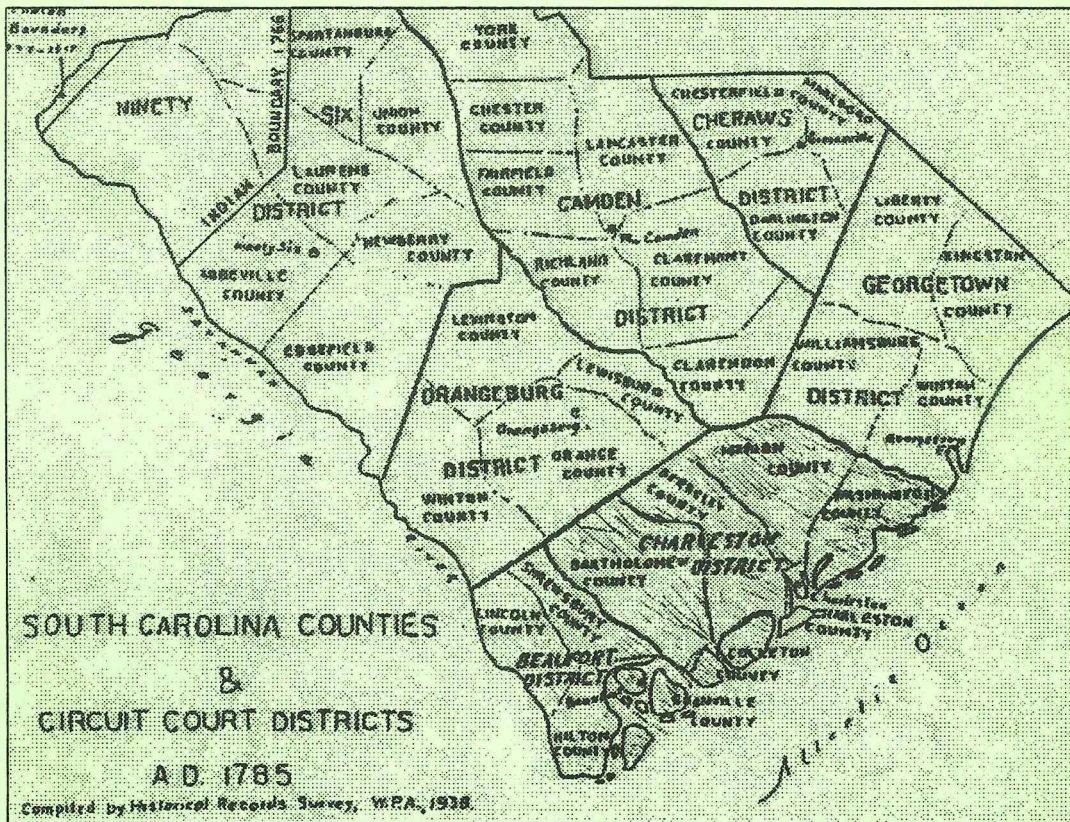


# Southern Anthropologist



Volume 28, No. 1, Fall 2001

# Southern Anthropologist

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# Southern Anthropologist

Volume 28 Number 1

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The *Southern Anthropologist* is normally published twice a year (Fall and Spring) and is distributed as a benefit to the membership of the Southern Anthropological Society.

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**Regular:** \$40.00 per year

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**Joint:** \$40.00 (Joint members receive only one copy of the Proceedings)

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"Gigabyte" Johnson

## Editor's Corner

The Society was again blessed with numerous excellent student papers at its Spring Meetings, this year held in Nashville, and the cream of the crop is being printed in this fine anthropological publication!

Antoinette Jackson's paper on "Heritage Tourism and the Historical Present: African Americans at Snee Farm Plantation (in South Carolina)" is the lead paper in this issue. This paper won First place in the Doctoral Level Student Paper Competition.

This issue also has Denise Lewis' paper on "From Cambodia to the United States: The Disassembly, Reconstruction, and Redefinition of Khmer Identity," which won the Masters Level Student Paper Competition.

This issue also begins a tradition of reports from the Mooney Book Competition Committee, with a review of the winning book by William Pollitzer, *The Gullah People and their African Heritage*, as well as a review of Gertrude Fraser's book *African Midwifery in the South: Dialogues of Birth, Race and Memory*, which received Honorable Mention.

### Future articles

The Spring issue will contain Patrick Hayden's paper on "Selfhood at Sewanee," which won First Place in the Undergraduate Paper competition, as well as a paper on Anthropology and Anorexia that Jennie Smith presented at the Nashville meetings.

I am always looking for other articles, so if

you have something you think might interest me, such as responses to the "Threads" articles given in previous issues, contact me at the meetings or send it to me at the addresses given below!

### Humor

Wally Balloo, our roving reporter, is again responsible for a major coup that resulted from his exploration of resources on the web. He was able to find provocative parts to an article that is actually from the future! See his report at the end of this issue!

### Keep in touch!

Ways to reach me:

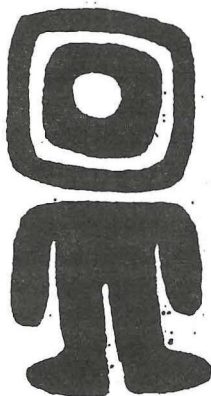
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- (5) Surface mail:

David M Johnson, Editor, SAS  
 Dept. of Sociology and Social Work  
 N C A&T State University  
 Greensboro, N C 27411

If you wish to submit materials to the Anthropologist, my preferences are (in rank order) and (please!) in more than one form:

- (1) text of MS Word file and RTF file on a Macintosh floppy, along with hard copy
- (2) text or word processor file on 3-1/2" IBM (MS-DOS) disk with hard copy
- (3) e-mail to address above; try RTF file format.
- (4) fax and/or hard copy

My deadline for the Spring 2002 issue of the *Southern Anthropologist* is tentatively December 15, 2001.



## **SAS Endowment Campaign for Education and Outreach in the South**

The Endowment is now in its sixth year of fund-raising towards a \$30,000 goal.

The purpose of the endowment is to:

- support student participation in the meetings and the student prize competition,
- expand the knowledge of anthropology in and of the South and to smaller colleges and universities which do not yet offer courses in anthropology,
- bring the message of our discipline to minority institutions through a dynamic speakers bureau,
- encourage minority participation in the field and at our meetings, and
- reward outstanding scholarship in the anthropology of the South with the annual presentation of an enhanced James Mooney prize.

At present the Endowment is about one-third of the way to the goal, so your contributions are needed!

**Please take time to make a campaign pledge or donation and send it to:**

Dr Max E White  
Department of Sociology and Anthropology  
Piedmont College  
PO Box 10  
Demorest, GA 30535

email: <mwhite@piedmont.edu>; Tel: (706) 778-3000 ext 261; Fax: (706) 776-2811

# President's Column

Barbara Hendry  
Georgia Southern University

## Thanks, the Future and a Call for Organization

While I have totally forgotten the line dance steps I tried to learn at the Wildhorse Saloon in Nashville last Spring, I do remember the fun I had practicing this fancy footwork with several more coordinated SAS colleagues. Many thanks to Melissa Schrift for organizing the Nashville meetings, and to Celeste Ray for putting together the Program and a provocative Key Symposium, "Contested Identities and Regional Memories: Public Display and Ethnic Heritage Festivals in the American South." Melissa and Celeste's efforts to publicize the meetings well beyond the SAS membership brought about 200 participants to Nashville and there was a palpable atmosphere of energy and excitement at these meetings.

Thanks to the student volunteers from Middle Tennessee State University who ran the registration table, among other tasks, and to Susan Stans for coordinating the student paper competition. Kudos to Past-President, Mark Moberg, and to all of the SAS officers, committee chairs and members, volunteers, and endowment contributors. Your generous help and support insure the success of our annual meetings and organization. Participating in the SAS community over the last decade has been one of the most rewarding parts of my anthropological career, and it is indeed a great honor to now serve as President.

### Future Meetings:

**SAS 2002:** Plans for next year's meetings in Asheville, N.C. are well underway. Lisa Lefler is Local Arrangements Chair and has scheduled the meetings from April 4 through the morning of April 7 at the Quality Inn/Double Tree Biltmore, located in

the historic Biltmore Village near downtown Asheville. A welcoming reception with a special performance by local musicians will be held on the evening of April 4, and Lisa is planning a second reception, possibly at the Cherokee Cultural Resources Center in Cherokee, N.C., for April 6. For further information about local arrangements, Lisa's email address is: llefler@email.wcu.edu.

Margaret Bender has agreed to serve as Program Chair and to organize a Key Symposium entitled "Linguistic Diversity in the Southeast: Changing Codes, Practices, and Ideology." Margaret sent the following message: "This year's Key Symposium will pay tribute to the rich tapestry of languages and dialects spoken in the southeastern United States. Special attention will be paid to changing patterns of usage, new linguistic forms and genres, and relationships between beliefs about language and local values, practices and institutions. For more information, contact Margaret Bender, Department of Anthropology, Wake Forest University, 336/7585326, benderm@wfu.edu.%o

Beth Higgs is the Student Paper Competition Chair for 2002 (BethHiggs@aol.com). Please start now to encourage your students and colleagues (both within and outside of your own institution/organization) to participate in the Asheville Meetings. Let them know about the student paper competition (with \$200.00 prizes to award winners) and about the wonderful mix of fine scholarship, collegiality, and fun our meetings are known for.

**SAS 2003:** Miles Richardson will host the 2003 meetings in Baton Rouge, La. He wants to schedule them for the Wednesday through Friday just before the Baton Rouge Mardi Gras celebration on

Saturday. Fat Tuesday in New Orleans is the following Tuesday. Plan to come early and stay on for the festivities. Helen Regis has volunteered to organize the Key Symposium.

**SAS 2004:** A meeting site has not been confirmed, although some interest in hosting it has been expressed.

**Future Meetings:** For the most effective planning, we hope to have meeting places set at least two years in advance. If you are interested in organizing a meeting or Key Symposium, please contact me (bhendry@gsaix2.cc.gasou.edu).

**Visit the SAS Website, Join the SAS email listserve:**

Access the SAS website at [www.smcm.edu/sas](http://www.smcm.edu/sas) for a variety of information about SAS. Get instructions there for joining the SAS email listserve, SAS-L, by clicking onto the SAS-L link. Participating in SAS-L enables you to send messages simultaneously to everyone on the list. About twenty people have joined so far and the listserve was effectively used to discuss meeting plans last Spring. SAS-L could also serve as a resource for more general exchange of information and networking. Many thanks to Dan Ingersoll for establishing and maintaining the excellent website.

**Proceedings Editor:**

Mike Angrosino is stepping down as SAS Proceedings Editor after completing this year's (2001) volume. He has served in this crucially important position since 1995. We are exceedingly grateful to Mike for his care and expertise, ensuring the high quality and timeliness of the Proceedings, publications for seven years. These annual volumes of selected papers from the Key Symposiums of the SAS meetings stand as a distinguished record of anthropological scholarship. We now need to recruit a new Proceedings Editor, and Mike has provided the following lists of Job Responsibilities and Requirements:

**Responsibilities:**

- \* act as liaison with University of Georgia Press on all matters regarding the production of the series, including the generation of annual sales reports
- \* establish deadlines for the volume editor
- \* prepare final copy of the manuscript to be sent to Press
- \* respond to all editorial queries about manuscript
- \* copy-edit galley and page proofs
- \* consult with SAS officers regarding selection of topics for Key Symposia

**Requirements:**

- \* ability to work within deadlines and willingness to apply all appropriate means to induce volume editors and contributors to do the same
- \* skill in fine details of style and usage

**Desirable, but not absolutely necessary**

**factors:**

- \* prior publishing or editorial experience with a university press
- \* negotiated released time, office space, and/or clerical assistance from home institution

If you are interested in becoming the Proceedings Editor, please send a letter of interest and Vita to me via snail mail at: Department of Sociology and Anthropology, P. O. Box 8051, Georgia Southern University, Statesboro, GA 30460, or as an email attachment to my email address above. Mike has offered to advise and consult with the new editor, who will be responsible for the Proceedings beginning 2002. If you are qualified and interested, seriously consider making this major contribution to the SAS and wider scholarly community.

**Volunteer Recruitment/Job Descriptions?**

SAS is an organization which is totally run by its members. There are many opportunities to volunteer, with many levels of involvement. For example, more judges are needed for the student paper competition (contact Beth Higgs if you can help in this way). The responsibilities of student paper competition judges are rather straightforward.

But perhaps you would like to one day serve as Local Arrangements or Program Chair for an annual meeting, Book Exhibits Coordinator, Student Paper Competition Chair, Proceedings Editor, Mooney Award committee member, etc. In order to give potential volunteers a clear idea of the duties associated with these positions, and to provide guidelines and timetables for successful completion of tasks, I propose that we put together a set of written guidelines. I know we have managed to function fairly well without formal guidelines, but I also know that I could not have done a good job as either Local Arrangements Chair or Student Paper Competition Chair without detailed instructions from my predecessors in these positions. This idea is not new — in 1991, then SAS President Holly Mathews recruited Tom Collins and Harry Lefever to write up guidelines and suggestions for the Local Arrangements and Program Chairs based on their experiences in these positions. These appear in the Spring, 1991 issue of the *Southern Anthropologist* (vol. 18, no. 2: 13-18). Updated guidelines to these and the other jobs could be posted on our website, and perhaps in some hard copy form. Using the website would facilitate

adapting the guidelines over time as new ideas come up.

Since I served as the Student Paper Competition Chair for four years, I will put together a description of this job. Mike Angrosino has already provided instructions for the Proceedings Editor position. I ask those of you who are familiar with the other jobs (including SAS officers) to think about writing up what you see as the responsibilities and timetables these activities entail. I suggest that we then share our preliminary drafts on the email listserve, SAS-L, for feedback. I will be glad to edit and organize these contributions if enough of you agree that this is a good idea and want to participate. Let me know your thoughts about this proposal (or share them on SAS-L). Also, please contact me or the listserve with other comments, suggestions, or questions about the organization.

Hearty thanks to everyone who participates in the SAS. I very much look forward to working with many of you over the next year, and to seeing you in Asheville next Spring.

