Horhn, from whom I inherited my respect for the past. I would like to thank Lindsay whose vibrant intensity and passion has kindled the best in me during this process. I would like to thank my close friends whose thoughts and love has been a refuge for me in almost every way imaginable. Finally, I would like to thank my ancestors, known and unknown, for the sacrifices that inspired me to become the scholar that I am.

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1 INTRODUCTION

The political career of Ella Baker presents to historians the opportunity to raise intellectual questions about what were the most effective methods of organizing engaged by African-Americans seeking self-determination. Baker has been celebrated as one of the most influential organizers to have been active during the Civil Rights movement. Her political methodology was essential to the success of many of the organizations actively pursuing social justice for African-Americans during the height of the Civil Rights Movement. The NAACP, SCLC, and SNCC all benefited from Baker's managerial and grassroots expertise. Ella Baker had a particular type of upbringing which informed her ideology and vision for African-American political organization. The ideas which framed her societal outlook were used throughout her career and drawn from her early experiences in North Carolina.[1]

Ella Baker was the quintessential activist of the Civil Rights Movement because of her decentralized grassroots methodology.[2] Her style of political organization was designed to cultivate members of communities in a manner that would enable them to pursue their own social justice objectives independently. She encouraged local communities to identify the exact oppressions they faced on a local level. She would then use her experience to help the communities craft individual plans which they could implement to agitate for social agency, while simultaneously putting communities into contact with broader networks to secure resources. One of her principal practices was to secure training for members of social action groups so that they could continue with anti-oppression and anti-hierarchal initiatives, even in the absence of a centralized administration.

These practices enabled Ella Baker to leverage social power against institutional oppression in a surgical fashion that addressed specific issues at the local level. Simultaneously

her organizational methodology allowed her to avoid the paradoxical implementation of an oppressive infrastructure to coerce group cohesion among individuals striving for social justice in specific areas. Her preference was to affect social cohesion through a group-centered ethos rooted in notions of interdependence and mutual consent. She promoted this line of political ideation as the best possible path to achieving locally sustainable anti-oppression objectives.

Historians have examined the activism of Ella Baker from the perspective of political history and scholarship conducted on the events of the Civil Rights Movement. However, few scholars have engaged the social milieu and background influences from which Ella Baker's influences arose. The region from which Ella Baker originated was a hotbed of African-American political resistance even prior to the formation of the United States. The use of captive Africans as the primary labor force of Antebellum slave society had unintended consequences for the political culture of the region. In particular, North Carolina and Virginia planters relying on African slave labor had to contend with the unforeseen fallout of escaped slaves attempting to sabotage the economic infrastructure of the plantation system.[3]

African captives who were trafficked to the North Carolina and Virginia territories were often sought for their culturally specific agricultural skills. Various ethnicities gained reputations as great rice cultivators and coastal agriculturalists, especially those drawn from the stateless coastal societies of Guinea-Bissau and Senegambia. African captives whose cultural innovations enriched the farming culture of antebellum slave society also used that culture to escape slavery. Ethnic groups such as the Igbo and Balanta, were as much known for their militant resistance to slavery, as they were for their contributions to the agricultural efficiency of plantation economies. The traceable elements of culture among African slaves such as farming technology, military tactics, and religious habits are all important to historians seeking to contextualize the

background of Ella Baker's early influences developing in rural Jim Crow North Carolina. The military traditions and agricultural specialties evident among slaves laboring on antebellum plantations, give indication of the presence of specific African ethnic groups influencing the political economies of North Carolina and Virginia from an early era. Understanding the cultural habitude of these African groups offers scholars additional angles of perspective when exploring the influences that motivated the work of Ella Baker.[4]

When African captives found opportunity to escape from the plantation economy they often formed maroon societies. One such maroon society, the Great Dismal Swamp Maroons, came to exist as a permanent settlement straddling the wetland border between North Carolina and Virginia. The GDSM culture rapidly evolved to be a full-fledged maroon settlement which constantly warred with and harassed plantation society. The GDSM may have even had a hand in catalyzing Nat Turner's slave revolt, in an effort to foment wider rebellion among African-Americans. The farm where Ella Baker grew up lied on the northern banks of the Roanoke River, a waterway frequented by the GDSM during their long resistance to antebellum slave society. [5]

West African acepholous societies situated along the Rice Coast and from the region of Biafra were the probable source for the political culture of the GDSM. Stateless societies did not require a large amount of material resources and would have possessed a culture more easily reproduced in the wetland areas of the region than other more centralized societies who based their organization on wealth. The non-hierarchal orientation of the GDSM may have in turn informed the non-hierarchal perspectives of Ella Baker, indirectly through the absorption of their ethical outlook into the slave culture from which Baker's family emerged.[6]

Ella Baker's family was the original inspiration for her political outlook on how African-Americans should organize for social agency. Her family was adamant about inculcating in

Baker that she was the inheritor of a legacy of militant resistance, derived from the local slave culture of North Carolina and Virginia. The group-centered focus of Ella Baker's politics was drawn from observations she made about her socialization in Littleton, NC. Her family served as a pillar of the community and facilitated the social uplift of other African-Americans by empowering them on a personal level. Her family did this so locally based African-Americans could overcome the existential challenges that came with being self-determined in the Jim Crow South. Ella Baker's code of ethics was informed by that of her family's kinship-based notions of community. In Baker's opinion it was this ethos, promulgated among the wider community on an individual basis, which enabled her family to facilitate positive change in their local Littleton community. This is the essence of Ella Baker's grassroots group-centered organizational model, later refined by Baker for the purpose of combating oppression at a national level.[7]

1.1 The Political Relevance of West African Stateless Societies

The profundity of Ella Baker's contribution to the Civil Rights movement and later political heritage of the United States was amplified by the unusual nature of her organizational philosophy. The influences of her early social and political outlook therefore beg investigation, especially within the locus of her regional background. The home region of Ella Baker was extensively impacted by the activities of runaway slaves, with many being sourced from coastal West African acephalous societies. The African captives who were able to escape and form maroon societies represent a unique vector for the transmission of certain West African political precepts, such as decentralized organization, into the African Diaspora located near the Great Dismal Swamp. These former African captives may have begun a tradition of resistance based on their native political culture that later impacted the efforts of African-Americans, like Ella Baker, who may have adapted such politics to the needs of the early Civil Rights movement.[8]

The evolution of stateless societies in West African has had a broad impact on the development of political events as they relate to Muslim expansion, West African religious culture, Africana political thought, and the slave trade. Africanist exploration of precolonial political organization is largely centered on the formation of centralized states. Often, these states are constructed by historians as being the most developed and evolved administrative structures operating within the political domain of the African continent. However, African acephalous societies have undergone just as much development and refinement as the centralized societies of Africa's history. The emphasis on identifying the continuum of statist models flowing from the precolonial era into modernity can be sourced as a trend stemming from the Post-WWII independence-era when academics. African scholars motivated by Cold War politics, were compelled to reexamine the nature of African state formation. The need for new historical understandings and the urgings of African nationalists seeking independence from colonial rule, fostered the birth of the African Studies field.[9]

However, the political necessities of the Western powers coupled with desires of independence activists, oriented academic investigation away from any coherent development of meaningful discourse on African stateless societies. The overriding conclusion of Western scholars was that African stateless societies represented remnants of primitive societies, apolitical and ahistorical, which for one reason or another were unable to progress to the level of centralized state.[10] This conclusion resulted from problems inherent in the Western gaze,[11] and was compounded by the desire of African nationalists to dissociate themselves from acephalous societies, which had become synonymous with primitivism since the onset of modernity.[12]

The limited engagement with stateless societies has narrowed the intellectual field of vision,[13] especially where it pertains to studying the organizational techniques selected by

African-descended people dispersed through the Atlantic World. The incorporation of African methods of organization within the African Diaspora can be explicitly examined by observing the occurrence of maroon societies in the 18th and 19th centuries. While, maroon societies existed with varying levels of temperance throughout the New World colonies, in North America their presence has been considered less significant in comparison to the more viable permanent maroon enclaves of the Caribbean and South America, especially those of Brazil and Jamaica.[14]

Africanist and Atlantic History scholars have likewise been reluctant to engage questions surrounding African ethnicity.[15] Ethnicity has been regarded as tangential to the understanding of the African Diaspora. Though shipping data exists that could possibly offer insight into some of the common cultural theories made about trafficked African captives enslaved by European powers.[16] Some scholars have been reserved in assigning meaning to the data,[17] while others have taken it as an affirmation of continuing ethnic practices among African-descended populations distributed throughout the Americas.[18] Additionally, the impact of such populations on Atlantic industries is debated as contentious.[19]

The cultural connection between maroon societies and centralized African states, such as the relationship between Jamaican maroons and the Asante Confederacy, supports the theory of persisting Africanisms serving as the political basis for maroon organization in the New World.[20] The noted relationship between the Kimbunda kingdom and Palmares, also speaks to the possibility of trans-Atlantic continuity present within the African Diaspora.[21] The aforementioned examples sufficiently validated would represent a continuation of African political culture along statist lines, but do not eliminate the possibility of unique contributions originating from African stateless societies as well.[22] The presence of maroon societies was

much more pronounced in these parts of the Atlantic than they were in what is now considered the continental United States.

1.2 North American marronage and the Great Dismal Swamp

The historical treatment of Caribbean and South American maroon societies is much more prodigious than that concerning maroon societies of the North American continent. The impacts of such maroon societies on the political economies of various localities are considered luminal at best. Additionally, scholars of North American maroon societies rarely draw any lines of continuity between the activity of such resistance groups and the political orientation of political notables emerging from within their sphere of influence, such as Ella Baker. However, this does not mean that the role of maroon societies was insignificant to the development of the United States, or the African-American political culture which developed in its borders.[23] The South Carolina hills were home to numerous large maroon settlements,[24] such as Granny Quarter Creek and Flatt Creek; which housed African runaways, ostracized whites, and small populations of Native Americans.[25] South Carolina did not possess the only significant settlements of North American maroon societies. Neither were they the only intersection of space and culture that would enable to continuance of African political traditions. Scholars have indicated that maroons societies have served as conduits for methods of social organization consistent with African notions of political thought.[26]

Political methods often are considered to represent cultural holdovers from African political habitude. The Great Dismal Swamp maroons for example, who may have existed as an amalgamation of diverse villages, represent a possible conduit for decentralized political organization among the African Diaspora in the United States.[27] The Great Dismal Swamp is a

wet land region which exists on the eastern boundary of the North Carolina and Virginia border.[28]

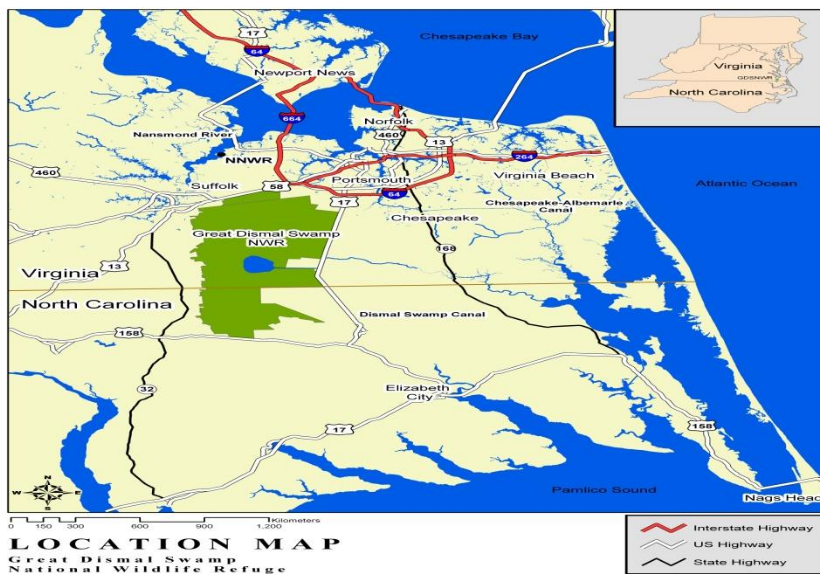

Figure 1 Great Dismal Swamp Location Map

During the American Colonial era the Swamp served as a settlement for what was arguably the largest permanently maintained maroon society in North America.[29] Escaped slaves formed communities within the provinces of the Swamp, organizing war bands to harass planters and government authorities from 1650 to the conclusion of the Civil War.[30] Slaves developed an intelligence network to undermine the system of slavery by connecting various temporary maroon camps to major hubs such as the Dismal Swamp.[31] Even the enslaved inhabitants of the plantations would occasionally steal away to other plantations or maroon settlements at night to participate in social rituals or to avoid harsh punishment.

Many scholars cite this activity on the margins of developing American society as being a location for the retention of African cultural retention.[32] Efforts towards emancipation were greatly aided by the culture of resistance promoted by these maroon communities through the Emancipation period. Their presence had a major impact on the development of the Underground Railroad,[33] abolition efforts, and slave resistance in North America.[34] The Great Dismal Swamp

maroons were especially noteworthy for the permanence of their settlements and the retention of African political culture.

Furthermore, rice cultivation was advanced in the Carolinas during the late 18th century. The incorporation of the tidal-farming system is credited by some scholars as being an innovation of West African slaves relocated to the low-country. Other scholars challenge this view of the discourse, and consider the rise of rice industry as the net effect of a series of diverse events far outside the range of any one population to impact unilaterally. The developments surrounding the growth of West African rice-farming technologies were posited to have arisen simultaneously with the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, especially among societies located along the Upper Guinea coast.[35]

Rice farming techniques therefore plays an important role in the study of the Atlantic Slave Trade, ethnic distribution of captive Africans, and retention of African culture in the New World. This was the industry that the Great Dismal Swamp maroons sought to render inoperative. Their raids had a constant impact on both the political development of the area, and the profitability of the Antebellum plantation system. The militant activity of the Great Dismal Swamp maroons required segmented style of organization, guerilla tactics and raids had to be undertaken with a relative level of group autonomy.[36]

The presence of specific rice farming techniques in North Carolina, taken in combination with the mention of runaway slaves from specific coastal regions, provides reasonable grounds for concluding that acephalous societies such as the Balanta and Diola, were present near the Great Dismal Swamp. The impact that such groups had on the military history and farming culture of the eastern border region between North Carolina and Virginia was prolific, and therefore inquiry must be made as to what influence these groups exerted over local political

culture. Ella Baker was touched by the remnants of local slave culture through her contact with her grandparents, a slave culture swayed heavily by the influence of maroon activity. Baker's grandparents also guided her early thinking about militant resistance in the face of social oppression. Ella Baker's political life presents a unique opportunity to explore the continuity of Africana political thought, reimagined and restructured, within the vicinity of the Great Dismal Swamp.[37]

1.3 The political lineage of Ella Baker and the Great Dismal Swamp

The political life of African-Americans existing between Littleton, NC and Norfolk, VA at the turn of the 20th century was precarious. Ella Baker grew up in a social climate that only grudgingly tolerated political efforts made by or on the behalf of African-Americans. Her family had adopted a habit of extending kinship ties to guarantee the equitable survival of the African-American population residing in the local Littleton area. It is unknown whether or not this modality was a holdover from the regional slave culture. What is known is that Baker's family viewed such social arrangements as being integral to African-American success in the face of overwhelming oppression. Exclusion from the nominal opportunities of American citizenship provided a cohesive pressure around the African-American community, in much the same way as systemic slavery provided a raison d'etre for maroon unity. Ella Baker and her family therefore rationalized that they were a part of a continuing struggle, an era in which many of the old oppressions were still in effect, albeit in slightly sublimated forms. The tools of militant resistance as well as the experiences of slavery's resistors, such as the Great Dismal Swamp maroons, were still of great relevance to Ella Baker, during the development of her political outlook.[38]

The conclusion of the Civil War led to the dispersal of the Great Dismal Swamp Maroons throughout the immediate vicinity of the Carolinas and Virginia at the beginning of Reconstruction,[39] in some cases beyond even these locations.[40] Some former inhabitants of the Dismal Swamp went on to become political leaders in the local legislatures where they had maintained communities.[41] Figures such as John Q. Hodges, the last maroon paramount chief, and his brothers were instrumental in advocating for the liberation of oppressed people in the areas near Norfolk, Virginia through the Colored Monitor Union.[42] These luminaries fought for the advancement of newly emancipated slaves, while simultaneously combating the increasingly virulent political repression from the resistant white majority. This has broad implications given the cultural orientation of the Great Dismal Swamp Maroons, who represented numerous predominately African ethnic influences by the conclusion of the Civil War.

> The maroons had come out of the Dismal Swamp, some at once after the defeat of the Confederacy, others by gradual visits accustoming themselves to the life outside. . .Now what had been maroon heritage would be a part of the heritage of all Black Americans. We have seen that those who had been members of the Dismal Swamp maroon community now played leading roles in the new political leadership of the South, their region pioneering in Black political leadership of the South, their region pioneering in Black political action, their organization the foremost in the Black section of the state Republican Party. And as recurs in maroon history, family relationships, the kinfolk, were a vehicle for the

> expression of the life and will of the community (H. P. Leaming 1979, 326).

This was the political and cultural atmosphere in which the family of Ella Baker steeped prior to the turn of the century.[43] She was born only some 30 years after the conclusion of the Civil War, and dispersal of the previously isolated maroon populations through the region. Her professional career reflects an emphasis on decentralized political organization with a focus on interfacing with groups over empowering charismatic leaders.

Ella Baker's political efforts were founded on a group-centered organizational model which is alleged to have been an extension of her family's ethics.[44] She eschewed the charismatic privileging of traditional hierarchal modes of organization in favor with models that favored group-centered empowerment.[45] Her early inspiration for resisting oppression was drawn from her maternal-grandmother, Elizabeth Ross, while her initial impressions of social organization were drawn from Mitchell R. Ross, her maternal-grandfather.[46]

Both grandparents were formerly enslaved African-Americans who grew up on a plantation in Littleton, North Carolina, approximately 50 miles west of the old borders of the Great Dismal Swamp.[47] The borders of the Dismal Swamp were once much more expansive, the current swamp at 2,000 square miles is one tenth of its own original size.[48] Baker's grandmother related numerous stories to her children concerning slave resistance, inculcating in her daughter and granddaughter that they were from a line of resistance fighters.[49] Her grandfather, was a Baptist preacher, who had managed to accumulate a great portion of land from a local planter, in all likelihood his former owner, to be cultivated for the use of his newly emancipated family.[50]

By the time Ella Baker was born he had established several churches in the area with the express intention of uplifting the social standing of his family and local black population.

Mitchell Ross shunned the traditional charismatic role often invoked by Baptist preachers to stir and manipulate church parishioners into emotional frenzies, preferring instead to engage with his parishioners on a rational level with carefully crafted sermons.[51] The success of her family enabled them to support other families who were either less well off, or unable to support themselves. The ethics of her family, informed by retained traditions of extended-kinship, in combination with the resistance stories related by her formerly enslaved relations, crystallized the basic tenets of Ella Baker's later political career.

Her political relationship with George Schuyler, a well-known Black anarchist, led to her spending six years as National Director with the Young Negro Cooperative League, an organization dedicated to grassroots organization composed nationally of co-ops and markets intended to relive economic pressure on blacks during the Great Depression.[52] Her later work with the SCLC and SNCC was characterized by the same dedication to group-centered resistance to white racist policy making, political disenfranchisement, economic deprivation, hierarchical leadership, and gender bias.[53]

1.4 Statement of the Problem

The impacts of precolonial African political culture on enslaved African populations are not well known.[54] Stateless societies' methods of political organization are not universally agreed upon by historians.[55] Some choose to interpret such societies as participatory democracies, while others interpret their political structure as a form of communal socialism.[56] For the purpose of this study African decentralized political thinking will be evaluated through the lens of social anarchism. Social anarchism is a form of anarchism that validates the existence of human beings as social creatures while simultaneously resisting the illegitimate accumulation of power by small sectors of society. Anarchism holds that external sources of authority and

control which are not self-determined constitute illegitimate points of coercion in society. These coercive structures are inherently dangerous and undesirable because they organize violence against human beings, and direct that violence in a way that assures the continued domination of disenfranchised members of society by those who hold power. This unjust domination brings about inequitable social relations that damage the ability of individuals to self-determine, as well as limits the progress and prosperity of society by focusing power into the hands of a privileged minority.

