

## From African Canoe to Plantation Crew: Tracing Maritime Memory and Legacy

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Hi de good boat Neely?  
She row bery fast, Miss Neely!  
Aint no boat like Miss Neely,  
Ho yoi'!

Who gawing to row wid Miss Neely?  
Can't catch dis boat Neely-  
Nobody show de face wid Neely  
Ho yoi'!

During a boat trip down the Ashley River near Charlestown in South Carolina, Juba, the head oarsman, led his fellow slaves in a song about the boat *Neely*, which was named for the daughter of the planter Cornelia who was aboard. It was a work song, serving simultaneously to berate, uplift and encourage the crew. Later the song shifted its focus to the suitor of Cornelia who was also aboard, acknowledging his presence and complimenting him as a possible competent captain for the plantation rowboat in the future:

Maybe Maus Lewis take de oar for Neely,  
Bery handsome boat Miss Neely!  
Maus Lewis nice Captain for Neely,  
Hoi Yoi!

The river and waterborne activities were an integral part of the low country plantation's daily routine just as they were in the West Indies plantations.<sup>1</sup> An early historian for the Royal Government wrote: "The oldest plantations were upon rivers, a waterfront indeed, and a landing were essential to such establishments, for it must have the periago for plantation purposes and the trim sloop and large cypress canoes for the master's use."<sup>2</sup> European trained shipwrights built the ships or "trim sloops" for transatlantic voyaging in local shipyards with slave labor, but it is likely that the bulk of the smaller canoes and log-hulled sailing periogos were built and operated by African slaves who dominated the low country manual workforce population in the colonial era.<sup>3</sup>

Slaves arriving either directly from Africa, or that the West Indian settlers brought with them to the Carolinas, originated from a variety of coastal, lake and river system regions of Africa where boats were everyday commodities. Currently the manifestation of their maritime heritage is a significant yet neglected part of the colonial and plantation history of the south. Maritime history is traditionally approached with a Eurocentric focus on large ships of war, trade, and exploration. Fisheries and whaling history have added another valuable dimension to the literature, highlighting the critical and diverse roles of multi-cultural maritime communities. Scholars like Peter Wood, Jeffrey Bolster, Marcus Rediker, David Cecelski and Kevin Dawson all address contributions of Africans and African Americans to both coastal communities and transatlantic endeavors.<sup>4</sup> Maritime archaeologists are now researching synergies between the land and water with the increasingly popular intellectual topics of “maritime landscapes, seascapes and waterscapes” or seeking to identify the essence of “maritimity” or maritime identity of a population.<sup>5</sup> Presenting case studies that illustrate the nuances of cross-cultural maritime legacies around waterscapes have potential to create new connecting narratives and understandings of more representative collective memories of the maritime past. Documenting and analyzing remnants of maritime material culture in museum assemblages or in the archaeological record may reveal stylistic similarities between South Carolina canoe-built boats and African proto-types.

Ancestral slave communities in Africa are the starting point for delineating some of the roots of these maritime landscapes and cultures. Rivers connected inland communities with ports and “sea-people” navigated up and down the African shore from the Gold Coast to Angola in brilliantly colored boats decorated with crescent moons, stars, and sea-life symbols from their mythology.<sup>6</sup> During these long coastal voyages mariners utilized masts and sails, oars and paddles. The sails were made of rush-mats, “a Sort of Cloth of the Bark of Trees, having long hairy Threads, like the Cocoa-Tree, which they spin and weave into Canvas, and their Rigging is of Palm-tree Yarn.” Boats were painted inside and outside and adorned with “fetishes and idols” such as dried corn and several dry heads of lions, goats, monkeys and other animals. If the voyage was long, they often hung a dead animal, like a goat, off the stern. Pleasure-Canoes were made for important European officials. One such example had a large blue and gold awning decorated with silver and gold fringes and surrounded by curtains. Turkish carpets covered the “handsome seats.”<sup>7</sup> James Holman described a boat that used seventeen paddles and had chairs

fixed to a platform in the forward part. These ornate canoes were sufficiently intriguing that travelers sent home model canoes amongst numerous African-made items like spears, fishing lines, stone slings made from the fiber of a bark tree, armlets, bracelets, knives made out of an old iron hoop, and monkey skins.<sup>8</sup>



**Figure 1.** Artwork showing African Canoes (University of Virginia Library, Special Collections, MSS 14357, no 20)

The basic dugout or canoe hull form was undoubtedly one of the most popular and functional craft types in Africa. European travelers included drawings and artwork depicting details of the canoes and accessories and their accounts describe log canoes that varied in size from small fishing canoes carrying a crew of one, upwards to canoes over eighty feet long.