#### **Announcement:**

### *2001 Annual Meeting of the Society for Ethnohistory*

Sheraton Tucson Hotel and Suites, Tucson, Arizona

17-21 October 2001

Organized sessions, speakers and papers are planned for the 2001 Annual Meeting. The society encouraged ethnohistorical work concerning any part of the world, with sessions and papers on the following topics are especially encouraged for these meetings:

- Historic Events from different perspectives
- Ethnicity and ecology
- Borderlands
- Indigenous sovereignty and nation building
- Local histories in the American West
- Roles of tribal museums and cultural centers

More information on the meetings is available at

---

## Southern Anthropological Society 2002 Annual Meeting

(Sessions will be held Friday, Saturday and Sunday)  
 Doubletree Biltmore (formerly Quality Inn Biltmore), Asheville, NC  
 828/274-1800

*bender@wfu.edu*

### CALL FOR PAPERS

### **Abstracts (100 WORDS OR LESS) Due: JANUARY 15, 2002**

**Submission of Abstracts, Preregistration, and Membership:** Payment of the 2002 membership and registration fees (\$40 each for regular members/\$20 each for students) is ordinarily required for participation in the program, and non-members are expected to join at the time they submit paper abstracts. This requirement may be waived in the case of foreign scholars and/or other special cases.

---

Send paper and panel abstracts, registration forms and fees, and membership forms and fees **NO LATER THAN JANUARY 15** to: Margaret Bender, Department of Anthropology, P.O. Box 7807, Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, NC 27109-7807. (Forms will be mailed to SAS members; they will also be available via an SAS link at [www.wfu.edu/~bender](http://www.wfu.edu/~bender).) Please also send abstracts electronically if possible, also by Jan. 15, to . Write "SAS Abstract" in subject line.

---

**Key Symposium:** *Linguistic Diversity in the South: Changing Codes, Practices, and Ideology.* This year's Key Symposium will pay tribute to the rich tapestry of languages and dialects spoken in the U.S. South. Special attention will be paid to changing patterns of usage, new linguistic forms and genres, and relationships between beliefs about language and local values, practices and institutions. For more information, or if interested in participating, contact Margaret Bender as soon as possible.

---

**Student Paper Competition:** The 2002 Student Paper Competition entrants should send their abstracts, registration forms and fees, and 2002 membership forms and fees **BY DECEMBER 15** directly to Dr. Beth Higgs, Sociology & Anthropology, Western Illinois University, 1 University Circle, Macomb, IL, 61455. Three copies of the papers must be sent to Dr. Higgs by January 15. Inquiries only may go to . Papers should follow AAA guidelines and be no longer than 20 pages. Papers must have been written while enrolled in an anthropology program. Papers will be scheduled in appropriate conference sessions; students are expected to read their papers in sessions and must be present to win. Separate Undergraduate and Graduate prizes of \$200 will be awarded. Winning papers will be published in the *Southern Anthropologist*.

---

# LATINO WORKERS

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*edited by*

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COLLEEN BLANCHARD  
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## Mooney Award Committee Report

The Mooney Award Committee of the Southern Anthropological Society has made its decision for 2000, and the winner and honorable mention are:

### The Mooney Award winner for 2000:

William S Pollitzer. *The Gullah People and Their African Heritage*. 298 PP. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1999

(review by David Landy for the Mooney Committee (David Landy, chair; Hester Davis; Harry G. Lefever)

This study is a model for anthropologists. Pollitzer, Emeritus Professor of Anatomy and Anthropology at the University of North Carolina—Chapel Hill, employs a four-field approach to anthropology to provide a thorough understanding of the Gullah people: where they have been, where they are now, and where they are likely to go. In doing so, he calls upon biological, sociocultural, linguistic, historical and archeological factors that shaped the lives of these descendants of Black slaves: blood groups, genes, teeth and bones; kinship, marriage, living patterns, dance, song, music, etc.; words, phrases, and intonations of various Central and Western African languages and their relationship to Gullah; village patterns, population movements, pottery, seeds, etc. He uses all these, calling upon the work of others and his own contributions, to confirm his original notion that the Gullah peoples of coastal Carolina and Georgia, and nearby islands, are closest to their African progenitors.

This book demonstrates the possibilities and limits of anthropology as a field of study. It is obviously the result of many years' devotion to a labor of love. What comes through is the great sympathy and admiration of the author who came late to his realization that the Gullah speakers probably have less admixture with Europeans and Native Americans than other African Americans. Though he

grew up in this area, he did not question for a long time what seemed to be the nature of things—the “natural” superiority of whites and the “inferiority” of other ethnic groups—until he had discovered genetics, demographics and anthropology while working on a Ph D at Columbia University.

Pollitzer's methodology and hypotheses are documented in his appendices, preface, footnotes, and in the body of the book in the finest traditions of Alfred Kroeber, Franz Boas, James Mooney and ideal anthropology. At the same time, the author does not hesitate to point to the limitations of his data, in part due to the nature of the slave trade—yanking men and women from their cultural and geographic roots and plunging them into a difficult, almost unendurable fate as bondsmen to wealthy masters intent mainly on the bottom line, produced by humans who were forced to work with neither compensation nor pity.

### Honorable Mention:

Fraser, Gertrude Jacinta. *African American Midwifery in the South: Dialogues of Birth, Race, and Memory*. 287 pp. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998.

Review by Harry G. Lefever for the Mooney Committee (David Landy, chair; Hester Davis; Harry G. Lefever).

Gertrude Fraser, Associate Professor of Anthropology at the University of Virginia, has produced a masterful piece of anthropological research. Fraser's analysis is diachronic and synchronic as well as etic and emic. Parts I and II provide the general etic context and Part III provides the emic and ethnographic particulars. Thus, the book is organized from the general to the particular, but, at the same time, the particulars raise issues and questions for new and better general interpretations of African-American midwifery.

Frazer's focus of analysis is structural. That is, she argues that an adequate study of midwifery is

more than a study of larger-than-life heroic individuals. In order to understand the developments and changes within midwifery one needs to understand the effects of African-American poverty, the unequal access to health care for African-Americans, and, in general, the subordinated roles African Americans were forced to play in the first half of the 20th century. Fraser insists that it was wrong to blame midwives for the high mortality rates, the large number of mothers who died in childbirth, and the many incidences of infant diseases when, in fact, the failures were, to a large extent, the consequences of a racist society.

Fraser provides an analysis of the process of bureaucratization and legalization of birthing rationale and procedures as they moved from the holistic/spiritual to the scientific/secular. Those who supported the professionalization of midwifery argued that it benefitted both the African-American mothers and the public in general. However, the consequences did not result in equity, but maintained the status quo, and, in doing so, pushed the midwives to the margins and then finally out of existence altogether. The medicalization of birthing did not occur with equal participation from members of the medical profession, midwives, and the communities they served. Black women had no choice but to move from home births under the care of midwives to hospitals under the care of physicians. The "choice" was controlled by the structurally "superior" and more powerful representatives of the medical profession.

Fraser also examines the interrelated issues of race, class and gender. The changes that occurred, whether by force or by persuasion, pitted educated white males who were committed to the professionalization and scientization of medicine and birthing against poor uneducated African-American women who were committed to following their sacred callings and who operated within the context of mother wit.

In her analysis of cultural and social change,

Fraser rejects all simplistic dichotomies — before and after, sacred and secular, folk and scientific, ignorance and knowledge. She argues that the changes that occurred between these often-suggested dichotomies were neither unilineal nor unidimensional. Rather, the forces of change were manifold, ambiguous and open to multivalent interpretations. The midwives were neither victims nor saints but a complex mixture of both.

Consistent with the principles of postmodern ethnography, Fraser self-consciously examines the effects of her role as ethnographer. She acknowledges that her role was one of power and that her position of power influenced her research and analysis. She also acknowledges that as an African-American woman she had "an intellectual and emotional investment in reclaiming/celebrating the history of African American midwives" (262) and that her advocacy approach "sometimes threatened to get in the way of the stories that informants wanted to tell" (262).

Faculty and students in courses in medical anthropology; race, class and gender; ethnography; and African-American studies should find this book valuable to read and discuss.

The names and terms of office of the Mooney Committee members are:

Harry G. Lefever, chair (1999-2002)

Department of Sociology and Anthropology  
Spelman College, Atlanta, GA 30314  
hlefever@spelman.edu

Hester A. Davis (1996-2003)

Arkansas Archeological Survey  
2475 N. Hatch Ave.  
Fayetteville, AR 72704

hadavis@comp.uark.edu

Helen Regis (2001-2004)

Department of Geography and Anthropology  
237 Howe-Russell Hall  
Louisiana State University  
Baton Rouge, LN 70803

add  
← e-mail

**Winning Entry 2001 SAS Student Paper Competition: Doctoral Level**

## **Heritage-Tourism and the Historical Present Africans at Snee Farm Plantation**

**Antoinette T. Jackson**

University of Florida

### **Abstract**

This paper examines the production of American history in public forums by exploring the impact of preserving and presenting 'historical' sites for the purpose of heritage tourism. A National Park Service project to study African communities formerly associated with Snee Farm plantation (the Charles Pickney National site) in Mt. Pleasant, South Carolina provides the basis for this discussion. An analysis of interview data collected expose the scope, complexity, and heterogeneity of African life in American plantation settings outside of a 'Gone With The Wind' trope. The goal of this paper is to expand the context from which the African experience in plantation settings is viewed in order to enrich the construction of American history in the present at public heritage sites. Trouillot's concepts regarding power and historical production inform this discussion (Trouillot 1995).

"... by introducing new evidence from the underside, by shifting the focus and opening new areas of inquiry, by challenging some of the assumptions and accepted judgements of historians, by bringing recognition to substantial groups of people who had been ignored, a cumulative process of transformation is set in motion" (Thompson 1978, 7).

## INTRODUCTION

Persons of African descent have often been depicted as 'slave' caricatures in plantation community representations throughout the colonial and antebellum periods of American history. To reduce the view of African association with plantations to 'slave' life portraits is to continue to perpetuate a narrow historical representation of Africans in American history. This paper proposes that taking an ethnohistorical look at American plantation communities will reveal that in reality these communities *were* African communities. South Carolina census records from as early as 1790, for example, confirm that Africans made up the majority of the population within plantation communities and performed the wide range of jobs and tasks that enabled plantation-based agricultural production centers to function. Therefore portraying Africans as only a segment within the broader representation of plantation life is to invert historical reality.

A National Park Service project to study African communities formerly associated with Snee Farm plantation (the Charles Pinckney National Historic site) in Mt. Pleasant, South Carolina forms the basis of this theoretical examination of the production of American history in public forums. An analysis of interview data collected from descendants of enslaved Africans of the Snee Farm plantation community expose the scope, complexity, and heterogeneity of African life in American plantation settings outside of a 'Gone With The Wind' trope. The goal of this paper is to expand the context from which African experience within plantation settings is viewed in order to enrich the construction of American history in the present at public heritage sites. Trouillot's concepts regarding power and historical production inform this discussion (Trouillot 1995).

In 1998, the United States Department of Interior authorized the establishment of the 'Charles Pinckney National Historic Site' for interpreting and

representing the life of Charles Pinckney (1757-1824), who is considered an 'important' political figure of the early years of American history. The life and career of Charles Pinckney is a testament to the growing tension that surrounded the continued enslavement of African people and the growth of the union. This tension eventually led to the outbreak of the Civil War in Charleston, Pinckney's hometown. The site, Snee Farm, was a former country retreat of Pinckney, a noted drafter of the US Constitution and an outspoken advocate for slavery, who served as a US Senator, member of the House of Representatives, and Governor for two terms. Snee Farm was a working plantation in which rice, cotton, and corn were produced using the labor of enslaved Africans. The purpose for the preservation of the site was later expanded to include an interpretation of the life of 'all' the site's inhabitants, free and 'slave' (Blythe 2000).

### I. Representation in the Historical Present: Applying Anthropological Theory and Methodology

This paper utilizes anthropological theory and method to examine representations of plantation community life. In general, the 'core narratives' that inform historical studies and popular imagination about the plantation experience of Africans focus on the pain of survival; servitude and submission; and rebellion and unrest (Creel 1988; Dusinger 1996; Mitchell 1936; Ulrich 1946). However, there is a greater complexity to the plantation dynamic than these 'core narratives' reveal. The scholarship of Steven Gregory, Paul Thompson, and Michel-Rolph Trouillot introduce perspectives that challenge hegemonic representation and propose ways of using narrative to present communities in a more culturally representative context.

Steven Gregory's ethnography of an inner-city community in New York City as described in his book, *Black@Corona* (1998), offers a model for representing diversity within the black community experience. Most interesting is his examination of community heterogeneity and the processes involved

in constructing a collective social life and sense of community in the face of racial exclusion.

Thompson advocates balance as a key to representations of the past. He says, "The voice of the past matters to the present. But whose voice—or voices—are to be heard?" (1978, x). Narrative data collected in this study illustrate the inherent power that the choice of voice has in informing representations of the past. Specifically, the interview data collected reveal plantation life as experienced by African members of the community.

This analysis is most enriched by Michel-Rolph Trouillot's theoretical ideas about power and the production of history—i.e., the production of history as itself historical (Trouillot 1995). Trouillot outlines four ways that silences enter the process of historical production:

1. at the moment of fact creation (at the very moment that the source is created)
2. at the moment of fact collection or the creation of archives
3. at the moment of fact retrieval (the making of narratives)
4. at the moment of the making of history in the present (Trouillot 1995, 26).

An understanding of the ways in which silence is produced and at what moments—as Trouillot does in his writings on the Haitian revolution for example—not only helps in breaking the silence but also helps in informing the construction of alternative narratives. The construction of alternative narratives serves as a way of revealing the silence that occurred in the first place and as a method of filling in the gaps with the voices, stories, and details that the silence obscured or failed to present. This paper specifically focuses on informing the silences introduced at the moment of the making of history in the present as in the case of the production and presentation of 'heritage tourist sites'.

## II. Site of Inquiry

The site of inquiry for this study is the community. Interactions with informants took place in their homes (kitchens, porches, yards), churches, social events, job sites, and informal encounters in grocery stores, restaurants and other community gathering places. Methodologically, participant observation and key informant interviews were the primary means of obtaining ethnographic data from members of the community. Eighteen key informant interviews were conducted with persons ranging in ages from 46 to 92. Archival data from local libraries, historic societies, research centers, and National Park Service facilities were also obtained.

In addition to the community, the author's own experiences and reactions were used as a site of inquiry. The presentation of plantation memories from the past by informants precipitated a constant framing and locating of 'self' by the author as participant observer. This negotiation with representation in the historical present is conveyed in narrative form in Attachment-A ('Framing Myself within the Historical Present'). The narrative is an acute illustration of Trouillot's lesson that we cannot divorce ourselves from the past, as the past is only understood via how we look at and frame it in the present (Trouillot 1995). The exercise of framing oneself in the historical present is an important intervention, especially for an anthropologist, in that it causes one to critique relations of power and intent in historical representation.