Anarchism is therefore necessarily anti-hierarchical and built on direct control of the political and economic structures by members of the society. However, social anarchism holds that informal forms of anarchism are susceptible to hyper individualism which has the potential to threaten the social continuity of communities, by enabling excessive value to be placed on the ability of individuals to pursue personal agendas. Therefore social anarchists propose that anarchism be paired with a group-centric ethic to ensure that communities are cooperatively organized, produce on the basis of mutual-aid, and are oriented towards equitable communalism. Social anarchism was specifically selected as a framework for this research because it accounts for the general cultural and social imperatives of West African acephalous societies, and is also consistent with Ella Baker's political outlook, especially during her early foray into political activism, under the tutelage of then anarchist George Schuyler.[57]

The framework of social anarchism not only accounts for the decentralized ethic present within the political structure of West African stateless societies, but also spontaneously organized maroon groups, and some later African-American political efforts, most notably those of Ella Baker.[58] Scholars have been able to identify various strands of African cultural retentions, however it has been difficult for scholars to determine with any level of exactitude the notions of

political organization which were possibly maintained through the Trans-Atlantic slave trade.[59] This study traces the contours and growth of African decentralized organization from its original incarnation in the form of African stateless societies, to the more modern civic practices promulgated by Ella Baker. The discourse of modern Africana history has favored evaluating political economies on the African continent and within the broader Diaspora along statist lines.[60]

The social anarchist framework of the study enabled the evaluation of the political observations and actions of Ella Baker. Additionally, the framework enables a understand of Ella Baker's critique of capitalist systems of control, as well as exploring her observations of how notions of communalism could be utilized to achieve social agency in the absence of ridge hierarchies. Social anarchism is a theoretical framework acknowledging that societies based on hierarchal structures, like capitalist societies, are established on the basis of an illusory individualized progress, which is only seemingly available to all participants in the society. Progress when viewed through the lens of social anarchism is only attainable through mutual advancement and group-consensus, because in reality all members of any given society are interdependent, regardless of attributed social status. This framework is useful because incorporates the notion of federated communities working cooperatively outside of established hierarchies; a system which Ella Baker spent her political career attempting to bring to fruition, and a reality arguably expressed by West African stateless societies and the GDSM. The social anarchistic framework also enables the political realities of West African stateless societies, GDSM, and Ella Baker's group-centered organizational model, to be placed in conversation as synchronistically distinct historical phenomena, which are linked by political culture and an anti-hierarchal social ethos.[61]

1.4.1 African Stateless Societies into Colonial Era

The exploration of Ella Baker's political philosophy as a potential site of retention for the organizational techniques of West African acephalous societies, also demands an explanation of the study of stateless political organization in Africa. African stateless societies are not widely or independently considered as contributors to past or present political cultures within the African Diaspora. Numerous ethnic groups with stateless orientations were removed from Africa, and brought to what would become the American coast, particularly groups who were sourced from the Bight of Benin and Windward Coast.[62] Many of these early arrivals, especially those from Upper Guinea, immediately escaped slave labor to form maroon societies in demonstrations of resistance that recurred cyclically throughout the early settlement of the Americas. Escaped slaves attempted in many cases to reconstitute their independent cultures to the best of their ability, establishing a hybrid culture based on what norms they could retain, and also the environmental factors within which they found themselves immersed.[63]

This study theorizes that such societies could have served as bridges between African methods of decentralized organization and the currents methods of grassroots organization expressed by African-Americans. However, the existences within maroon societies of ethnic groups which are still normatively characterized today by horizontal political organization, such as the Igbo, are often not considered exclusively.[64] This is true even when scholars are attempting to determine the political orientation of Africans in the Diaspora.[65] Additionally, the fluidity of African ethnicity and the limited number of methods by which African identity and political habitude can be tracked empirically through the Trans-Atlantic slave trade; have restricted the degree to which scholars have been able to follow specific political impulses from Africa into the New World.[66]

1.4.2 Maroon Societies and Notions of Statelessness

This study examines maroon societies, as sites of cultural transformation and retention, to provide a way to evaluate possibilities surrounding a potential continuation of African political culture transplanted to the social landscape of the North American continent. Transformations and cultural shifts in maroon societies occurred within a series of revolving factors that were largely based on the necessities of survival.[67] Therefore scholars attempting determine the political heritage of maroon societies must pay careful attention to the context in which such cultures exhibited certain behaviors.

Determinations about the nature of life within maroon societies, the origins of their stateless political heritage, and their potential legacies must also only be made based on historical artifacts sourced from the maroons.[68] The aforementioned difficulties are compounded by the reality of searching for archeological or historical evidence among maroons, whose societies were esoteric by nature, and who on every occasion sought to hide evidence of their presence. Such societies historically settled in naturally inaccessible areas and did not have large literate cultures.[69] This reality often obstructs scientific investigation either by necessitating the investment of exorbitant resources, or by eliminating evidence such as material artifacts, which deteriorate rapidly in the swamp environments preferred by maroons. Archeologists have continually added to the body of evidence surrounding stateless societies, and the maroon societies which may have evolved from their members. However, historians have only sporadically ventured to investigate the political culture among either maroons or African stateless societies, and rarely engaged discussions around whether a cultural continuity can possibly be observed flowing through both groups.[70]

1.4.3 Potential for Continuity of African Political Thought in the Americas

The possibility of historical political connections reaching from African stateless societies, through maroon societies, and into modern political culture are yet unexplored. It is known that many Great Dismal Swamp maroons were at the vanguard of Reconstruction era politics along the Mid-Atlantic coast after the conclusion of the Civil War.[71] What lasting legacy their politics or social experiences may have left on the area should be evident to a degree in the historical events of the regions where they were present. However, such correspondences do not necessary indicate a direct continuum of political consciousness stretching from African stateless societies into modern political landscapes, rather they represent specific lines of influences issuing from the past to act on our modern perspectives.

1.5 Research Questions

The principle aim of this research is to delineate the possible routes African methods of decentralized organization could have taken to find expression in modern-day politics among African-Americans. The secondary aim of this study is to determine if the political outlook of noted civil activist Ella Baker represents one such expression; as a potential heir to certain specific cultural and organizational imperatives unique to African stateless societies. The purposes of such aims are to identify what is useful about decentralized methods of political organization to modern-day African-Americans. Further, it is a goal of the researcher to investigate whether the use of “grassroots methods” of organization by politically mobilized African-Americans represents a cultural inheritance or exists as an adopted set of political tactics.

1.6 Methodology

This study has utilized a social anarchistic framework to create a historical case study analysis of Ella Baker's early life and political career. Baker's upbringing and later activism will be explored within view of the given contextual background of her historical environment. The study will use historical research to investigate questions of political heritage by locating Baker and her organizational philosophy; and placing them in conversation with the earlier political developments of African-descended populations from the region of her birth. The study will specifically focus on contextualizing two historical phenomena which likely impacted the political orientation of African-descended populations in the Carolinas and Virginia.

The first is the dislocation of members of African stateless societies from their homelands and their introduction as a mixed population to the Carolinas and Virginia. The second phenomena which will be explored is the formation and organization of the Great Dismal Swamp maroons, which will be analyzed using narratives, historical evidence, and archaeological findings. Primary source material for this section will largely consist of runaway slave advertisements, and be supplemented by secondary sources gathered from archeological explorations of the Great Dismal Swamp, along with historical treatments of the Dismal swamp maroons. The Great Dismal Swamp maroons were selected because of their close proximity to the birthplace of Ella Baker and also because of the long continuous political tradition they represented among African-Americans inhabiting that space.

The study will then use historical studies and biographical information about Ella Baker to situate her political philosophy in the ongoing liberation struggles of the region, while exploring the contours of her life experiences. The primary source material for this section will include oral interviews conducted with Ella Baker drawn from the Southern Oral History

Program Collection at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. These sources will be added to primary source information drawn from reproductions of the Ella Baker papers housed at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division. The reproduced documents will focus on personal correspondence and reflections from Baker's early life, as well as papers from her time National Director of the Young Negro Cooperative League. Finally, these sources on Ella Baker will be used to reconstruct her political perspectives, social orientation, and potential connections to the organizational culture of previous African-American political efforts.

1.7 Significance

Grassroots political organization has been critical to the advancement of African-American community. The socio-political position of African-Americans necessitates avoiding the paradoxical pitfall of organizing for liberation using oppressive hierarchal structures. The political thinking surrounding stateless societies represents a potential strand of African cultural inheritance, which has large implications for how we understand organizing for social agency. The implications are equally great with regard to our historical understanding of African-American activists, like Ella Baker, who utilized decentralized organizational methods to affect social justice in American society.

Stateless societies and maroon societies have been historically overlooked as predecessors to modern African-American political thought. The typical narrative shows African-Americans emerging from Reconstruction-era politics without a rooted political legacy sourced from a time prior to the rise of Antebellum Slavery. However, the society that developed around the Trans-Atlantic slave trade did not prevent the continuation of Africanisms in the form of organizational techniques. Slavery was not an impermeable cultural barrier. This research

represents an opportunity for Africana scholars to revisit African stateless societies, and African political thinking to investigate whether corollaries are present within current grassroots movements. The study represents an opportunity to rethink what is politically useful, while simultaneously engaging in a historical discourse which may have deeper repercussions across an African Diaspora progressing into the 21st century.

1.8 Chapter Summary

The first chapter of this study introduces the historiography of scholars who have treated the subject of West African acephalous societies, and contextualizes the culture they introduced to Ella Baker's native region by examining how they responded to the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. Specifically, the chapter examines three specific ethnic groups; the Diola, Balanta, and Igbo, as likely candidates for being source groups from which maroons derived as well as continuous contributors to the militant resistance to Antebellum slavery, which Ella Baker cited as an early influence in her childhood. The chapter explores assertions made about the apolitical nature of the societies in question, emphasizing explorations of whether or not they were truly stateless and anti-authoritarian. The chapter illustrates the historically traceable cultural transmissions of West African acephalous societies, which were later made manifest in the Great Dismal Swamp wetland by escaped African captives. The political economy of West African acephalous societies are explored to determine in what ways they may have influenced the organizational habits of the later-day African-descended population existing within the vicinity of eastern border of North Carolina and Virginia.

The second chapter engages the formation of the Great Dismal Swamp maroons, and describes the various points of contact between their activity and the political culture of the North Carolina/Virginia area; with a special emphasis on detailing the potential ramifications

that the GDSM's political legacy had on Ella Baker. The chapter discusses the probable linkages between West African acephalous societies and the GDSM on the basis of shared farming techniques, military tactics, slave demographics, and politico-religious culture. Further analysis is given of how the political economy of the GDSM culture evolved into the political efforts of the Colored Monitor Union, and later blended with the regional organizational efforts of the African-descended population of Ella Baker's home region. The organizational legacy of the GDSM is given political context and used to show how the political ideology of Ella Baker developed as a result of a particular orientation towards militant resistance, gifted in part by the historical activity of the GDSM.

The final chapter treats the political career of Ella Baker and the characteristics which made her novel organizational approach effective for African-Americans during the Civil Rights Movement. The section offers background on Ella Baker's early influences and political activity in an effort to show the lines of political continuity that flow from her regional background forward into her political ideology. Analysis of Baker's later political philosophy is offered, drawing on material sourced from her organizational papers and personal correspondence. Particularly, her experiences as national director of the Young Negro Cooperative League, under the direction of anarchist George Schuyler, will be reviewed based on her organizational papers from that period. The chapter will review the various ways scholars have engaged Ella Baker's politics and ideological stance regarding organizing for social justice. The chapter concludes by showing the correspondence that exists between Ella Baker's organizational ideology and her rural cultural background, by presenting the cultural influences she was immersed in during her youth just outside the Great Dismal Swamp. The suggested chain of political continuity existing between West African acephalous societies, the GDSM, and the organizational philosophy of

Ella Baker are presented, along with the manifold implications such connections have on our understanding of Ella Baker's political philosophy.

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2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Ella Baker was uniquely positioned in time and space to be the beneficiary of an African political legacy derived from stateless societies. She was born only 35 years after the conclusion of Reconstruction in rural North Carolina to a family steeped in the slave culture of the region. From early in her professional career it is clear that her political perspectives were somewhat unorthodox, especially when compared to the ideas of her contemporaries. She was considered to be distinctive among African-American activists for the way she negotiated power. Baker is often credited with single-handedly guaranteeing the autonomy of SNCC, by defending the rights of students and small community groups to make their own administrative decisions locally, absent the influence of more centralized national bodies like the SCLC or NAACP. The effectiveness of her approach is often attributed to her organizational technique, which allowed for a fluid response to specific oppressions over a wide geographic area by loosely aligned autonomous social justice groups. Scholars have even gone so far as to posit that Baker saw herself as a part of a new wave of abolitionism echoing the struggles of the previous century and continuing in a tradition of resistance to unjust racial oppression.[1]

What is missing from the discourse on Ella Baker is a deeper examination of the social and cultural determinants that framed her political trajectory early in life. Baker alluded to the fact that her family encouraged her to see herself as the heir to a specific culture of resistance, one which linked her to a legacy that stretched back across generations, and tied the meaning of her own struggle for freedom to that of her African-born ancestors. It is the responsibility of scholars of Ella Baker's life to explore what further understanding of her political philosophy, is to be potentially gained from exploring the environmental and historical details that led to her effectiveness as an activist. Scholars must endeavor to understand why Baker and her family

placed such an emphasis on a traditional legacy of resistance to oppression. Furthermore, if this heritage is a result of slave resistance efforts by African-born runaways, academics must inquire as to what political value such a transmission would have had to a modern activist like Ella Baker.

The constituent parts of any African sourced anti-oppression tradition Ella Baker was exposed to by her family would have necessarily had a deep impression on not only her identity, but also her political outlook. It is evident that Baker did experience something profound which shaped her political outlook during her formative years with her family in Littleton. NC. Politically speaking it is highly unlikely that any transmission of African political culture Ella Baker adopted as useful was from a highly centralized and authoritarian society, such hierarchal groups would have had extreme difficulty reproducing their culture under Antebellum slavery, and their cultural habitude does not configure well with Baker's established philosophy. Additionally, the vast preponderance of the farming, shipping, and slave record data would seem to indicate that there was a strong influence in Baker's native region from West African stateless societies. The Great Dismal Swamp with its long history of habitation and reputation as a haven for escaped African captives could have served as conduit for an anti-oppression political tradition, especially given its proximity to Ella Baker's point of origin. It is therefore crucial to our understanding of Ella Baker's political philosophy to identify what impact West African acephalous societies had on the political culture her native region, and what are the possible ways in which such contacts could have influenced her across time and space. [2]

2.1 Academic Observations of African Stateless Societies

African stateless societies were typically discussed by scholars as being the last vestiges of primitive communalism.[3] However, most African historians agree that the appearance of

decentralized societies does not necessarily indicate an inability to achieve an expansive state-centric culture.[4] Typically, African stateless societies are discussed as loose-knit village systems whose organization is reckoned through kinship ties.[5] According to the views of some scholars each village functions as an independent polity, which operates as a participatory democracy in which all adult members of the village actively vote and discuss all major village decisions, usually with the oversight of an elder's council.[6] These kinship ties and the attending decentralized political organization, transmitted culturally by African captives taken the American coastal area near the Great Dismal Swamp, are suspected sources of inspiration for Ella Baker's group-centered political organization.

Occasionally, in some West African stateless societies the councils would select headmen to serve as the voice predetermined actions, but having very little role outside of executing the collective will of the village.[7] Other scholars choose to characterize African stateless societies as groups who place emphasis on shared means of production and access to labor. [8] These scholars liken African stateless societies to communal socialism, noting the imperative such societies place on maintaining social harmony and restricting the freedoms of individuals where they infringe on the agency of other aspects of the collective.[9] Sam Mbah has advocated that African stateless societies should be viewed as a form of anarchism due to their ethical stance against forming social hierarchies and centralized power.[10] The saying of the Igbo people of southeastern Nigeria, "Igbo enwe eze" or the Igbo have no kings seems to ground his view in a certain reality.[11] The existence of such as saying indicates at once that some stateless societies were aware of kingship, and actively found such centralization either unnecessary or undesirable.

Indeed, many scholars of African history and culture note that even in the instances where hierarchal control was established in Africa, kings did not rule freely.[12] Many were subject

to extensive cultural controls, the influence of an advisory council, and in some cases ritualized forms of regicide.[13] Authoritarian autocratic rule has proven to be aberrant in the history of African societies.[14] European contact and exposure to the slave trade also radically changed the organizational tactics of all stateless societies who were pressured by them. The Balanta of the Senegambian region for example abandoned their existing territories to move toward more inaccessible areas within mangrove swamps.[15] Some scholars point out that many ethnic groups completely reorganized the dispersion of their village layouts to either include fortifications or to avoid concentrating their populations in centralized areas.[16] The Diola began to alter their spiritual traditions to account for stories of stolen people, while simultaneously making village based decisions on whether or not to participate in the slave trade.[17]

2.2 Historiography of Maroon Societies in North America

Enslaved Africans displaced by the Trans-Atlantic slave trade who were able to escape into a state of marronage were in a unique position.[18] Kevin Mulroy points out that the sheer process of being enslaved and transported across the Atlantic Ocean was enough to begin the process of ethnogenesis.[19] The experience immediately impacted the cultural perspectives of the all the ethnic groups that experienced the Middle Passage, and subsequently led to their adoption of new perspectives better suited to their alien environment. They retained many cultural notions to the extent that they found them useful, but often quickly incorporated the new knowledge of groups they were placed in contact with be they Native American, European, or previously unknown African ethic groups.[20]

The state of marronage created a unique set of circumstances for African captives that managed to escape the most caustic oppressions of antebellum slavery. Scholars tend to view North American maroon societies such as the GDSM as being organized around spontaneous

action and deeply embedded with a survival ethic, one which placed very little emphasis on long-term planning. The character of maroon societies was such that they produced very little material culture from which scholars could extrapolate their characteristics or living habits. Maroons also left a very limited body of first person accounts of their culture for the historical record, and because of the remote nature of their settlements, it is very difficult for archeologists to explore scientifically their material culture. However, accounts of North American maroon societies were still produced by military officers, colonial officials, explorers, slave owners, and runaway slaves, in sufficient quantity to supply academics with an insight into their culture.[21]

Many scholars believe that North American maroon societies were necessarily hierarchal because of the militant nature of their lifestyle, the assumption being that combat requires a vertical command structure to be effective. Dr. Daniel O. Sayers and others assert that the political organization of North American maroon societies, such as the GDSM, would have found in necessary to implement a vertical command structure to guarantee defense, allocation of resources, and coordinate military maneuvers. The lack of any such centralized structure governing the activities of North American maroon societies is entirely possible. Some scholars, such as Hugo P. Leaming and Michael Gomez, point out that North American maroon societies would often form on a small scale, and only coalesced into larger more self-sufficient groups as time progressed, especially during the early phase of the 18th century. However, in many cases there is no conclusive evidence completely validate the theory that these societies were governed by a centralized system of political organization. Leaders did emerge in North American maroon societies, but the extent to which they were charismatic leaders “ruling” groups of people with a high level of practical authority as opposed to politico-religious symbolic figureheads, is not clearly demonstrated by the current discourse.[22]

The current perception among archeologists is that the GDSM were originally a collection of defeated war combatants who retreated to live permanently in the Great Dismal wetland after the conclusion of the Tuscarora War in 1715. The Tuscarora ethnic group comprised a significant portion of the GDSM population until 1730, when the overwhelming population of the swamp became African runaways. Subsequently, the GDSM were arranged along family lines, with newcomers being slowly integrated into the society over time layer upon layer. The settlements of the GDSM maroons from the earliest period of their habitation of the swamp reflect this settlement pattern, along with the persistent need to protect their settlements. Some of their defensive strategies reflect the building habits and survival techniques of West African acephalous societies. The archeological record therefore reflects a certain level of "Africanisms" in present in the Great Dismal Swamp. According to Dr. Terry Weik the principle ways in which archeologists have been able to track "Africanisms" in such societies has been by examining remnants of foodways, building techniques, and pottery traditions. Such examples of material culture have reinforced the image of permanent settlements, with an egalitarian social structure, built for rapid defense and escape. It is noteworthy that not much ironwork has been found in the Great Dismal Swamp as compared to other maroon settlements in West Africa. Iron smelting was an especially prolific industry in West Africa during the height of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. However, such technology was noticeably absent in the domestic economy of the West African acephalous societies of the Rice Coast, especially among the Balanta. Captive members of the Balanta were brought to North Carolina during the 18th century in significant numbers to labor in the budding rice industry, and one potential source GDSM culture.[23]

Scholars Sylviana Diouf, Gwendolyn Hall, and Michael Gomez do not subscribe to the view that maroon societies, or groups of African bondsmen were necessarily committed to organized resistance against Antebellum slavery on a cultural level. They point out that resistance often took the form of highly localized sporadic acts of sabotage and militant resistance. However, they do agree that such actions often were organized along ethnic lines, and were therefore heavily influenced by the preexisting cultural orientation of the African captives, particularly those actively pursuing their freedom in the shadow of antebellum plantation society. Diouf posits that the GDSM culture was composed of groups that often behaved autonomously in response to their own unique economic and security concerns, especially towards the opening of the 19th century when the isolation of the Great Dismal swamp was threatened by the logging industry. However, Hugo Leaming has suggested that the GDSM were especially committed to militant resistance, and the dismantling of the antebellum plantation system for the duration of their habitation in the wetland. Leaming cites the repeated military actions the GDSM participated in including the American Revolutionary War, Civil War, lesser intermittent actions such as cattle-raiding, and the raiding of plantations straddling the eastern North Carolina/Virginia border. He also cites the politico-religious culture of the GDSM as being responsible for the growth of a network of militant resistors being seeded within luminal group of slave preachers, who came to prominence in slave culture during the late 18th century. Leaming posits that this network of slave preachers and conjure men was important to communication between the Great Dismal Swamp and enslaved black populations within the plantation system. He and Jeffrey Crow observe that slave resistance in North Carolina was heavily impacted by the collusion of slave preachers, who communicated and recruited militants from within groups of bondsmen. This is especially important to the academic understanding of

Ella Baker's political orientation given the position of her maternal grandfather as formerly-enslaved preacher who emerged from this regional culture.[24]

North American marronage was characterized by small companies of men who existed outside of the direct control of white hegemony in Antebellum society. These societies were not necessarily given to permanent settlement, or militant collaboration with the enslaved population of actively held on plantations. Tim Lockley and David Doddington asserts that most maroon communities only existed a few years and were primarily significant because they enabled African-descended bondsmen to familiarize themselves with the limits of Antebellum society's ability to project power. It was in these remote and inaccessible spaces that maroons found the ability to self-determine and resist the influence of plantation society, creating an escalating incidence of opposition to plantation society in the form of the Underground Railroad. This was how the culture of militant resistance which influenced the political ideology of Ella Baker evolved into a pervasive culture in her native region.[25]