The small canoes were paddled by children and adults. In one report a traveler remarks on “a canoe, paddled by four young boys, not much older than seven years of age, and steered with a paddle by a man in the stern...”<sup>9</sup> They also reported smaller canoes being paddled by solitary females or males, marveling on the dexterity of these canoeists. In one report they describe a typical solitary fishing scene:

The appearance of the canoes, as well as the agility of their tenants is remarkable. The former are not more than six to eight feet in length, fourteen to sixteen inches in width, and from four to six inches in depth. When the fishing man sits in the canoe, as we sit on horseback, his leg at either side being the guiding power. The line with its

beardless hook, having a shrimp for bait, is played up and down with one hand, whilst the other he now and then seizes a large ladle and bails out the boat with a rapidity of motion that at first site seems really ludicrous...”<sup>10</sup>

There are descriptions of various practices of paddling small single person canoes either with hands while “they will use one foot to bale water out of the canoe” or “being propelled with the feet almost as fast as the paddle.” To get into a smaller canoe quickly, if there was more than one person on board, a man or woman would swim toward the canoe and roll over the gunwale in a horizontal position, the other people in the boat leaning over to the opposite side to prevent it tipping.<sup>11</sup>



Fishing trips often ended in canoe surfing races “on top of the surging billows

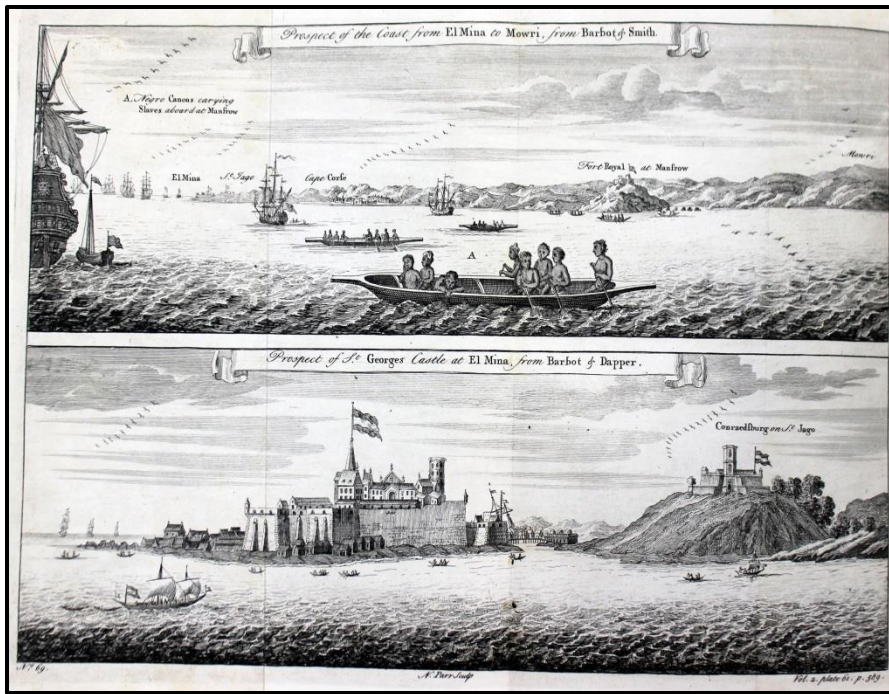
**Figure 2.** African pirogues with canoes in the background (Special Collections, University of Virginia Library)

which broke on the sea shore” with the natives described as having qualities of “nimbleness and security of ducks.” The surf races took place along selected stretches of coastline chosen for continuous long swells that lasted several hundred yards. It was amazing to the European viewers the “no one ever drowned...[because] like the majority of coast negroes they may be reckoned amphibious.”<sup>12</sup> In much the same way that fanatical surfers today are not deterred by sharks, neither it appears were these fishermen surfers. On some occasions, a traveler remarked “when the fisherman is hauling on the line [the shark] comes in sight of the larger bait of the negro leg, and chops it off without remorse. Even though the victim died - it did not diminish the number of canoes riding the waves.”<sup>13</sup>



The larger canoes were scooped out of the single trunk of a tree. Some of these canoes are from thirty-five to thirty-six feet in length and of five foot in beam, and four in depth. “These canoe labors constitute the whole of the work done by males” commented a European traveler “they are propelled by oars as well as sails and are schooner-rigged.”<sup>14</sup> Some were designed with elaborate features resembling a quarterdeck and fo’castle. Canoes on the Bonny and Calabar

Rivers in the Eastern delta of the Niger had cooking hearths and arrangements for stowage and the crews’ sleeping mats.<sup>15</sup> The larger canoes were built for the calm waters of the estuaries and rivers and were often intricately carved and painted; others were used for warfare and carried as many as one hundred and twenty warriors armed with spears (assegaais),



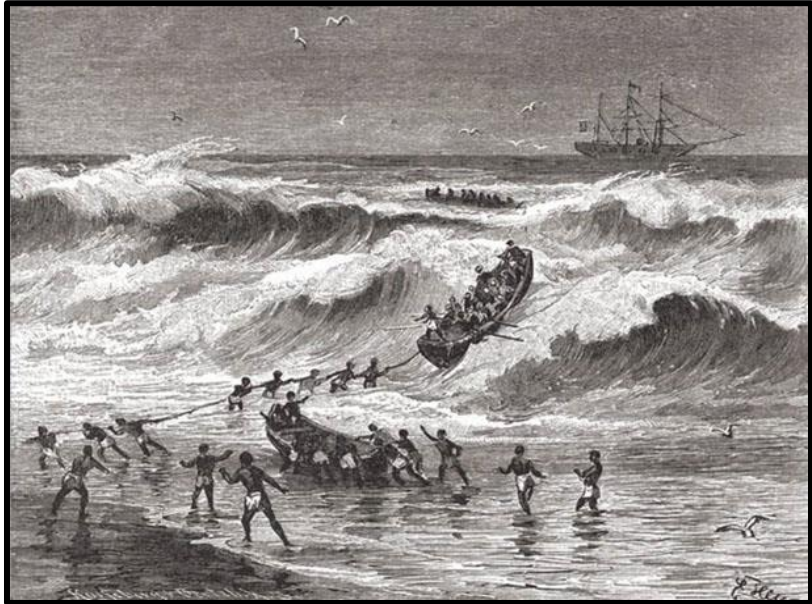
**Figure 3.** Fishing Canoes of Mina (Astley, Thomas. *A New general collection of voyages and travels*. London, 1745.)