## III. In Historical Perspective: Mount Pleasant Plantation Communities

To place this analysis in historical perspective an overview of Mount Pleasant plantation communities, with a specific emphasis on African communities, is provided. The town of Mount Pleasant was founded in 1680 and is situated across the Cooper River from the city of Charleston in the

state of South Carolina. It has a rich and diverse heritage and is an excellent place to view the past and the present in direct relationship. It is in Mount Pleasant that the famous African art of sweet grass basketmaking still thrives, and it is in the Mount Pleasant area that the National Park Service (NPS) maintains several historic sites —including Fort Moultrie and the Charles Pinckney National Historic site (Figure 1, next page).

The settlement of blacks into plantation communities in Mt. Pleasant began with the establishment of the institution of slavery. Slavery was used as a means of securing labor by European settlers engaged in agricultural production as a means of generating wealth. In the 1700s, the area's primary cash crop was rice. Later, emphasis shifted to cotton production, pecan production and truck farming as sources of income.

Today there are several distinct African American communities in the Mt. Pleasant area that developed historically in relation to the region's earlier plantation-based economy. Informants described the historically African communities in Mt. Pleasant as extending from the town of Mt. Pleasant proper to McClellanville (25 miles north from the center of town). Many of these communities were established following the Civil War as blacks acquired land and established neighborhoods beyond original plantation boundaries.

The community of Phillips, for example, was described as one of the oldest in the area. An informant, aged 70 years, born and raised in the Phillips community, shared the following regarding the history of his community:

Phillips is one of the oldest plantation communities in the area and many of the other communities branched off from it. The Phillips community was at one point part of the Laurel Hill plantation complex and was given the name Phillips (after a "white man from England") to distinguish the location from the rest of the Laurel Hill plantation.

The Phillips community was one of the places set aside for enslaved Africans to live who were not classified as house servants on the local area plantations of Snee Farm, Boone Hall/Brickyard, and Laurel Hill. The Phillips/Laurel Hill community includes Martin Point (today River Town) and Wagner (today Dunes West) subdivisions and is located off highway 17 on route 41 starting at Joe Rouse Road and extending to the Dunes West subdivision. After slavery, all the land in Phillips was donated and later deeded to ex-slaves according to family size—with families being given between 2 to 12 acres each.

The Phillips community was all black until the 1940's when the Swinton family sold land to a white family by the name of Hutichinson (who built a grocery store in the community). Phillips was home for many of the Snee Farm and Boone Hall plantation labor force before and after slavery. Today Phillips remains a predominately black community.

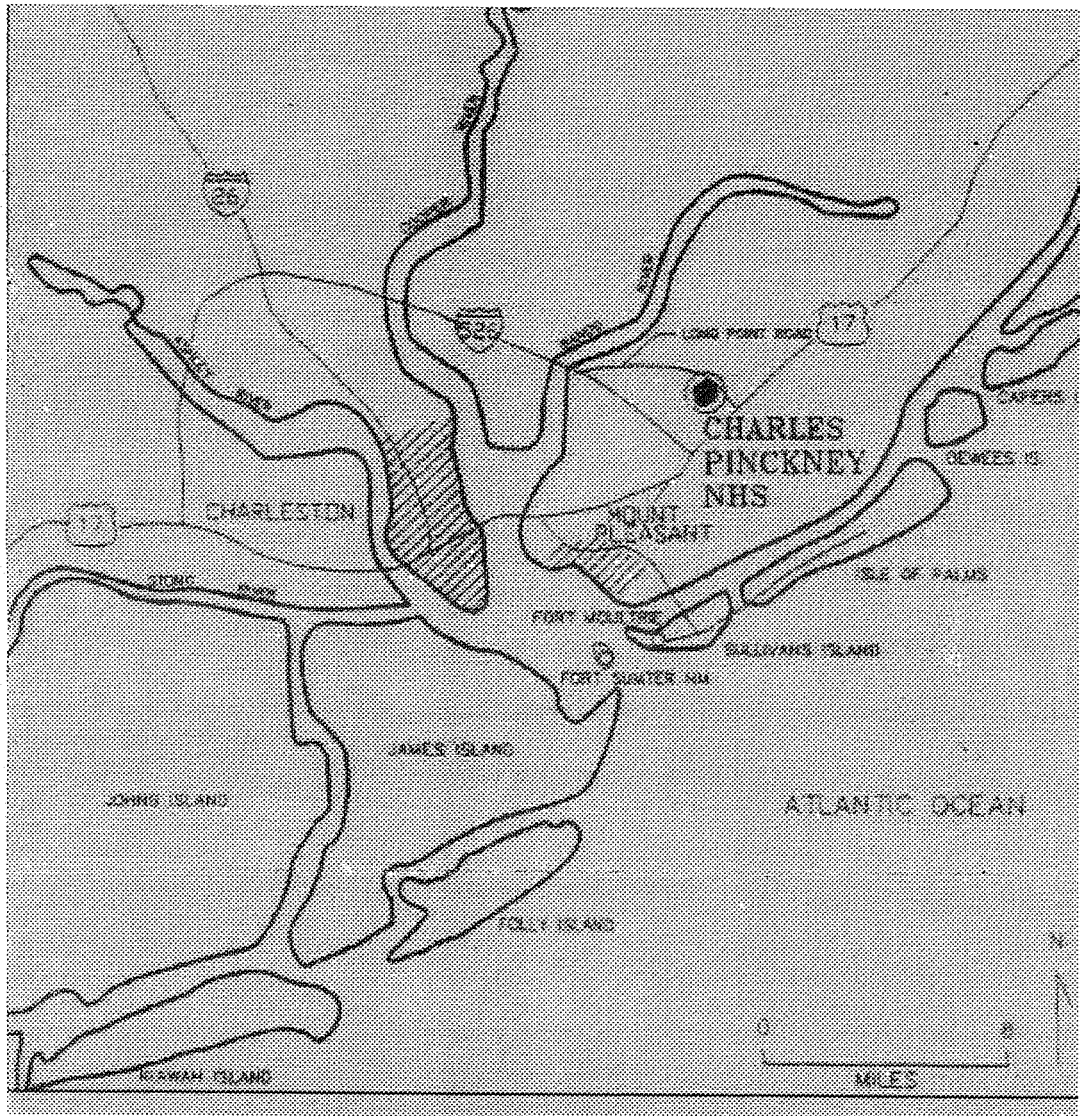
- interview notes

H.P. tape (Jackson 2000)

### Demographics

Prior to the Civil War, persons of African ancestry comprised an overwhelming majority of the population in the Mt. Pleasant area. They lived in plantation communities such as Snee Farm, Boone Hall, Laurel Hill, Phillips, and Parkers Island.

A review of the 1790 census of the Charleston District and Christ Church parish region provides a historical snapshot of the community's population demographically and socially (U.S. Census Bureau 1908). Christ Church Parish was one of ten parishes created in the Charleston District by the Church Act of 1706, with Mt. Pleasant coming under the jurisdiction



**Figure 1:** Charles Pinckney National Historic Site vicinity (Blythe 2000, 3)

of this parish (Figures 2&2b, next page). The 1790 census shows that over 75% of the population in the Charleston District were African or African-descended as underscored by the following population breakdown (U.S. Census Bureau 1908,9):

<b>Population in the Charleston District</b>	
Total	66,985
Enslaved Africans	50,633 (75%)
<b>Population in Christ Church parish</b>	
Total	2,954
Enslaved Africans	2,377 (80%)

In addition, many of the 'founding' families of Mt. Pleasant, including the descendants of enslaved Africans, can be traced to family names listed in the 1790 census report (i.e., Boon, Bonneau, Brown, Capers, Hamlin, Hibben, Huggins, Parker, and Rutledge). A more detailed listing of family names as well as an illustration of the ratio of enslaved African population to plantation owner families within the Mt. Pleasant area in 1790 is contained in Attachment-B.

Census records today show that Mount Pleasant has experienced rapid growth as well as a shift in population composition. It has expanded from a population of around 5,000 people in 1960 to over 47,000 in 2000. Once a historically African majority community, Mount Pleasant, according to year 2000 census figures, is now a community in which blacks make up less than ten percent of the population (U.S. Census Bureau 2000).

### **Community Profile**

The study of plantations as African communities is one method of revealing the presence and significance of African culture in the American South. Informants indicated that they considered all the plantations in the local area as connected and related to one another. Even though plantations were demarcated by plantation owners by name, Africans generally made no significant distinction between plantations as their communities and relationships

extended across plantation lines. For example, Africans considered the Mt. Pleasant area plantations of Snee Farm and Boone Hall to be part of one big plantation complex, which also included Laurel Hill and Brickyard plantations. As such, talking about Snee Farm in isolation from other plantations in the area would be inconsistent with the way that informants position themselves within their plantation communities.

Essentially African plantation communities are examples of how participation in everyday acts of living is a powerful cultural survival strategy. By living as they had learned from their parents, grandparents, great-grandparents, and African ancestors of the past, Africans in America passed on valuable skills and knowledge to one another that enabled them to survive collectively as a community. Notes taken from interviews with informants provide a profile of African communities in the Mt. Pleasant area historically and presently. Social relations, relationship to elders, foodways, and plantation activities are examples of aspects of community life that will be used to illustrate heterogeneity and continuity via cultural transmission within plantation communities.

### **i. Social Relationships**

African communities in Mt. Pleasant are interconnected along kinship and social lines. Most people interviewed described their community relationships as very close and very nurturing, historically and presently. For example informants shared the following stories about their communities:

"Everybody had knowed everybody on Phillips. Everybody was everybody children's parents. That's just the way it was and, uh, even the smallest child as soon as they get large enough, everybody knowed each other".

—interview notes H.P. tape (Jackson 2000)

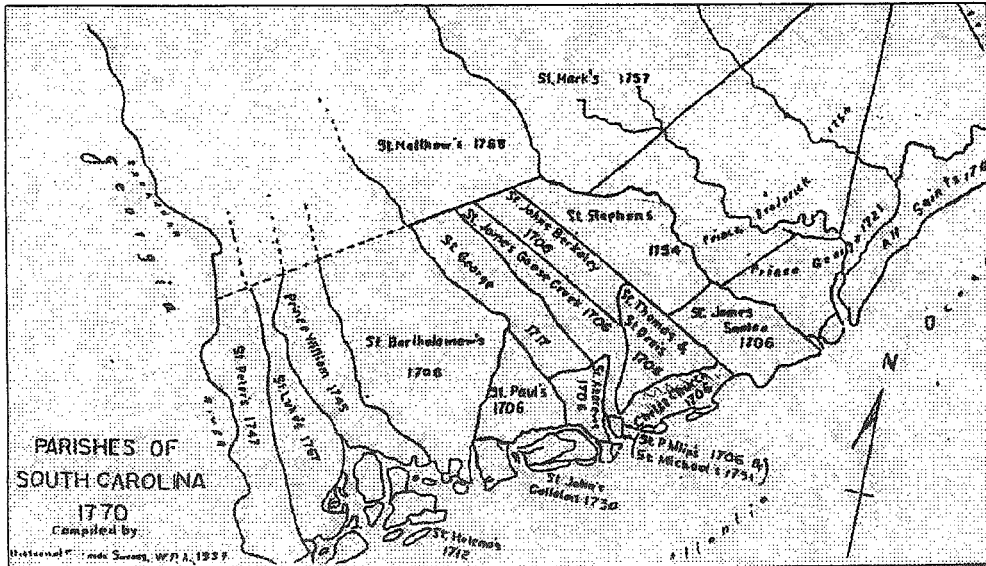


Figure 2:

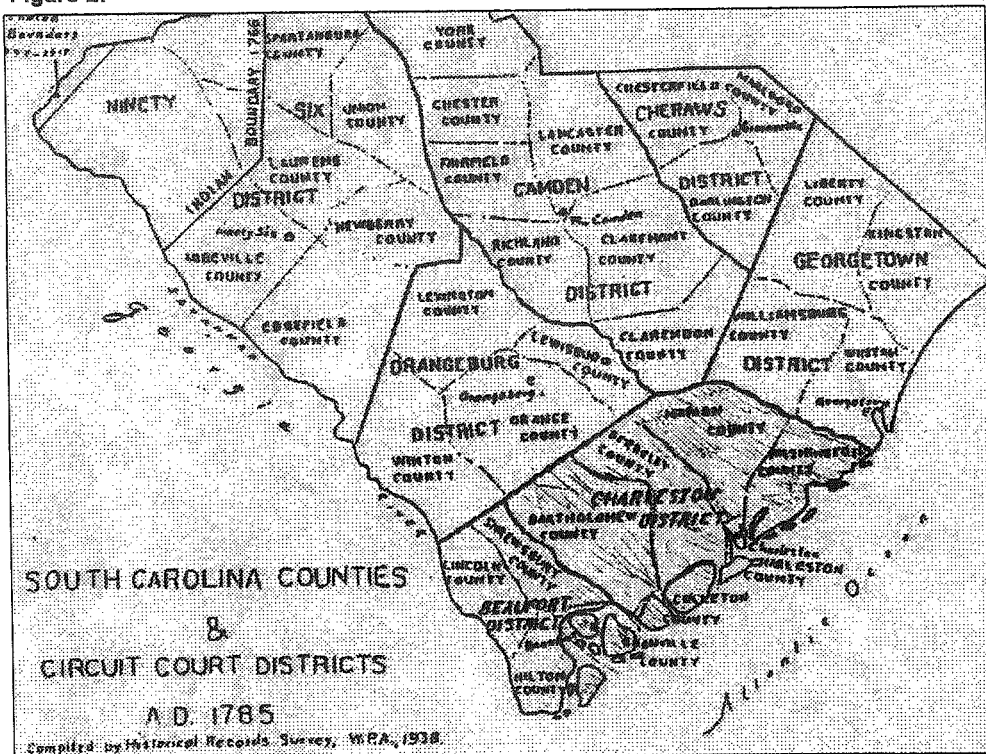


Figure 2b

People in the area had either a plum, apple, and/or pear tree(s). And a few people had grapevines. Then people traded and shared with one another. There was not much store buying but people traded and shared with one another. Everybody had a cast net... a poor man net, a net that could be used to catch shrimp or mullet. Every family knitted or had their own net. People in the community were lovin' people.

interview notes J.S. tape (Jackson 2000)

He (Issac Coakley) was a fisherman. He use to fish and give away most of his catch. People didn't really have money and so just shared what they had.