2.3 Ella Baker in the Shadow of the Great Dismal Swamp Maroons

Carolinas planters active during the 18th and 19th centuries showed a remarkable preference for slaves from Senegambia and a marked disdain for Biafran captives, many of whom were associated with the Igbo ethnic group, and considered violent resistors. Virginian planters were not so stringent in their prejudice towards slaves taken from Biafran markets, and likely imported larger numbers of African captives who maintained an Igbo ethnic identity. It is therefore plausible that this paradigm led to a concentration of African captives from West African acephalous societies, built up within the Carolinas and along Virginia's southern state border near the Great Dismal swamp. Scholars now know that ethnicity played a major role in how escaped slaves chose to organize politically for their own liberation, as evidenced by the

Denmark Vesey revolt.[A] These same scholars assert that it is now necessary to investigate the ethnic origins of African descendants who were considered influential in the development of American slave culture.[B] Such explorations are essential to contextualizing the development of Ella Baker's political thought, as she matured among the traces of West African culture and legacy of the Great Dismal Swamp maroons.[26]

Scholars share diverse opinions as to what is the regional legacy of the Great Dismal Swamp maroons. Some scholars tend to regard them only in relation to slave resistance efforts and the narratives of runaway slaves, especially those traveling the Underground Railroad.[27] Other scholars identify the maroons with the military engagements they participated in over the course of generations. A select few of scholars have endeavored to study the Great Dismal Swamp maroons as a unique culture which operated continuously for over 225 years, impacting a wide range of historical events and possessing a particular heritage unique to their region.[28] How pervasive the culture of the Dismal Swamp maroons was in the area of the eastern North Carolina and Virginia borderlands is unknown. Trace evidence would suggest that the maroons and what their culture represented were reasonably well-known to African-Americans whether free or enslaved.[29]

This opens the possibility for cultural transmissions which possibly could have been maintained down to our present era. Ella Baker remains a strong candidate for being a recipient of such transmissions because of the influence of her grandparents on her early life. Baker

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[A] "Closer examination of Vesey's insurrection, however, demonstrates weaknesses inherent in its approach and derivative of the circumstances out of which it sought deliverance. . . Organized according to ethnicity, the revolt consisted of an Igbo column led by Monday Gell and a Gullah contingent under Gullah Jack. . ." Gomez 1998, 3

[B] Africans and their descendants did not simply forget (or elect not to remember) the African background. Rather, that background played a crucial role in determining the African American identity. Put another way, given the importance of African ethnicity, it is inescapable that ethnicity had a direct impact on African Americans' self-perception. The African American represents an amalgam of the ethnic matrix; that is, the African American identity is in fact a composite of identities. Gomez 1998, 13

upbringing has been likened to being an immersion in a kinship-based system of socialism that had an irreducible impact on her later political career and notions of group-centered ethics.[30] Her grandfather's aversion to charismatic leadership within his own church practice may have been the foundation of her later point of departure from the NAACP and SCLC.[31] Her political activities early aligned with anarchism later evolving into group-centered leadership focused on producing participatory democracies. She is theorized to have developed her own independent model of political organization through her experiences with the civil rights movement, but still heavily influenced by her family background. However, what is often neglected in these treatments is how much of Ella Baker's political philosophy was derived from the collective experience of those closest to her during her adolescence, and how much of that collective experience was entrenched in the Antebellum history of her place of origin. Baker's vision of what took place during slavery, and how African-Americans coped with Reconstruction, was largely framed by the stories of family, especially her grandmother Elizabeth Ross. Her upbringing oriented her towards being a resistance fighter along radical margins.[32]

Scholars Barbara Ransby and Todd Moye describe Ella Baker as a product of an immersion in a family culture that supported the expression of communalistic ideals. Ella Baker as a political activist viewed from this perspective is an individual who was attempting to adapt the communitarian values of her family, to the broader needs of the African-American community. Her organizational emphasis was on developing notions of mutual-aid, direct action, and group-consensus absent the oversight of centralized hierarchies. In their view her focus was on developing people who were independently capable of pursuing their own social justice initiatives locally. Ransby, especially views Ella Baker's political career as an attempt to extended her personal ethics to the groups she helped organize during the Civil Rights

Movement. While this view is consistent with the facts of Ella Baker's life and political career, it does not delve deep enough into the historical factors influencing her background that stem from the era of slavery. [33]

Scholars investigating Ella Baker are not in full agreement about what her position was in relation to partisan politics. Ella Baker was very insistent on removing her personal disposition from being a factor affecting her professional work, and was careful to avoid the more egocentric pronouncements of other notable activists. Her affinities for grassroots organization and peer-to-peer development have led some to identify her political orientation as being most closely attuned to that of a participatory democracy. However, participatory democracy is a method of approaching statecraft, and it is not known what legitimacy Baker felt the American state had within lives of African-Americans, or the broader general population. Also, Ella Baker's earliest professional experience as an officer within a national organization facilitating community activism, the YNCL, was accompanied by her affiliation with a great number African-Americans holding either socialist or anarchist views. It is evident from the official correspondence Ella Baker produced during her time with the YNCL, that her group-centered views were already in place and finding political expression. Furthermore, even those scholars who assert that Ella Baker was the titular pioneer of participatory democracy in American politics are quick to point out that the true point of inspiration for her dedication to social justice was her family, who are attributed by scholars, such as Moye and Payne, a primarily socialist-like disposition.[C] It is more

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[C] The philosophy of social change that led her to insist on an independent student organization at the Raleigh Conference in April 1960 was the logical extension of these experiences combined with a southern upbringing based in a strong allegiance to family and community. Her great sense of social responsibility was based in the traditions of the small North Carolina community where she moved in 1911 at the age of eight with her family.12 The local church was presided over by her grandfather, a former slave, who had bought the land on which he once had served, vowing to provide amply for the needs of his family and neighbors. It was a commonplace for his household to take in the local sick and needy. Regardless of their social position, Miss Baker learned at an early age to be responsible for all of them. Mueller 2004, 82

plausible that Ella Baker be identified as a social anarchist because her critique of capitalism was socialist in origin, her affinity for direct action often in opposition to state institutions, and her staunch encouragement of group autonomy independent centralized hierarchy. Baker also incorporated her family's habit of using a communal ethos to affect social cohesion into her political philosophy, something repeatedly evidenced by the way she encouraged members of social justice groups to share values. Scholars repeatedly cite the influence of Ella Baker's grandparents (ex-slaves) as being a major force in the formation of her early political views. The emphasis Ella Baker's grandparents placed on inculcating in her that she was a part of a legacy of militant resistance; demands a more thorough examination regarding what militant actions they were referencing, and whether such actions had any relationship with the history of the GDSM.[34]

The organizational model developed by Ella Baker is posited to have been constructed as a counter to the charismatic model of male leadership typical of ministers active with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.[35] Her legacy to the Civil Rights Movement was an organic method of political organization that was fluid enough to be adaptable in any political environment.[36] Her administrative tactics are theorized to have maximized efficiency by decentralizing leadership, promoting direct-action, and enabling everyday individuals through group-centered consensus building.[37] Ella Baker's writings show that she had an affinity African history, and considered herself to be a inheritor of African culture.[38] Baker grappled with the larger social issues surrounding modern political formation and American economic infrastructure. She valued the cultivation of people as activists, and adopted of empowering people so that they were capable of facilitating their own desired social change.[39] Ella Baker's political philosophy demonstrates the "race-consciousness" of the Civil Rights Movement, but

maintains a staunch anti-capitalist stance, along with a consistent anti-hierarchical outlook.[40] Her positioning within the broader historical context of the political liberation struggles of African-descended populations around the North Carolina-Virginia border, offers a new perspective on what influenced the formation of her philosophy. Placing African stateless societies in conversation with later-day maroon societies, may enable future scholars to approach questions surrounding the development of Ella Baker's political efficacy on a deeper level.

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[26] Gomez 1998; Hall 2005

[27] Lockley and Doddington 2012; D. O. Sayers 2004

[28] H. P. Leaming 1979; Aptheker 1943; Sayers, Burke and Henry 2007 societies in the Americas: Resistance, cultural continuity, and transformation in the African diaspora." *Historical Archaeology* (Society for Historical Archaeology) 31, no. 2 (1997): 81-92.

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[35] Mueller 2004; Baker 1974; Elliott 1996

[36] Mueller 2004

[37] Mueller 2004; Baker, Cooperative League correspondence 1932-1936

[38] . . . Because Africa's history has long been reduced to the status of superstition and myth, and its children everywhere have been victimized by prejudicial and pseudo-scientific propaganda. That this has been most direful and far-reaching in its damage, only a casual recall of the discriminations and injustices suffered by the Negro everywhere, the widespread acceptance of Nordic "superiority" and Negro "inferiority", and the lack of a group consciousness among Negroes will suffice to confirm. But that such conditions should continue to exist, or that they cannot be remedied is another question. (Baker, Light on a Dark Continent n.d.)

[39] Baker, Oral History Interview with Ella Baker 1977; Ransby 2003

[40] Mueller 2004

3 *VOID, NOT VACUUM*: HISTORICAL TREATMENT OF STATELESS SOCIETIES

Ella Baker was influenced by a tradition of militant resistance inherited by the African-descended population of her native region. Her political ideology concerning how communities organize for social justice was heavily influenced by the group-centric ideals of her family, who emerged from North Carolina slave culture. Furthermore, the militant resistance culture of her region was the legacy of runaway African captives who attempted to reassert their culture in the uninhabited regions of the North Carolina and Virginia border. Many of these African captives were sourced from West African stateless societies. Therefore, it is fundamentally important to the academic understanding of Ella Baker's political orientation to examine decentralized political thinking among West African acephalous societies, in an effort to determine the possible lines of continuity that exist between them and Baker's organizational philosophy.[1]

The history of West African acephalous societies has reflected multiple shifts in African historiography across time, and has also been impacted by contemporary notions of how political thought has influenced social organization on the African continent. The influence of indigenous African political thought on the course of historical events within the locus of Africa is not disputed, what remains contentious is the point of origin and level of significance such political thought had on the evolution of specific ethnicities, and the historical events in which they participated. Also in dispute, is the relevance of such political thought to African-descended populations across the Atlantic Ocean. Notions of statelessness and the affinity of some West African ethnic communities for horizontal organizational structures indicate that there is space to consider the influence that such organizational habits had on historical events. Enslaved Africans dislocated to North America by the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, attempting to reestablish their

group identities in self-determined ways, potentially drew on the political thought of acephalous societies for inspiration in guiding their own organizational efforts.

Establishing which ethnicities were most germane to discussion of decentralized organizational habits in West African societies, and what their potential for a Trans-Atlantic communication they represent, is complex line of inquiry necessitating interdisciplinary insights. However, the field of inquiry can be reduced by examining which ethnic groups were represented in sufficient numbers, both in West Africa and North America, in situations which allowed for self-determined expression of political thought. Furthermore, the acephalous or stateless status of such societies operating in precolonial Africa must first be established through a thorough examination of their development in the existing discourse. This study finds three specific African ethnic groups are noteworthy for the roles their decentralized political habitude played on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean; they are the Diola (Jola), Balanta, and Igbo.

The military strategy and farming culture of these selected West African acephalous societies will be used to demonstrate their presence in the Great Dismal Swamp region. African captives transplanted from the Guinea Coast revolutionized the North Carolina rice industry, especially near the coastal areas surrounding the Great Dismal Swamp. Furthermore, the military tactics of specific decentralized ethnic groups, particularly the Igbo can be seen in the recorded history of the GDSM active in both Virginia and North Carolina. Ella Baker cites her family as originating in this region within a slave culture with a history of militant resistance.[2] Therefore, the influences of these particular ethnic groups may have been impactful on how Ella Baker developed, especially given her origin in the region of their most politically and military relevant actions. African-Americans organizing for self-determination may have drawn on the influence of West African acephalous societies to galvanize themselves politically. Ella Baker may have

received as a part of her heritage notions of how to organize politically for resistance to racial oppression. Exploration of West African acephalous societies will demonstrate their presence in the GDSM culture and given indications of how their culture may have been absorbed into the political heritage of African-Americans, like Ella Baker, who were attempting to secure their own socioeconomic agency.

3.1 Igbo

The Igbo are known for their decentralized political organization and large population located primarily in southeastern portion of Nigeria, in what has come to be known as Igboland. The Igbo were considered notable for their refusal to embrace kingship or federated systems of organization, however, their history is nuanced with multiple political incarnations existing across time and space. The moniker "Igbo enwe eze," translated as "the Igbo have no king" is not to be taken as an absolute truism in all historical instances where Igbo political organization has found expression; this is especially true when the regional differences between the various lands Igbo populations inhabit are taken into account. The specifics of their political organization have been explored in detail by various scholars,[3] and their findings reveal many of the characteristics unique to West African acephalous societies. The contradictions that exist within the political culture between various Igbo communities illustrate the potential intellectual pitfalls of evaluating their culture as a monolithic structure, and by extension the pitfalls of evaluating acephalous societies synchronistically.

West African acephalous societies organize politically along extended kinship lines and utilize such ties to divide land, resources, and responsibility horizontally. The Igbo, for instance, are organized within a village system which is further subdivided by age-grades and fed by the kin groups of the local area. The Ikwu and Umunna kinship belts are cited as being the

foundational underpinning of Igbo society, and distinctions between the such regional differences in kinship organization are fundamental to discussion of Igbo political structure.[4] In specific regions individuals are appointed to be either village head-men or members of an elders' council. However, these positions are not guaranteed by lineage or always permanent fixtures once appointed. The majority of the power in such societies resided with the individual members of the society who were recognized as adults through rites of passage. The religious rites of the Igbo were therefore incredibly significant to their political development because of their function as both a signifier of ideal authority, and social constraints.[5]

Revisiting the statement "Igbo enwe eze" scholars have noted that the linguistic usage of eze denotes the early comprehension of ritual kingship. That is to say the honorific title of "eze" is as old as Igbo society and therefore kingship was not an alien notion, in the sense that it was not imposed by foreign influences. The notion of a eze (chief/king) has always been an organically possessed notion, and is rather ubiquitous in the Igbo lexicon.[6] However, there has been a tendency on the part of Africanist scholars to conflate the title of eze solely with the type of leadership in seen in large centralized kingdoms.[7] Over time some scholars have come to question the assumption that kingship was considered by the Igbo in terms similar to how authoritarian regimes existed elsewhere in West Africa.[8]

The Igbo hinterland remained relatively decentralized well into the progression of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade.[9] However, the coastal region of Igboland afforded local groups with broader access to both trade and new technology. The Nri who founded a kingdom on the Anambra River, were at the core of a lineage expansion that slowly crystallized into powerful state. This expansion was a thousand year process that blossomed out from the Igbo-Ibaji borderlands to establish hegemony in a territory of approximately 25,000 sq miles. In spite of

this, it is asserted that Nri ritual control never grew to encompass a majority of Igbo people.[10] Populations which lived in the southern, northeastern, and northern territories of Igboland were unaware of the dominance of Nri. The incorporation of powerful military orders therefore did not always result in the inception of a centralized system of political control. This is reasoned to be because of the autonomous nature of the Igbo village system, which was reputed to be jealously protected against exterior influences.[11]

Africanist scholars,[12] and Igbo specialists in particular,[13] have asserted that West African notions of kingship were intentionally proscribed. Most notions of political organization in West Africa are bound in politico-religious structures with very specific rules about what type of authority can be vested in the hands of particular title-holders.[14] It is posited that the Igbo people were very well aware of the subtleties of kingship and attempted to remove as much as possible centralized systems of control.[15] They were given at certain times to acknowledging the advantages hierarchal organization renders in war, and were not above allocating war powers to a particular title holder. However, such military commanders were immediately stripped of such powers during the ensuing periods of peace. One of the major hallmarks of such decentralized political activity in West Africa was the use of ritual shrines and sacred authority to truncate the temporal power of title holders and administrators. This is particularly true in the case of the Igbo. Ritual control exercised by shrine cults effectively delimited concentration of power in any one aspect of the community, be it power held by an individual or group.

The scared title holders and Eze were often obliged by the responsibilities of their office to engage in an incredible number of ritual propitiations.[16] They were also restricted by a large number of taboos. Sacred title holders were expected to behave in a way that dissociated themselves with any obvious human flaws or needs. Therefore, all such administrators imbued

with sacred authority had to observe strict taboos such as; never crossing oceans or rivers, not eating profane animals, or shaking hands with untitled men.[17] In some cases these elaborate taboos were castigating enough to force some individuals to abdicate their office. It is theorized that many of these taboos, which restricted the movement and behavior of sacred authority holders in Igbo society, were designed specifically with the intention of limiting their ability to affect coercive power. This was done in favor of a more idealized governance based on consensus.[A] In effect, the notion of sacred is applied to kingship to elevate the office to a level above the typical egocentric motivations of humanity, which in the Igbo view would inevitability corrupt the office and lead to oppression.[18]

The Ala shrine dedicated to the Igbo earth goddess Ezeala, was used to promote both unity and to affect a ritually enforced respect for boundaries. Territories were demarked by mounds erected to demonstrate the communal distribution of land resources, sacred mounds also functioned as a reminder of the ritual law in effect throughout the Igboland. Sacred authority holders, politico-religious cults, and village headmen were administrators of law enforcement and operated the mechanisms of ritual power in Igbo society.[19] However, power could not be wielded by sacred authority holders carelessly without the consequence of losing public faith.[B] Economic prosperity and social cohesion depended on a moral governance, which was at once a source of communal unity and anti-oppressive. No community could long suffer the economic fallout of prolonged internal conflict. Long-term social strife or oppression would be an

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[A] Neither leadership nor headmanship implies any coercive power over the other members of the band. Only as a coagulation of group opinion can headmen or leaders exert a control—which, even then, is not final. (Ayittey G. B., 2006, p. 115)

[B] Good governance sustains a population and helps it to grow, bringing an increase in prosperity, and as succinctly put by an Igbo adage, “Madu ka ego” (lit. humans, the creators of wealth, are more important than wealth itself). Authority holders who failed to uphold this adage and misruled their communities, lost both their moral and economic bases of power. Igbo history is rife with examples of people who migrated and settled in other places due to political oppression and the social discord and economic distress it created in their communities. (Oriji J. , 2011, p. 52)

occurrence that would immediately rob a populace of its social freedom halting economic activity. This type of mismanagement was avoided at all level lest it lead to the migration of the populace away from the source of the conflict and the deterioration of the community.

Rule of law was determined by community consensus guided by elder members of the community. Elders generally exercised more influence in the adjudication of ritual law because of their experience and mastery of the complex set of rules governing Igbo politico-religious structures. There is little doubt that the Amala (Igbo village council) was dominated by elders and sacred title holders such as the eze. However, it must also be understood that the younger age-sets (ogbo), composed of recognized young men, were the main secular branch of the Igbo system of societal organization and jurisprudence. They policed the public spaces (markets, roads, and village gatherings), while also serving as the main body of community defense. The arbitration of mundane justice and the duties of judicial determinations was therefore the proxy of the ogbo, who were effectively organized to take advantage extended kinship ties in the pursuit of social order. Though the elders council exercised a controlling influence in the Amala, adherence to sacred law severely limited the range of their power. This in combination with the need for the ogbo's virility and continued participation in the defense of Igbo society, on both a moral and mundane level, enabled an offsetting of power.

Women were also serious participants in Igbo society on both a sacred and mundane level. Still, the extent to which they participated in the society depended to a large degree on whether they were situated in an area of Igboland that recognized matrilineal descent, as in the Ikwu kinship belt. The majority of the Igbo population was situated in the Umunna kinship belt which includes the Western Igbo, Cross River Igbo, Northern Igbo, Niger Igbo, and the Southern Igbo. The Umunna kinship belt trended towards recognizing only patrilineal lineage and

excluded women from some of the proceedings of the Amala. However, this does not mean women played no serious role in the politico-religious institutions of the Igbo.[20]

The Umuada (daughters of Igbo) were a ritual society made up of worshippers of Ezeala made up of the unmarried, married, and divorced adult women of the community. Their society existed as a moral force, charged with cleaning and consecrating sacred spaces and facilitating burial rights. The Umuada were also feared because their pronouncements could render individual members of society with transgressing against ancestral taboo. The punishment for this violation included a withdrawal of their participation from funeral rite.[21] This act under Igbo cosmology would effectively condemn the spirit of the individual to be broken from the ancestral chain of the community. Women were important in Igbo societies in times of conflict because they could function as political mediators in significant political machinations between their villages of birth and post-marital homesteads. Women were therefore very keen to stay abreast of the changing political narratives of their regional areas, especially where events concerned their own blood lineages.

When decentralized societies are discussed the level of social stratification apparent in the cultural institutions present are often used as indicators of whether such groups are egalitarian or hierarchal. The institution of slavery among the Igbo must be critiqued to examine how social stratification can either shift a society towards a more hierarchal set of political practices, or defend an existing egalitarian moral order. Slavery was practiced in Igboland, especially in the south, where it was the providence of the politico-religious shrine culture that pervaded the area. The Osu cult which was an extension of the Ala shrine system, was a collection of taboo breaking individuals who had been stripped of their status as citizens of the community. Their status was usually the result of violating ritual law, which resulted either in

their flight from the justice of their local communities, or their commitment to a shrine in retribution for their alleged crimes.[22]

Individuals who committed murder, rape, incest, or witchcraft were consigned to the Ala shrine and inducted as a member of the Oso cult.[23] Cult members were forbidden from marrying nominal citizens and were forbidden from returning to their previous homes without the sanction of the sacred authorities operating the shrine.[24] Oso cultists had to forsake lineage ties and land holdings until their status was restored. It is from the ranks of this group that slave labor was drawn under the aegis of maintaining the social order. The policing of morals and social taboo created a small but institutionally significant group of people who unable to rehabilitate their social status without redeeming themselves in the eyes of sacred authority holders.[25]

Originally, this practice upheld the moral order by removing disruptive individuals and arbitrating social conflict, while simultaneously offering a path to rehabilitation for detained Oso.[26] However, over time with the rise of the Aro trade network and ajoining Okonko Society, the institution of the Oso cult served as a pretense for the violent enslavement of citizens. This change was subtle and took place over generations and slowly shifted Igbo culture, especially that of the Nri and Southern Igbo into a more authoritarian political stance by the mid-19th century. The interior of Igboland remained relatively decentralized well thru the apex of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, but not without becoming far more militaristic.

