SLAVE NAMES IN COLONIAL
SOUTH CAROLINA

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A N INADEQUATE use by scholars and compilers of dictionaries of at least
one colonial newspaper, the *South Carolina Gazette* published at Charleston from 1732 to 1775, has left relatively untouched an important source of
Southern contributions to American English. It is quite probable that a more
careful examination of the *Gazette* would yield a number of citations of Americanisms earlier than have been noted previously and perhaps would establish
the American origin of a limited number of vocabulary items as well. This
would be true, of course, of almost any colonial newspaper of a comparable
period and state of preservation which has not been examined thoroughly;
the unique opportunity presented by the *Gazette* lies in the materials it contains concerning the vocabulary associated with the slave system, concerning
African influences on the Gullah dialect of the sea island, and concerning
patterns in the nomenclature of slaves.

An example of an earlier unrecorded usage from the *Gazette* is the word
driver in the sense of a Negro slave appointed to the position of overseer.
The earliest citation of this word in the *NED* is dated 1796, and the earliest
DAE citation is 1772. The first citation in the *DA* is from James Grainger's
Sugar-Cane, a didactic poem on the cultivation of sugar cane in the British
West Indies, written at St. Kitts in the Leeward Islands and published in
London in 1764. *Driver* in the sense of a Negro overseer, was used in the
South Carolina Gazette of May 10, 1760. Another example, both an earlier
usage and an Africanism, is the word *Gullah* signifying the Negroes of coastal
South Carolina and their dialect. For their definition and etymology of *Gullah*
the *NED*, *DAE*, and *DA* rely upon a monograph by Reed Smith published
in 1926,[1] and the first instance of its use which they cite is a reference found
by Smith in an official publication relating to the Denmark Vesey slave uprising of 1822. This reference mentions the part played in the insurrection
by ' "Gullah Jack" and his company of "Gullah or Angola Negroes." '[2] A
similar reference to *Gullah* occurs in an advertisement in the *Gazette* of May
12, 1739, for a runaway slave described as 'a short well set Negro, named

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1. 'Gullah,' *Bulletin of the University of South Carolina*, 1926, pp. 8–9.
2. Probably from *An Account of the Late Intended Insurrection among a Portion of the Blacks
of This City; Published by the Authority of the Corporation of Charleston* (Charleston, S.C.,
1822).

Golla Harry.' Actually, Negroes were seldom mentioned by name in colonial newspapers except in notices concerning runaway slaves, and it is in the names contained in such notices that African linguistic influences and nominal patterns generally are most apparent.

Slavery was coexistent with the founding in 1670 of the first permanent colony in South Carolina, and early official records occasionally contain the names of slaves.[3] An inventory of the estate of Francis Jones in 1693 lists 'a negro man Jack' and 'a negro Woman name Jugg.'[4] An inventory of the estate of James Beamor in 1694 includes the male slaves Robin, Tony, and Mingo, and the females Rosa, Hannay, Doll, and Betty; an inventory of the estate of Joseph Pendarvis in the same year lists the males Mingo and Tom and the females Bess, Pegg, and Moll.[5] Of these names two, *Jugg* and *Mingo*, are probably of African provenience. By 1732, when the *Gazette* was established, the appearance of Negro slaves in legal inventories was common. Examples of probable African names of this period include *Bowbaw*, *Cuffee*, *Ebo Jo*, *Ganda*, *Quaquo*, *Quomenor*, and *Quoy* for male slaves, and *Auba*, *Bucko*, *Juba*, *Mimba*, *Odah*, and *Otta* for female slaves.[6]

An examination of slaves' names appearing in the *Gazette* supplements the findings of Lorenzo Turner regarding the presence of a dual naming system among present-day Gullah Negroes.[7] This system consists of an English or 'true name' and a more intimate but more widely used nickname, often of African origin. Turner expresses surprise that earlier writers on Gullah failed to note the existence of this system or the importance of African survivals in the nomenclature of the Gullahs. For field investigators this was a remarkable oversight, but it is even more remarkable in the face of evidence found in the *Gazette* of the tacit recognition by white owners of a dual naming system among Negro slaves in the eighteenth century. As a matter of convenience, owners usually gave their slaves simple names, but they were aware that the slaves themselves often retained or took an African name. Therefore, in advertising for runaways the owners were at pains to include both the 'proper' name (the name which the owner had prescribed) and the 'country name' (the African name which the runaway retained). The following examples from advertisements for runaways are evidence of this situation:

> John   Aug. 27, 1757   ('. . . he will more readily answer to the name of FOOTBEA, which he went by in his own country.')

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3. Elizabeth Donnan, ed., *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to America* (Washington, D. C., 1935), IV, 240–43.
4. *Will Book 1692–1693*, of the Charleston, S.C., Probate Court.
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Inventories 1732–1736*, of the Charleston, S.C., Probate Court.
7. Lorenzo Turner, *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect* (Chicago, 1949).