- interview notes

E.C. tape (Jackson 2000)

## ii. Relationship to elders

The narratives shared by Mt. Pleasant area African descendant community members highlight the significance of family, particularly elders, in early as well as present day plantation communities. For example, grandparents played an especially important role in passing on knowledge, which they in turn had learned from their parents or grandparents (many of whom had been enslaved). Many of the people interviewed had been "raised-up" by their grandparents, particularly their grandmothers. Informants shared the following stories about relationships with elders:

"Those real old people, I still believe, they had something that, and it came from Africa, because we didn't know, you know we used to call them old people, backwards, we

didn't know what they do and they was people of well stock they knew what was goin on and you can believe that. " -J.S. interview tape

No Manners... meant you didn't speak to or respect your elders.

You could get your behind 'cut' for this. The old folks trained them right.

- interview notes N.N. tape (Jackson 2000)

Mariah Butler, Elizabeth's maternal grandmother, raised her. She learned how to work on the farm from her grandparents... they used to pick corn, pecans, peas, and sweet potatoes. She has been making baskets for 55 years. She learned from her grandparents and they passed it on.

- interview notes E.C. tape (Jackson 2000)

Ms. M's grandmother raised Cecelia Brown after Cecelia's mother died. Cecelia did the cooking and laundry for the Hamlin family. Ms. M's grandmother was Sorrena Linnen. Sorrena and her husband Walter Linnen raised Cecelia Brown. Sorrena had 3 kids and raised one. 'Raised' means in this case (as explained by M's daughter) that Sorrena had one living child, Lydia, and so she brought in Cecelia and raised Cecelia as her daughter.

Ms Mattie's grandmother taught her how to cook. She also taught Ms. M's Mom how to cook.

- interview notes M.G. tape (Jackson 2000)

### iii. Foodways

The securing of and sharing of food was a central aspect of African American community relationships. The narratives reveal that food served not only as a means of surviving, but it was also a means of pleasure. Many conversations with informants revolved around discussions about food.

“We used to have some wonderful days on Boone Hall Plantation. Yeah grow sweet potato, white potato –everything you could name they grow on that farm.”

- interview notes M.G. tape (Jackson 2000)

Sorrena (Ms. M’s grandmother) used to have plenty of everything. Hens, ducks, turkeys... all lived in one place. We used to store things in the barn. Used to stack peanuts like hay. When you want peanuts you pull them off and then parch them. Ms. M. said that they really did not sell very much of anything that they planted but rather used it themselves or shared it with others on the farm.

- interview notes M.G. tape (Jackson 2000)

### iv. Plantation work: activities and tasks

Africans performed a variety of tasks within plantation communities as noted in historical literature on plantation life (Joyner 1999; Schwalm 1996; Wood 1976). The 1860 census report lists a wide range of occupations that persons employed in South Carolina performed (Census 1864). Africans and their descendants performed many of the functions listed in the census report as the caretakers, managers, and permanent residents of plantation communities such as Snee Farm.

For example, Africans in plantation communities performed the following jobs as listed in the 1860 census report (U.S. Census Bureau 1864, 454-455):

### State of South Carolina – Occupations

#### (excerpt Eighth Census of the U.S.-Table 6)

Bakers	Dairymen	Mechanics
Basketmakers	Drivers	Millers
Blacksmiths	Farmers	Musicians
Boatbuilders	Fishermen	Oystermen
Boatmen	Gardeners	Painters
Bricklayers	Governesses	Sawyers
Brick-makers	Hucksters	Seamstresses
Carpenters	Hunters	Servants
Coopers	Laundresses	Weavers
Farmers	Masons	Woodcutters

In the interview data collected, African informants described some of their specific tasks as laborers on Snee Farm plantation. The following table provides a snapshot of those task s(see next page):

### v. Interpretation and intervention

The primary significance of the narratives collected is that they privilege African agency. The importance of agency is that the subject is brought into the picture as a participant, as a creative force capable of analyzing and pursuing deliberate actions on their own behalf— and Africans in plantation communities demonstrate that they did just that. They performed a wide range of activities in plantation communities from midwives to musicians to field laborers. They raised families, actively transmitted knowledge from one generation to the next, and maintained strong community relationships and spiritual connections. In short, Africans in plantation communities simply lived, and in that living, experienced both pain and pleasure as they not only sustained themselves but also reproduced themselves culturally.

However, the continued use of the label ‘slave’ in public forum productions of American history (i.e., National Historic Site venues) serves to

### Table of Snee Farm Jobs

<b>Gardener</b>	Responsible for managing the garden. Plantation owners left plantation in the summer and returned in winter. Gardener took care of Snee farm flowers all year.
<b>Firing Furnace</b>	In charge of firing the coal furnace in the basement of the house.
<b>Head Man</b>	Kept up the place. Functionally equivalent to a 'Driver'. In charge of the day-to-day tasks and operation of the farm. Usually lived on the plantation.
<b>Cook</b>	Person responsible for preparing all meals for the plantation owner and family.
<b>Laundress</b>	Responsible for washing and ironing clothes for the plantation owner and family.
<b>Maid</b>	Typically referred to as a 'Servant'. Responsible for cleaning the house (doing dishes, mopping floors, making beds, ...)
<b>Wood Cutter</b>	Person that cut wood for the plantation house. In the case of Snee Farm in 1920s-1930s, the house had six fireplaces and it took 40 cords of wood/yr to heat the house. Pay was \$1.25-\$1.50/cord.
<b>Nanny</b>	Raised plantation owner's children.
<b>Midwife</b>	Delivered babies within both black and white communities.

mask the diversity of African plantation experience and minimize the cultural contributions in the everyday life-ways of Africans in plantation communities (Figure 3 and Figure 4, next page). One way of expanding the view of African life in plantation settings is by critically examining the use of the label 'slave'. This label privileges representations of plantation life that deny African agency by collapsing the construction of an entire community's identity into a single template—one defined by an imposed condition created by the institution of slavery. As such, discourse originating from this perspective focus on icons versus people, subjects versus agents. For example, discussions about locating 'slave' sites, counting 'slave' artifacts, and interpreting and analyzing 'slave' life as opposed to focusing on the life of enslaved African people in plantation communities, are limiting. Escobar underscores the effects of labeling in his discussion of development discourse as follows:

Labels determine access to resources, so that people must adjust to such categorization to be successful in their dealings with the institution. A key mechanism at work here is that the whole reality of a person's life is

reduced to a single feature or trait (access to land, for instance; or inability to read and write); in other words, the person is turned into a 'case'. That this case is more the reflection of how the institution constructs 'the problem' is rarely noticed, ... (Escobar 1995,110).

The Snee Farm plantation community interview data offer a means of displaying plantation life from a different perspective. These narratives illustrate African agency in everyday acts of simply living. In this way, people are positioned beyond imposed labels.

## VI. Conclusion

This paper used anthropological theory and methods to explore the complexity and heterogeneity of African plantation communities in general and the diversity of African experience within Mt. Pleasant plantation communities like Snee Farm specifically. In analyzing the data collected, it can be seen that, although many representations of plantation life portray 'slave' life as only a segment of plantation community life, in reality plantations were essentially

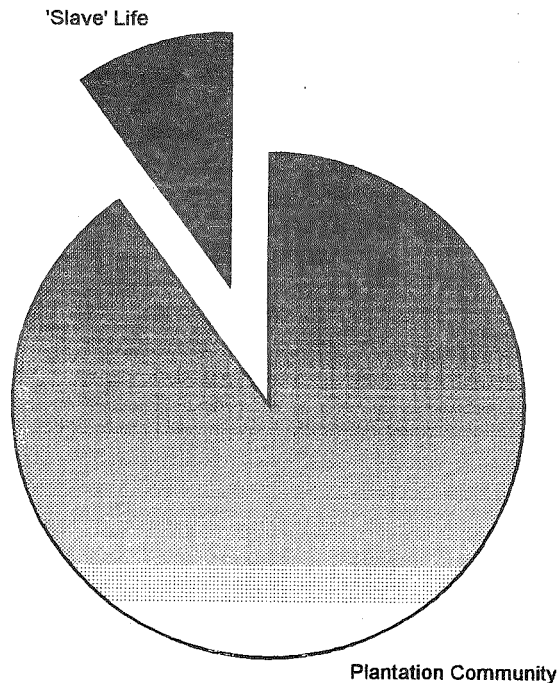
self-sustaining African communities and agricultural production centers. Population data and the interview data collected in Mt. Pleasant plantation communities support this position. Africans were not only the majority of the population in antebellum plantation communities but typically they were the only permanent year round residents. As stated, Snee Farm, for example, was Charles Pinckney's country home.

Overall, a sense of fond memories of the old ways and old days lived within these essentially African communities was conveyed. The stories shared were interesting, diverse, informative, and instructive. Africans arrived often by force but they arrived; they worked often involuntarily in less than

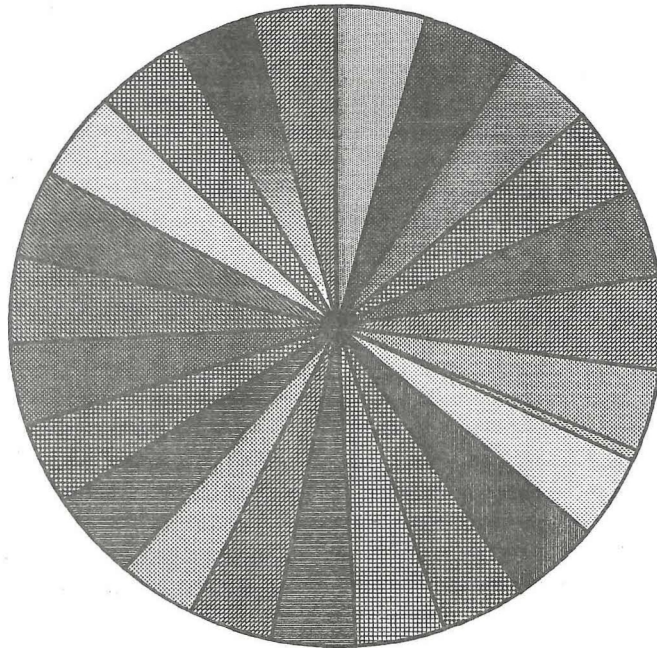
ideal conditions in plantation settings but they worked. Essentially, Africans lived, loved, labored, and died in plantation communities but communities in every sense of the word. It was from within these communities that Snee Farm and Boone Hall and countless other agricultural production centers in the American South emerged. It is through the voices of African descendants of these plantation communities and the portrayal of the lifeways of their ancestors that historical representations of the past, such as the 'Charles Pinckney National Historic Site', can be informed and enriched in the present.

### Typical Portrayal of African Presence in Plantation Communities

Figure 3



**African Life in Plantation Communities  
Plantation Occupations**



■ Cook	■ Laundress	■ Maid	■ Wood cutter	■ Nanny	■ Midwife
■ Gardner	■ Overseer	■ Driver/Headman	■ Brick-maker	■ Bricklayers	■ Boatmen
■ Teachers	■ Fishermen	■ Blacksmiths	■ Coopers	■ Millwrights	■ Musicians
■ Sawyers	■ Basket-makers	■ Hunters	■ Farm Laborers	■ masons	■ bee keepers

Figure 4

## ATTACHMENT-A

## FRAMING MYSELF WITHIN THE HISTORICAL PRESENT

*"Oh, they gwine tore the roof off my house"*

*-M. Gaillard*

Your house, a slave cabin, on a southern plantation, and your memory differ from what I see, what I want to see. I see your house, a one room 'cabin', in a row with nine others. There's a dirt floor and a fireplace inside. You say that six people and sometimes more lived with you. I also see the 'big' house with lots and lots of rooms to be cleaned and silver to be polished and meals to be prepared and clothes to be washed and fields to be planted and crops to be harvested and cattle to be raised and people with pale skin to be served. I strain to hear your memories in the place where my anger dwells. I wonder how you've managed to bring pleasure into the midst of my anger. You tell me stories of living life with your family, as a family, in a one room cabin on a southern plantation. I want to plaster your walls with my resentment about a past that *you* lived and survived. What are you saying, I scream inside. I say, let the cabins burn, let

the roof fall off, let the world simmer with sorrow for what was done down here on these plantations.

I realize that I only want to hear sad stories, stories of pain, stories about being crammed into a one room cabin staring at the big house. Instead you say that you long to return, not to a material place only, but you long to return home. I realize that I only want to hear your 'struggles in the face of pain' stories. I cannot hear your living and loving and laughing with your family stories. How could there be pleasure here in this slave 'cottage', on this plantation in the American South?

But I continue to listen and I start to see you, really see you. I soften my glare as I see your eyes letting me in and hear your smile about this land, about this plantation, about this place. You are offering me a chance to return home, to find home. Home is not in this one room cottage without a roof but home is in the spirit of this community, a community that has managed to survive so I could survive. You are letting me see you so I can find my way home. You are letting me feel the power of love.

- Antoinette T. Jackson

Dedicated to Ms. Mattie Gilliard of Mt. Pleasant, SC who shared her home and heart with me.

**ATTACHMENT-B**

An excerpt of names of Families, Christ Church Parish and their slave holdings, 1790

C. Brown	(11 slaves)
John Boon	(40 slaves)
H. Bonneau	(2 slaves)
Gabrial Capers	(82 slaves)
George Capers	(15 slaves)
Andrew Hibben	(29 slaves)
James Hibben	(7 slaves)
William Huggins	(12 slaves)
Eli Huggins	(4 slaves)
Hanner Hamlin	(5 slaves)
William Hamlin	(26 slaves)
Thomas Hamlin	(14 slaves)
Mary Hamlin	(1 slave)
Sarah Rutledge	(64 slaves)
Joseph Wigfall	(83 slaves)
A. Vanderhorst	(117 slaves)
Will Scott	(70 slaves)

An excerpt of names of Families, St. Thomas Parish and their slave holdings, 1790

Marg Bennet	(17 slaves)
Elizabeth Bonneau	(16 slaves)
Arch Brown	(150 slaves)
William Capers	(29 slaves)
Gab Manigault	(210 slaves)
Isaac Parker	(93 slaves)
B. Simmons	(112 slaves)

An excerpt of names of families, St. James Santee and Goose Creek Parishes and their slave holdings, 1790

John C. Ball	(82 slaves)
John Gaillard	(115 slaves)
Cha Gaillard	(34 slaves)
Ed Jerman	(73 slaves)
Geo Parker	(48 slaves)
Hugh Swinton	(22 slaves)
Cha Glover	(44 slaves)
Joseph Glover	(123 slaves)

Source: 1790 Census, 1<sup>st</sup> Census of the USA (U.S. Census 1908)

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Special thanks to the people of the Mount Pleasant community (especially the communities of Snowden, Phillips, 6-mile, 7-mile, Hamlin, and 'Old Mount Pleasant') who opened their hearts and homes to me. Additional thanks to the NPS Southeast Region staff and management, most notably: Superintendent John Tucker, Michael Allen, Cynthia Porcher, and Brenda Smalls.