The Oso cult was the primary source of slaves at the beginning of the slave trade, and immediately subsequent to Portuguese contact with the coast.[27] Principally, these slaves were acquired from shrines as simple purchases that were made in exchange for ordinary goods. Aro traders had established themselves as strong traders within Igboland by the late 17th century. They managed to create complex networks of supply chains between the hinterland and the

coastal cities of the Eze-ala (Southern Igbo shrine priests),[28] to funnel goods and labor between the regions. Previously individual sacred authority holders might have sold Osu cultists from their individualized shrines to the Portuguese whenever the occasion arose. However, over time with the entrance of Great Britain into the slave trade during the late 17th and early 18th century, demand for slaves rapidly increased. Several factors accelerated the impact of the slave trade on Igboland in tandem with escalating socio-political changes.

The Aro as traders had come into contact with the Efik-Ibibio people of the Cross River Basin from whom they most likely acquired the Ekpe/Okonko Title Society, popularly known as the Leopard Society. The Okonko society title holders among the Aro began to spread the cult's practices throughout Igboland. The cult became enriched by the economic activities of the Aro Trade Network and began to exert a powerful influence on the politico-religious culture of the Igbo.[29] Wealthy Okonko society members began to police the societies were they had originally existed only as tradesmen. People who transgressed against the cult were punished, often ruthlessly. The fear the Okonko cult struck in the local communities created a shift in the politico-religious culture of the region. Members of various Igbo villages began to approach Okonko society members to intervene or arbitrate justice on their behalf, which undermined the power of the existing institutions.[30] The Amala and Ezeala cultists were slowly minimized in importance and legitimacy as Okonko cultists began to resolve divorces, land disputes, and manage security concerns.

The rise of the Okonko Society[31] in Igbo culture coincided with the full force entrance of the British Empire into the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. The entrance of British on exacerbated previously circumstances created by the increase in demand by the Portuguese sugar industry in the New World colonies, especially Brazil. The militant tone set by the Okonko Society in

Igboland merged with the increase in demand from the slave trade, which modified the existing checks and balances of Igbo society.[32] Igbo culture became increasingly violent and centralized in the Southeastern region of Nigeria, especially in the areas near the slave port of Calabar. Oso cults expanded to include not only criminals, but also tradesmen, women, and farmers who ran afoul of the Okonko Society. The Igbo hinterland adhered for the most part to the ritual law of the Ezeala, however, areas that were not on allied terms with the Aro Trade Network or Okonko Society were targeted for slave raids.

Aro Trade Network slavers preferred to raid Northern Igbo communities such as the Nri and Akwa. Igbo populations targeted by the slave trade began to adopt defensive measures and forming military alliances. Politico-religious institutions such as the Amala and Ezeala began to enter into fierce power struggles with the Okonko Society, in an effort to maintain the village autonomy enjoyed during the previous era. However, at no time did the Okonko Society overtake the Ezeala shrine system as the nominal arbitrator of sacred law or moral codes.[33] The Ezeala sacred authority holders served as the sole provider of moral legitimacy in Igbo society until the colonial period.[34]

Igbo society during this time period put an emphasis on inculcating into age-sets (male and female) the value of military tactics and martial prowess. The inclusion of members of the everyday populace in the slave trade depleted economic and technological development. This created a paradigm where many of the adults captured in Igbo territories were immediately likely to be resentful of their diminished status in Atlantic slave societies. Igbo slaves were notoriously difficult control and reputed to prefer suicide to subjugation by Europeans.[35] In total it is estimated that 1.34 million captive Africans were shipped to the New World from the Bight of Biafra.[36] The British were responsible for bringing the majority of the slaves shipped from the

Bight of Biafra between 1750 and 1807, depositing large numbers in Jamaica. Smaller yet significant numbers were also brought to the Virginia and Maryland areas of North America.[37] Their presence in British American plantations, along with their reputation for resistance, and cultural habituation towards politico-religious notions of autonomy, would seem to indicate that Igbo were especially instrumental to early slave resistance efforts in colonial North America.

3.2 Balanta

The coast of Guinea-Bissau was a hotbed of Portuguese activity during the 16th and 17th centuries. However, prior to European contact the Balanta ethnic group established themselves as farmers in the region between the lower Rio Casamance and northern bank of the Rio Geba. The origins of the Balanta ethnic group are mysterious and characterized by interethnic conflict and a need for more arable land resources. Scholars believe that the people that formed the Balanta ethnic group, slowly came to settle the southern coastal region of Guinea-Bissau between the 10th and 14th century. Their arrival was motivated by Mandinka expansionism and the incorporation of the Mali Empire.[38] They are politically significant to the history of West African acephalous societies because they are particularly decentralized as a society. They are also significant for their defensive habits and guerrilla tactics which they used to resist domination by the Mali Empire, Portuguese, and inception of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade.

Balanta political organization is extremely focused in local-level organization and is founded largely upon patrilineal kinship ties. Balanta society has subsisted agriculturally off of yam, beans, and pumpkin crop production for centuries. However, evidence indicates that their rice cultivation industry did not arise until Portuguese contact in the early 16th century, introduced a particular strain of rice (O. glaberrima) to the Upper Guinea coast. This particular strain of rice was well-adapted growing in the wet and salty soil conditions of the Guinea coastal

zones. The Balanta were not prolific cultivators of rice prior to the coming of Europeans for reasons of; inaccessible labor, low-population density, limited access to iron-technology, and weak purchasing power.

The issues of labor and population density were caused by the Balanta's system of political organization. Balanta communities were patrilineal, and composed primarily of agriculturists practicing subsistence farming. They possessed a diffuse system of settlement which evolved to enable the sons of male heads of household or b'alante b'ndang, to branch out and form their own farms.[39] Typically, in Balanta society fathers had access to the labor of their sons until they were married, usually when they are between 25-35 years old. Balanta males upon reaching maturity would be given plots of land by their fathers. However, useful farmland was not always easily available in all communities. In village areas with higher community populations arable land was not always plentiful. Under such conditions sons of landowners would leave their father's land and travel to establish themselves in other communities with available land resources. This trend led to a dispersed population and a near completely decentralized political economy among the Balanta.

It was in the interest of the B'alante B'ndang (lit. big men) to retain the labor and services of their dependents. Sons who were members of the uninitiated male age-sets (blufos) were indispensible as labor. Also, their presence enabled Balanta communities to wage war, engage in raids, and defend settlements. B'alante B'ndang also needed to maintain and strengthen kinship ties through marriage, and sought to retain male dependants for that purpose. The B'alante B'ndang at all times endeavored to maximize their economic output through the use of labor. Iron implements were considered rare valuable in Balanta communities, particularly for their ability to improve farming technology. In spite of this scholars have observed that it is strange

that the Balanta did not have access to better iron technology, especially since iron smelting had been conducted in Guinea-Bissau's interior and other northern West African regions for over 2000 years. This observation indicates that special attention must be given to the politico-religious institutions of the Balanta.[40]

Iron production in West Africa was usually controlled by specialized guilds. These groups taught their craft and passed it down through kinship lineages. There were many such guilds among the Madinka, Fula, and Diola in the regions north of the coastal region inhabited by the Balanta. However, the Balanta never possessed access to extensive iron tools or industry until after the arrival of Europeans. It is suspected that iron guilds and the related cult groups were kept out of Balanta communities by their fiercely independent political institutions. Iron working usually improved the individual productivity of farmers and merchants who were in command of the technology. The secrecy needed to control iron technology promoted the incorporation of closed men's societies which would often form a politico-religious cabals. This phenomenon is identified by scholars as being the mechanism by which increasing centralization occurred in many West African societies.[41]

The Balanta organized themselves and adjudicated according to group consensus. The B'alante B'ndang while influential with organizing labor, did not have the political cohesion necessary to unilaterally force acceptance of decisions. Individual b'alante b'ndang may have been able to garner influence on an extremely local level, but were unable to exercise true autocratic control. Balanta society possessed the social conventions promulgated by the shrine culture, Fanando men's society, and the tradition of face-to-face village meetings. This culture did not allow for the emergence of specialized classes or varied skill sets. The Balanta were aware of both the effects of centralization through kingship and merchant-led social

stratification. Walter Hawthorne implies that this awareness led them to the conclusion that centralization and closed societies were not consistent with their values.

Another way of considering the political impetus of the Balanta is presented when Hawthorne asserts that within their culture, every man could become an alante n'dang (respected elder or king) of his own moranças (individual household). Socially the Balanta did not gain by cultivating an elevated class of leadership. Any elite class with concentrated power would have been quickly identified by foreign powers such as the Madinka or Portuguese and used to infiltrate Balanta society. The preferred method of expansion for the Madinka and Mali Empire was suzerainty, which they affected by marrying into the nobility of those they wanted to conquer.[42] This had the dual effect of giving them legitimacy and access to the most influential cultural institutions of a given area.

Intermarriage did occur between the Balanta and these foreign groups, especially with the intention of fostering trade relationships. However, at no time was the concentration of wealth in the hands of members of the b'alante b'ndang (or any other group) ever so pronounced that it led to the crystallization of an elite class. Furthermore, the Balanta were extremely mistrusting of outsiders not from their own lineage or tabancas. This was true even when applied to members of their own ethnic group, and resulted in a culture that held loyalty to the tabancas above all else. Therefore, it was impossible for outside forces to gain influence over Balanta culture without direct conquest and the commitment of military resources. The fact that the Balanta possessed very little material culture and existed in dispersed settlement pattern would have discourage the notion of any such conquest. However, many Balanta communities found ways to derive benefits from intermarriage with outside groups, even groups they exchanged occasional hostilities with as the slave trade escalated in the 17th century.

Balanta women began to play an increasingly important role in the socio-political events post-European contact. B'alante b'ndang attempted to maintain the social cohesion of their morancas by inculcating specific cultural notions in their male dependents. However, the evolution of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade forced the Balanta to adapt to a shifting set of political circumstances.[43] The blufos could become disenchanted with being restricted to the prospects of village life. Contact with outsiders provided an economic opportunity to sustain oneself outside the responsibilities of the tabancas and ritual proscriptions of Balanta society. In an effort to minimize contact with outsiders who threatened to whittle away at their labor force, b'alante b'ndang began to cultivate the women of their tabancas as traders. These female traders functioned as intermediaries between the b'alante b'ndang and foreigners.

Balanta women would trade salt for cloth and foodstuffs with Mandinka merchants, over time cultivating lucrative business networks. They would venture to Portuguese encampments and sell goods in exchange for much desired iron products and firearms.[44] This activity did not subvert the existing virilfocal patrilineal society they came from, on the contrary the b'alante b'ndang encouraged such socioeconomic contact. The b'alante b'ndang benefited from the long-distance trade with foreign markets on an individualized basis, while simultaneously maintaining the necessary labor (blufos) to bring prosperity to their moranças. Women were often able to secure great wealth and respect for themselves, either by winning prosperity through their own economic ingenuity, or by inheriting wealth from foreign traders whom they had married.[45]

The growth of an iron trade facilitated new farming techniques, and the ability to cultivate both upland and wetland strains of rice introduced through economic contact with the Portuguese and Mandinka. Rice cultivation accelerated as the Balanta learned that they could sell surplus crop to the Portuguese in bulk to resupply their ships for international voyages. However,

the burgeoning sugarcane industry in the Portuguese colonies simultaneously led to a demand for copious slave labor, which dramatically changed the socio-economic reality of the Balanta. Raids and warfare quickly escalated as local populations found it profitable to become slave merchants. Originally, slaves were acquired as war captives or criminals from the nominal political economy of Balanta people.

In spite of this, the b'alante b'ndang were not always successful in maintaining the social cohesion of the moranças. The blufos would sometimes leave their tabancas to form gampisas (raiding parties) who would steal cattle, children, women, weapons, and any other portable good of value. Raiding was a time honored preoccupation in Balanta society, so much so, that it is ingrained in their origin story.[46] However, this raiding was always conducted on the behalf of tabancas, but with the arrival of Europeans came the opportunity for individual profiteering. These raiding parties upset the political bedrock of Balanta society and forced a reorganization of the culture.

During 17th century the Balanta learned how to create rice paddies and flotillas within the estuarial zones of the Guinea Bissau coast. The b'alante b'ndang would organize the labor of blufos to construct dikes and tidal pools surrounded by the white mangrove trees that pervaded the coastal area. The artificial pools would flood, filling the interior with fresh water filtered from the surrounding barriers encompassing the pools. The water would slowly flood and kill the roots of the white mangroves used to anchor the pool in position. The pool could then be harvested using wooden tools because of the fragile nature of the rotten roots of the white mangrove trees. These rice cultivation techniques would be practiced into the colonial era, and would be transported with enslaved Balanta captives to the North Carolina and Virginia regions

of British North America. Bought to secure labor for the early colonial tobacco industry they would eventually pioneer the rice industry that expanded in these areas.

The slave trade forced the Balanta to abandon savanna and highland areas which were more difficult to defend against raids. They retreated to the swampy mangrove forests which line the coast of Guinea-Bissau. By water these regions were difficult to navigate because of the winding and narrow paths of the small estuarial rivers that flow through them. Land navigation was extremely treacherous because of the sinking soil, poisonous fauna, and tangled web of vegetation that obscures any direct path. Additionally, the Balanta began to construct in these areas winding and maze like wooden fortifications positioned to challenge any hostile assault force. They militarized the blufos and repositioned villages to produce a tactical advantage that favored them in both defense and counterattack.[C] Moranças which once were spread out to take advantage of arable land resources were rewoven into tightly concentrated tabancas capable of quickly responding to attacks.[47]

The destabilization of the status quo political economy pushed the Balanta culture to its limit. Some individuals chose to partake in the slave trade as method of gaining personal advantage, however profit motive was not always a sufficient cause to legitimize participation. Many Balanta preferred to remove themselves to remote inaccessible coastal areas that removed them from the most heavily raided areas.[48] Still a great number of Balanta were taken captive and shipped to the New World. The Balanta ethnic group has a recorded presence in the Portuguese colonies of Suriname and Brazil. Their presence in the British colonial areas of the Carolinas and Virginia are evident in the history of those regions rice production industry.

[C] "Their villages are walled around with very large timbers, firmly fixed in the ground, in three or four circling fences, and surrounded outside the towers and guard-posts, made of very tall timbers, with wooden walks. . . from which old men shoot their arrows so as not to be useless" (Hawthorne, 2003, p. 159)

The Guinea-Bissau region produced a disproportionately large number of captive Africans from the early-18th century until 1810, populations which were distributed throughout the Chesapeake region, Carolinas, and Georgia.[49] The evidence reflects that the majority of African captives taken from Guinea-Bissau were sourced from the coastal littoral regions inhabited by the Balanta and other acephalous societies.[50] A large percentage of these captives were therefore ethnic Balanta, Diola, and Bijago, ethnic groups who were renown for their tidal rice farming techniques.[51] Their presence in North America not only brought change to rice industry, but also affected the political economy of early America, when escaped African captives began to form maroon societies.

3.3 Diola

The Diola (Jola) are an acephalous society that inhabits the lower Casamance region near the Gambia River in what is today southern Senegal. The area is an amalgamation of mangrove swamps and forested areas replete with heavy vegetation including, oil palms, silk cotton trees, and black mangroves. The Diola share many key characteristics with the ethnic groups of the Upper Guinea Coast. They operate politically within a village system regulated by a politico-religious moral order. They are also known to be prolific rice cultivators, who use a combination of tidal farming and upland planting to grow rice in multiple different ecological environments.

Time is reckoned on the microeconomic scale within the Diola village system. Therefore, oral histories among the Diola do not reveal broad sweeping historical events playing out on the macroeconomic scale; such as the rulership of dynasty or invasion of a foreign force. Instead, the Diola use references from changes in their shrine culture, initiation societies, and village occurrences. Historians, Robin Horton, Martin A. Klein, Walter Hawthorne, and Robert M. Baum are all in agreement that gaps exist in the existing discourse regarding African stateless

societies.[52] They all cite the limited accessibility of Western scholars to West African intellectual culture, as a major obstacle to researching the complexities surrounding both these societies' evolution and impact on history.

The Diola historically have organized themselves politically into relatively autonomous independent villages, loosely affiliated through kinship ties. The sanguinity of ties between villages is important because it simultaneously provides grounds for trade, labor acquisition, and conflict resolution. Villages which have extended family residing in neighboring villages are less likely to make war when conflicts arise over theft, property, or moral observances. The onset of the Trans-Atlantic Slave trade severely unbalanced the moral and political balance that maintained the social fabric of the Diola. However, the European slave trade was not the only force challenging the equilibrium of the Diola society. The indigenous politics of the areas interior to the Casamance region were driving major changes to institutions that had remained relatively static for generations. Exchanges with the Mandinka and refugees from foreign lands influenced the culture and economy of Diola, stimulating diverse changes.

The most important part of Diola political institutions was the shrine system, organized to overlay a spiritual order over the temporal activities of the community. The spirit shrines (ukine) of the Diola were both the epicenter of social life and the forum for maintenance of political harmony.[53] Shrine elders would teach moral lessons, explain ritual obligations, and habituate members of the community to working in unison through shared cultural imperatives. Over time European contact and new access to iron tools corroded aspects of Diola cultural institutions, or forced them to transform. New initiate ceremonies, such as the Bukut, were instituted as a result of these changes. Shifting social values began to emphasize wealth over moral rectitude and social harmony slowly leading to the creation of a new order.

There is dispute among scholars as to whether or not the native population of the Senegambian coastal region represented a major source slave labor. It is theorized that Muslim networks were responsible for facilitating a great deal of the slave supply apparatus through expansion and jihads. The military activities of the Kaabu kingdom and expansion of Segu are cited as being the prominent forces generating supply to the trade. The coastal regions of Senegambia are posited to have therefore been the preserves of slave market activity throughout the 18th century, and the former site of slave raids during 17th century, closer to European first contact.[54] For instance Dr. James Searing asserts that coastal populations near Senegalese river deltas did not compose any more than ten percent of outgoing slave imports.[55] The conclusion drawn is essentially that economic networks in the land immediately interior to the Senegambian coastal zone possessed powerful Muslim kingdoms, who possessed a far more capable infrastructure for producing copious amounts of slaves for economic gain, and did so often under religious pretenses more adapted such an enterprise.

If such assertions were proven unilaterally valid it would mean that the coastal population of the Senegambian coastline and the rest of Upper Guinea, were not well represented in the disembarked slave populations of North America. This would substantially negate the possibility that West African acephalous societies from these regions were significant to the political development of events in North America. However, there are weaknesses to these assertions and counterpoints have been presented. These counters are largely based on slave shipping data compiled by Dr. David Eltis, and presented in the Trans-Atlantic Slave Database.[56] Firstly, inflation in the price of African captives and the lack of centralized cultural institutions opposed to raiding and slave trading enabled greater war-making activity among the coastal acephalous societies.

The current data from shipping records shows that over 300,000 captives were sourced from the Senegambia region during the 18th century.[57] Coastal inhabitants constituted a significant portion of this number, and were also significant in transmitting to the North American coast rice culture in the form of tidal-farming. However, Dr. Eltis and other scholars dispute the importance of this reasoning that ethnicity and the rise of specific crop cultures were not linked in any significant, or causal way.[58] They assert that slave populations and planters were influenced by a myriad of unseen forces including, market changes, shipping logistics, and the political economies of local areas. While willing to concede that ethnicity was a factor, they reiterate that it was not a governing factor in the creation of any one crop industry.[59]

It is important to also consider the academic response to their observations.[60] The Trans-Atlantic Slave Database, while an unprecedented source of empirical data for scholars of the slave trade is not an all-encompassing account of shipping transactions from the Middle Passage. There were numerous transactions that were undocumented, and many which were executed privately in a manner not easily accounted for historically. Finally, the vantage point of scholars often reflects the terminology and perspectives of Atlantic traders, who demarked regions (Windward Coast, Rice Coast, Gold Coast, Slave Coast) as compartmentalized areas with static populations. However, by assuming these regions as concrete, rather than fluid, historians can overlook the fact that neither Senegambian rice-cultivating technology, nor the ethnic groups affiliated with it were confined to specific ports.[61]

Bearing in mind the current progress of the discourse surrounding the Senegambian region's history, it should be resolved that careful attention must be paid to cultural and provisional conditions. Diola rice culture was influenced by contact with the Mandinka, Balanta refugees, and Europeans operating on the coast. The slave trade began to have a significant

impact on cultures on the coast as early as the mid-17th century. The Diola suffered incursions by Portuguese traders and retaliated in 1669 by burning down a Portuguese factory in Bolor.[62] The increasing violent nature of exchanges in the region caused a rise in militancy, but ironically also a boom in economic prosperity for those Diola communities capable of profiting from the shift.

The authority of ukine were based on Diola cosmology, which was monocentric and organized around the belief in a supreme deity, Emitai. Emitai was said to have revealed the nature of the natural order to specific individuals who were then obligated to share this knowledge with others. The shrine system was maintained almost as autonomously as the general village system. After, a set of spiritual principles were revealed to individuals through dreams and visions, they were relay the new moral teachings to the community. The medium for these transmissions were the ukine, each operating within the vicinity of a particular community.[63] These ukine were in erected in such numbers that it was likely that most adults would experience holding a position of spiritual authority at one point in time or another. In order to join a shrine and participate in its teachings sacrifices, ritual cleansings, and pledges of ritual loyalty had to be made. Ukine could also be inherited, passed on to heirs, or even loyal slaves.