Tyra	Aug. 10, 1765	('The wench's country name Camba. . .')
Somerset	Sept. 20, 1773	('. . . his country name Massery. . .')
Limus	Sept. 20, 1773	('. . . his Country Name Serrah. . .')
Mask	Sept. 20, 1773	('. . . his Country Name Mussu. . . .')
Chloe	Sept. 27, 1773	('. . . Her Country Name, Agua')

In certain instances slaves did not receive a 'proper' name but were known by their African names alone, some of which, like *Sambo*, *Quash*, *Mingo*, and *Juba*, became commonplace in the eighteenth century. In other instances, slaves translated their African names into English or used English names which conformed to the African naming systems.[8] A striking illustration of this practice can be seen in the custom of naming a child for the day, month, or season when he was born. As early as 1774 Edward Long noted that Jamaican Negroes 'called their children by the African day of the week on which they are born,' and he compiled the following chart illustrating this system:[9]

Male	*Female*	*Day*
Cudjoe	Juba	Monday
Cubbenah	Beneba	Tuesday
Quaco	Cuba	Wednesday
Quao	Abba	Thursday
Cuffee	Phibba	Friday
Quamin	Mimba	Saturday
Quashee	Quasheba	Sunday

Cuffee and *Cudjo* were perhaps the most widely used of the male 'day' names, and *Abba* and *Juba* of the female. An English counterpart of this system of nomenclature existed side by side with the African. Two male slaves named Friday, one of them 'this country born' and the other from the 'Angola Country,' and two male slaves named Monday, one from 'Bomborough' and the other 'A Barbian Negro' are mentioned in the *Gazette*. Slaves were more often named for the months of the year, and *Gazette* notices include the mention of males named January, March, April, May, June, July, August, September, and November. Male slave names derived from the seasons are *Spring*, 'Ebo or Calabar,' and *Winter*, 'country born.' *Moon* and *Thunder* are names probably connected with the state of the weather at the time of the child's birth. Other male names which are probably English equivalents of Africanisms are *Arrow* ('of the Pappa country'), *Boy* ('Guiney'), *Huntsman* ('new'), *Little One* ('Ebo'), *Plenty* ('Gambia' and 'Mandingo'), and *Sharper* ('Bambara').

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8. See Turner, *op. cit.*, pp. 31–41.

9. *History of Jamaica* (London, 1774), p. 427. Long's observations were confirmed by Philip Henry Gosse in *A Naturalist's Sojourn in Jamaica* (London, 1851), pp. 232–33, who obtained his information from 'an old coloured lady,' and by James Platt in 'Christian Names Derived from Week-days,' *Notes & Queries*, VIII (Nov. 16, 1895), 388–89, whose source was 'a Fantee gentleman (a native of Whydah) . . .'

Several studies of slave appellations of the colonial period have been made. N. N. Puckett in a list of sixty-five late seventeenth-century slave names found only two, 'Mookinga and Sambo (Maryland, 1692) [which] seem to offer possibilities of African origin,' but he concluded that 'the African element was still fairly strong' in the eighteenth century.[10] Blanche Britt supplied H. L. Mencken with the following list of Negro names obtained from 'Southern newspapers of the period from 1736 to the end of the Eighteenth Century': *Annika, Boohum, Boomy, Bowzar, Cuffee, Cuffey, Cuffy, Habella, Kauchee, Mila, Minas, Monimea, Pamo, Qua, Quaco, Quamina, Quash, Warrah,* and *Yonaha.*[11] Lorenzo Greene, who examined the personality of the runaway slaves as revealed in sixty-two advertisements from eleven eighteenth-century New England newspapers, found that slave names fell into 'at least four categories: classical, Hebrew, Christian (English), and African.' However, slaves who 'bore what appeared to be African names' were only four in number, 'Quom, Cloe, Coffee and Bandong.'[12]

Although no comparative treatment has been attempted in this paper, the number of names of probably African origin contained in the following list from the *South Carolina Gazette* suggests that a larger proportion of slaves bore African names than has been previously realized. This list is limited to the twenty-five years preceding the Revolutionary War, a period which saw the slave population in South Carolina increase to more than one hundred thousand, outnumbering the white by almost two to one.[13]

Obvious duplication of names has been eliminated, but doubtless some duplication remains as a result of the casual manner in which African names were transliterated into English. For example, the name of a male slave mentioned several times in the *Gazette* in 1761 was spelled variously *Cockcoose, Caucos,* and *Caucause. Cumba, Comba, Cumber,* and *Camba* are variants of a widely used female name. Some names of non-African origin may be listed because the compiler, lacking a knowledge of African languages, was forced to depend upon internal evidence in combination with Professor Turner's check list of Gullah personal names as a basis of selection.

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10. 'Names of American Negro Slaves' in *Studies in the Science of Society Presented to Albert Galloway Keller* (New Haven, 1936), pp. 473, 477.

11. *The American Language* (New York, 1937), p. 524n. This list contains duplications, and at least one name, *Monimea*, appears to be of literary derivation, perhaps from Monimia in Thomas Otway's *The Orphan*. Most of the names, however, appear to be of African origin.

12. 'The New England Negro as Seen in Advertisements for Runaway Slaves,' *Journal of Negro History*, XXIX (1944), 129, 130–31.