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**Winning Entry 2001 SAS Student Paper Competition: Master's Level**

## **From Cambodia to the United States: The Disassembly, Reconstruction and Redefinition of Khmer Identity<sup>1</sup>**

**Denise Clark Lewis**

University of Kentucky

### **Introduction**

**K**hmers in the United States have adapted to life far from their homeland with transformed and redefined identities. They have endured and survived as Khmer individuals and communities by working hard to preserve what they valued in Khmerness. They have negotiated extreme circumstances that tore at their long-held beliefs of who they were, who they had become, how they interacted with those around them, and they have created a community of Khmers. This article presents and explains negotiations of circumstances surrounding the disassembly, reconstruction, and redefinition of Khmer identity from their homeland in Cambodia to a traditional Khmer village recreated in the United States. By placing processes of negotiation and identity transformation within the lived context of Khmers' lives, one can begin to understand holistically the interrelatedness of multiple changes in Khmerness. Khmer identity continued to shift with their changing circumstances, from endangered Cambodian, to refugees, to reestablished Khmers in America.

This research documents three levels of identity transformation as told by members of a small Khmer village established along the U. S. Gulf of Mexico. However, it must be made clear that these three levels of transformation are not mutually exclusive nor are they necessarily sequential. Each may exist with and within the other. Cultural identity continually shifts and is transformed by past and present experiences. Therefore, the boundaries I have assigned are for analytical purposes and should be

utilized as a way to make processes of identity negotiation more easily understood. These three levels of explanation are permeable aggregates of disassemblies, reconstructions and redefinitions of Khmerness.

Negotiating reconstructed and redefined Khmer identities was new to this population who had been the majority in Cambodia (Smith-Hefner 1999:11). Many who have worked with Cambodians in the United States describe most Khmers as former peasants and rice farmers who arrived here with little education and limited job skills (Carlson and Rosser-Hogan, 1991:47, Frye and McGill 1993, Kulig 1995:152, Ong 1996:743 Smith-Hefner 1994, 1998:67, 1999). These authors report that most Khmers were dispersed throughout multi-ethnic communities, living in near isolation from other Khmers and having to travel considerable distance to temples and ceremonies (Breckon, 1998:127, Kulig 1995:152, Ong 1996:742). Several authors also report that Khmers faced racism (Pfeffer 1994:10), were stereotyped as welfare-dependent (Breckon, 1998:116, Ong 1996:742, Palinkas, 1995:648, Pfeffer 1994:19, Smith-Hefner 1999), and were contented with low status jobs and low wages (Breckon, 1998:116, Pfeffer 1994:12). Each author predicts the erosion of Khmerness, as this population faces the loss of personal identity and the imposition of a group identity which was not created by Khmers but was created by external forces that marginalized Khmers as a devalued people (Hinton 1996:824).

Throughout my research, I found much within the community I studied that contradicted these authors. Rather than a demoralized and devalued

<sup>1</sup> (All personal and place names are pseudonyms)

people, Khmers in this particular community were negotiating identities based on present-day needs, practices, and social realities. Most had advanced educations and had held jobs with high status in Cambodia. They lived in close proximity to each other and to the Buddhist temple. Only the very old or disabled received U. S. governmental assistance. Despite working in jobs that did not always offer high wages, most reported satisfaction in working with Khmer and other Southeast Asians in the local seafood industry. Moreover, they had reconstructed and redefined their identities and their lives in a way that they benefited from, instead of being consumed by, the dominant U. S. culture. They had transformed identities from "refugee" to self-sufficient, active Khmers in America with a strong sense of shared Khmerness.

Processes of identity construction and transformation are not linear processes but are on going and overlapping; thus, I begin, in medias res, with a description of the deliberate fracturing of identity as many Khmers negotiated circumstances brought about by civil war in Cambodia. Identities were disassembled as a strategy for survival in Cambodia's communist forced-labor camps. Within the first few days of communist takeover, many Khmers recognized that anyone who had previous contacts with non-Cambodian entities were in danger of execution. To escape, many hid their identities as non-communist soldiers, professionals, or merchants and cloaked themselves and their families in the mannerisms, dress, and language of poor farmers. Khmer identities underwent continued transformations in refugee camps and processing centers where identities of helplessness and weakness were imposed and often adopted. Through repeated intensive interviews and interrogations that informed Khmers of their "difference" and "disease," stigmatization, marginalization, and devaluation were added to their cultural understandings of Khmers as Cambodian refugees.

Finally, Khmer identities continued to be

transformed and redefined through individual and collective efforts of Khmers in the United States. Khmers in the United States resisted an imposed identity of weak and diseased refugee, and instead reconstructed an identity of strength and solidarity in the form of a physically and symbolically constructed Khmer community. This constructed community, Veluvanna Village<sup>1</sup>, was a resource for redefining lives. It was a storehouse and a reference point for Khmer identity. Deeper meanings of Khmerness were manifested in the creation of a "peaceful, quiet" village that was reminiscent of life in Cambodia before the Khmer Rouge takeover. This uniquely Khmer village provided its residents with a sense of belonging, not only to the village but also in the village and with the people of the village.

Shortly after the establishment of the village in 1982, word spread among local Cambodian refugees that there was a safe, quiet place to live with other Khmers and that jobs were available. Families began building new homes or moving mobile homes onto the property. Thirty-six Khmer families (approximately 250 people) lived within the one-hundred-eighty-acre heavily forested tract where an amalgam of Khmer and American influences permeated the village. Khmer identity came to be redefined to include peacefulness, strength, solidarity, collective support, individual and group self-sufficiency, and Buddhism. The village became a place of knowing-who one was and who one had become.

#### **Veluvanna Village**

As the following excerpt from my fieldnotes shows, Veluvanna Village was a sanctuary for a redefined Khmerness as an identity, as a way of life, and as a state of mind.

*The biggest difference in living here and not Cambodia is you can close you eye at night. You can enjoy life.* (Pra'ahm, 62 year old community leader and forklift operator)

The village is filled with contrasts as traditional Cambodian activities and American

influences engage in a sometimes-bumpy coexistence. Well maintained, spacious brick homes and mobile homes—some patched together with corrugated tin and heavy plastic, others new, brightly painted, and nicely trimmed—nestle under old oak trees. Most homes provide relief from the outside stresses of life in an unfamiliar and often unforgiving environment and impart a sense of tradition and Khmerness to their occupants. Gardening, sharing, and closeness among neighbors supply opportunities for continuing traditional Khmer practices.

At Angkor Seafood, a crab and oyster processing plant located near the entrance to the village, a refrigerator truck grumbles as four men unload crates of scrambling, bubbling, pinching crabs. Inside, middle-age women work alongside village elders rapidly plucking meat from freshly cooked crabs. Conversations and laughter fly over the gleaming stainless steel tables. Most of the talk concerns the temple building project in which nearly everyone in the community participates each Sunday; where the men provide labor and the women provide food. There is a lively conversation regarding the amount of crabs processed and several people express optimism that Savenne, the young Khmer man who owns Angkor Seafood, would continue to receive such large shipments. Large shipments mean steady work close to home, money to set aside for the months without crabs to pick, and money to send to relatives in Cambodia.

By midmorning, hunger has overtaken most of the workers and they walk the short distance to Grandmother Devi's home where she and other elder women in the village have prepared vats of noodles and steaming pots of rich, thick fish soup. Hungry men and women, many who have worked since long before sunrise, continue to arrive from the seafood plant; soup is quickly eaten, then bowls are rinsed and passed to the next person. The crowd ebbs and flows much like the tides in this region that bring abundant catches of crab that allow dependable, although seasonal, jobs. The soup pot seems nearly bottomless,

as does the sense of sharing, support, and cohesiveness within the community.

## From Cambodia to the United States

### Disassembled Identities

The United Nations defines refugees as persons who:

(O)wing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country. (UNHCR 2000)

Although the definition of "refugee" specifies that the person must be "outside the country," for most refugees who must flee their countries, the process of transforming from citizen of a particular country to refugee in another land begins before one crosses the border and leaves one's homeland behind (Daniel and Knudsen 1995b:1). This was the case for many Khmers, who were forced to shed or conceal their previous identities as a strategy for survival while still in the Cambodia (Breckon 1998:117; Ung 2000). The fracturing of identities and the internalization of "difference" and of a sense of no longer belonging were the initial steps toward becoming refugees. Writing of the psychosocial dissonance surrounding the Cambodian genocide, Hinton (1996:824) describes the marginalization and devaluation of individualistic Khmer identity to one of a "homogeneous mass," who then were considered enemies by the Khmer Rouge organization.

Carefully timed to coincide with the 1975 Cambodian New Year, when families traditionally gathered for a week-long celebration, the Khmer Rouge leader, now known as Pol Pot, began the erasure of 2000 years of history (Kamm 1998). He claimed that only through his determined efforts could Cambodia have a new beginning—Ground Zero—with a new pure Khmer identity. All non-Cambodian values

that he deemed unfit such as foreign languages, foods, and dress, as well as democracy, religion, or non-communist education, and the use of photography, Western medicine, or electricity, were considered just causes for immediate execution (Chandler 1983, 1991, 1996, 2000, Kamm 1998, Ung 2000). Khmer Rouge cadres had little problem first dehumanizing and then executing those who were not "true" Khmers (Hinton 1996:824). Pol Pot and his followers began reworking Cambodia's heritage (Braudel 1994:30-31) to mold the lives of the remaining Cambodian people into Pol Pot's own model based on an idealized, glorified past. The process of an imposed identity renegotiation had clearly begun. Over three million Cambodians became refugees, crowding into camps along the Thai border, or became displaced persons scattered far from their homes in forced-labor camps (Chandler 1991; Kamm 1998). Life was harsh; many people who survived Khmer Rouge atrocities in Cambodia died of starvation, exhaustion, or illness upon arrival at the camps (Mayotte 1992:41). Once in refugee camps, many expected an easing of tensions and fears. However, instead of finding sanctuary where they could remain before rebuilding their lives, a different form of fear and devaluation emerged.

A significant part of the ordeal of becoming refugees included early encounters with aid agencies' bureaucratic inflexibility during processing through various refugee camps where an identity as weak and helpless refugee was also imposed (Knudsen 1995:21; Mayotte 1992; Ong 1995:1244). With no sensitivity to previous identities, family hierarchies, or previous interrogations by communist forces, which often elicited personal and family information later used against one or one's family, refugees were routinely subjected to multiple interviews regarding their identities (Muecke 1995:38). Distrust permeated such encounters. Interviewers distrusted refugees' stories and refugees distrusted interviewers' motives.

Cambodian refugees' experiences were often similar to refugees' experiences elsewhere. With no control over how information was used, Daniel and Knudsen (1995b:4) report, refugees around the world quickly learned "identity management." Many carefully construct histories to assure both safety in the camps and acceptance by a country of asylum (Knudsen 1995:13, 22). Such identity management, or the "conscious, or even unconscious, strategy for self-preservation, a legitimization of moves and counter-moves, and projections for the future" (Knudsen 1995:29) may have been employed by Cambodian and other refugees as a means to resist an imposed role of "powerless refugee." For example, Knudsen (1995) reports that Vietnamese refugees carefully controlled information regarding their health to avoid being identified as a "having problems" (such as chronic illnesses or turmoil within families) that would prevent resettlement. Similarly, Ong (1995:1244) details how Cambodian refugees learned to cautiously respond to each interrogation lest some bureaucrat suddenly deny them resettlement while in Southeast Asia or housing, food, or health care in the United States.

The authoritative dictates of biomedicine imposed a marginalized, stigmatized, inferior minority status on Southeast Asian refugees (Kinzie, et al. 1990; Kinzie, et al. 1998; Kinzie and Leung 1989; Kinzie, et al. 1994; Kinzie, et al. 1989; Mollica, et al. 1993; Mollica, et al. 1997; Mollica, et al. 1987a; Mollica, et al. 1987b; Mollica, et al. 1990). Most were taught the norms of American society in processing centers in Thailand, Malaysia, and the Philippines and across the United States (Knudsen 1995:21, 23, Ong 1995:1245). Aid agencies dispensed brochures that described Americans' preferred patterns of hygiene and cooking methods. Through these and other avenues, refugees learned that their bodies and everyday household practices were dirty and offensive to Americans (Ong 1995). Refugees also learned that their memories must fit into diagnosable categories of mental disorders that could then be erased and

invalidated (Boehnlein 1987; Kinzie et al. 1990; Mollica, Wyshak, and Lavelle 1987; Ong 1995:1249) in order to gain access to other benefits such as relocation assistance and housing. Failure to conform to biomedical diagnoses of widespread mental disorders was used as justification by countries of asylum as "legitimate" reasons for intensive surveillance of Cambodian (Kinzie, et al. 1990) and other refugees (Chester and Holtan 1992). Such diagnoses added to a reconstructing of identity as damaged and diseased selves (Boehnlein 1987; Daniel and Knudsen 1995:3; Knudsen 1995:21-23) that many Khmers resisted and struggled to overcome.

### **Reconstructing Lives in the United States**

Cambodian refugees learned that, once in the United States, their former identities as self-sufficient, productive, and valued members of society were diminished as Khmers were redefined by U. S. society as dependent and devalued "others" (Smith-Hefner 1999:8). Instead of acceptance by the dominant U. S. society as valued people, Khmers learned to act subservient and work without complaining in low status and low wage occupations (Ong 1995, 1996; Pfeffer 1994:12). Consequently, many of the same survival tactics that allowed Khmers to live through the war years in Cambodia were often required for survival, at least initially, in the United States (Pfeffer 1994:11). The overarching lesson to Cambodian refugees was that they must remain quiet, complacent, and unobtrusive in the workplace and in communities across the United States.