shields, and arrows. Among the African people who owned these fleets, warfare took a distinctive form which can be differentiated from land warfare. Large canoes were not simply to transport land troops, but justify being designated as naval. Evidence of canoe warfare is described extensively in the early accounts by the Portuguese in the Sierra Leone River.<sup>16</sup>

Canoe men, primarily fishermen, were indispensable to the Portuguese ships along the rough surf along the coastline of West Africa as early as the 1500s. By 1650 the canoe men serving the Dutch, French and English trade ships totaled 350, and by 1790 they totaled 1000. These canoeists were a workforce that was an integral part of the operating procedures of the transatlantic trade. They received wages as employees, ferried passengers and cargoes to and from the beaches, and were frequently implicated in illegal trade activities. Companies kept careful records of disbursements headed “canoe men hire,” enumerating “slave canoe men,” and

“free canoe men.” They were recorded as going on strike for better payment and through time rose in rank and status by engaging in slave trading themselves. During the prolonged Anglo-Dutch Wars, canoe men became seriously embroiled in international conflicts.<sup>17</sup>

There are descriptions of using canoes to transport slaves from inland areas down the rivers to the port cities. Two Frenchmen, Chevalier des Marchais and Sieur d’Elbee,



**Figure 4.** Transporting Passengers and Slaves through the Surf in Canoes (University of Virginia Library, Special Collections).

described the boats they saw and how they were used on the coastline and the rivers of Angola and the Congo. Africans had both smaller canoes and large boats. The travelers described the latter as “made up of the trunk of the *Likondo*, or *Alikunda*, a Tree of a monstrous size; for that one of them will carry about two hundred Persons. In rowing they do not rest their Oars on the Boat’s Side, but hold them at Liberty in their hands: They also steer with them. When they fight on the Water, they lay down their Oar, and take their Bow.”<sup>18</sup> On another occasion the travelers encountered “two Bark-log” canoes on the beach. They explained that these “Pieces of Wood, tied close together in the Nature of a Raft or Float, the two ends pointed, and raised on each side with Pieces for Gunnels about seven Inches high.” Mungo Park referred to boats in Africa made from two trees that were “rendered concave and joined together...the junction being exactly across the middle of the canoe” and being “long and disproportionately narrow.” There are descriptions of a “flying ferry drawn from one side [of the river] to the other by means of a rope. One such ferry allowed several persons and horses to cross the Niger River.”<sup>19</sup>

Travelers noted that communities in Gold Coast African towns Axim, Boutroe, Tacorary, Commendo, Cormentin and Wineba were most well known for their canoes making and handling skills. They were intrigued by the manufacturing process and described it in great detail:

When the Trunk of the Tree is cut to the Length they design, they hollow it as much as they can with these crooked knives, and they burn it out by Degrees, until it is reduced to the intended Cavity and Thickness, which they then Scrape and Plane with other small tools of their Invention, both within and without, leaving it sufficient Thickness, so as not to Split when loaded. The Bottom is made almost flat, and the sides somewhat rounded, so that it is always narrower, just at the Top, and bellies out a little lower, that it may carry more Sail. The Head and Stern are raised long, and somewhat hooked, very sharp at the End, that several men may lift them on Occasion, to lay it up ashore and turn it upside down, so that they make it as light as possible.<sup>20</sup>

African boat builders sold these craft to the Europeans and their neighbors. The largest could carry up to twelve tons of goods. The Mina men were repeatedly assessed as the most skillful boatmen. Travelers expressed surprise at the great maneuverability and speed of even the largest canoes. Even though they were light, the freeboard was so low that the boatmen sat half underwater. The paddlers sat in the middle of the boat on a small stool and a steersman at the stern. These *canoas*, they claimed, "...flew like Arrows along the Water, so that no Bark nor Shallop can come-up with them, especially if the Sea be smooth and calm."<sup>21</sup> If the seas were rough the canoes would often roll over, but the Africans were extremely dexterous in righting the boat, bailing out the water and continuing their voyage.

The archaeological and ethnographic record adds further data to the canoe maritime legacy. Africa's oldest known boat, named "Dufuna Canoe," was discovered near the region of the River Yobe. Fulani herdsman discovered the canoe in May 1987, in Dufuna Village while digging a well. The canoe's "almost black wood," was identified as African mahogany. Various Radio-Carbon tests indicate that the Canoe is over 8000 years old, thus making it the oldest known canoe in the archaeological record of Africa. Little is known of the period to which the boat belongs, in archaeological terms it is described as an early phase of the Later Stone Age, which began rather more than 12,000 years ago and ended with the appearance of pottery. The lab results redefined the pre-history of African water transport, ranking the Dufuna canoe as the world's third oldest known dugout. Older dugouts were found in Pesse, Netherlands, and