Slavery, amongst the Diola was not nearly as brutal as the chattel slavery characteristic of the Trans-Atlantic trade, but it took on an increasingly disruptive incarnations as Diola society progressed towards the 19th century. Originally, Diola slavery was centered around the taking of war captives and criminals. Often, these individuals would be dedicated to local shrines, kept as lower-status family members for labor, and even purchased to replace deceased children.[64] The coming of European traders provided an avenue to convert the security function of raiding into an economically profitable exercise.

Shrine culture reflects this shift among the Diola. The male initiation rite of the Kahat, for instance, was transformed to reflect the increasing militancy of the area, especially around Esulalu. This was an innovation of the late 18th century. The elders who previously supervised the initiation rites stressed that there was an increasing need to change the rites based on the local proliferation of war, and major changes in the regional economy. It is believed that elements of the new initiation ceremony were of Mandinka origin, and preferred for the improved surgical techniques used during circumcision, and the elongated period that elders had to inculcate the principles of masculinity into male youth. These principles included teachings on ritual obligations, manhood, marriage, warfare, and communal law.[65]

The new ceremony, known as the Bukut, was implemented during an era of social upheaval. The process was done on a generational basis, which is the major dissimilarity between the Bukut and Mandinka ceremonial proceedings. Its implementation shows the increasing valorization of martial skill and the increasing importance of wealth. The slave trade depleted labor forces and reduced the efficacy of rice cultivators who did not participate in the trade to secure better iron farming implements. Hupila (family shrines) among the Diola were affected by these shifts in the political economy. Raiding enriched some major Diola communities such as Ediamat, Diembering, and Niomoun and so ritual worship changed to support the new economic reality.[66] Hupila which were originally very simple altars for the pouring of ritual libations became ornate; the new hupila were decorated with wooden fetters (made to resemble rope) and made large enough to receive the sacrificial blood of large animals. These shrines became a communally safe way to display wealth and accomplishment without drawing the ire of the village.

In reality the new rituals were net result of prolonged warfare and foreign contact. Diola engaged in the slave trade had to reaffirm and bolster their military capacity. Even Diola communities who shunned the trade usually had to engage in kidnapping and ransoming hostages from other villages to secure iron or the return of their own captive family members. The transition was a slow one, but eventually Diola villages began to show some degree of social stratification. Wealthy slave trading farmers were beginning to out-compete and dominate the political economy of their local areas.[67] However, the restrictions of ritual taboo and the propitiation of maternal and paternal ancestral spirits usually served to reign in excessive aggression on the part of more successful members of Diola communities. However, such community restrictions were eventually circumvented in specific communities. The creation of the Hoohaney (elder's shrine) was used to affirm the wealth of the men who could afford to participate in its rites. Cattle and participation in the slave trade were necessary to be included in ceremonies, which no longer held moral rectitude as their founding principle. The basis for selection and participation in the societies was simply proven wealth.[68]

The Diola had been dispersed widely throughout the Americas by the early 17th century.[69] Their introduction to the lowcountry of the North American coast among a mass influx of Senegambians during the 18th century is supported by several scholars.[70] The impact they had subsequent to their arrival in North America, specifically their impact on the political development of the African Diaspora near the Great Dismal Swamp, is the primary query of this work. It has been established that Senegambians in addition to being prolific rice cultivators were also heavily militarized by two centuries of engagement with the slave trade. There are many shipping and traveler documents created by Portuguese and French slavers that seem to indicate Senegambians in general had a tendency to violently resist slavery, even after ships had

departed for their destinations. Slave resistance among Senegambians has a long record and is important to consider when determining the impact of slavery on North America.[71]

3.4 Statelessness in the Atlantic World

The captive African populations sourced from acephalous societies in Upper Guinea or Senegambia held an important position in the Africa Diaspora. The military tactics associated with raiding, theft, and stealing cattle are evident in the maroon societies that riddled the South Carolina lowcountry, and also those of the Great Dismal Swamp. It has even be posited that it was because of their counter-hegemonic activities that ethnic groups like the Igbo, may have becomes such powerful symbols of resistance among enslaved Africans.[72] Additionally, the habituation of many groups such as the Igbo, Diola, and Balanta, to estuarial mangrove laden environments may have been a unique asset once some were able to escape into a state of marronage.

The historical evidence places African acephalous societies very near to the birthplace of Ella Baker. The maroon culture which blossomed on the North Carolina and Virginia border, within the confines of the Great Dismal Swamp, inevitably shaped the political economy of the region. The shipping records, runaway slave advertisements, and military accounts attest to the fact that African captives from the Guinea coast and Biafra made up a large contingent of 18th century maroon society in the region of the Great Dismal Swamp. The politico-religious institutions that escaped African slaves attempted to recreate, dramatically influenced the culture of the Great Dismal Swamp, and through the institution of slavery, the broader African-American community. Ella Baker's family originated in this slave culture and was very much immersed in the local socio-political struggles of the African-American community. It is therefore imperative to investigate the impact vestiges of West African stateless societies had on

the political orientation of Ella Baker and her family, especially given the long history of her family's commitment to militant resistance. The ability of African-Americans to perpetuate the political institutions of West African stateless societies depended both on escaped slaves ability to retain their culture, and their ability to reapply their culture in the wetland environment of the Great Dismal Swamp.

The physical environment of the coastal Carolinas and southern Virginia, does not differ greatly from the mangrove swamps of coastal West Africa. Furthermore, the development of a wetland rice-culture based on a tidal flooding system has been proven to be viable, particularly in the Carolinas.[73] The ability to produce food in such an environment, while raiding for other supplies, would have proven an exploitable skill set to maroons. These were the exact type of skills demonstrated in the discourse surrounding maroon activity in the Carolinas, and also in the Chesapeake region of North America. In order to determine the potential impact of West African acephalous societies on the political economy of the aforementioned maroon societies, both the cultural and environmental circumstances of maroons must be examined. In the following chapter, historical and archeological evidence will be used to characterize the development of maroon societies within the Great Dismal Swamp region. Historical accounts will then be used to determine the possibility for West African ethnic transmissions coming from acephalous societies, and finding expression in maroons societies.

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[1] Baker, Ella, interview by Sue Thrasher and Casey Hayden. *Oral History Interview with Ella Baker* University of North Carolina- Chapel Hill. April 17, 1977.; Oriji, John. *Political organization in Nigeria since the late Stone Age.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011; Hawthorne, Walter. *Planting Rice and Harvesting Slaves: Transformations along the Guinea-Bissau Coast, 1400-1900.* Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Heinemann, 2003.

[2] Baker 1977

[3] J. Oriji 2011; , Chinyere. "Power of Space, Space of Power: The Sociocultural Complexities in the Institutionalization of "Ezeship" in Non-Igbo States in Nigeria." *Journal of Black Studies* (2012); Harneit-Sievers, Axel. "Igbo'Traditional rulers': Chieftaincy and the state in Southeastern Nigeria." *Africa Spectrum* (1998): 57-79.

[4] J. Oriji 2011, 11-12

[5] Ukpokolo, Chinyere. "Power of Space, Space of Power: The Sociocultural Complexities in the Institutionalization of "Ezeship" in Non-Igbo States in Nigeria." *Journal of Black Studies* (2012), 448

[6] J. Oriji 2011, 16

[7] Ibid, 16-17

[8] Harneit-Sievers, Axel. "Igbo'Traditional rulers': Chieftaincy and the state in Southeastern Nigeria." *Africa Spectrum* (1998): 57-79.

[9] Ukpokolo 2012, 450-451

[10] J. Oriji 2011

[11] Ibid

[12] Ayittey, George B.N. *Indigenous African Institutions.* 2nd. Ardsley, New York: Transnational Publishers, Inc., 2006.; Edgerton, Robert B. *Africa's Armies: From Honor to Infamy A History From 1791 to the Present.* Boulder: Westview Press, 2002.

[13] J. Oriji 2011

[14] Ibid

[15] G. B. Ayittey 2006, 113

[16] J. Oriji 2011, 49-50

[17] Ibid

[18] Ukpokolo 2012, 450

[19] Harneit-Sievers 1998, 60

[20] Although married women of a village had no shrine located in its central sacred spaces, they possessed their own organs of governance. In patrilineal Igbo societies where men exercised considerable political power, women formed their own sociopolitical organization (Nzuko Ndem, Out Inyemedi/Unyedi, Otu Alutaradi) that complimented those of the sacred authority holders and the village council. J. Oriji 2011

[21] Ibid, 54

[22]Oriji, John N. *Transformations in Igbo cosmology during slavery: a study of the geneses of place-names, totems & taboos*. No. 4. Éditions de Cahiers d'Études Africaines, 2010., 960-962; J. Oriji 2011, 109, 124

[23] Offiong, Daniel A. "The status of slaves in Igbo and Ibibio of Nigeria." *Phylon (1960-)* 46, no. 1 (1985): 49-57.; J. Oriji 2011; J. N. Oriji, Transformations in Igbo cosmology during slavery: a study of the geneses of place-names, totems & taboos 2010

[24] J. Oriji 2011

[25] Ibid, 106

[26] Ibid, 53

[27] Ibid

[28] J. N. Oriji, Transformations in Igbo cosmology during slavery: a study of the geneses of place-names, totems & taboos 2010, 957-958

[29] J. Oriji 2011, 109

[30] Northrup, David. "The growth of trade among the Igbo before 1880." *The Journal of African History* 13, no. 02 (1972): 217-236.; Lovejoy, Paul E. *Transformations in slavery: a history of slavery in Africa*. Vol. 117. Cambridge University Press, 2011.

[31] The Okonko Society is variously referred to by academics as the Ekpe or Leopard Society. According to Desch Obi, the society was prestigious organization open to only those members of the community that proved themselves in battle. Ekpe was a graded society with levels of initiation that played various roles in Biafra, including facilitating trade, artistic development, and law enforcement. The Ekpe had a segmented organization, with each community having its own “lodge” and each lodge existing as part of a far-reaching network that allowed for coordinated efforts and safe travel of initiates to other areas of Biafra. This format allowed the Ekpe to maintain order between independent areas and therefore exercise great authority over trade, especially in the interior or Calabar. Desch-Obi, Thomas M. *Fighting For Honor: Thist History of African Martial Art Traditions in the Atlantic World.* University of South Carolina Press , 2008.,160

[32] J. N. Oriji, Igboland, Slavery, and the Drums of War and Heroism 2003; J. Oriji 2011, 109-115

[33] J. Oriji 2011, 131

[34] Ukpokolo 2012

[35] J. Oriji 2011, 109

[36] Eltis, David. "The Volume and Structure of the Transatlantic Slave Trade: A Reassessment." *William and Mary Quarterly* 58 (2001): 17-46.; J. Oriji 2011

[37] The need for slave labor further increased by the subsequent spread of the sugar revolution to British North America and the cultivation of tobacco, called the "miracle crop," in Virginia and Maryland. (Oriji J. , 2011, p. 108)

[38] Hawthorne, Walter. *Planting Rice and Harvesting Slaves: Transformations along the Guinea-Bissau Coast, 1400-1900.* Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Heinemann, 2003.

[39] Ibid

[40] Ibid

[41] Hawthorne 2003; Fields-Black, Edda L. *Deep roots: rice farmers in West Africa and the African diaspora.* Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2008: 112-115

[42] Hawthorne 2003

[43] Hawthorne 2003; Hawthorne, Walter. "Strategies of the Decentralized Defending Communities from Slave Raiders in Coastal Guinea-Bissau, 1450-1815." In *Fighting the Slave Trade*, by Sylviane A. Diouf. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2003.; Fields-Black 2008

[44] Hawthorne, Strategies of the Decentralized Defending Communities from Slave Raiders in Coastal Guinea-Bissau, 1450-1815 2003, 163

[45] Hawthorne, Planting Rice and Harvesting Slaves: Transformations along the Guinea-Bissau Coast, 1400-1900 2003, 126-127

[46] Hawthorne, Strategies of the Decentralized Defending Communities from Slave Raiders in Coastal Guinea-Bissau, 1450-1815 2003, 156, 164

[47] Ibid, 159

[48] Ibid, 156

[49] The latest and most complete data available for the trans-Atlantic slave trade provides empirical confirmation of the importance of the West African Rice Coast and West-Central Africa in supplying captives to the South Carolina and Georgia markets. Of the 171,538 captives who disembarked in the Carolinas, 54,425 or 32 percent of the total embarked slaving vessels in West Africa's Rice Coast region. This figure is larger than the 44,432 captives that originated in West-Central Africa, constituting 26 percent of the total. Of the 15,240 captives to

disembark in Georgia, 6,832 (45 percent of the total) originated in West Africa's Rice Coast region. Fields-Black, Deep roots: rice farmers in West Africa and the African diaspora, 2008, p. 174

[50] Hawthorne, Strategies of the Decentralized Defending Communities from Slave Raiders in Coastal Guinea-Bissau, 1450-1815 2003, 155

[51] Carney, Judith A. "The Role of African Rice and Slaves in the History of Rice Cultivation in the Americas." *Human Ecology* 26, no. 4 (1998): 525-545. pp. 104-109; Fields-Black 2008, 176-180; Hawthorne, Strategies of the Decentralized Defending Communities from Slave Raiders in Coastal Guinea-Bissau, 1450-1815 2003, 155

[52] Horton, Robin. "Stateless societies in the history of West Africa." *History of West Africa* 1 (1971): 87-128.; Klein, Martin A. "The Slave Trade and Decentralized Societies." *The Journal of African History* 42, no. 1 (2001): 49-65.; Hawthorne, States and Statelessness 2013; Hawthorne, Planting Rice and Harvesting Slaves: Transformations along the Guinea-Bissau Coast, 1400-1900 2003; Baum, Robert M. *Shrines of the slave trade: Diola religion and society in precolonial Senegambia.* New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

[53] Baum 1999

[54] Richardson, David. "Shipboard Revolts, African Authority, and the Transatlantic Slave Trade." In *Fighting the Slave Trade: West African Strategies*, by Sylviane A. Diouf, 199-218. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2003. 207; Hawthorne, Strategies of the Decentralized Defending Communities from Slave Raiders in Coastal Guinea-Bissau, 1450-1815 2003, 77

[55] Searing, James F. *West African Slavery and Atlantic Commerce: The Senegal River Valley, 1700-1860.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.32-33; Richardson 2003, 203

[56] Eltis, The Volume and Structure of the Transatlantic Slave Trade: A Reassessment 2001

[57] Eltis 2001; Fields-Black 2008, 206

[58] Eltis, David, Philip Morgan, and David Richardson. "Agency and Diaspora in Atlantic History: Reassessing the African Contribution to Rice Cultivation in the Americas." *The American Historical Review* (Oxford University Press) 112, no. 5 (December 2007): 1329-1358.

[59] Ibid

[60] Ibid

[61] Fields-Black 2008, 172-174

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[62] Baum 1999

[63] Ibid

[64] Ibid, 161-162

[65] Ibid, 101-103

[66] Ibid, 117

[67] Ibid, 120-126

[68] Ibid, 125

[69] As early as 1605, Diola slaves were being transported across the Atlantic to such places as Brazil, Colombia, Hispaniola, Mexico, Peru, and Venezuela. Baum, Shrines of the slave trade: Diola religion and society in precolonial Senegambia, 1999, p. 109

[70] Eltis, Morgan and Richardson 2007; Fields-Black 2008, 174-179; J. A. Carney 1998

[71] Whether true or not, European traders seem to have singled out slaves from Senegambia and parts of Upper Guinea as being prone to rebellion. Richardson, 2003, p. 206

[72] Desch-Obi 2008, 104, 126

[73] Fields-Black 2008

4 BEASTS OF NO NATION

Africans who were taken captive and transported through Middle Passage felt the effects of the Trans-Atlantic Slave trade long before they were actually physically taken hostage. The security of stateless West African coastal societies was based on group consensus, equal access to the agricultural resources, and a moral culture rooted in politico-religious systems which delimited concentrations of power. These cultural seals were either transformed or broken by the escalation of the slave trade on the West African coast. They constitute the cultural and ethnic distinctions of trafficked African captives which are traceable through the historical record to the region of Ella Baker's birth. The militant tradition her family valorized were most likely the end result of changes which took place among stateless societies on the West African coast for a period of centuries. Political and military resistance to slavery was pervasive among many of the African acephalous societies transported to North Carolina to galvanize the rice industry.[A] Populations were subjected to chronic physical insecurity in the face of increased warfare and raiding. The notion of moral rectitude upheld by older politico-religious institutions were replaced by closed societies, who valued the cultivation of wealth among the select few, usually those who were able to advance their personal holdings through participation in the slave trade. The taking of captives and settlement distortions caused by the slave trade caused labor shortages, especially among those villages who did not participate in the trade. The absence of laborers forced an economic shift away from agricultural subsistence. Communities found in necessary to find alternate means of acquiring goods, and often found it more expedient to rely on those who profited from the trade, further fracturing previously egalitarian politics.[1]

[A] Certain groups were known for their opposition to the trade, including the Balanta, Djola, and Kru of Sierra Leone. Others could be added to the list. Gomez 1998, 206

Overall, West African acephalous societies adapted to these circumstances by shifting the nature of their cultural institutions. The male initiation rites of such societies were reorganized to create generational cohorts that were more easily marshaled for war and labor. Military skills were cultivated with an increasing specialization in raiding, cattle rustling, covert theft, and hostage taking. Farming habits were realigned to be conducive to costal wetland conditions in inhospitable environments, often within the tidal zone of mangrove swamps. Small groups were organized to farm so that no lone individual presented an easy target for capture. The defensive structure of villages was changed to present an imposing maze of wooden barriers intended to slow both the attack and retreat of hostile groups. These populations also developed methods of navigating the narrow waterways of coastal estuaries, even with the additional difficulties of quicksand and flash flooding. By the year 1700 many of these tactics had been refined by more than a century of exposure to Portuguese slavery, and the encroachment of Mandinka polities.[2] These cultural refinements in military tactics, evasion, and tidal farming indicate that West African acephalous societies, especially those of the Rice Coast and Biafra, were the likely instrumental in the creation of the GDSM culture. Their proximity to the childhood region of Ella Baker, taken in combination with their influence over the local African-descended population, means that these ethnic groups are a probable source for her family's cultural orientation. Their novel use of waterways may be significant due to the GDSM use of estuarial land and the position of Baker's family home on the banks of the Roanoke River.

When the inhabitants of the West African littoral region were taken captive to be distributed throughout New World colonies, they took with them a certain set of skills that made them ideal candidates for becoming violent resistors to slavery.[3] It has been noted that resistance began with the defensive measures taken against capture on the West African coast,[4] measures

often continued across the ocean with resistance on slave ships.[5] In both cases it is documented that individuals taken from the Upper Guinea coast[6] were particularly prone to revolting against slavery.[7] Biafrans were also renown as militant resistors who would sometimes commit suicide rather than be enslaved.[8] Whether resistance action encompassed running away or direct violent action varied. What is consistent in accounts is the undesirability of specific ethnics based on their perceived predisposition to resist slavery.[9]

4.1 The Birth of Maroon Societies

The arrival of African slaves in the Americas was immediately followed by the foundation of maroon societies. African captives taken to North America found opportunities to take advantage of gaps in both the surveillances and security measures that British colonialists established to ensure their subjugation. The maroon societies that they founded after securing their freedom will be primary investigative focus of this chapter. The traceable elements of African ethnicity will be used here to draw conclusions about the possible identity and ethnic composition of the Great Dismal swamp maroons. However, both presenting and tracing ethnicity present specific and difficult challenges to historians evaluating the events of the Atlantic slave trade, and subsequent institutions of the Antebellum south. These challenges include establishing ethnicity, indentifying the traceable aspects of ethnicity, and grappling with the ethnogenesis of African captives transplanted to the New World.[10]

Ethnicity and identity in the African context were usually determined according to kinship ties, occupation (e.g. blacksmithing, farming), location, spiritual affiliation, and age groups. These were complex systems that affected the identities of individuals in numerous ways. For instance, Balanta blufos would often abduct small children along with cattle from other Balanta villages, as well as other ethnic groups.[11] These children would then be integrated

into the Balanta age-grade system as an ethnic Balanta. How to categorize such individuals complicates the question of ethnicity. This is especially true because slave traders often labeled the captives they took based on their relation to them. Therefore, their port of departure, language, and perceived ethnic affiliation were taken as declaratives of identity by slavers and traffickers. Additionally, the trauma of capture and trafficking of enslaved Africans through the Middle Passage alongside numerous, often unfamiliar, ethnic groups placed the identity of captives in flux. New arrivals from the West African coast were therefore dislocated from the influences that originally enabled them to crystallize their own self-determined ethnic identity, triggering the ethnogenesis of new identities.[12]

However, the investigation of African slave identities is still important to consider because the internalized culture of those populations found expression in the resistance efforts of escaped slaves. Slave resistance was influenced by the cultural habitude of African captives of diverse ethnic origins.[13] However, specific cultural attributes were key to the expression of resistance in the Antebellum South, characteristics which were echoed throughout the slave-holding Americas. The militarism of the cultures from which incoming African slaves were sourced became a key issue. African slaves who were formerly professional soldiers or experienced members of warrior cultures were a threat to slave holding society. Often, they resisted slavery reusing tactics from culturally specific settings. Therefore their identity, occupation, and former location were all relevant to how they chose to react to slavery.