A significant body of literature addresses adaptations and negotiations faced by different groups of refugees or immigrants. In examining the scholarship on refugees and immigrants to the U. S., certain themes recur. One theme addresses refugees' experiences that relate to the physical act of immigrating from one location to another. For example, Foner (1997) discusses massive, disruptive changes in family relations and status among Punjabi, Vietnamese, Caribbean, and many other groups who have

come to the United States, whether as refugees or as economic immigrants. Hagan (1998) discusses Mayan economic immigrants' experiences in establishing social networks that aided in finding jobs or housing; again, similar processes occurred among Khmer refugees. Gans (1997), Perlmann and Waldinger (1997), Portes (1997), and Zhou (1997) investigate broad themes such as cultural identity and allegiance, jobs and networking, and retention of cultural identities that directly relate to many refugees' experiences.

Many refugees experienced a dichotomy of acceptance or exclusion in the U. S. job market (Hagan 1998). For example, Southeast Asian refugees sought entrance into the low-wage, unskilled labor market, which was characteristic of seafood processing regions. Some were offered jobs on shrimp boats or on docks that received shipments of crabs, shrimp, oysters or fish. Conversely, language, cultural habits, or physical appearance initially led to stereotypes such as being too "dirty" to work with seafood (Moberg and Thomas 1998), and too lazy and welfare dependent to want jobs (Maril 1995; Portes 1997). In spite of widespread marginalization, exclusion, and stigmatization, refugees began to resist the imposition of labels of helpless, dependent victims through collective actions and networks that, eventually, resulted in recognition as preferred seafood processors and the building of a community of Khmers.

### **Renegotiating and Redefining Khmerness through Community Building**

Khmer and other Southeast Asian refugees who first arrived in the United States found jobs, and then they helped other refugees find jobs. Many refugees from Cambodia, Vietnam or Laos opened grocery stores or seafood processing plants, and created homes and communities wherever local communities would accept them (Conquergood 1992; Maril 1995; Moberg and Thomas 1998). Refugees continually reconstituted and invented anew their identities in response to conflicting pressures from

other refugees. Many refugees stressed adaptation and assimilation into a new Americanized culture. At the same time, there was strong internal pressure among most groups to retain aspects of their long-established culture that were traditionally highly valued (Faderman 1998; Foner 1997; Moberg and Thomas 1998; Smith-Hefner 1999). In addition, national pressures exerted by aid agencies and the dominant American culture stressed assimilation into "good" United States citizens who could speak English and followed U. S. patterns of work, food, and family (Foner 1997; Gans 1997; Hagan 1998; Kalcik 1984; Maril 1995; Ong 1996).

Partially in response to such pressures, widespread social networks were established by refugees to provide mutual aid in finding jobs, housing, English language training, and communities accepting of people who were "different" (Dyck, et al. 1995; Hagan 1998; Maril 1995; Moberg and Thomas 1998; Smith-Hefner 1998). Ethnic enclaves, or areas with substantial numbers of immigrants with pre-emigration business experience, available sources of capital, and available labor, developed around communities to provide food and other products familiar to Southeast Asian refugee populations (Maril 1995; Moberg and Thomas 1998; Pessar 1995). Many Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Laotian families joined other minorities in low-income neighborhoods (Conquergood 1992; Faderman 1998; Kibria 1999; Maril 1995; Moberg and Thomas 1998; Smith-Hefner 1994, 1998, 1999).

Numerous refugees utilized refugee-community-based internal networks for local assistance and more broad-reaching external networks to locate jobs and housing away from their current locations (Hagan, 1998). Such networks, in addition to ethnic enclaves (Pessar 1995), allowed strong cohesion, cultural retention, and reconstruction of identities as successful and valuable members of multicultural societies. Internal and external pressures of acculturation and assimilation by many different ethnic groups (Gans 1997) and internal changes in families (Foner 1997)

also were reflected in both the retention and loss of different aspects of cultural identity.

Within the "dynamic interplay between structure, culture, and agency" (Foner 1997:961), traditions and identities were created and redefined. Cultural understandings of change and continuity continually shifted in the context of new pressures or new hierarchies such as those found in the job market, schools, and communities in the United States (Perlmann and Waldinger 1997; Smith-Hefner 1999; Zhou 1997). Aspects of traditional culture among Khmer and other Southeast Asian refugee populations, such as young boys living in the Buddhist temple as novice monks (Smith-Hefner 1999) were challenged by many Khmers as no longer possible or even desirable in the United States. Ancestor veneration (Faderman 1998; Smith-Hefner 1999), additions of medicinal herbs to food (Van Esterik 1988), and dietary adjustments during pregnancy (Foner 1997; Smith-Hefner 1999; Van Esterik 1988; Zhou 1997), practices that related to long-held understandings of health and well-being, were often retained as parts of traditional identities. Often, processes or degrees of retention or assimilation were related to networking with others who shared similar backgrounds and cultural ideologies (Pessar 1995; Smith-Hefner 1999). Cultural identity and economic and social solidarity were vital forces within refugee communities but could not be assumed among and between different populations (Faderman 1998; Foner 1997; Portes 1997). Class divisions may have operated within some refugee economies and communities rather than an all-for-one stereotype of ethnic solidarity (Hagan 1998; Pessar 1995). An examination of the internal structures of these networks and enclaves often revealed a dichotomy of conflict and contestation between cultural identity and allegiance that constructed a traditional identity on the one hand (Foner 1997; Gans 1997; Portes 1997; Smith-Hefner 1999) and economic expedience that diminished cultural solidarity on the other hand (Pessar 1995:383; Sanders and Nee 1987).

There was strong pressure for children to join gangs, established according to ethnicity, as a means of social acceptance and for a sense of belonging in the United States (Smith-Hefner 1999). Many young refugees adopted American patterns of behavior, such as consumerism and dating without parental permission (Gans 1997:877). The close proximity of role models was important for children's understandings of traditional cultural identities. Cultural identities, of both young and old, were constructed by experiences within one's world and the memories and meanings one assigned to those experiences. Zhou (1997:976), in his comparative study of U. S. minority children and Vietnamese refugee children, posits that ethnic communities are not sufficiently held together by economics, ethnicity, or kin and social networks. Instead, Zhou asserts that people from other nations "melt into the mainstream" with each succeeding generation. Therefore, changes in self-perception and reconstruction of identities and understandings of family roles occurred at different rates between generations (Foner 1997; Gans 1997; Kibria, 1999) based on individual and collective understanding and sharing of past and present experiences (Halbwachs 1992).

There existed within societies a collective memory that informed people of who they were and how they should interact with each other. Such a collective memory was formed, reconstituted, and recalled when external stimuli triggered by others' utterances or recollections brought one's own memories to the surface (Halbwachs 1992:38). Knowledge and truth emerged, were shared, reformed, and reconstituted (Schwandt 1994:125) among individuals who then formed collective, though sometimes conflicting, memories from historical and current understandings. Both individual and collective memories were stretched and shaped, sometimes by intentional human agency, such as "identity management" practiced by many refugees (Knudsen 1995:22), and other times unconsciously in the ongoing process of identity management, reformation,

reconstitution, and redefinition.

Some Khmers struggled against geographic and social isolation (Smith-Hefner 1999:11-12) as they strove to retain what they considered to be valuable factors in retention of Khmerness. Buddhist temples, which symbolically and physically occupied the center of most communities in Cambodia, were often difficult to reach for refugees with limited transportation in the United States. Many Khmers abandoned daily visits to the temple and only attended during major celebrations and ceremonies (Smith-Hefner, 1999:6). Without a temple as the center of Khmer community, there were few social resources available that facilitated reconstruction and redefinition of Khmerness (Smith-Hefner 1994, 1998:52-59, 1999). A loss of anchoring, such as provided by Buddhist temples and found through associations with other Khmers, created an atmosphere of anomie. On the other hand, Nesdale, Rooney, and Smith (1997) argue that many refugees chose strategies that helped them rebuild self-esteem through identification and interaction with others who held similar cultural identities. This argument supports others (Hagan 1998; Pessar 1995; Smith-Hefner 1998) who also have shown the importance of social networks and community building in the construction of cultural identities.

The physical and symbolic reconstruction of communities provided ways of reconnecting, reconstructing, and redefining selves (Fitchen 1991). Fitchen (1991:245) describes rural communities in the United States as repositories and referents for understanding and constructing identities, for defining "who and what we are." Communities tied people, ideology, practice, and place together. They served as safe havens in which residents could modify ideas and define identities. Communities reinforced retention of those aspects of life and culture that the community deemed important. A physically and symbolically constructed community provided "buffer space" from outside influences (Fitchen 1991:251) as residents negotiated myriad circumstances in their quest for

identities that included belonging both in and of the community.

### **Khmer Narratives: Negotiating Khmerness**

For almost an hour he talked while occasionally glancing at sheets of notebook paper filled with handwritten Khmer. This was a story he wanted known. About all I did was nod and listen... He spoke slowly with many long pauses between words, sentences, and thoughts. I wondered how he could stand to relate these horrifying stories to me. But it was obvious that he wanted to make sure that he told me as much of his history as possible. His description of the communist takeover and the slaughter of his family were shocking, saddening, terrifying. I am surprised that I didn't cry because this was the first time I heard a first hand account of a survivor. I suppose had he cried I would have cried with him... (Fieldnotes, Interview with Pra'ahm)

The following narratives portray and explain Khmers negotiations of circumstances surrounding the disassembly, reconstruction, and redefinition of their identity. By placing processes of negotiation and transformation within the lived context of Khmers' lives, these narratives offer a way to begin an understanding of multiple changes in Khmerness. The narratives that follow reflect only part of Khmers' long journey where identities are continually broken apart, reconstructed and redefined as Khmer selves and as a community of Khmers in America.

### **Disassembled Identities**

*Why did I come here? I have no where to go...I lost everything. Already a bomb had dropped on my house, I had no where to live. When the communists first came into my village...I knew I had to go. My wife, my children, we just ran. We ran through the rice fields and the communists shot. First they killed two of my children. They shot again and killed my wife and both my sons...I kept running for 19 days...I cried for 3*

*years. (Pra'ahm)*

On April 17, 1975, many people in war-torn Cambodia thought that peace had finally arrived. The sixteen-year long civil war had ended with the collapse of General Lon Nol's government. Over 3,000,000 people, waiting to begin repairing their homes and their lives, weary of the bombing that had been almost ceaseless for the past four months, were crowded into Phnom Penh. Many who came to the city believed that the fighting would end and the communists would allow them to return to their homes.

But peace did not come, communist soldiers killed anyone, regardless of social class, but especially those who questioned the authority of the Khmer Rouge organization or moved too slowly. Some Cambodians were murdered immediately and publicly. Those with education, those with previous contact with the West, or officers who had served the overthrown government were executed as examples to ensure compliance with Pol Pot's ideology of a new Cambodia free from Western influence (Chandler 1991, 1996). Any form of capitalistic behavior or goods could mean execution.

Many professors, merchants, or non-communist government workers tried to hide their identities by adopting the demeanor of rural farmers. One informant, Kan, told me of his struggles to hide who he was from Khmer Rouge forces. He explained that he had been a merchant in Phnom Penh with a large store on one of its main streets. When the communist forces took over the city, he, his wife and children, and his brother (who worked in the store with him) had all tried to hide their identities when they saw whom the Khmer Rouge were targeting for execution. He explained how he survived by destroying all personal papers and wearing clothes left behind by farmers. He told me he had buried photographs of his family just before the communists arrived and retrieved them three years later. Each photograph, now tattered and fading, was carefully held in an album. One by one he pointed to his wife, his

children, and two brothers:

*All killed. The communist killed my youngest brother first day because he in high school. Our family saw what the communist were doing, who they killed first. We knew we must hide who we are. We tried, but my wife and all seven children were killed before we can leave the city. Another brother is tortured. He died too.*

Kan explained that the only way he, and many others like him, survived was by stripping themselves of their identity.

Another informant, Mok, described his role in Lon Nol's government through the mid-1970s. He explained the only way he and his men escaped was by "being smart" and carefully managing their identities. He assured me that only if one could "act dumb" and "work like farmers" could they escape. He held his wife's hand as he explained how he had left her in order to protect her and their sons should he be discovered. He had also instructed her to "look down (and) act dumb." Thus, by disassembling her identity, as a former member of the Cambodian royal court and the wife of a non-communist military leader, and reconstructing her own and their son's identities, as docile, obedient farmers, she and their sons survived the harshness of the Khmer Rouge. Mok explained:

*She cried and begged me not to leave her but I had to do it. If the communist found us together we would all be killed. She left everything; our home, her family jewelry, her clothes. She took care of our sons and worked on the farms for three years. The communist never knew who she was. Now I take care of her.*

Other members of the community told very similar stories. First they destroyed all personal papers; then they destroyed all outward signs of capitalism such as eyeglasses and Western trousers, shoes, and shirts. Only when one was left with nothing but old clothes and downcast eyes could one hope to survive.

### Resisting Labels: Narratives of Reconstruction

Once they had escaped the destruction, terror, and torture of Pol Pot's Cambodia, Khmer identity was subjected to continuous negotiation, transformation, reconstruction, and redefinition. Refugees continued "identity management" (Knudsen 1995:22) as they began negotiating resettlement during encounters with government interviewers from countries such as France, Germany, Australia, and the United States. Most interviewers were insensitive to Khmers experiences as soldiers recruited by the U. S. government, as survivors who strove to protect themselves and their families, or as victims of torture and witnesses to untold atrocities. Soldiers continued hiding identities by retaining pseudonyms assigned by the CIA. Others refused to tell family histories as a protective strategy for fear that communists might have infiltrated the camps. Family histories were modified to include children who had been "adopted" in forced labor camps. Khmers carefully constructed responses to interviewers' questions that might help them gain acceptance and resettlement in any "peaceful" country willing to accept refugees.

Although physically weakened by the ordeal of life and escape under extremely harsh conditions, Khmer ideas of "refugee" revolved around their identities as strong soldiers, as mothers, fathers, and families who, left with no place to go, sought refuge from outsiders. Conversely, many Khmers reported that government interviewers appeared openly suspicious and accusatory, often repeatedly questioning Khmers' affiliation with communist forces and their motives for leaving Cambodia.