Noyen-sur-Seine, France. A newspaper article states that “evidence of an 8,000-year-old tradition of boat building in Africa throws cold water on the assumption that maritime transport developed much later there in comparison with Europe.” Peter Breunig of the University Frankfurt, Germany, an archaeologist involved in the project, says the canoe’s age “forces a reconsideration of Africa’s role in the history of water transport.” It shows, he added, “that the cultural history of Africa was not determined by Near Eastern and European influences but took its own, in many cases parallel, course.” Breunig added that it even outranked in style European finds of similar age. “The bow and stern are both carefully worked to points, giving the boat a notably more elegant form,” compared to “the dugout made of conifer wood from Pesse in the Netherlands, whose blunt ends and thick sides seem crude.” To go by its stylistic sophistication, he reasons, “It is highly probable that the Dufuna boat does not represent the beginning of a tradition, but had already undergone a long development, and that the origins of water transport in Africa lie even further back in time.”<sup>22</sup>

Ethnographers like Allison Gray, working for the Arts and Culture Program in Ghana and Jojada Verrips from the Anthropology Department, University of Amsterdam studied contemporary watercraft of northwest Africa, many built in much the same way as the 1600s.<sup>23</sup>



**Figure 5.** Ghana Contemporary Canoes (Photo Courtesy of Jojada Verrips)

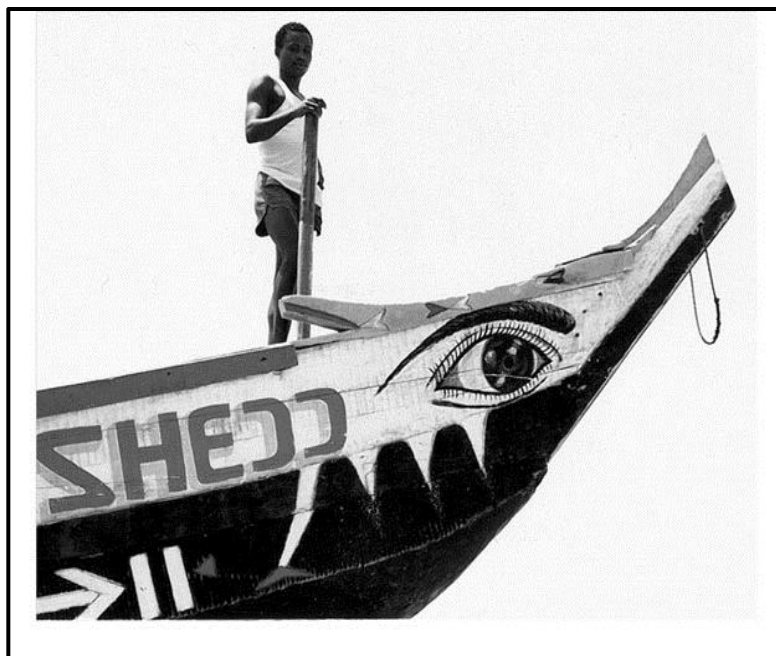
‘individuality’ amongst other, similarly treated canoes.” He suggests that a beach with moored canoes can be considered as a revealing manifestation of the social community of the fishermen. The canoes have many different roles: they are their messengers and talk on behalf of their

Their research focused how the canoe, as an art form, intertwined social, economic and religious beliefs. Verrips argues that canoes are very succinct, symbolic expressions of a wide range of relations, identifications and sympathies of their owners/users with things, fellow human beings and ideas. The decorations are chosen from “a big reservoir of possibilities and carefully composed into what one could call a distinctive, decorative Gestalt, so that each canoe gets, just like its owner/user, a recognizable identity or



owners, they show their “mindscape” and convey subtle information how they relate to each other and perceive their world.

Gray provides a detailed account of the manufacturing process and the high status in the community of the canoe builders and repair men. These men are creators who are considered almost religious leaders. She describes the tools they use, the building sequence, the language they use for parts of the canoe and the decorative techniques. She observed and questioned fishermen about their ideas of the role of boats in the community. Ethnographic studies of these contemporary African boats may help to speculate about how enslaved colonial people manufactured, valued and personified their canoes.



**Figure 6.** Ghana Contemporary Canoes and Artwork (Photo Courtesy of Jojada Verrips)

One of the most comprehensive reports on the technical aspects of contemporary Ghanaian canoe forms and building was a project conducted by O. Gulbrandsen in 1991 with financial assistance from Denmark in collaboration with the Republic of Benin, the Fisheries Department implementing a small scale fisheries development, called the Programme for Integrated Development of Artisanal Fisheries in West Africa - IDAF Project. This report contains information on a multitude of pertinent topics including canoe design variations, dimensions, choice of woods, handling canoes in the surf, rigging, hauling devices, manpower, training of boat builders, traditional proto-types, construction problems, canoe accidents, fishing adaptations, and an appendix of longitudinal and plan views of canoes forms.<sup>24</sup>

Drawing upon this compilation of historical, ethnographic and archaeological evidence, it is salient to make connections with South Carolina’s colonial and plantation era boat culture. Throughout the eighteenth century local South Carolina newspaper advertisements explicitly announced where slaves came from such as “a fine cargo of healthy young slaves, just imported from the Gold Coast and Angola”; “mostly of the MASSE CONGO country”; or “from