13. Edward McCrady, *South Carolina under the Royal Government, 1719–1776* (New York, 1899), p. 807.

Male Names

Assey
Balipho
Banjoe
Beay
Beoy
Bram 'Barbary born'
Cockcoose
Crack
Cudjoe 'Angola'
Cuff 'Coromantee'
Cuffee
Culley 'Kishee'
Cumin
Dago
Dembow
Dibbe 'new . . . has his teeth filed'
Donas
Easom
Fodee 'Gold Coast'
Gamone
Gunnah 'country born'
Homady 'speaks bad English'

Hughky 'Coromantee'
Jobny
Ketch
Mallay 'Gambia negro boy . . . speaks the Jolloff language'
Mambee 'Gold Coast'
Mamena 'a new Negro'
Manso 'Gambia'
Marmillo
Mingo
Mobe
Mollock 'new Negro'
Musco Jack
Okree
Pherco
Pouta
Quacoe
Quammano
Quaow
Quash 'Coromantee'
Quaw 'new Negro'

Rente 'Ebo'
Saffran 'a new negro fellow'
Sambo
Sandico 'new'
Sango
Saundy
Sawney 'a new Negro'
Serrah 'Mandingo'
Shampee
Sirrah 'Guiney'
Sogo
Stepney
Tokey 'Angola'
Tomboe 'new'
Wabee 'Mandingo'
Whan
Wolly 'Gambia'
Yanke
Yanki
Zick
Zocky
Zoun

Female Names

Aba
Abey
Affey
Agua
Arrah
Banaba 'Looks much like an Eboe Negro'
Binah 'country born'
Body
Camba 'The wench's country name . . . country marks on her temples, breast, belly and back'

Dye
Eley
Embro
Fantame 'her country name was *Fantame*, or *Fantee*'
Fortimer
Juba
Juda
Mabia
Mamadoe 'new negro'
Mawdlong
Minda

Nea
Rino
Rynah
Sack
Sibby
Tinah
Teina
Windy, 'A new negro girl, speaks no *English*, her name as far as I can understand by my negro fellow is Windy'

In addition to the slave names based upon African nominal folkways, several other naming patterns are revealed in the advertisements for runaways in the *Gazette*. Slaves were frequently named for cities, particularly and not unnaturally for cities in the British Isles. These names include *Bath*, *Bedford*, *Boston*, *Bristol*, *Chelsea*, *Cork*, *Dublin*, *Durham*, *Edinburgh*, *Glasgow*, *Leeds*, *Limerick*, *London*, *Norfolk*, *Oxford*, *Plymouth*, *Salisbury*, *Somerset*, *Topham*, and *York*. Slaves with names derived from South Carolina place names include Carolina (a widely used male name), Charles-Town (city), Ponpon (town in Charleston County), and Sampit (town and river in Georgetown County). A

second category consists of names of classical, predominantly Latin, origin. These include mythological personages, such as Achilles, Ajax, Apollo, Bacchus, Cupid, Daphne, Hector, Hercules, Juno, Jupiter, Neptune, Phoebe, and Venus; historical figures, such as Agrippa, Brutus, Cato, Caesar, Nero, Pompey, and Titus; and such neoclassical favorites as Amoretta, Belinda, Clarinda, Myrtilla, Philander, Philis, Sabina, and Strephon. Traditional Anglo-Saxon and Biblical names comprise the final and largest categories, but they were not characteristic as slave names. A few slaves had French names, a fact which can be attributed to the importance of the Huguenot element in South Carolina in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Among these are *Piero*, *Pierre*, *Paris*, and probably *John-Baptist*. Literary sources contributed relatively few names. Among those found in the *Gazette* are *Romeo*, *Othello*, *Dulcinea*, and possibly *Oronooke*.

Although such a thing was extremely unusual, at least one South Carolina slave possessed a surname. An advertisement in the *Gazette* of February 15, 1773, describes a runaway 'Negro Man Slave, Formerly the Property of David Brown, Shipwright, deceased, and . . . known by the Name of Jack Brown.' Because most of the free Negroes mentioned in the *Gazette* had conventional surnames, runaways who sought to pose as free Negroes often adopted them. A few free Negroes did not assume last names. For example, Abraham, a Negro who was rewarded with manumission for his heroic service in the Indian wars, called himself 'Indian Abraham,' and a free Negro who practiced medicine was known as 'Doctor Caesar.'

The first known effort to reproduce the Gullah dialect in print is an anecdote which appeared in the *South Carolina State Gazette* of September 25, 1794,[14] and, as has been stated previously in this paper, the first appearance of the word *Gullah* was in 1739. Thus, through the materials found in colonial newspapers it is possible to document the development of the Gullah dialect and, significantly for linguistic studies in general, to determine that this dialect developed within the period of roughly a century—the time between the first considerable importation of slaves from Africa in the late 1690s and the first printed evidence of its existence. For students of American English and American folklore, a careful examination of colonial newspaper files is often rewarding.

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14. The *State Gazette* was the postrevolutionary successor of the *South Carolina Gazette*. The anecdote was transcribed and edited by John Bennett in 'Note on Gullah,' *South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine*, L (1949), 56–57.

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