Pra' ahm angrily recalled his battle to retain his identity as a Khmer non-communist CIA soldier during his stay at a Thai refugee camp:

*The German, the French, the United States...they all come and interview me about going to their country. They keep asking me, 'Are you communist or non-communist?' I tell*

*them I surveyor for land development. I work for CIA. I tell them I no communist! It the communist that kill my family! It the communist that destroy everything! I no communist! I tell them over and over.*

Pra'ahm and many other Khmer men who served as CIA operatives in Cambodia spoke of broken promises and abandonment when the defeat of U. S. backed forces seemed imminent. Many men were proud of their identities as soldiers and leaders who served under Lon Nol and the United States and often expressed dismay that the United States' government continued to ignore that part of their lives.

In addition to struggling to overcome imposed identities as suspicious or communist refugees, Khmers often resisted an imposed identity of mentally weak refugees. Many biomedical practitioners, who interviewed refugees in processing centers, assigned diagnoses of mental disorders. Such diagnoses were based on Western notions of appropriate responses to massive trauma (Eisenbruch 1991; Eisenbruch 1992; Kinzie, et al. 1990; Kinzie, et al. 1998; Kinzie, et al. 1984; Kinzie and Leung 1989; Kinzie, et al. 1994; Kinzie, et al. 1989; Mollica, et al. 1993; Mollica, et al. 1997; Mollica, et al. 1987a; Mollica, et al. 1987b; Mollica, et al. 1990), regardless of individuals' needs or ways of healing, coping, and expressing their sorrow (Eisenbruch 1991). Such encounters with authoritative figures helped create an atmosphere of stigmatization that generated feelings of damaged selves among the refugees. Consequently, labels of mental weakness were often internalized: "See that man walking across that grass?" Pra'ahm asked as we concluded an English lesson with the monk and headed for our cars. "Doctor say he crazy. He cry all the time." He paused, drew a deep breath on his pipe. He lowered his voice and quietly continued, "Sometime I think we all crazy. Maybe I not supposed to say that, but that what I think. Sometime I still cry for my wife, my children. Sometime I don't know what to do so I yell or get

angry. Maybe I crazy too. I don't know." He shook his head... (Fieldnotes)

Pra'ahm's statement, "Sometime I think we all crazy," was indicative of the extensive assumption of mental weakness, imposed by Western authorities and often internalized by Cambodian refugees. The authoritative discourse of biomedicine determined and delimited the available ways of making sense of survivors' experiences. "Crazy" became the characterization of Khmers by many biomedical practitioners as opposed to "survivor." Thus, the reconstruction of Khmerness occurred in a dialogic interaction with other competing identities such as "crazy," "weak," "dependent," and "American." Not only were Khmer identities ripped apart and forcibly changed during Pol Pot's reign of terror, but Khmers in the U. S. continually shifted and questioned their identities as they redefined and resisted others' ideas of who they were and who they had become. They juxtaposed and mingled those externally generated identities with their own self-created identities.

In response to such shifting ideas of identity and in spite of success in homes, families, and jobs, many Khmers occasionally doubted their own identities as strong, productive members of their "new" country. As a result, many Khmers began forming alliances with other Khmers in the United States in an effort to negate the internalization of others' ideas of Khmers as "suspicious" and "weak" refugees. They began offering collective support in reconstructing their identity as strong, self-sufficient Khmers. One outcome of this resistance to imposed identities was the formation of a uniquely Khmer village where traditions, beliefs, and practices helped instill Khmers' own redefinition of Khmerness.

### **Redefining Khmerness**

Once Khmers were granted entry into the United States, identities shifted again within the context of reconstructed and redefined lives, and continued to shift as families began moving into Veluvanna Village. Physically and symbolically,

Veluvanna Village, whose name means "beautiful forest," was established by Pra'ahm, Tuon, and Pere, the first three Cambodian refugees to arrive in Bay County, as a mutual aid society for and by Khmers. A safe haven for rebuilding Khmer selves and self-esteem, Veluvanna Village was formed, occupied, and governed exclusively by Cambodian refugees and provided a place where villagers could more comfortably preserve their Khmerness through family interactions and group solidarity. They could continue their culture through their children who would be surrounded by Khmerness in many ways, although it was a different Khmerness as will be shown in the following narratives.

Several themes emerged as villagers spoke of the importance of the village as a community of Khmers. The first was the centrality of Buddhism in all aspects of Khmer life—as a religion and as a guide for family, community, and civic interactions. A second theme addressed the importance of collective action in reestablishing and redefining themselves as strong Khmers. A third theme, of shifting employment, also led to reformulated identities derived from past and present occupations. Finally, generational tensions and resistance to loss of ethnic identity constitute the final theme in this section. Strong familial, social, and cultural solidarity is evident throughout each of these themes.

Buddhism was a defining characteristic of Khmer identity in the lives of the villagers. Almost without fail, work, family, or social interactions all revolved around adherence to Buddhist beliefs in loving kindness—for family, neighbors, and ancestors—and self-sufficiency. The temple, situated on nine acres in the center of the village, served as a religious, cultural, educational, and social anchor for Khmerness that extended beyond the physical bounds of the village. Ceremonies held at the temple often attracted hundreds of Khmers from the village, the surrounding community, neighboring states, and Canada. Often I was told that to be Khmer was to be Buddhist. Pra'ahm, one of the founders of Veluvanna Village,

explained the early days of collective village construction and pointed to the value of working together to build the temple while reestablishing themselves as Khmers living in the United States. Pra'ahm further explained that, through these collective actions, villagers could preserve those aspects of Khmerness that were most important: family, Buddhism, and community:

*We came here; we cleared the trees; we offered rice to the spirits and asked our ancestors to protect us. We build houses; we buy old trailers, new trailers. We begin to move together. Cambodian people help each other. They help build; they work together. This is a good place, close to the seaport, good jobs. I have good spiritual life here, peaceful, quiet.*

*My religion very important to me. I am Buddhist ...It very important for us to have the temple and the monk here. The people need to learn the traditional way, custom, and ceremony. I will do everything I can to keep Venerable Sambath here. He going to teach our young about Cambodian way, about our custom and our religion. He teaching them Khmer writing and reading. People come to the temple when they want. Not only on Sunday like church, but anytime they need, they go. Temple is like cultural center for us too. People come here to learn English, to talk to ancestors, to meditate. We building together, the new temple. We build the Cambodian way, everybody work together. We don't borrow money from bank we just save money and when we get enough we build some more. In a couple year, the new building built and a lot more people can fit and temple belong to all Khmer.*

A second theme of working together, of collective and connected lives, is an important one for the reconstruction and redefinition of a Khmer identity as defined by Khmers and not by outsiders such as governmental or aid agencies. Most Khmers

now living in Veluvanna Village were skilled laborers or professionals in Cambodia. Once in the United States, they had to renegotiate their identities to encompass new realities of employment. Many men who had high-ranking government, education, or military careers in Cambodia were forced to work as unskilled laborers in the United States because they were unable to transfer skills. Many women found themselves entering the paid labor force for the first time in their lives.

Pra'ahm, who was working as a land development officer in Cambodia when the CIA recruited him, worked as a forklift operator at a local factory. He described his realization that his previous occupation and position in his Cambodian village no longer mattered in the same way here in the United States. He accepted that he could only find work in low-status, low-wage jobs, and would do so without complaining, as long as he could support his family, the temple, and the community:

*In Cambodia I worked same job for 16 years. Here I work many jobs...dishwasher, truck driver, raised duck, welder...Eventually I realized that a job was a job. It didn't matter what I did in Cambodia; a job is a job.*

Often a long period of adjustment was necessary before the individual was able to resolve feelings of loss and conflict within the dichotomy of a present-day identity as unskilled laborer with previous identities as skilled workers or professionals with prestige in Cambodia. Many men were able to divorce themselves from the diminished status associated with low wage jobs in the United States once they were in the village with Khmer or other Southeast Asian populations who lived nearby. Within the village, just as in Cambodia, status more often was attained by community and temple involvement than by occupation:

*It don't matter if you mayor or if you farmer. What matter is if you good Buddhist...If you take care of you mother, you father, you wife and kid, you ancestor, you neighbor...It what you do not*

*who you are...That what matter most. (Tuon)*

Nonetheless, merit-based prestige may have undergone change in the United States as younger people were able to gain prestige through financial contributions to community and temple development. Savenne, at 32, was relatively young for his role as a village leader. However, his success in the seafood processing industry allowed him the financial resources to make large contributions to the temple. Savenne explained:

*Buddhism is very important in our lives. I do what I can to help the temple, the old people in the community. I come to visit Venerable Sambath often. We keep an altar for Buddha in our home. This is no different from growing up in Cambodia. We help each other.*

Savenne's contributions to the temple, combined with his deep religious conviction that Buddhism remained central in the community, afforded him considerable respect among the villagers. In this way, one's identity as a "success" in the temple and in the community was redefined to include financial success in the job market.

Success in the outside job market required the greatest level of cultural capital-especially language skills-and networking with the already-employed to overcome the dividing line between low-wage, unskilled labor and middle class wages. However, this was very complicated. For example, many men enrolled in job training programs to learn skills that they hoped would bring good jobs with significantly higher wages:

*I get my (welding) certificate and I go to big shipbuilding plant. The newspaper say need welders. But the man say he don't need workers for welding. White man are there too and they getting hired. I ask'd him why he won't hire me. He say he don't have to hire nobody he don't want. I tell him I speak good English; I even read English, but he say no. I think he just don't want to hire Cambodian. I go to other shipyard, always the same story. What good is certificate?*

*Because I speak a lot of different language I get a job with USCC (United States Catholic Council) to work with refugee so I do not know. But at first, it was hard to find job. (Huon)*

Thus, the hopes of gaining certification and skills that would allow increased financial security were not realized. Although many villagers attempted to change their financial circumstances through acquisition of job training, most were nearly excluded from higher wage occupations, such as welding, because of discrimination. Most refugee families in the area relied on multiple wage earners (husband, wife, and teenage children) to achieve a median income of approximately \$23,000 per year (U. S. Census 1990). This led to a redefinition of household labor roles and identities that were markedly different from those established while living in Cambodia. One man summarized:

*In the United States I have to work every day. In Cambodia, you don't work every day... After you plant, you wait, you sew, and you do other things at your house. You work depending on the season. Here you work all the time. In Cambodia, my wife doesn't work. She stays at home and takes care of our kid. Here she works long time picking crab. Life is good in United States but you have to work all the time. (Vong)*

Thus, women also experienced disruption and disassembly of identities as a result of employment in their new country. Ly Lai, who worked along with her husband in a Chinese restaurant explained:

*In Cambodia I only take care of my husband and my children. We live in the city (Phnom Penh) so I have people to take care of my house and my garden. Here I work with my husband because our family must have money.*

In Cambodia, most women did not work for wages but gardened and stayed home to care for their husbands, children, and the elderly. Although patterns of household roles have undergone change in the United States, there has been a strong effort to retain a

sense of family, community, and Khmerness in the village and in the workplace.

The themes of working together and shifting employment opportunities came together in the establishment of Angkor Seafood, located just inside the village. Angkor Seafood was created through the collective actions of a group of Cambodian men living in Veluvanna Village. Each had held vastly different jobs in Cambodia (a surveyor, a college professor, and former top-ranking officer in the Cambodian air force) compared with those they held in the United States (a truck driver, a cook, and a nurseryman). These three men collectively saved their money and pooled their resources to start a processing plant that hired only villagers.

"I like to keep the plant small," explained Savenne, who after his father's death used insurance proceeds to buy out the remaining partners. He continued, "(the plant) maybe process(es) only 8 to 12 thousand pounds of crab meat each day. That way I don't need to hire anybody outside the village." He explained that by keeping the plant small, elders in the village could work as much or as little as they desired. Women in the village could work around school and day care schedules. "I want to keep the plant here in the village, the people like working together here and I make enough money to take good care of my wife, my daughter, and my mother."

With steady incomes, more families began building new homes or moving mobile homes into the village. Soon word reached across the United States and Cambodia. A second wave of migrants from cities such as Stockton, California and Lowell, Massachusetts arrived in the village, reconnecting with relatives or simply seeking a peaceful place to live, work, and raise families. One mother, who moved from Massachusetts to the village in 1999, stated that she wanted her children (ages 6, 8, and 11) away from the influences of "drugs, gangs, and rebellion," which she described as an increasing menace around her previous home. She said she moved to the village so she and her family could

practice and experience traditional Khmer values among other Khmers.

Thus, strong familial, social, and cultural solidarity, through extensive networks in the village, at the seafood processing plant, and in the surrounding community informed reconstructed and redefined identities. Such solidarity allowed considerable retention of traditional Cambodian social and cultural relations, beliefs, and practices. By continuing traditional practices of childcare, language, and religion, older Khmers sought to uphold a distinct identity and instill a sense of Khmerness in their younger American-born children and grandchildren. However, younger Khmers' ideas about identities did not always match with their elders' ideas.

Duong, who has four children, recognized that continuation of a strong and traditional Khmer identity often proved to be difficult for younger Khmers with no memory of Cambodia. He described the dilemma his children faced. He told how they learned to straddle cultures and grappled with multiple identities as Khmer children with defined traditional familial responsibilities, and American youth who desired great autonomy. His children's identities continually shifted and were restructured by their experiences as both Americans and as Khmer:

*For their future, their economic future, they must learn the American ways. They need to know how to work in the American system. But for their lives and the...(continuation of Cambodian identity)... they must learn the Cambodian way.*

Several other parents spoke of confrontations with young teens who engaged in unKhmer-like behaviors, especially those considered by elder Khmers as dangerous, e.g. drinking alcohol, dating without parental approval, and using drugs. Other parents described anger over their children "becoming too American" and losing respect for elders and ancestors, or only wanting to eat "American food" such as hamburgers and pizza. Pra'ahm angrily reproached Vithy, who had declared that he was American not Cambodian:

*You talk Cambodian! You eat Cambodian! I look at you, you hair, you eye, you nose. I see Cambodian! You Cambodian!*

Pra'ahm saw Vithy's disassembly and contestation of Khmerness as succeeding where the Khmer Rouge had not, in the elimination of Khmer identities. Most parents agreed that there were no easy solutions to their own or their children's retention of Khmerness, especially as children faced pressures in school from non-Khmer classmates to conform to American patterns of behavior. This struggle is evident in differences expressed by parents themselves. For example, some were resigned to maintaining Khmerness only at home in the village and were more accepting that their children eventually would become more American than Cambodian whereby children would focus more on consumerism instead of family obligations. Kia, the father of three young children, maintains a very traditional Khmer home and faithfully supports the community and temple. However, he wanted his children to learn to work within the American system. Kia's desire for his children's success coexists with deep pain over his experiences in Cambodia:

*Why should we remember Cambodian ways? In Cambodia I worked all week and barely had enough rice to feed my family. Here I work one day and can buy enough rice for a month. Let them become American!*

Other parents stressed the need to train their children as Khmers while they were young. They saw promise in their children for the continuation of many Khmer traditions and the adherence to Buddhist teachings because of the continuous exposure within the village to these beliefs and practices. Savenne, who had just begun his family, explained the significance of raising his children as Khmer:

*I think it is very important to speak Khmer at home. Your children need to learn early. If they learn English first it is very hard for them*

*to learn Khmer later. It is also important that we stay in contact with our religion. Buddhism is very important in our lives. The temple helps us have an understanding of who we are. The monk is here to lead us as far as we can go in knowledge. We have to pass this on for our children's future. We have to teach them to love their parents and their family. They need to know to pray for their ancestors and to burn incense. I don't think that I will raise my daughter any different than my parents raised us. I will teach her the same things my parents taught me and so will my wife. Our daughter watches children's TV and she is learning some English there, but, we only speak Khmer with her. She will learn English soon enough at day care and kindergarten.*

Savanne's statements reflected the importance of maintaining a distinct Khmer identity and teaching Khmer culture to young children while adults and children each negotiated life in the United States. Many villagers believed that life in Veluvanna Village was conducive to retention of Khmerness because of the closeness and involvement of its residents in each other's lives. They cited the involvement of elders, village leaders, and the monk when a child veered from a traditional path established through village norms such as adherence to Buddhism, respect for parents, elders, and ancestors, and strong community involvement. When first confronted with a disrespectful or disobedient child, most parents described how they first "talk sweet" to their child and try to "love them back" into traditional ways.