WHYDAH on the Gold Coast.”<sup>25</sup> Many cultures from which slaves were imported had extensive craft and trade skills well known to Europeans exploring or colonizing Africa. Planters made efforts to import slaves from areas of West Africa where rice, cotton and indigo were grown.<sup>26</sup> Water skills like swimming, free diving, sailing, paddling and rowing can also be added to this laundry list of less visible cultural contributions to the colonial world<sup>27</sup>. Clearly, low country plantations incorporated boating and labor traditions practiced in sea ports and along river systems of Africa. Historical correspondences, journals, artwork, archaeological data, and ethnographic evidence provide supporting data to further the process of constructing a distinctive vision of a Carolinian-African maritime heritage. The South Carolina frontier, from a European point of view, was a wild world where watermen of diverse ethnicities shared, adopted and adapted aquatic skills to survive. They crewed together as an informal colonial navy in galleys guarding the mouths of Edisto, Kiawah and Savannah Rivers, rowed and raced plantation boats, swam proficiently, fought alligators, fished for profits, and worked side by side as laborers in large shipyards. Enslaved watermen built and ran away in plantation boats and boarded ships in port as crew bound for Atlantic World destinations.

Native American and African slaves were engaged as oarsmen in the first two decades of 1700s aboard the canoe, piraguas and guard and patrol boats used in conflicts and intelligence reporting about other European powers, especially Spain and France.<sup>28</sup> The inland passage was also of benefit to marauding parties of Spaniards and Indians who could quietly slip into the colony in their canoes and raid plantations.<sup>29</sup> In 1702 the House of Commons ordered that the militia should consider “what boats, Canoas, and Periaugers y’ watches, in case of Allarams.”<sup>30</sup> In 1703, when a Spanish invasion seemed imminent, the coastline watches were organized into a company. A captain, lieutenant, and nineteen watchmen comprised a watch team ordered to garrison stockade forts and also to patrol the Inland Passage in three piraguas constructed of cedar.<sup>31</sup>

By 1707, scout watches no longer simply observed the waterways from a tower and a few guard boats, but actively patrolled or scouted the Inland Passage in boats fitted out with sails and oars. An Act passed in 1713 lists details about the boats used in coastal patrols recommending that “there be with all possible expedition bought for the use of ye Public, six cyprus Periaugers, forty feet long, and five feet wide, att Least, with seventy eight pairs of oars to be kept, one in the North Edisto, two near the head of Stono River, and three near Charles Towne, for the carrying

of men in case of an invasion.”<sup>32</sup> Scout canoes were used not only for “giving intelligence to vessels,” but also for capturing runaways. Anyone who captured a slave or slave in a boat on the sea coast, a mile within the shore, or within two miles of the coast received a reward of forty shillings. The Port Royal Scout boats were equipped with twenty-five pounds of gunpowder and seventy five pounds of bullets. Chiefs appointed Native Americans to serve in the scout canoes with the payment of around fifteen pounds per annum. If they ran away during their time of duty, their employer, with the consent of the chief, could order moderate punishments for these deserting boat crews.<sup>33</sup> Legislation passed in 1719 authorized trusty male slaves between sixteen and sixty years to provide service to the Carolina settlement in “time of alarms and for encouragement of sailors to serve the same against our enemies.” Captains, Lieutenants, and Ensigns were charged with the joint responsibility of drawing up lists of “negroes, mulattoes, mustees, and Indian slaves” to serve as boat crew.<sup>34</sup>

In the context of southern plantation culture boating, fishing and piloting was accompanied by other highly competitive skills as watermen, that planter viewed both as recreational and as desirable for their European-educated sons to learn from their slaves. From the time Europeans first arrived in the southern colony, they related repeatedly their fears of the larger aquatic fauna. An English sea captain wrote a poem about everyday life in Charleston. His litany of horrors included a line of reference to “Frightful creatures in the water, Porpoises, sharks and alligators.....” These were situations that many Europeans were not familiar with in their past world. South Carolina travelogues specifically mention Africans abilities with sharks and their value as food, medicine and in making commodities like buttons:

Some Negroes, and others, that can swim well and dive well, go naked into the water with a Knife in their Hand, and fight the Shark, and very commonly kill him, or wound him, so that he turns tail and runs away. Their Livors make good Oil to dress Leather withal; the Bones found in their Head are said to hasten Birth; and ease the Stone by bringing it away. Their Meat is eaten in scarce times, though I never could way with it, though a great Lover of Fish. Their backbone is of one entire thickness. Of the Bones or Joints I have known

Buttons made, which serve well enough in Scarce Times and remote Places.<sup>35</sup>

Groups of slaves also went into the rivers and sounds to wrestle alligators to the shore where others waited with ax to behead the giant creatures to entertain crowds of excited slaveholders. May, an African-born slave reportedly leapt on the back of the harpooned manta ray and swam it back to the boat. A planter boastfully exclaimed, “Had he belonged to the Saxon or Norman race, he would have been knighted, and allowed to quarter on his shield the horns of the devil-fish, in token of his exploit!”<sup>36</sup> The ability to perform well in these physical aquatic events also singled them out and gained them the respect of their fellow slaves and attain status tasks related to waterborne activity.”<sup>37</sup> At a time when most Europeans could not swim except dog paddle to save themselves in an emergency, slaves were plantation lifeguards extraordinaire. They put the safety of their wives and children on a small boat in low country rivers, teeming with alligators, in the hands of the plantation patron. They relied on patroons to transport their



**Figure 7.** Plantation Boat in South Carolina (Photo from The Charleston Museum, Charleston, South Carolina)

valuable plantation merchandize efficiently and speedily to markets in their canoes and periaguas. These water skills made a slave more valuable should the planter wish to sell him or promote the competence of his labor force to a prospective merchant buying his rice.