The Stono Rebellion remains a strong example of how Africanisms persisted and affected the political events of the North American coast. The influence of Angolan military culture, especially their war-dances was especially evident in South Carolina during the Stono Rebellion.[14] The spiritual affiliation and orientation of African captives was also an influence

that informed resistance in the Antebellum South. This was true to the extent that colonial officials began to enact legal prohibitions against the practice of traditional African religions. Greater attempts were also made to induct African populations into the Christian Church. These attempts were met with moderate success, especially before the turn of the 19th century when the importation of native-born African captives was still considerable. Finally, African runaways' ability to execute farming techniques capable of sustaining a substantial community must be examined, along with the resources they would have had at their disposal. Farming in lowland areas or wetlands is not easily. The hazards of dangerous flora and fauna make being exposed for prolonged periods amid crops undesirable. Soil acidity and floodwater would threaten any crop yield cultivated in a swampland area, such as the Great Dismal Swamp. Therefore, specialized knowledge would be needed to cope with life there on a long-term basis. Such knowledge of farming culture makes it likely that the GDSM were heavily influenced by the West African stateless societies of the Guinea Coast.

American maroonage is theorized to have begun after 1619 when the first historically recognized African bondsmen were brought to Jamestown.[15] The Great Dismal Swamp existed as a 2,000 acre obstacle to colonial economic ambition during the years of early American settlement. However, the political economy of the swamp and its surrounding lands were quite active. Native American activity is reported to have included the Chesapeake tribe, Powhatan Empire, Recehecrians, Meherrins, and Nansemonds. However, English colonial expansion severely marginalized Native American power by edifying itself along strategic costal positions in Norfolk and Williamsburg. Colonialism had solidified its hegemonic control of the coastal area by the end of the 17th century, however, throughout that time period Native Americans and African-American maroons coalesced in the Great Dismal Swamp.

The presence of the Great Dismal Swamp Maroons (GDSM) was a perpetual nuisance to colonial authorities. The swamp was a physical barrier to colonial expansion and constituted a security threat. Nominal colonial authority was not established over North Carolina until the early 18th century. The territory that later became North Carolina was settled by groups of white former indentured servants, Native American groups, and fugitive slaves.[16] The North Carolina woodland is not easily traversed and was difficult to project military power into, this was especially the case for wetlands near the Great Dismal Swamp. These were the environmental circumstances that African runaways found themselves in when they escaped to the Great Dismal Swamp.

Dr. Lathan A. Windley compiled a mass of runaway slave advertisements drawn from the Virginia Gazette, South Carolina Gazette, North Carolina Gazette, and American Advertiser between years 1730-1790. The periodicals do not always reference ethnicity in the displayed articles. Some advertisements simply reference "country marks", the identification scars utilized by many West African cultures to convey ethnic affiliation and status through ritual scarification. Runaway slave advertisements extracted from the Virginia Gazette give some indication of which demographic populations were represented among escaped members of slave populations. Several escaped slaves were indicated as having origins stemming from the Rice Coast (Guinea) or parts of Senegambia.[17] Igbo advertisements were also published for the Virginia area.[18] South Carolina advertisements also cite escapees of Igbo origin,[19] as well as numerous references to fugitives who were "Gambia negroes" or of Senegambian origin.[20]

The advertisements illuminate several key points that can be used to add context to some of the subtler issues surrounding ethnicity, and marronage. The first interesting point is that the ethnic backgrounds of Guinean, Igbo, Gambian, and Mandinka are often repeated in the

advertisements referencing fugitive slaves. Also, prolific are the references to Angolan fugitive slaves,[21] however, this is much more pronounced in South Carolina and Georgia, than near the Great Dismal Swamp. This reporting of slave escapes is also accompanied by a detailed awareness of African ritual scarification and tooth filing, highlighting African otherness. It is obvious based on some of the accounts offered that a slave's country of birth mattered significantly when it came to their assessed value, and the effort planters were willing to expend recovering them. Mulatto slaves with a skill set such as blacksmithing or tailoring were considered especially valuable. However, slave masters were very particular about differentiating between African-born runaways and American-born fugitives. While it is difficult to understand the motive for the differentiation being made in every advertisement, it may be posited that recovering Africa-born slaves, from particular ethnics, was considered especially dangerous.

Another theme which emerges from analyzing the runaway slave advertisements is that many mulatto runaways are ascribed Native American backgrounds, with references being made to them possessing "Indian marks".[22] This corroborates the assumption that Native-American and escaped African fugitives had begun to build partnerships and aggregated societies.[23] This was especially true of areas near the Great Dismal Swamp which settlers refused to enter either due to fear, or knowledge of the local maroon presence. These partnerships were not a universally synchronistic phenomenon and depended heavily on the nature of local politics. Native American search parties were often employed to track and recover fugitive slaves.[24] However, amiable relations between former indentured servants, Tuscaroras Indians, and African escapees formed quickly in the Great Dismal Swamp. The habitation of the swamp increased exponentially after the Tuscarora War ended in 1714, ceding control of the disputed North Carolina territory to British colonials.[25] This was the conflict that served as the major impetus for

driving maroons into the Great Dismal Swamp. Following the loss of the war, Tuscarora and Africa runaways sought refuge in the swamp, and founded what was arguably the longest lived rebel community in the Antebellum South.

Another consideration that emerges from reviewing slave advertisements in periodicals from the Antebellum Era is that populations from Senegambia and Biafra can be easily placed in the regions near the Great Dismal Swamp.[26] Beyond this they are cited as constituting a significant portion of the fugitive slave population from which the Great Dismal Swamp could have sourced inhabitants. The counties near the Great Dismal Swamp showed a large amount of runaway activity, which would seem to indicate the region was a haven for slave resistance.[27] This steady influx of escaped slaves from the surrounding area undoubtedly changed the political economy of the GDSM. African runaways had been a notable portion of the population of the swamp well before the 18th century, but did not come to preeminence in the area until after 1730. The exit of the Tuscarora Indian population fifteen years after the conclusion of the Tuscarora War meant that by 1730, African-descended fugitive slaves comprised the majority population of the swamp.

4.2 Anatomy of the Great Dismal Swamp Maroon Culture

The environment of the Dismal Swamp was peculiar and induced much superstition in the local area. The ecology of the swamp is important to any understanding of what was necessary to survive there, and by extension how permanent residence was maintained politically. The swamp was riddled with narrow winding streams, deep mud, and numerous biting insects. The flora included cypress, juniper, and gum trees which wove a tangled web of vegetation around the swamp. The amount of wildlife in the swamp is reported to have been extremely high, however, the amount of dangerous game was a heavy deterrent to hunters.[28]

There were species of pumas, black bears, bobcats, wild cattle, alligators, and a variety of poisonous snakes to challenge any inexperienced entry into the swamp. However, the Great Dismal Swamp is free of brackish water and therefore somewhat renown for its water quality. The land within the swamp floods often and is generally not useful for farming. However, there are mesic islands in the interior swamp, which are high enough to never be endangered of flooding, and these were the areas that became home to the GDSM.[29]

Warfare was waged by the GDSM not just as an offensive measure, but also as a means of securing their own community against depletion of supplies. Munitions were an absolute necessity to stave off invasion. Guerrilla warfare was also the default attack style of swamp inhabitants, who conducted numerous raids on the surrounding plantation establishment. This warfare was perpetual but had peaks and lulls in activity. However, two peak periods reveal the GDSM as being specifically politically oriented against the hegemonic order represented by the Antebellum South's planter class. The American Revolution saw the GDSM align themselves with the political regime of Great Britain in an effort to destroy the American colonial system in the South. Nearly a century later they entered the Civil War aligned with Union Army forces in an effort to decimate the same foe. The guerrilla activities of the Maroons were targeted at the political and economic legitimacy of the slave-holding South.[30]

The GDSM military skills included raiding tactics were characterized by covert raiding, cattle theft, spying, and hostage taking. Both the Tuscarora and the Africa-born militants among the fugitive slave populations had cattle-raiding cultures.[31] However, the maintenance of those cultures after the exodus of the Tuscarora in 1730, introduces the proposition that they were primarily influenced by African military tactics by the time of the American Revolution some 40 years later. The Scratch Hall Tawny Folk who were primarily of Tuscarora and European

descent, were the principle possessors of Native American military tactics among the GDSM. Their raiding excursions went primarily to the south into North Carolina territory, and to the west into the lands used by cattle herders. The principally African-descended populations of the GDSM inhabited the northern and central portions of the swamp. Their military activities were nominally kept to the north and west of Virginia's territory.

Neither Virginia nor North Carolina had been able to survey the Great Dismal Swamp to a sufficient degree to establish a clear border. This enabled the GDSM to collectively harass colonials on both sides of the border using the sovereignty claims of each as shield upon their retreat. However, the military activities of GDSM reflect many military traditions indicative of West African cultural habitude. This can be reasoned based on many habits the GDSM demonstrated across generations, in addition to clues provided by the history of the region. Firstly, the removal of the majority of the Tuscarora population would have dealt a blow to the ability of Tuscarora Indians remaining in the area to maintain their culture.

> The role of the Tuscarora community in the Swamp as the rallying center for increased population and the organization and cooperation of communities could only be fulfilled by the eventual dissolution of the distinct Tuscarora society and culture. Then in place of the Tuscarora hegemony there could grow a swamp-wide network of equal and cooperating settlements and a new culture incorporating African and European as well as Native American elements. If Tuscarora leadership had continued beyond a certain point the deeper sort of unity and community, that of equals, would

> have been hindered (H. P. Leaming, Hidden Americans: Maroons of Virginia and the Carolinas 1979, 228).

Additionally, there was a constant influx of new African-born fugitive slaves coming to regions surrounding the Dismal Swamp. This continued for nearly a century after the fugitive inhabitants of the region retreated to the Dismal Swamp in earnest at the conclusion of the Tuscarora War.[32] These new entrants to the Dismal Swamp, especially in the northern portions of the swamp, would have given expression to their own cultural habitude. Implied in this expression is the kinship-based decentralization of West African village communities, particularly those of the littoral areas of the Rice Coast.

Further proof of the dominance of this cultural orientation comes from the Scratch Hall Tawny Folk. Though they were primarily recognized as being of Tuscarora lineage, they chose to self identified as 'colored' when joining the North Carolina Colored Volunteer Regiments of the Union Army, during the outbreak of the Civil War.[33] The GDSM participated in the American Revolutionary War, War of 1812, and Civil War displaying masterful use of clandestine war tactics in each conflict. However, survival skills employed in the swamp environment were not necessarily acquired through Native American association. Though their presence is detectable going back to 1620, Native Americans may not have permanently inhabited the Dismal Swamp until after the loss of the Tuscarora War in 1714.[34] Similar skills, especially those of cattle raiding were on full display in South Carolina maroon societies,[35] with little Native-American influence, even during the Revolutionary War period. Additionally, the environment of the Dismal Swamp approximated that of the littoral regions of coastal West Africa very closely, especially the areas associated with the Rice Coast.

4.3 African Parallels in the Habitation of the Great Dismal Swamp

The difficult habitat of the Dismal Swamp was not unlike the estuarial regions of the Rice Coast, which were characterized by dense vegetation, difficult to navigate marshy terrain, and tidal flooding. The Great Dismal Swamp presented itself to newly escaped fugitive slaves as a haven specifically because it presented a set of barriers they knew how to cope with, and could use as protection. More importantly, the Great Dismal Swamp represented an environment that they knew how to manipulate to their advantage for defense, farming, and shelter. Escaped African-born fugitives from slavery, particularly those from the Rice Coast, would have also likely had the psychological preparation necessary to become acculturated to life in the swamp quickly due to the defensive strategies they employed in their cultures of origin.[36]

Evidence of farming left in the Great Dismal Swamp presents the potential to learn more about the cultural habits of the GDSM. Farming culture is potentially traceable in a way that many other cultural habits are not. Therefore the physical architecture of the settlements formed by the GDSM can demonstrate a lot about the cultural tendencies of their population. It has been shown through archeological investigation that the GDSM lived in permanent villages favoring the usage of heavy wood construction.[37] The presence of animal bones, cutting materials, and munitions among the excavation sites of GDSM villages indicate a culture with domesticated livestock, the capacity for hunting, and defense.[38] There was rice farming on the elevated ground of mesic islands according historical accounts of the Great Dismal Swamp.[39] The mesic islands within the swamp would serve as the perfect environment to employ either the upland or wetland farming techniques of the West African traditions.[40] However, given the propensity of the area to flood the tidal system would have probably offered the most food security for the society of the GDSM.

The influx of West African slaves from the Rice Coast was accompanied by the development of the tidewater system of rice cultivation in South Carolina and Georgia. The introduction of Oryza sativa rice variety, an Asian strain of rice with a higher crop yield, enabled the feasible production of mass rice fields.[41] The mid-18th century saw the rise of demand for slaves from the Rice Coast as well as the development of a major plantation system in the Carolinas and Georgia for the production of rice crops.[42] The build-up of slave labor in a region brought in an excess of militarized African captives, who feed the populations of regional maroon societies, including the GDSM. This was the economic mechanism that drove the continual settlement and vitality of the GDSM.

Giving full consideration to the observations of rice culture and farming within the Carolinas during the 18th century, the question of which ethnicities participated extensively among the GDSM trend towards a specific set of groups.[43] These groups when compared to runaway advertisements, African ethnic population data, and shipping records present four specific population sets. The Mandinka, Guineans (Rice Coast), Angolans (and Congolese), and Igbo (Biafrans) repeatedly are cited throughout the historical literature as being the most likely demographic pools that would have heavily influenced the GDSM, though not exclusively. The political economy of the GDSM was therefore easily a collection of diverse ethnic groups. The complexity surrounding how they expressed themselves politically must be examined through both hard material evidence and historical documentation.

The GDSM are suggested to have organized themselves along kinship lines in a village system parallel to what was seen on the West African coast.[44] The indicated practice seems to have been that new members would be integrated slowly into maroon society. They would experience a probationary period during which their behavior was watched to ascertain whether

their continued presence constituted a threat. Once they established themselves with the GDSM, they would be further incorporated into the society. However, the GDSM organization shows very little social stratification in the evidence left behind in their material culture.[45] Therefore, though undoubtedly individual maroon community members distinguished themselves over time, it is unlikely that they cultivated anything reminiscent of autocratic rule. Older clans that had served the community may have been afforded a certain respect and adoration but this did not approximate hereditary leadership. More likely the GDSM organized themselves according to group-consensus supported by kinship affiliation, which is evidenced by three phenomena.

The GDSM had generals and war chiefs who led prominently in raids, later engaging in prolonged military campaigns. However, because these leaders were often killed as a result of the military actions they participated in throughout history, it is clear that an institutional mechanism was in place to select another military commander. This suggests that the GDSM possessed some sort of institutional body shared among the various settlements that would enable them to arrive at a consensus. This is especially likely given that neither the archeological or historical evidence from within the swamp has yet to provide evidence of inter-settlement conflict. It is therefore likely that the GDSM war chiefs affected a type of charismatic leadership versus existing as hereditary heads of state. This would be consistent with West African cultural habits, especially those decentralized societies, of nominating headman or chief. However, as is often the case in West African societies such a title holder would be invested with spiritual authority under the proscription of numerous taboos[46] and mandates.[47] The institution of these ritual safeguards would have been vital in a maroon community whose survival depended on having leaders dedicated to best interests of all, versus a stratified minority of elites.

This ethic can be seen repeatedly in how GDSM organized for labor around the swamp, in the lumber industry and for the Cross Canal Company.[48] Also, the variations of village settlements, each with independent village cultures would seem to indicate that there was no locus of hegemony in the traditional hierarchal sense among the GDSM. Some settlements such as those of the Scratch Hall folk located on the southern edge of the Great Dismal Swamp were recorded as being steeped in creole traditions. The Congo settlement deeper within the confines of the Dismal Swamp was reported as having a collection of traditions stemming from various "Bantu" traditions in West Africa.[49] For such settlements to share any sort of political unity for centuries is indicative of a large umbrella culture, one that shuns the utilization of oppressive hierarchal structures to create uniformity.

Scholars have theorized that the militancy expressed by the GDSM would require a necessarily hierarchal leadership structure to facilitate organization.[50] Similar structures were very present in the military orders that developed among the Angolans, Congolese, Yoruba, and Islamized Mandinka. However, among the heavily militarized Igbo, Balanta, and Diola such social stratification did not emerge throughout their respective cultures until the late-17th century.[51] Even after the possibility for such social structures were reached within West African acephalous societies, the cultures often resisted the change (Balanta, Diola), or were not affected in all areas pervasively (Igbo hinterland vs. coastal south). The Balanta, Diola, and Igbo maintained very militant raiding cultures without an extensive level of social stratification for several centuries. West African acephalous societies effectively delimited concentrations of power within their societies through deployment of socially cohesive age-grade systems, and through the modulation of politico-religious cultural institutions, both of which positively affected social unity.

The employment of spiritual leaders also had an edifying effect on the political economy of the GDSM.[52] The function of politico-religious institutions in West African stateless societies was primarily to affect social cohesion through the implementation of cultural standards and social taboo. Such institutions, as a secondary function, serve as arbitrators of the law and communal justice. This is true particularly in instances where a group decision needs to be obtained for the progression of the community. The GDSM employed such institutions for an additional purpose, the subversion of the plantation slave economy. The history of slave insurrections especially within the vicinity of the Great Dismal Swamp, is awash with numerous plots and military actions designed to topple the American slave economy. This is because it was a static policy of the GDSM culture to undermine the American slave economy wherever possible through either direct military action or covert sabotage.[53]

4.4 Regional impact of the Great Dismal Swamp Maroons

The GDSM attempted to extend their organizational culture in the form of their politico-religious institutions beyond the boundaries of their wetland home. Their goal was to cultivate among the African-American communities of the plantations, a network of subversives, who could be called upon at specific times to engage in coordinated military actions. Hugo Leaming cites the information contained within a missive written by Richard W. Byrd to Virginia governor John Tyler. He uses this as the source for information for a theory concerning the intrigue launched by maroon chief Peter II[54] in 1810.[55] According to historical documents the information in the missive was obtained by torturing a boy-slave to discover details regarding slave communications. This particular plot reveals the importance of local politico-religious leaders on area plantations to the liberation efforts of the GDSM.

On many plantations in the Antebellum South there were spiritualists who were regarded as luminaries among the slave population for their ability to heal, instill courage, and intercede with slave owners on the behalf of bondsmen. These slave preachers or conjure men were usually not legitimized by white society but were useful in disseminating information throughout a given region. The historical record seems to indicate they were organized by a council that operated with its point of central contact within the Dismal Swamp. The creation of such a network at the opening of the 19th century has broad implications for the slave revolt of Denmark Vessey and Nat Turner's rebellion. The implication for the historiography of early American culture would be that the efforts of both, Denmark Vesey and Nat Turner, rather than being viewed as sporadic outbursts, need to be placed in conversation with the larger covert efforts of the Great Dismal Swamp Maroons against American slave-holding culture.

4.5 The Underground Railroad and the Colored Monitor Union Club

The patchwork of smaller temporary maroon communities, plantations, and abolitionists surrounding the Great Dismal Swamp over time led to the consolidation of an effective liberation network. African-Americans were able to smuggle information, people, and ideas under the cloak of secrecy throughout the Antebellum South.[56] The network was extremely detrimental to American slave-holding system both economically and politically.[57] The stories of savagery and human cruelty which typified slavery damaged the refined Victorian image of the Antebellum South, providing easy fodder for abolitionists looking for testimonials to undermine the institution. The Great Dismal Swamp existed as a major hub for the Underground Railroad, sheltering numerous fugitives slaves out into northern territories where they could find refuge from the institution of slavery. The work done by the Underground Railroad helped to precipitate the political events which led to the Civil War.

The GDSM fought extensively in the Civil War, as they had in all of the previous major conflicts that touched their region. They typically engaged in any conflict which enabled them to undermine American slavery as a system. In spite of the persistent harassment of Confederate forces by the GDSM, a formalized military arrangement was not realized until 1862. Similar to the emancipation of slaves granted by British Lord Dunmore during the Revolutionary War,[58] President Lincoln arrived at the emancipation of slaves as a practical war proclamation, rather than as an ennobled goal of the war. The result however was the mass induction of many GDSM, escaped slaves, and poor whites into North Carolina's Colored Volunteer regiment.

The GDSM fighting with the North Carolina regiment of the Union army, were a major boon to Lincoln's war effort. They were able to forage for game and supply the Union forces from behind enemy lines. Conversely, they were able to sabotage the Confederate's supply lines and force them to relinquish many slaves held in bondage behind their lines. They used their knowledge of the Dismal Swamp's river systems to pilot Union soldiers through with shipments to restore depleted supplies and munitions. The GDSM continued their nominal role as conductors of the Underground Railroad, and took advantage of the distraction of the war to guide numerous liberated slaves through the battle zones to freedom.[59] The destruction of American Slavery in the Antebellum South that came on the heels of the Civil War's end, gave the GDSM hope for a life beyond the rigors of the swamp, where they could gain full acceptance in American society as citizens.

During the Reconstruction Era the GDSM became politically active organizing themselves into a constituency, and then into an organization called the Colored Monitor Union Club (CMUC). The CMUC was organized to enfranchise the local African-American population regardless of their status as free, formerly enslaved, or originating in the Dismal Swamp. Most of

the support and activity of the CMUC congealed around the cities of Norfolk and Portsmouth, which were also the nearest major cities to the Dismal Swamp. African-Americans managed to elect to the state legislature enough seats to secure republican majorities. The CMUC secured 25 Republican seats for African-Americans.[60]

Ella Baker's world was also indirectly impacted by the activity taken by the Great Dismal Swamp maroons after the Civil War. The political efforts of the later day Great Dismal Swamp maroons where geared towards institutionalizing the autonomy of African-Americans in the local state legislatures, as well as defending local black communities from the oppression of ex-Confederates. The net effect of their political activity was ultimately ambiguous, mostly due to the fact that American government officials were willing to make concessions to bring the American South back within the socioeconomic confines of U.S. normalcy, even where it was at the apparent expense of the citizenship rights of African-Americans. However, the GDSM did establish many political precedents which provided a bureaucratic foundation from which the later day populations of African-Americans were able to derive agency in North Carolina and Virginia. The political environment Ella Baker was born into, and the way African-Americans viewed themselves within the vicinity of her childhood locality, were ultimately influenced by the endeavors of the GDSM pursuing equal representation during the late 19th century. Their activity therefore helped frame they role Ella Baker felt she, as an African-American continuing a militant tradition, felt she had to play.