In spite of difficulties encountered by many Khmers as they struggled to redefine Khmerness for themselves and their children in the United States, families, friends, and neighbors-across fences, sometimes even across continents-worked together to provide a safe and familiar environment of Khmerness in Veluvanna Village. Within this setting, there was a constant level of community activity that allowed the dynamic interaction between Khmer and U. S.

influences. Activities such as the ones portrayed throughout the preceding narratives continually shaped the villagers' negotiations toward a reconstitution and redefinition of individual and collective Khmerness.

### Summary

Against almost overwhelming odds, Khmers have reconstructed identities and reconstituted Khmerness outside Cambodia. Whether their identities were fractured by force, by loss of homes, or by escape and resettlement in countries outside Cambodia, by relaying their losses, their struggles, and their daily lives, their narratives expressed and demonstrated the complexity of redefining Khmerness. Within each of the preceding narratives, whether Khmers were relating experiences in Cambodia, in refugee camps, in the United States, or within the village, identities were continuously negotiated in response to changing circumstances that were aggregates of past and present experiences.

The years of horror and turmoil in Cambodia and in refugee camps were strongly revealed through narratives told to me by many members of this Khmer community. These narratives marked the long journey out of Cambodia where many were forced to shed or conceal their old identities and faced an uncertain journey toward reconstituting and reconstructing new identities as refugees and as Khmer outside Cambodia. Khmers have fought to overcome stigmatization associated with an imposed identity of diseased, weak Southeast Asian refugee. They reconstituted their lives individually and collectively as self-sufficient Khmer in America, engaging in careful management of their identities when among non-Khmer, but continually striving to rebuild and reconstitute disassembled lives into a cohesive Khmerness. Traditions such as Buddhism, ancestor veneration, and close involvement in family and community life remained strong within Veluvanna Village. The physical and spiritual centrality of the temple reinforced their individual and collective Khmerness and

provided a stabilizing force for adherence to many traditional Khmer practices. However, the village was not isolated from the dominant American culture. Changes in status among men were often difficult passages toward acceptance of low-wage low-status occupations. Traditional attainment of status among men also underwent significant changes. Loss of skilled or professional status among working men required a reorganization of processes of status building. Prestige among older Khmers was acquired through contributions of work and dedication to the Buddhist temple and the community. High income among some younger adult men has caused a shift toward status building through finances. Still, this shift was not complete. Indeed, status was not acquired through the acquisition of consumer goods, but from the financial generosity to the temple and to elders in the village. In this way, status within the village remained strongly associated with civic and religious dedication to traditional Khmer practices and beliefs.

Many Khmers who survived near extinction under Khmer Rouge forces and under imposed identities as weak refugees continued to fear extinction of Khmerness should their children continue to eschew traditional food, practices, and beliefs and adopt American values. The realities of people's perceptions—both young and old—and interpretations of events, practices, and beliefs reconstructed definitions of Khmerness. By relying on Khmers' narratives, a fuller representation of the reconstruction of Khmer identities, shaped by internal and external pressures, emerged.

Understanding and reinterpreting the lives of Cambodian refugees and the identities they have reconstituted in the United States required placing them historically within the context of lives in Cambodia and as refugees, parents, leaders, men, and women in the United States (Schwandt 1994). Their narratives were one way they exerted control over their experiences and regained voices that were previously silenced (Olesen 1994). Experiences

within each individual's world and the memories and meanings one assigned to those experiences reconstructed both individual and collective identities as Khmers. External stimuli, triggered by others' utterances or recollections, made possible by the creation of a distinctively Khmer home and community, often brought memories to the surface that were shared, renegotiated, and reconstituted (Halbwachs 1992:38) into different ways of being and understanding Khmerness in the United States.

The construction of an exclusively Khmer village and the central role of the temple were important differences in redefinition of Khmer identity in Veluvanna Village compared to identities of Khmers studied in multicultural communities in California (Ong 1995, 1996), Illinois (Conquergood 1992), and Massachusetts (Smith-Hefner 1994, 1998, 1999). Conversely, other Khmers, Buddhism, Khmer music, food, dress, language, and ideas surrounded Khmers in Veluvanna Village. The temple, rather than located far from daily activities, occupied several acres within the village and served as the community's primary cultural center. A steady stream of villagers and Khmers from other communities, both young and old, frequently stopped in to see the monk, meditate, or leave offerings for ancestors and Buddha. In addition, the monk was regularly found visiting in homes, presiding over small ceremonies, and offering lessons in Buddhism and written Khmer to the children.

On the other hand, obvious external pressures from school and from mass media have led many young Khmers to adopt hairstyles, clothing, and desires for acquiring consumer goods that are more common among American youth than traditional Khmer youth. Still, the strength of village solidarity had (so far) held most youthful rebellion at bay. The argument that each new generation would eventually "melt into the mainstream" (Zhou 1997:976) appeared less likely to occur in Veluvanna Village given the daily exposure to Khmer cultural practices and the rapid intervention of parents, elders, and other kin

when children displayed aberrant behaviors. While it was apparent that most Cambodian refugees of all ages adopted some aspects of "Americanization" such as daily work schedules and American education, the majority also selectively reconstructed aspects of traditional Cambodian culture such as spoken Khmer, traditional music, clothing, and home-grown Cambodian vegetables.

Khmers in Veluvanna Village reported holding many different, often professional, jobs in Cambodia and all but the oldest were wage earners in the United States. This finding was in strong contrast with reports from Ong (1995), Pfeffer (1994), Smith-Hefner (1994, 1998, 1999) and others who identified most Khmers as former peasants and farmers that now relied on U. S. governmental assistance. In addition, older Khmers also learned to divorce outside-the-village stigmatization and discrimination from inside-the-village ascribed status based on meritorious service. All ages felt strong pressures to maintain traditional identities within the family, the temple, and the community.

The strongest resistance to externally imposed identities and the greatest advantage to redefining Khmerness was the establishment of Veluvanna Village and the construction of a Buddhist temple. The village, just as in rural communities described by Fitchen (1991), provided an anchoring point in the preservation of Khmer culture in the United States. Furthermore, it facilitated the construction of a collective memory (Halbwachs 1992:38) and the redefinition of Khmer identity. Within the context of the village and the temple, as circular processes that relied on understandings of past and present activities, Khmer identities were informed by both individual and collective experiences that residents could see, feel, hear, taste, and understand.

### **Conclusion**

The challenges of reconstructing and redefining identities as Khmers, as refugees, as Khmer-Americans, as families, and as active temple

and community members required a deep understanding of the circularity of selves, lives, and realities, and of the past, present, and future; each was formed by and informed the other. Such an understanding often initiated a reinterpretation and reconstitution of pasts and a reconfiguration and redefinition for futures within reconstructed and ever changing worlds.

The meaning of Khmerness changed as pressures to conform to mainstream culture changed. Individuals, families, and communities existed within vibrant interactions of intimate and extended networks that provided social and cultural assistance and allowed individual and collective agency. Such interplay facilitated the recreation and redefinition of traditions and identities of Khmers by Khmers.

Understandings of change, continuity, and identity, and ideas of family, responsibility, and self continually shifted in the context of new pressures or new hierarchies such as those found in the United States. Some parents encouraged their children to become bicultural through education and work opportunities. Then again, many Khmers continued valuing traditions such as ancestor worship, Buddhism, speaking Khmer, and consumption of traditional foods.

Often I was told that to be Khmer is to be Buddhist; therefore, retention of Buddhist traditions within the family was a powerful priority. Based on such a strong identification of Buddhism with Khmerness, it was no surprise to me that those values most often retained followed a pattern of spirituality and reflected Buddhism's importance within Khmer culture.

In addition to facilitating an understanding of the complexity of redefinition of Khmerness within this population, this research provided valuable data from practical and theoretical perspectives. From a practical stance, it pointed to the importance of considering in-depth histories, phenomenological and collective experiences, and refugees' own voices in order to understand the complex reconstruction and redefinition of selves and ethnicity in the face of

massive change. It pointed to the importance of recognition by governments, aid agencies, biomedical practitioners, and anthropologists that refugees arrived in camps and in resettlement countries with existing ideas of collective identities often in opposition to imposed identities. The recognition that many resisted the imposition of a label of helpless and weak refugee was critical for understanding the importance of individual and collective agency as refugees sought to have their own stories heard and valued both within and outside their communities.

Widespread mutual support networks, some loosely organized, others more formally established, provided linkages for many refugees as they reconstituted families, sought jobs and housing, and strove to maintain Cambodian practices and beliefs. However, there is no doubt that the most powerful way refugees negotiated life in the United States, one that encouraged and informed a situationally modified Khmerness, was through the establishment of Veluvanna Village, a uniquely Cambodian community. Within the community, refugees shared food and monetary resources, provided support and comfort, and engaged in and created an environment of familiar sounds, smells, tastes, and ideology as they reconstituted lives in the United States that included a strong identity of Khmerness. These processes of community building, whether through networks or the physical construction of the village and temple, also allowed self-sustaining and self-renewing reconstructions of memories and identities that reconstituted and redefined realities of individual and collective identities (Schwandt 1994:125).

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## News from the Future

Grinsboro, N C: SAS News Service: SAS's own Wally Balloo, reporter and investigator extraordinaire, has scored another coup. While snooping around the fringes of the internet, he came across some news stories from the future. "I guess it's like what sometimes happens when you listen to AM radio at night," he says, "and crazy things happen with the signal bouncing off inversion layers, etc, so you can sometimes hear stations from thousands of miles away that you wouldn't normally be able to hear. Well, this time it appears that somehow the signal came from the future.

"Here is what I have salvaged from the transmission, some of which was originally in Spanish," he continued:

### Historians Debate Future of Biographies

Los Angeles, Arizona, dateline August 31, 2080, APP: Historians are involved in a lively conference here at the Hilton Los Angeles East in west Arizona, where the focus theme is "The Future of Biography." We were fortunate to interview the keynote speaker as he was flying home to Maui on his private Airdevice. Formerly of the University of El Paso, Francisco Nguyen waxed pessimistic about the future. "As you know, Jeff, [Ed note: we don't know who 'Jeff' was/ will be] what with the advances in crystalline fractography, we can put all of human knowledge in a cube no bigger than two centimeters square in a side, and it will be stable for generations. Well, in the immediate past, especially about a hundred years ago, they had lots of forms of data capture but they haven't held up well. As a result we have really good information from the early twentieth century, but after that...to use a phrase from the time period: "We're in a 'funk.'" (We aren't totally clear about what a funk was, but it didn't sound too good and I want to sound 'hip' as it were.)"

He was interrupted by Maryfrances Fujikawa, who continued from her hotel room, "For example, I was working on a biography of a famous World War II general, Douglas MacArthur, and there was lots of information on him, such as diaries, letters on paper, books on paper, and other materials from him and his associates. But when I went to look at his grandson's life, well...let me have you talk to Najiyah Floyd-McLeathers, who is really into the technology of the period."

McLeathers, who was actually face to face with this reporter, continued, "With some of the forms of document capture, such as paper—if it was good quality and not pulp paper—we still have many surviving records. But with later, electronic capture, we are "batting almost zero," to use a hot nineteenth century expression. We have some paper magazines from the time period with articles that gloat about how much information is on the 'world wide web' and how acces-

sible it is, but it was all stored on devices called "hard disks," none of which are readable today. And lots of it was backed up onto round disks called 'CDROMs' but they are all separating into their original layers and we no longer have working machines to read them, so they are useless. And don't get me talking about that company, what's its name... Micro, Micro-something! Their products are really junk! We thought we had scored a coup by getting one of the machines which used their software products to run. It was being used as a doorstep by a little old guy who was living in Florida. He was really proud of it, said it had been a real 'screamer' in his day—I really love all those old expressions I've picked up!—with a gigahertz Pentium CPU, 50 gig hard drive, and so forth, (I don't know what all that means, but it sounds impressive!). We got it to run, but we couldn't figure out the software to save our souls, so had to give it back to the old man and he put it back on his doorstep. John, one of my co-workers, was excited because he had some of those 'floppy disks' which said something about "Apple II" on them, and we hoped they would be usable in the old man's machine, but they wouldn't fit. The disk had a label on it which said "Important Back Up Files" but we'll never know what they were, probably a shopping list! The disk was as big as a frisbee, and about as useful now."

Samantha Weeks-Turley, who was part of the conversation, beamed her words apparently from her Palmster while she was riding in an Airdevice on her way to work (judging by the gyrations in her picture and the changing backgrounds) and was really livid. "I was working on a biography of President George Bush IV and I finally had to give it up! All those communications that the periodicals of the time talk about so glibly—emails, fax, cell-phone conversations, even the occasional micro-cassette—are all gone, or unreadable! I'm about to do another bio of William Clinton, since a lot of his stuff was on paper."

The conference ended on a high note, however ... [Note from Wally Balloo: the rest of the text is gibberish, so I guess we'll live in suspense until 2080!]

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