Swimming prowess of certain slaves, for example, was discussed by planter John Clinkscales who boasted that the slave Essex (Essick), who was five feet ten, weighed one hundred and ninety pounds and “was as sinewy and



active as a Texas pony” on his father’s South Carolina plantation as the best swimmer, not only on the plantation, but in the whole country. Another area where slave boatmen from plantations had considerable educational value, leverage and freedom, were as plantation fishermen and hunters, or even as crew aboard coastal vessels. A series of letters reminiscing in the typical romantic southern style about plantation life describes how, as a plantation child, Jones was accompanied by his childhood caretaker slave called “man Friday” or boy “Dick.” The two were inseparable hunting and fishing companions. At an early age they were only allowed to set traps and use “Indian implements” like bows and arrows. Later on he acquired a horse and allowed to shoot bird shot – the “height of a country boy’s ambition. They often made adventurous voyages in the rice fields in the slave’s “bateau” with an “extemporized sail.” The boat was provisioned with sweet potatoes to cook at a fire on shore. He describes how the “coffin-shaped” boat [probably a canoe] was built in the streets of the “the quarters.” The slaves joked that he might die in the so-called coffin. He delighted in going out in the boat to “chum” for fish in the low water with the “negro men and boys.” The slave fishing crew knocked both ends out of a flour barrel which they used in a canal to capture fish by throwing downward, covering the barrels with their bodies and grabbing the fish to throw to the younger boys who had built a fish dam.<sup>38</sup>

A group of slaves identified as the “fishing Negroes” emerged in the Charleston area. A well-known fisherman, Moses, was often employed in net “knitting.”<sup>39</sup> African fishermen traditionally made use of a variety of nets and were skilled in net casting and repairs. A surgeon, visiting the Gold Coast, described in his journal that it was “impossible to imagine how very dextrous the Negroes are in catching fish with a net.”<sup>40</sup> An act establishing a separate fish market in Charleston acknowledged that “the business of fishing is principally carried on by Negroes, Mulattoes, and Mestizos.” These fishermen were also able to exact whatever prices they wanted for their catch.<sup>41</sup> The independent character of slave fishermen, clearly, rested upon access to and ownership of boats.<sup>42</sup> A local newspaper columnist observed that slaves dominated the fishing business because they were “permitted to keep boats, canows etc.” The inventory of one Charleston home listed three slave fishermen, but no boats belonging to their owner. This suggests that they had their own boats or access to the sea as hired crew aboard a vessel belonging to someone else. Notices in newspapers for runaway slaves or advertisements use commentary like a slave “who was possessed of a canoe.”<sup>43</sup>

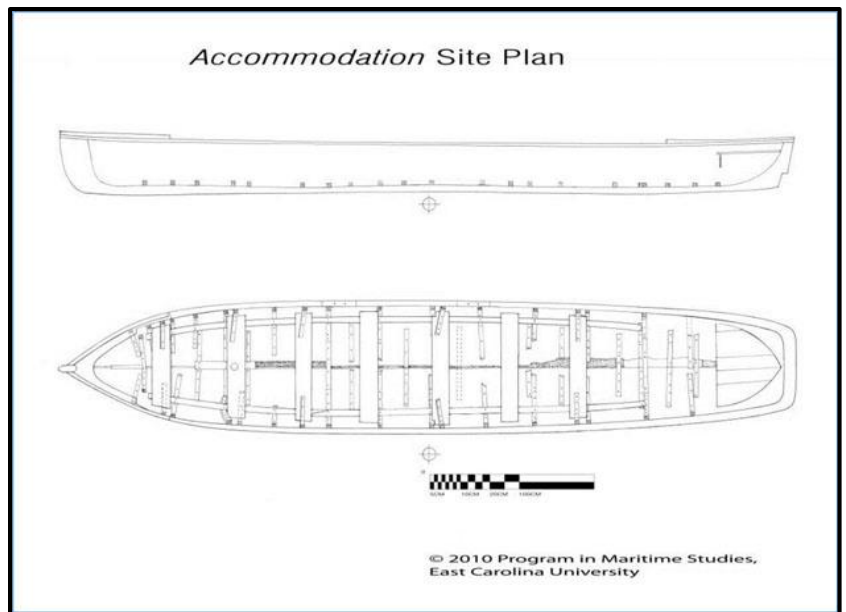


**Figure 8.** Bessie Plantation Boat Exhibit at Charleston Museum (Photograph by Program in Maritime Studies, East Carolina University).

Charleston Museum, the Parris Island and Horry County Museum. Most canoes in museum collections are associated with plantation usage in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>44</sup>

These varied designs in watercraft reflect the builders' choices in regard to the technical choices and construction details like shaping of the hull from the tree form, stern and bow designs suggesting use in surf, placement of

The South Carolina State archaeological database lists canoes located underwater in local rivers like the east and the west branch of the Cooper River, Edisto, Waccamaw, Wateree and Combahee Rivers. State researchers recorded a number of canoes reported either underwater or eroding out of river banks, usually named after the finder or the location such as the Ferguson canoe, the Kizer Judy canoe, the Cut Dam canoe and the Chessey creek canoe. Archaeologists draw, photograph, and describe these boats often leaving them *in situ* as a result of the costs of preservation. Examples of a variety of canoe types can be viewed by the public at locations such as the Middleton Place in West Ashley, the South Carolina State Museum in Columbia, the



**Figure 9.** Accommodation Plantation Boat (Illustration by Program of Maritime Studies, East Carolina University)

masts, seating arrangements for rowing, modifications and repairs, and occasionally decorative details. There are distinct connections to African prototypes. Curatorial records from some donors clearly state “built by Negro laborers.”<sup>45</sup> There are a wealth of untapped boat collections representing the cultures and sub-cultures of people who established river and coastal communities along the southeastern seaboard of North America. The diverse variety of canoes displayed in museums, stored in attics or showcased as flower pots in riverside gardens of South Carolina are not only iconic reminders of an African and West Indies maritime legacy, but represent a significant primary source collection for historians studying enslaved mariners and craftsmen from Africa who are, undoubtedly, central figures in the colonial historical narrative.