The political activities of the CMUC were the first political strivings of African-Americans in the region held as legitimate under law. The efforts of the CMUC were spearheaded by John Hodges (last war chief of GDSM), Willis Hodges, and Charles E. Hodges. These former inhabitants of the Great Dismal Swamp entered the political arena with the same

intensity that would be expected of freedom fighters. They were able use their clan kinship ties to organize and coordinate efforts between themselves, and other monitor unions organized as far away as Louisiana. The Hodges' clan was able to leverage themselves and other African-Americans like, Thomas Bayne, into political positions so that they could facilitate the inclusion of African-Americans into Virginia State politics. However, it soon became evident the former white planter class had no honest interest in legally including African-Americans in the American legislative process. The GDSM had by this time dispersed throughout the nominal African-American population and abandoned the Dismal Swamp. Despite this, the efforts and achievements of the Colored Monitor Union Club were the first of their kind to achieve success, fighting on the behalf of African-American agency.

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[2] Hawthorne, Walter. *Planting Rice and Harvesting Slaves: Transformations along the Guinea-Bissau Coast, 1400-1900.* Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Heinemann, 2003.

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[5] Richardson, David. "Shipboard Revolts, African Authority, and the Transatlantic Slave Trade." In *Fighting the Slave Trade: West African Strategies*, by Sylviane A. Diouf, 199-218. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2003.

[6] The differentials are, moreover, even more remarkable if one takes west-central Africa or ports such as Bonny and Calabar, in the Bight of Biafra, as benchmarks. Compared to ships trading at these places, those trading at Senegambia and Gabon-Cape Lopez were fourteen to thirty times more likely to experience a revolt. Richardson, 2003, p. 204

[7] Richardson 2003, 203-205

[8] Desch-Obi 2008, 104; J. N. Oriji 2003; J. Oriji 2011

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[11] Hawthorne, Planting Rice and Harvesting Slaves: Transformations along the Guinea-Bissau Coast, 1400-1900 2003, 141

[12] Haviser and MacDonald 2006

[13] Haviser and MacDonald 2006; Hall, Gwendolyn M. *Slavery and African ethnicities in the Americas: restoring the links.* University of North Carolina Press, 2005.; Weik, Terry. "The Archaeology of Maroon societies in the Americas: Resistance, cultural continuity, and transformation in the African diaspora." *Historical Archaeology*, 1997: 81-92.

[14] Desch-Obi 2008, 17-18, 77

[15] Sayers, Daniel O. *A Desolate Place for a Defiant People: The Archaeology of Maroons, Indigenous Americans, and Enslaved Laborers in the Great Dismal Swamp.* Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2014.; Leaming, Hugo Prosper. *Hidden Americans: Maroons of Virginia and the Carolinas.* Edited by Graham Hodges. New York; London: Garland Publishing, 1979.; Weik 1997

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[21] —. *Runaway Slave Advertisements: A Documentary History from the 1730s to 1790s South Carolina.* Vol. III. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1983. 25, 26, 29, 30, 34, 40, 42

[22] Windley, Runaway Slave Advertisements: A Documentary History from the 1730s to 1790s Virginia and North Carolina 1983, 121, 174

[23] Weik 1997

[24] H. P. Leaming 1979, 121, 397

[25] Ibid, 225

[26] Hall 2005; Thornton, John. *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1800.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998. 321

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[34] H. P. Leaming 1979, 224-225; D. O. Sayers 2014, 87, 140

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[44] H. P. Leaming 1979, 230-232, 257, 283-288; Diouf 2014; D. O. Sayers, A Desolate Place for a Defiant People: The Archaeology of Maroons, Indigenous Americans, and Enslaved Laborers in the Great Dismal Swamp 2014, 163-168

[45] Ibid, 166

[46] H. P. Leaming 1979, 262-263, 340-342

[47] J. Oriji 2011; Hawthorne 2003

[48] D. O. Sayers 2014, 186-188; H. P. Leaming 1979, 283

[49] H. P. Leaming 1979

[50] Weik 1997; Sayers, Daniel O, P. Brendan Burke, and Aaron M. Henry. "The Political Economy of Exile in the Great Dismal Swamp." *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* 11, no. 1 (2007): 60-97.; H. P. Leaming, Hidden Americans: Maroons of Virginia and the Carolinas 1979

[51] J. N. Oriji 2003; J. Oriji 2011; Hawthorne 2003; Baum 1999

[52] Though maroon culture in general was compounded of European and Native American as well as African elements, the distinctive religion of the Dismal Swamp was African. H. P. Leaming 1979, 341

[53] H. P. Leaming 1979; Desch-Obi 2008, 90-91; Diouf 2014

[54] Peter II's purpose was to establish a network of agents on the plantations of eastern Virginia and North Carolina for political-military communications, planning and eventual coordinated action. The underground preachers and conjure men would add these functions. The goal, as one of General Peter's supporters stated it, was that "There'll be an earthquake on the same night" through the region. H. P. Leaming 1979, 254

[55] H. P. Leaming 1979; Aptheker, American Negro Slave Revolts 1943

[56] Diouf 2014; Desch-Obi 2008

[57] D. O. Sayers, The Underground Railroad Reconsidered 2004

[58] H. P. Leaming 1979, 233

[59] Ibid. 300-309

[60] Ibid. 323-329

5 WHAT'S IN A KING?

The political culture of the states of North Carolina and Virginia were heavily influenced by the activities of the Great Dismal Swamp Maroons (GDSM). The Colored Monitor Union championed by the remnants of the GDSM community pioneered the political activity of the African-American community in both states post-Reconstruction. The former war chief of the GDSM, John Hodges was selected to be the first African-American state representative of the county of Princess Anne to the Virginia State General Assembly. His family members William Hodges, and Willis Hodges, served in prominent roles within the Virginia State legislature, advancing the agency of African-Americans in the region. Their entrance into the world of politics does not signal an end to the fight for the GDSM, but rather a shift in the chosen battle ground. After establishing that the back of the American plantation slavery system was broken, and always eager to spread their anti-oppression ethics, the GDSM took up the fight of black enfranchisement. Cognizant of the need for socio-political cohesion among blacks during this transitional period, the GDSM chose to ally with and disperse throughout the general black population, converting their struggle to maintain independence into a freedom legacy for African-Americans everywhere.

The ferment of the post-Reconstruction South produced many luminaries within the African-American community. Many of these individuals are presented as emerging from a historically dark African-American community in the Antebellum South. This population is then posited to have steadily increased their political activity as they progressed into the Jim Crow South of the early modern era. In this way slavery and the Civil War function as historical veils, which construct the political life of African-Americans prior to Reconstruction as a veritable dark age. While, it is resolved that the experience of American chattel slavery had a debilitating

effect on the communities of African-descended people, it did not eliminate the possibility of political activity or resistance.

Therefore, the notables who emerged from the African-American community as innovators of liberation politics were simultaneously inheritors of the political legacies from previous generations. The efforts of North American maroon societies, represent one strand of the political legacies which informed the evolution of African-American political development in Virginia and the Carolinas. The guiding lights of the African-American community such as Ella Baker, Septima Clark, and others were molded by the political legacies of the American South. Their political orientations were reflections of the culture of their communities, as well as the ethical dispositions of their families.

In order to contextualize the development of anti-hierarchal political orientation among such African-American political activists, the professional life of Ella Baker has been evaluated. Also, it is important to understand that farming techniques that gave slaves value during Antebellum period in the region of Ella Baker's upbringing were the innovation of West African acephalous societies such as the Balanta and Diola. Additionally, the military tactics that slave runaways employed to evade or combat slavers confirms the presence of the Igbo and other nominally decentralized African ethnics in the same area.[1] The emergence of Ella Baker's family from the regional slave culture introduces the possibility that retention of certain political culture remained as a staple modality within sectors of the local African-American population. The examination of Baker's cultural background will indicate the possible lines of continuity that exist between her career, and the legacy of the decentralized political organization of African-descended populations in the United States. The expression of the views held by Ella Baker regarding Black political organization has served as a bridge between the modern era and the

pre-Reconstruction liberation efforts of African-Americans. What is demonstrated by the trajectory of Ella Baker's political thought is that many of her perspectives were informed by the organization and social ethics of her family. Her formative years, in particular her adolescence spent in Littleton, NC, were essential to her understanding of how to organize for agency.

5.1 Ella Baker's Family Background and Childhood

Ella Baker was born in Norfolk, VA in the year 1903, only 35 years after the abandonment of the Great Dismal Swamp, and less than twenty years after the political activity of Colored Monitor Union active within the city of Norfolk. Her early childhood was characterized by her close association with extended family members, and summer trips to Littleton, NC to visit her relations on family land. She was born to Blake Baker and Georgianna "Anna" Ross Baker who had settled in Norfolk to take advantage of the economic opportunities available within the city. Their family remained in Norfolk until 1910 when a race riot[2] was triggered by Jack Johnson's victory over James J. Jefferies. The ensuing violence and fallout led them to relocate their family to Littleton, NC where Ella Baker's maternal grandparents maintained a family farm. Prior to the 1910 race riot, Blake Baker worked as a waiter on a steamliner, and therefore spent considerable amounts of time away from his family.

Blake Baker, Ella Baker's father, was born to former-slaves Teema and Margaret Baker. He had taken time away from his job working on a steamliner, which ran between the Chesapeake Bay and Potomac River (Washington D.C.) to court Ella Baker's mother, Georgianna. Ella Baker's parents had originally met in a small academy in Warrenton, NC. Blake Baker originally left the area to secure his economic future in Norfolk before later returning to marry Ella Baker's mother, who in the interim had found work as a school teacher. Blake and Georgiana Baker had eight children of which only four survived to maturity.[3] Ella

Baker has described them as a loving couple but took much of her inspiration from her mother, who she described as tireless, community-oriented, and expressive.

Ella Baker's maternal grandparents also had a large impact on her life, especially her grandmother.[4] Baker's maternal grandparents had been born on a plantation on the outskirts of Littleton, NC located in Warren County just northwest of the Roanoke River. The area is fifty miles west of where the Great Dismal Swamp is currently located, and may have existed much closer in previous decades. Modern deforestation has reduced the Dismal Swamp's size by 90 percent. Their family was deeply religious and held strong affiliations to the Baptist Church. Additionally, Ella Baker's grandparents were pillars of the local African-American community, often using their surplus crops to reinforce the food security of their neighbors. The development of Ella Baker's family reflects the social ethics and political habitude of African-Americans attempting to advance themselves post-Reconstruction.

Ella Baker's maternal grandparents were named Mitchell R. Ross and Josephine Elizabeth "Bet" Ross. They were born into slavery on a Littleton plantation that is alleged to have been owned by William D. Elams.[5] Elams is alleged to have been the father of Josephine Ross. Her mother according to the oral history of the family, was raped by William Elams, and Josephine Ross was the resulting issue of their violent exchange.[6] She was raised as a slave working in the household of the plantation which is believed to have been owned by William D. Elams.[7] Josephine Ross communicated to her granddaughter that she was told that her mother was poisoned by the plantation owner's wife. Baker's great-grandmother had given birth to Josephine Ross on Christmas day, and being greatly fatigued retired to her bed to rest. The plantation owner's wife took the opportunity presented by her post-partum physical weakness to send poison to her in the guise of a restorative medicine. The poison, in her weakened-state, was

enough to kill her[8]. This episode in the story of Ella Baker's family was the source of a natural enmity between Josephine Ross and the plantation owner's wife for years to come.

After Josephine Ross matured into a woman, the plantation owner's wife attempted to have her marry another slave named Carter. Josephine Ross refused to acquiesce to the wishes of the plantation owner's wife. This act of defiance was remembered and recounted in the oral history of Ella Baker's family. Her grandmother described to her how she rebelled against the oppression of slavery in her youth, inciting the wrath of the plantation's mistress.[9] The wife, extolled William D. Elams to punish Josephine Ross with extreme lashings for her display of insubordination. However, Elams chose to minimize the punishment, by sending Josephine Ross away to work in the fields of the plantation.[10] Whether William D. Elams commuted the punishment because Josephine Ross was his daughter is not currently known. However, Josephine Ross was punished with hard labor, and forced the plow the fields used for sowing crops. This was considered heavy labor usually reserved for male slaves. However, as Josephine Ross later related to her granddaughter Ella Baker, she would 'plow all day and dance all night'.[11]

Josephine Ross's jubilation was not the result of her escaping punishment but rather her celebration of a successful self-determined resistance to slavery. Her mentality of resistance to racial oppression was something that she gifted to Ella Baker through the telling of family stories.[12] It is noteworthy to consider that Josephine Ross's comment about "dancing all night" may have been a reference to slave gatherings commonly held at night where continuing traditions, and in some cases African traditions were practiced in North Carolina.[13] These revival-like ceremonies were often viewed as dangerous and illegal gatherings by slave owners.

However, such gatherings were often seen by slaves as a way to rebel and maintain cultural distance from white society.

Subsequent to her altercation with the plantation owner's wife, Josephine Ross married Mitchell R. Ross by jumping the broom.[14] She made it a point to emphasize to Ella Baker that part of her attraction to him was that he was a powerfully built, dark-skinned man. This description was also emphasized by Ella Baker when she noted the presence of a man in her hometown who reminded her of grandfather, nicknamed the "Black Money King",[15] a man she likened to a Zulu because of his physical bearing. Her, comments in combination with those of her grandmother reveal a strong family-based orientation towards Black Aesthetics and African culture. The affinity that Ella Baker possessed for African culture would surface often in her writings.[16] These mental perspectives would later play a role in various ways in both her professional political career and personal life.

Mitchell R. Ross, Baker's grandfather, was described as a farmer who was deeply concerned with the socio-political agency of the African-American population, especially those located within the immediate Littleton area.[17] After the Civil War and passing of emancipation law in North Carolina, he worked alongside his siblings as a sharecropper until he was able to purchase a substantial portion of land (approximately 50 acres), from his former plantation owner, who was assumed to be William D. Elams. This purchase of land was said to have occurred on January 24th, 1888, and secured for the family a means of subsistence as well as economic independence.[18] The land purchase, according to Baker, was remembered as a family holiday, which was celebrated each year with a large feast among the extended kin who remained in the area. The purchased land was just northwest of Littleton on a crop of land that juts out into the Roanoke River.

Ella Baker's family was well-respected in the area among the black populace because their land resources enabled them to help smaller families who were either unable to support themselves, or did not have access to farming equipment. Baker explained that at certain points her grandfather would allow access to their wheat threshing machine to enable black farmers who were unable to afford the cost of such machinery or services elsewhere,[19] the opportunity to process crops. The family also engaged in a kind of barter and trade system with the local community. This system provided food security and guaranteed the needs of the local African-American community were met. This process had the added benefit of enhancing group cooperation and social cohesion as a by-product. Ella Baker noted these dynamics and later put them to use as National Director of the Young Negro Cooperative League (YNCL) years later.

Ella Baker's family worked off of a kinship-based system of voluntary association, which cooperated with other family groupings in the area to engender security, and solidarity for African-Americans. This system was likened to a family socialism by,[20] who gave indication that socialist ideas influenced the radical thought of Ella Baker. Indication was also given that regardless of how influential socialist thought was in inspiring Ella Baker to pursue certain lines of thinking, she concluded that socialist organizing was ultimately inconsistent with her political orientation.[21] She resisted the centralized authority of many socialist and radical societies, in preference for organization which enabled cooperative-ownership and group-centered consensus.[22] This preference for group-centered ethics was incontrovertibly based on her early exposure to her family's program of corporately-owned community. This political orientation was echoed not only by the GDSM of the previous generation, but also by the many West African acephalous societies, whose Africanisms were transplanted to the swamp during the slave trade.

There is another reason why there may have been persisting strands of West African notions of communal ownership, and an orientation towards militant resistance to slavery in Baker's family. Her grandfather, Mitchell R. Ross was a Baptist preacher and had established a few churches in the region. Ross led three incarnations of the Roanoke Chapel Bapist Church located on land that he donated to the community.[23] His identity as a preacher and former slave is worth investigating further, especially given the suggestion that the plantation of William D. Elams was the site of nocturnal slave gatherings. The GDSM during the early half of the 19th century attempted to infiltrate the plantation system through the use of slave preachers and conjure men. Slave preachers and conjure men existed as luminal political figures within the Antebellum slave plantation system.

African-American slave preachers and conjure men were often considered as unsanctioned politico-religious figures with a type of unofficial status within Antebellum slave society. Their ability to speak publically and convey messages in the public sphere became a useful way of conveying messages about rebellion.[24] They were also notorious for retaining African beliefs which they would use to subvert the institution of slavery.[25] The GDSM attempted to establish a network of communication and organization among slave preachers who would then be used as disseminators of organizational plans for militant resistance. These attempts are believed to have been significant to the development of events around the slave rebellions organized by Denmark Vesey and later Nat Turner.[26]

These slave rebellion conspiracies were carried out in the immediate area surrounding the Great Dismal Swamp, especially the areas of the swamp near the waterways of the Roanoke River,[27] on which Ella Baker's family land set.[28] Mitchell R. Ross as a preacher may have been exposed to this culture of militant resistance, along with his wife. However, though Mitchell

Ross existed as a strong influence in Ella Baker's life, he passed away when she was age six.[29] Therefore, Ella Baker's grandmother Josephine Baker, would likely have been the primary vector for any notions of political resistance derived from the activity of the maroon societies active in the vicinity Littleton. Ella Baker relates that her grandmother inculcated in her the values of militant resistance to racial oppression, by telling her stories about how slaves resisted subjugation under the plantation system.[30]

Ella Baker recognized capitalism as a continuation of American slavery and sought to replace that economic system with a group-centered cooperative system which resembled her family's organization.[31] Her endeavors represented a sort of sublimated militancy adapted for a modern society. In her view slavery was an industry created by the necessities and various side effects of capitalistic endeavors. She embraced the critiques of capitalism offered by socialist thought, the same observations which kindled much of the intellectual thought of the Black radical tradition. However, Ella Baker did not agree with socialist methods and preferred to support "race conscious" decentralized movements, which were active in combating the effects of American socio-economic oppression. Baker's political career began with her cultivation as a militant under the tutelage of her grandmother, later gaining traction as she negotiated her education at Shaw University.

Ella Baker described herself as an active child with an inquisitive, talkative, and combative personality. Her education and radicalization started at Shaw University. Because her mother, Georgianna Baker disapproved of the teachers at the local secondary school; Ella Baker was enrolled at Shaw University for both high school and college. She spent nine years learning at Shaw where she began to develop as a political activist. While at Shaw University she began to notice the inequity with which the white staff members addressed administrative issues.[32] Her

disposition towards administration was shaped by challenging the rigors respectability politics and racial notions that pervaded the school at that time.[33] However, school papers demonstrate that she felt both a deep connection to her heritage, and the burden of advancing the cause of her own community in accordance with the best of American ideals.

> Each individual is a threefold debtor to time, to the past, to the present, and the future. To the past one owes his entire social heritage, to the present, his best efforts to improve that heritage, and to the future, the transmission of his heritage enlarged by the experiences and achievements of his own age. Today our debt is enormously more than that of any generation which has preceded us. We are the heirs of all the ages. Ours is the science of ancient Egypt, the glory that was Greece, and the grandeur that was Rome. Yet not alone from the remote past have we inherited our social wealth, for the fact that there is a class of 1927 in Shaw University serves to remind us that our presence here today is but the product of the idealism, sacrifice, and love of great hearts and noble souls. Now that we have come into the possession of Caesar's power, Shakespeare's strain, Emerson's vision, and the hopes and aspirations of all who lived before us, including our own fathers and mothers, we are challenged as no other age has been challenged. (Baker, Our Heritage and its Challenge, 1927)

What is interesting about the development of Ella Baker is she adapted her own political tactics and approach to organizing to met the immediate needs of the African-American

community, rather than attempting to impose a set of previously organized structures on the communities in which she operated. This is evidenced by her activity in Harlem, where Baker relocated subsequent to graduating from Shaw University. It was in New York that she was first exposed to communist thought and organization, by a Russian Jew who spoke to her at length in Washington Square Park.[34] However, before she could delve too deeply into the political sea of the New York landscape the Great Depression struck. The Great Depression, which started in 1929, made a difficult economic situation for African-Americans even more tenuous. The job market for African-Americans in New York City was limited at best before the Great Depression, however, after the economic upheaval they were effectively shut out of the job market.

5.2 Ella Baker's development as a young activist

Ella Baker's activity with (Young Negro Cooperative League) YNCL, a cooperative network established by then-anarchist George Schuyler, began in 1930 and lasted until 1936. Her involvement with the YNCL was fostered by her participation in YWCA (Young Women's Christian Association) and YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association) which led to her friendship with certain black journalists. She was introduced to Schuyler, a former-writer for the Pittsburgh Courier, by a journalist friend L. F. Coles.[35] Schuyler actively recruited Ella Baker to serve as the national director-treasurer of the YNCL. Schuyler was also the person most responsible for the growth of Ella Baker's understanding of socialist ideals and political rhetoric.

Notably, her political orientation never skewed toward adopting socialist ideals, rather it was the explanation of capitalism's weaknesses and failings that became an integrated part of Baker's views. Baker struggled with her understanding of the mechanics of society. Her personal notes demonstrate that she wanted to understand the fundamental motivations behind people,

organizing for their own security. Her rural upbringing enabled her to observe that the basic necessities of human life are what drive the desire for organization, but her experiences in New York demonstrated that internal social stratification could severely weaken the efficiency of such organization.[36] Her work with the YNCL and Schuyler showed not only Baker's aptitude for understanding the subtleties of professional organization, but also proved her nuanced understanding of African-American culture.

Her notes demonstrate her familiarity with Carter G. Woodson's writings on the impact of the Black Church on African-American society.[37] She understood that two of the key skill sets introduced by the Black Church were the argumentative oratorical skills, which enabled the audible challenging of White supremacy, and the knowledge of parliamentary procedure, which enabled activists to have greater organization for liberation efforts. Her notes also reveal that she believed that the economic stranglehold of capitalism had to be countered through group-economics organized around communities at a grassroots level.[38] The YNCL benefitted greatly from Ella Baker's professional insight and decentralized methodology. African-American communities throughout the major cities of the upper east coast also benefited from the efforts the YNCL under Ella Baker's oversight.

The YNCL infrastructure was arranged so that consumers within the African-American community were able to obtain control of the supply and distribution of their own economic goods. The goal of organizing at a grassroots level through a system of voluntary association, with individuals who corporately own the means of production, was to remove profit motive as factor. Typically, profit motive necessitates a level exploitation in business practices, which are nominally organized around the principle of achieving the highest gross profit possible. Eliminating profit motive and synthesizing individual business efforts into an infrastructure that

affirmed racial solidarity, was an important communitarian effort in the history of early 20th century African-American culture. Cooperative economics relied heavily on the group solidarity of African-Americans residing in the major cities, however, the practice of such trade was rooted in the economic habits of rural African-American families, such as Ella Baker's family clan. In either case White supremacy had a major effect on forcing social cohesion, in the absence of a strictly self-determined and strongly-defined cultural identity.

The formula of YNCL organization was essentially to bring the profit derived individually by business owners back within the African-American community. The YNCL noted that surplus money from business transactions after the expense of overhead was deducted was how American entrepreneurs generated profit.[39] To reclaim this profit the purveyors of the YNCL organized communities to buy products wholesale. Products were purchased from cooperative stores established under the supervision of locally appointed management. Communities would first decide which items they wanted supplied at stores, they pooled their money, and then had the management of the stores secure the products from wholesalers at a standard retail price. The surplus money, that resulted from the nominal fluctuations in retail price as set against business expenses, were then retained by the local YNCL stores. The communities which had established the stores would then divide the retained income among members after voting and reaching a consensus on how the funds would be used.

Typically there were two major barriers Ella Baker had to face as national director of the YNCL to secure the expansion of the cooperatives. First, she had to organize teaching seminars for African-Americans not well-versed in business management or the organization of economic structures.[40] Secondly, she had to convince the communities in which the YNCL was established to support their headquarters consistently, and to constrain their economic efforts to businesses

that could be controlled easily, and with simple mechanisms. Ella Baker managed both of these problems by attempting to instill in the YNCL a group-centered identity; that was as deeply rooted in their shared experiences of economic deprivation as it was in their shared racial heritage. The correspondence retained from her years with the YNCL confirms that it was important to the administration of the organization that a family ethic was instilled in its membership.[41]

Ella Baker's participation with the YNCL provided her with an opportunity to test out the effectiveness of her group-centered model of organization. She also gained invaluable experience as a national organizer and community activist. Her proximity to George Schuyler promoted her political awareness regarding anti-capitalist rhetoric, however, their relationship also presaged her later-day relationships with African-American men working in the Civil Rights Movement. Ella Baker displayed a certain disdain for self-aggrandizing behavior.[42] She maintained religious sentiments based on her upbringing with the moral ethics of the Baptist church. Despite this, her grandfather had eschewed the emotional homiletic approach often employed by Baptist preachers, in favor of logically well-prepared sermons, with the intention of cultivating the mental faculties of his parishioners.[43] Therefore, Ella Baker, while a noted firebrand who was unafraid to employ her strong oratorical skills, did not seek to emulate the charismatic leadership model made famous by many of the ministers involved with the Civil Rights Movement. She became well-known for her avoidance of social and media limelight. Her style was based on the cultivation of positive social relationships on a grassroots level, which she could then leverage into socially cohesive political groups.[44]

5.3 Ella Baker's grassroots philosophy and the Civil Rights Movement

George Schuyler made an introduction on the behalf of Ella Baker which eventually led to her involvement with the NAACP. She was employed originally as an assistant field secretary in 1942. She was eventually sent to work for the association in a branch located in Birmingham, AL.[45] Baker's work for the NAACP in Alabama lasted from 1942-1946 during America's heaviest involvement with World War II. The principle aim of most her activity there was in promoting the job security of the African-American community, especially around the shipyards industry. She noted that the culture of the NAACP office she worked for was such that it did not create any problems for her, on the basis of gender bias, to become the leader of the branch. Ella Baker cited her self-confidence, personable nature, and cultivation of relationships based on human commonality, as being the major factors guaranteeing her dignity as a female community activist. However, her activism and candor was at times contested on the basis of gender later in her political career.

Ella Baker left the NAACP because she found her position as Director of Branches undesirable. She stated that the NAACP was oriented toward securing civil rights legislation for African-Americans. Therefore, the principal goal of the organization was to bring attention to legal proceedings in an effort to secure enforcement of the law through actions taken by the government. Baker felt this strategy overlooked the things that could be done to educate and empower people on the local level, individuals who supported the NAACP, but were in need of more specific assistance. The difference in strategic philosophies between Ella Baker the NAACP, which was extremely hierarchal, led to Baker's departure.

Ella Baker left the American South to return to New York where she remained until 1957. She was married and took custody of her niece during this time period, while maintaining

herself through working odd jobs tangentially affiliated with the then-nascent Civil Rights movement. The Montgomery Bus Boycott had at the time earned the African-American community significant media and legal victories, which culminated in the 1956 Supreme Court Browder vs. Gayle decision. This ruling struck down segregation laws as legitimate and opened the country to socio-political change on a mass level. However, in the wake of that major historical moment there was no immediate action taken to advance the cause of the Civil Rights Movement further, and activists became concerned that a prolonged lull in activity would only serve to erode the momentum of the movement.

In order to intensify the activism taking place in the American South, Ella Baker returned, helping to found the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in January of 1957. She was accompanied by many luminaries of the Civil Rights Movement such as Bayard Rustin, Stanley Levinson, and George Lawrence.[46] Her participation in the founding of the SCLC was undeniable, but her interaction with organization leadership was not without conflict. The SCLC was primarily organized to continue the mass demonstrations and mass actions of the Civil Rights Movement. The NAACP did not engage in mass movements as a matter of default practice. The result was that there was a great need for an organizing body that could generate mass support for particular issues affecting African-Americans across the American South.

The tactics employed by the SCLC relied heavily on the role of the Black Church as a cultural institution within African-American society. To a degree the weaponization of the Black Church against White supremacy in the 1950's, mimicked the attempts of the GDSM to use slave preachers to destabilize plantation society in the previous century. The SCLC was primarily championed by ministers and their congregations. The members of the organization would attempt to mobilize support, primarily from the youth of the community, to participate in popular

protests against racist the infrastructure of American society. The SCLC constituted an attempt on the part of African-American clergy to get ahead of political changes that were taking place in American society. Changes that they were not necessarily prepared to deal with on their own.[47]

Ella Baker encouraged the leadership of the SCLC to take advantage of local populations by educating through the Crusade for Citizenship project.[48] The project was designed to enable African-Americans mobilized through the SCLC to take advantage of their collective voting power. The Crusade for Citizenship was able to leverage popular support in a way that enabled African-American voters to impact legislation across the American South. The NAACP, however, disagreed with the implementation of the Crusade project, principally because it encroached to a certain degree on their traditional role of securing legislation through the judicial system.[49] During this era Ella Baker promoted participatory democracy, and education as much as possible because she found it to be the most efficient way to secure mass participation with the SCLC.[50] However, it soon became evident that there were more groups nationwide, which wanted to become involved with activism in a more organic way.

The formation of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) enabled for a greater exhibition of Ella Baker's professional talent and political philosophy. The Civil Rights Movement had by 1960 galvanized the African-American community, and inspired spontaneous youth movements across the country. However, Ella Baker observed that there was little communication going on between groups with shared goals. Additionally, there was little training being done to demonstrate to people what the most effective methods of social action were, especially for their particular communities. Ella Baker reached out the Highlander Folk School in July of 1960, to ask for their participation in educating people in basic social action techniques, and voter registration law.[51] The resulting workshops and educational seminars

served the dual purpose of facilitating the organized mobilization of activists, while simultaneously educating them in the most current tactics necessary to secure the social changes they envisioned.[52]

SNCC was organized in a series of meetings primarily instigated by Ella Baker and held between North Carolina and Georgia. The meeting was called to unify the efforts of various spontaneously organized local groups, composed of primarily students who were committed to activism. The first meeting of SNCC was held at Ella Baker's alma mater, Shaw University. The second meeting where SNCC truly crystallized as an independent organization was held in Atlanta.[53] The power of SNCC was primarily a product of its young membership, and organic activism, which adapted quickly to the specific circumstances of local areas. Rev. Jim Lawson, and other members of the established hierarchy, wanted SNCC to become a branch of the SCLC. Ella Baker defended SNCC's freedom to be an independent organization and secured funding for the young organization. She was also always diligently working to network SNCC to other organizations, which enabled them access to better resources, improved techniques, and media attention.

The organizational philosophy of Ella Baker was founded upon her early experiences with family kinship, a trait she reinterpreted to be effective within the Civil Rights Movement. There is positive evidence to indicate that Ella Baker and her family retained the experiences of slave resistance and some unique political views not easily attributable to other sources. The high level activity of African-born runaways and later the GDSM in region would seem to correspond with the militancy Baker's family felt was their cultural legacy. The modern political interpretation of that legacy is what led Baker to commit her life to securing social justice for African-Americans. Social networks which were based on positive relationships were considered

by Baker to be the best way to channel the energy of mass movements.[54] Baker's tactics favored the encouragement of direct action as a means of securing social change, in full-partnership with community mobilization. This was done encourage members of society to take full responsibility for the changes they sought, by involving them in the movement at a grassroots level. It is important to remember that Ella Baker disagreed with the Marxist vision of a utopian society run by professional experts, an idea she was introduced to while in Harlem working with George Schuyler.[55]

Ella Baker preferred the decentralization of organizational structures, a tactic that was made efficient by the tight adherence to a set of ethical principles or jointly held philosophy. In Baker's vision social cohesion was therefore based on independently held ideals; in a way that closely imitated the anarchist views of Schuyler, and the cultural habitude of the rural African-American population of North Carolina.[56] Vertical hierarchies or leadership predicated on the basis of individual expertise were therefore held as undesirable; because they negated the efficiency of organizations by forcing a few powerful individuals, into a situation where they had to account for the wishes of countless others. It was Ella Baker's view that, "strong people did not need strong leaders," and therefore it was only ethical in her view, to offer people an institutional means to become stronger[57]. Ultimately, Baker's organizational tactics helped provide the spontaneity and chaos factor that kept SNCC and many other groups effective. The adaptability of the aggregate organizations of the Civil Rights Movement is ultimately what enabled them to achieve their goals. Ella Baker, for this reason, could be considered the heart of the Civil Rights Movement's versatility.

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[34] Baker 1977, 01:26:48-01:36:37

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[37] Ibid

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[39] Baker, Ella. "Cooperative League correspondence." *Ella Baker Collection 1926-1986.* Compiled by Archives, and Rare Books Division Schomburg Center Manuscripts. Schomburg Center for the Research of Black Culture, 1932-1936. Box 2 File 1.

[40] Ibid

[41] "In all our cooperative education, we stress the point that every cooperator must look upon the cooperative society as his own institution, and must strive for its success accordingly. He must learn To say "our society, our store-we are doing this-if we should see, it will help all of us-if we fail, it will hurt all of us." The corporate name of one of our cooperatives, for example, is "Our Cooperative House, Inc.". Long experience has taught cooperators that this point of view is most important. If the members of a cooperative stand off and say, "Well, it looks as though they are going to fail"-the cooperative is almost sure to fail, but in that case the failure rests, not on the leaders, but squarely on the shoulders of the members. No one else is to blame. It is up to every member of the Young Negroes Cooperative League to be a WE member, not a THEY member; and to see that every new member which we bring in becomes a WE member, not a THEY member." Cooley, Oscar. "The Cooperative League correspondence." *Ella Baker Collection 1926-1986.* Compiled by Archives, and Rare Books Division Schomburg Center Manuscripts. Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, March 31, 1932. Box 2 File 1.

[42] Ransby 2003; Baker 1977, 01:53:17-01:57:24

[43] Baker 1977, 01:07:17-01:13:18

[44] Ransby 2003, 114; K. Tutashinda 2010; Payne 1989

[45] Baker 1977, 01:53:17-01:57:24

[46] Baker 1974, 00:13:55-00:19:34

[47] Ibid, 00:41:20-00:47:32

[48] Ibid

[49] Ibid, 00:41:20-00:47:32; Ransby, Ella Baker and the Black freedom movement: A radical democratic vision 2003

[50] Baker 1977; Payne 1989; K. Tutashinda 2010

[51] Crawford, Vicki L, Jacqueline A Rouse, and Barbara Woods. *Women in the Civil Rights movement: Trailblazers and torchbearers, 1941-1965.* Vol. 16. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1990. 90; Ransby 2003

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[55] Baker 1977; Ransby 2003; Mueller 2004

[56] Baker 1977; K. Tutashinda 2010; Ransby 2003; Payne, Ella Baker and Models of Social Change 1989

[57] Crawford, Rouse and Woods 1990, 51

6 CONCLUSION

The vestiges of the key institutions facilitating West African decentralized political organization are still alive in the African Diaspora. The features of this form political organization, like other Africanisms[A] retained by the Diaspora were transformed by space, time, and circumstance.[1] However, fundamental structures are still readily identifiable within the African-American political thought. The use of extended kinship to affect social cohesion and identification with a set of cultural morals is still evident within the African-American community. The language and use of terms like "brotha" or "sista" to evoke a certain cultural response, especially where it pertains to politics, proves there is a perpetuation of a "kinship rationale" in African-American political thought. This shows that the principle of extended-kinship is still important when negotiating political organization among African-Americans.

Similarly, the notion of kinship was important to the development of social cohesion among the GDSM, as shown by the efforts of the Hodges family and references to the continuance of the Ferebees clan.[2] Ella Baker also tried to take advantage of this custom of Africana political thought. She did so by extending her own notions of familial ethics, self-determination, group-consensus, and decentralization around the groups she participated in during the Civil Rights Era. Her family may have been directly impacted by the militant resistance of the GDSM. Even if such impacts were indirect in nature, the effect upon our understanding of the circumstances influencing Ella Baker's political orientation would still have to be radically altered.

[A] . . . Similarly, among the Riverain and other communities that had a large number of slaves, people in the same compound or ward, who fictively call themselves "kinsmen and women," intermarried with one another. Oriji, John. *Political organization in Nigeria since the late Stone Age.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, 13

The fusion of political and religious institutions is also a vestige of African political thought. This was common among both African empires and acephalous societies, and may be considered a jointly held legacy. It is difficult to determine which West African societies predominated in the religious culture of maroon society in the Great Dismal Swamp. Until further archeological and historical work is done it will remain contentious to assert the influence of one culture over another. However, the placement of Senegambian, Guinean, and Biafran slaves in the North Carolina/Virginia borderlands, lends credence to a strong strand of influences from West African acephalous societies being present in the regional culture.

Baker's maternal grandfather is of particular interest to this discussion because of his status as an ex-slave and preacher. Given that the GDSM used slave preachers and conjure men to great effect in the 19th century, Mitchell R. Ross's background demands further treatment. This culture may have impacted Ella Baker through her maternal grandparents who held a heavy sway over her early development. Baker's orientation towards decentralized political organization may need to be amended in the future to be inclusive of influences from both the GDSM, and West African acephalous societies. Furthermore, the effectiveness of Ella Baker's organizational tactics needs to be viewed within the broader discussions around what makes African-descended populations engaging in decentralized organization throughout the Diaspora effective politically. The removal of Ella Baker from the history of the Civil Rights Movement would have had a profoundly negative effect on the efficiency of the most of the major Civil Rights organizations lobbying for change. Scholars by engaging the origins of Ella Baker's political philosophy could potentially break new ground in determining what are the most efficient and resilient political systems, for the mobilization of African-descended populations moving into the 21st century.

6.1 Future Directions and Limitations to Study

Professional academic exploration of decentralized political organization within the African Diaspora has the potential to reveal new historical facts concerning how African-descended populations organized for their own agency. However, there are numerous logistical barriers to the effective exploration of the contours of political organization across the Atlantic Ocean. When posing questions as to what influence West African stateless societies had on the later development of African-American political organization, it will be necessary for scholars to gather hard evidence reflecting a specific set of conditions. It must be determined with archaeological evidence that stateless West African ethnics were located in the Great Dismal Swamp. Greater examination of Virginia and North Carolina state records must be undertaken to determine broader organizational impact of African political culture filtered through the GDSM, and its affect if any, on modern African-American political culture.

Tracing the expression of decentralized political culture from precolonial West Africa across time into more modern incarnations within the Diaspora, presents a myriad of different problems to historical investigators. Ethnicity, for instance is not a consistent synchronistic phenomenon, it shifts in ways which are not easily quantifiable. However, ethnicity must be established to determine the influence and orientation of the groups who contributed to the culture of the GDSM. In spite of this it must be understood that the GDSM, and maroon societies in general, were typically secretive groups of people living on the margins of civilized society. Their clandestine nature means that the GDSM left a very limited material culture for the historical record.[3] In addition, what artifacts can be found of their presence and activity, usually require an extraordinary amount of resources to extract, since maroon societies flourished in

areas commonly remote to human habitation. Most historical accounts concerning the GDSM were left by the plantation society they were at war with and therefore understanding how the perceived their own culture and existence is not yet possible at this time.

Therefore, when considering the future direction of this study it is imperative to focus on developing historical resources derived, if possible, from the GDSM culture. Such sources would inform archeological research enabling excavation experts better insight into where to explore, particularly with regards to finding primary resource material concerning West African political culture in the Diaspora. Additionally, Ella Baker's family history must be surveyed to determine the nature of their existence in the plantation system of Littleton, NC. Historians are unaware if they participated in rice culture or any militant activities that might indicate a specific ethnic heritage. It is also currently unknown if Baker's family had direct contact with the GDSM, however according to Baker her family maintained a tradition of militant resistance to oppression as a holdover from the slave culture of northern North Carolina.[4] Baker's grandfather's role as a preacher taken in tandem with the location of his churches on the borders of the Roanoke River, a channel used by the GDSM, gives indication that more exploration needs to be done before a clear historical picture can be said to have emerged.[5] More exhaustive exploration of Ella Baker's personal papers must also be undertaken to determine if Ella Baker was directly influenced by either the Great Dismal Swamp maroons or the Colored Monitor Union of Norfolk, VA.

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APPENDICES

Key Terms

Ella Baker- Civil Rights activist who was a key organizer in some of the most prominent African-American organizations (NAACP, SCLC, SNCC, etc.) engaged in anti-oppression efforts during the mid-20th century. She was known for her organizational philosophy which was geared towards achieving social justice objective through the cultivation of individual activists at a grassroots level. She also implemented her organizational tactics using a decentralized methodology that did necessitate the imposition of hierarchal leadership structures.

Ethnogenesis- The cultural process that leads to the formation and development of a new ethnic group, often based on transformations that takes place due to various historical events.

Grassroots organizing- Community organizing is the process of building power through involving a constituency in identifying problems they share and the solutions to those problems that they desire; identifying the people and structures that can make those solutions possible; enlisting those targets in the effort through negotiation and using confrontation and pressure when needed; and building an institution that is democratically controlled by that constituency that can develop the capacity to take on further problems and that embodies the will and the power of that constituency.

Great Dismal Swamp- An area consisting of 110,000 acres of swampland that formerly served as the site of a series of permanent settlements maintained by the Great Dismal Swamp Maroons. The original size of the swamp has been estimated at one million acres. The swamp straddles the state southeastern Virginia and northeastern North Carolina. Currently, the swamp serves as a modern wildlife refuge due to the large number of plant and animal species that were thought to be endangered by the logging industry during the mid-1970s.

Kinship- A system of relational loyalty that is affects positively or negatively the social status, resource allocations, or survival fitness of individuals within a society. African notions of kinship are expansive and usually based on blood ties, the sharing of a living space, or habitation in the same village.

Marronage- refers to a people who escaped slavery to create independent groups which either are in a temporary state of flight (petit marronage), or exist on the outskirts of slave societies which they have permanently escaped (grand marronage).

Mesic islands- High dry areas of swampland which are not subjected to flooding during the water level shifts that occur naturally in swamp environments. These islands were the locations of villages established by Great Dismal Swamp inhabitants.

Social anarchism- This is a method of political organization characterized by group-centered economic ownership, and the maintenance of individual freedoms through mutual-aid, and the disavowal of institutions of concentrated authority.

Stateless/Acephalous Societies- These are considered independent societies which are characterized by non-hierarchal organizational techniques, whose political practices feature consensus building and an emphasis on group unity. The coercive powers of a centralized authority are excluded in favor of maintaining egalitarian relations between members of the society.

List of Abbreviations

CMUC	Colored Monitor Union Club
GDSM	Great Dismal Swamp Maroons
SCLC	Southern Christian Leadership Conference
SNCC	Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee

YNCL	Young Negro Cooperative League