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup>Levine Lawrence, *Black Culture and Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 12. This is an interesting compilation of folklore documents containing many quotations from songs, jokes, and stories which the author used to try and communicate a sense of black thought.

<sup>2</sup> Edward McCrady, *The History of South Carolina under the Royal Government, 1719-1776* (New York: 1899), 516.

<sup>3</sup>  
<sup>4</sup>Jeffrey Bolster, *Black Jacks: African American Men in the Age of Sail* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1998); James Barker Farr, *Black Odyssey: The Seafaring Traditions of African Americans* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing Group, 1991); Marcus Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates and the Anglo-American World: 1700-1750* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Grace Turner, "Bahamian Ship Grafitti," *International Journal of Nautical Archaeology* 35:2 (2006):253-273; Peter Wood, *Black Majority: Negroes in South Carolina from 1670 through the Stono Rebellion*. (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1974); Charles Joyner, *Down by the Riverside: A South Carolina Slave Community* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984); David Cecelski, *The Waterman's Song: Slavery and Freedom in Maritime North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Kevin Dawson, "Enslaved Swimmers and Divers in the Atlantic World," *The Journal of American History* 92:4 (March 2006), 1327-1355.

<sup>5</sup> Ben Ford, *Maritime Landscapes: When the Land Meets the Sea* (Florida: Springer Press, 2011).

<sup>6</sup>John Biggers, *The Web of Life in Africa* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996), 35-36. This work contains several interesting contemporary drawings of canoes and fishermen. Refer to Chapter 2 for more information on boating background.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas Astley (ed.), *Voyages and Travels*, Volume 2 (London: Frank Cass and Company, 1968), 650.

<sup>8</sup> James Holman, *Travels in Madeira, Sierra Leone, Teneriffe, St. Jago, Cape Coast, Fernando Po, Princes Island Etc. Etc.* (London: George Routledge, Leicester Square, 1840), 193, 195, 347. James Holman (1786-1857) was born in Exeter. Although he was afflicted by debilitating health problems, he travelled extensively and fought against slave trade in Africa. He was elected a fellow of the British Royal Society and the Linnaean Society. Charles Darwin frequently cited his work. The Holman River in Fernandino Po was named after him. James Holman was unequivocal about his first and deepest dream. "I have been conscious from my earliest youth of the existence of this desire to explore distant regions," he would recall, "to trace the variety exhibited by mankind under different influences of different climates, customs and law."

<sup>9</sup> Thomas J. Hutchinson, *Ten Years of Wanderings Amongst the Ethiopians: With Sketches of the Manners, Customs, of Civilized and Uncivilized Tribes from Senegal to Gaboon* (London: Hurst and Blacket, 1861), 50. Hutchinson (1802-1885) born in Ireland and settled in England, was a diplomat, physician, and travel writer. He was a fellow of the Ethnological Society, Royal Society of Literature, *HMS Consul* for the Bight of Biafra and island of Fernando Po. He travelled in Africa from 1865 to 1861.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 227-228.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 247; James Holman, *Travels*, 193.



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<sup>12</sup> Ibid. 229.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 229.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 251.

<sup>15</sup> Roger Smith, "The Canoe in West African History," *Journal of African History* 11:4 (1970), 518.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 525-531.

<sup>17</sup> Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch and Paul Lovejoy (eds.), *The Workers of the African Trade* (Beverly Hills, California: Sage Publishing, 1985), 25-50.

<sup>18</sup> Thomas Astley (ed.), *Voyages and Travels*, Volume 2 (London: Frank Cass and Company, 1968), 252.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 2:202. Zacharias Taurinius, *Travels through the interior of Africa, from the Cape of Good Hope to Morocco; in Caffraria, the Kingdoms of Mataman, Angola, Massi, Monoemugi, Muschako, Bahahara, Wangara, Haoussa, & c., &c. and thence through the desert of Sahara and the north of Barbary to Morocco. Between the years 1781 and 1797* (London: R. Philips, 1801), 407 and 502; Edmund James Web (ed.), *Africa as Seen by the Explorers* (1852-1945), 123-124.

<sup>20</sup> Astley, *Travels* 3: 650

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 650.

<sup>22</sup> Peter Breunig, "The 8000-year-old dugout canoe from Dufuna (NE Nigeria)," G. Pwiti and R. Soper (eds.), *Aspects of African Archaeology*. Papers from the 10th Congress of the PanAfrican Association for Prehistory and related Studies. University of Zimbabwe Publications (Harare 1996), 461-468.

<sup>23</sup> Jojada Verrips, "Ghaniain Canoe Decorations," *Maritime Studies* 1:1 (2002), 43-66. *Maritime Studies* (MAST) is a good source of articles about traditional fishing boats and fishing communities (<http://www.marecentre.nl/mast/backissues.html>); Allison Winnifred Gray, "Canoe Decoration and Meaning Amongst the Fante of the Cape Coast," *African Diaspora Collection*, SIT Graduate Institute/SIT Study Abroad, 1996.

<sup>24</sup> Gulbrandsen, O. Canoes in Ghana. IDAF/WP/37. Cotonou. FAO/Danida/Norway (1999)

<sup>25</sup> *South Carolina Gazette*, 14 August, 1736; *South Carolina Gazette* July 19, 1735; *South Carolina Gazette and Country Journal* July 28, 1772; *South Carolina Gazette and Country Journal*, July 2, 1772, *South Carolina Gazette and Country Journal* June 11, 1771.

<sup>26</sup> Daniel Littlefield, *Rice and Slaves: Ethnicity and the Slave Trade in Colonial South Carolina* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1991), 77-78; Elizabeth Donnan (ed.), *Documents Illustrative of the History of Slave Trade*, Volume 2 (Washington D.C.:Carnegie Institute, 1930), 476.

<sup>27</sup> Kevin Dawson, "Enslaved Swimmers and Divers in the Atlantic World," *The Journal of American History* 92:4 (March 2006), 1327-1355.

<sup>28</sup> "Periagua" is spelt many different ways in the South Carolina colonial records (piragua, periogo, pettyager, petiager etc.). In Spanish (piragua), in Portuguese (piroga) and in French (piroque) all translate to "dugout canoe." The context of use appears to denote a larger log-built hull vessel, often with sails, usually with an African slave captain (patroon) and crew.

<sup>29</sup> Larry Ivers, "Scouting the Inland Passage, 1685-1737," *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 73 (July 1972), 117-129.

<sup>30</sup> Alexander S. Salley, *Journal of the Commons House of Assembly of South Carolina for 1702*, 21 volumes (Columbia, South Carolina: The State Company, 1932), 66-67.

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<sup>31</sup>Thomas Cooper and David J. McCord, *The Statutes at Large of South Carolina*, 10 volumes (Columbia, South Carolina: A.S. Johnston, 1836-1841). See Volume 2: 10, 11, 24, 610; Volume 7: 32; Volume 9: 623, 624 for Acts passed about patrol boats.

<sup>32</sup>Salley, *Commons House 1692-1706*, 79.

<sup>33</sup>Cooper and McCord, *Statutes*, 2:608

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, 3:108-109.

<sup>35</sup>John Lawson, *A New Voyage to South Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1967), 140.

<sup>36</sup>William Elliot, *Carolina Sports by Land and Water: Including Incidents of Devil fishing. Wild-Cat, Deer, and Bear Hunting Etc.* (1859; Columbia, SC, 1994); Walter Edgar, *South Carolina: A History* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998), 155. See 1769 poem quoted in this book. Ambrose Gonzales, *The Black Border: Gullah Stories of the Carolina Coast* (Columbia, South Carolina, 1922), 121-124; Janet Shaw, *Journal of a Lady of Quality: Being the Narrative of a Journey from Scotland to the West Indies, North Carolina and Portugal, in the years 1774-1776* ed. Evangeline Walker Andrews (New Haven, 1921), 121-12; Robert Q. Mallard, *Plantation Life before Emancipation* (Richmond, 1892).

<sup>37</sup>David Wiggins, "Leisure Time on Southern Plantations: The Slaves Respite from Constant Toil, 1810-1860, p. 37 in Donald Spivey (ed.), *Sport in America: New Historical Perspectives* (Conneticut: Greenwood Press, 1985), 25-50.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*, 21-28.

<sup>39</sup>*South Carolina Gazette* November 5, 1737; Philip Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint: Black Culture in the Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake and Lowcountry* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 240-241; Robert Olwell, *Masters, Slaves, and Subjects: The Culture of Power in the South Carolina Lowcountry, 1740-1790* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998).

<sup>40</sup>Peter Wood, *Black Majority: Negroes in South Carolina from 1670 through the Stono Rebellion*. (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1974), 201.

<sup>41</sup>*South Carolina Gazette*, September 24, 1772; November 18, 1780.

<sup>42</sup>Morgan. *Slave Counterpoint*, 241.

<sup>43</sup>*South Carolina Gazette*, September 24, 1772; Records of Wills, Inventories, and Miscellaneous Records for Charleston County, South Carolina, Inventory Book Y: 306-307. See the Inventory of Daniel Chopard, August 3, 1770 and his estate; *South Carolina Gazette*, August 30, 1770.

<sup>44</sup>Lynn Harris, "Sea and Swamp Craft: The Utility of Canoe and Canoe Built Vessels in the Lowcountry," *Legacy: The Newsletter of the South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology* 2: 3 (December 1997), 2022; Lynn Harris "Public Education and Submerged Smallcraft Documentation in South Carolina," *Museum Smallcraft Association Transactions* 3 (1997): 46-53; Lynn Harris, "Flowing Timelines: Maritime Heritage Trails in South Carolina." *Sandlapper Magazine* (Summer 1999): 812

<sup>45</sup>Brown, Daniel, Cooper Kathryn and Harris Lynn, "Plantation boat *Accommodation*: An Icon of the South." *Nautical Research Journal* 56 (2010): 93-114.