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"… All of Cross"—African Potters, Marks, and Meanings in the Folk Pottery of the Edgefield District, South Carolina

ABSTRACT

African Americans were integral to the stoneware-manufacturing district that developed around Edgefield, South Carolina. Enslaved African Americans worked as potters at several of the Edgefield shops, and the most renowned potter of the district was an enslaved African American named Dave, who incorporated poetic verse onto some of the pottery he made, as well as other marks including an X and slashes. A cross mark was also associated with two of the potteries in the district where Dave had once worked: the Rev. John Landrum Pottery, and the subsequent operation of this pottery by Rev. Landrum's son, Benjamin Franklin Landrum. This cross-in-circle mark, known as the Landrum cross, resembles the African Bakongo cosmogram *dikenga*. The Landrum cross, as well as Dave's use of the X and slashes, may be representations of African symbols brought to the New World and found archaeologically in other settings and contexts. This paper looks at the African American presence in Edgefield, Landrum crosses, and Dave's use of the cross mark, to examine the meaning of these marks and their potential expression of African American identity.

Introduction

"I made this Jar all of cross—If you don't repent, you will be lost" is one of 27 known verses inscribed on stoneware of the Edgefield District, South Carolina, by the potter Dave, also known as Dave Drake, Dave of the Hive, and Dave Pottery (Todd 2008). An enslaved African American, Dave's pottery and poetry have been analyzed by historians, anthropologists, folklorists, and collectors for the meanings of his words and the window they offer to our understanding of African American life in the Old South. "I made this Jar ..." was chosen for the title of the first publication on the life and work of Dave the potter, as an expression of Dave's accomplishment and possession of the pottery he produced (Koeverman 1998b). In a published symposium that followed the printing of *I made this jar ...*, historian Aaron De Groft noted that this particular verse "refers to the dominant Christian theme of Christ's crucifixion and death for the sins of man and the edict to repent and live one's life after the model set forth by Christ or 'be lost'" (De Groft 1998:55). Edgefield District historian Orville Burton (1985:152) expressed some ambiguity in his interpretation of the meaning of this verse, which he described as reflecting Dave's "feelings about slavery, religion, or both." Anthropologist Grey Gundaker argued that the verse incorporated a broader meaning of the word "cross" than strictly its Christian identity, and suggested this "couplet refers to the Black Atlantic crossmark as well as the Christian cross" (Gundaker 1998:97).

If Dave's written words can elicit multiple and different interpretations of their meaning, it should not be surprising that the other pottery marks made by Dave and his fellow African American potters in the Edgefield District also possess debated identities and interpretations. In addition to verse, Dave's work is frequently marked by other characteristics and signs: the initials LM for his owner Lewis Miles, the signature of his name "Dave," production dates, paired slash marks, circle punctations, a U-shaped symbol, deep fingerprints at the bases of handles, and inscribed Xs. X marks and a cross-in-circle mark known as a Landrum cross were used on the ceramics made at the Rev. John Landrum and Benjamin Franklin Landrum potteries, and the Landrum cross resembles an African symbol known as the Bakongo cosmogram, or *dikenga dia Kongo*, an African ideological motif expressing the relationship between the present and the afterlife (Thompson 1983; Fennell 2007:31). Similar marks have been recorded on Southern African American colonowares (Ferguson 1993:113), and X and cross marks have been found archaeologically in a number of African American contexts. Both the X and cross-in-circle marks have European as well as African contexts and meanings. The recognition of these symbols on Edgefield stoneware expands their vocabulary and provides further insight into the meaning of these marks and African American identity in

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Edgefield pottery. This article looks at African American potters and Edgefield District pottery, Landrum crosses and Dave's X, and other African American marks, in an attempt to interpret the meaning of these marks and their place in the constellation of African American symbols.

A Brief History of the Edgefield Potteries

Most historians agree that the ceramic industry that developed around Edgefield owes its genesis to the members of the Landrum family in the 1810s. The Edgefield District was the first stoneware pottery district in the South, and introduced a new glaze formula, alkaline glaze, that would define Southern pottery for the next half century. The Landrums are credited with both the application of alkaline glaze and the creation of the Edgefield District.

The Landrum brothers––Abner, John, and Amos—reportedly migrated to Edgefield, South Carolina, from Salisbury, North Carolina, where a number of potteries were active in the late 18th century. Abner Landrum would establish a small community known as Pottersville on the outskirts of the town of Edgefield, while his brothers John and Amos would form separate potteries to the south. Pottery production was ongoing as early as 1819, when an advertisement in the *Camden Gazette* offered "370 pieces of the Edgefield made stone ware. … The first of its kind (and superior in quality to any) ever offered here for sale" (Baldwin 1993:33).

Edgefield pottery's distinctiveness was due in part to the glaze developed by the Landrums. Referred to as alkaline glaze, this glaze was composed of clay slip mixed with either wood ash or lime. Ash and lime glazes were common in Asia, where they had been used for folk pottery since the 10th century, but were not used in the United States until the advent of the Edgefield potteries. The inspiration for the Landrums' discovery of alkaline glazing is uncertain. John Vlach (1990:24) suggests that knowledge of the glaze could have come to the South Carolina backcountry via Richard Champion, an English investor in the pottery of William Cookworthy. Cookworthy, who had studied descriptions of Chinese potteries, developed an alkaline glaze in England by 1745 while researching the composition of Chinese porcelain, and would patent hard-paste porcelain in 1756. Champion, a London businessman, became one of his partners, and the two held the porcelain patent until the 1770s. It is unknown how much of Cookworthy's ceramics knowledge, and particularly if his formula for alkaline glaze, was passed on to Champion, but Champion moved to Camden, South Carolina, in 1784 and lived there until his death in 1791. Greer (1981), Vlach (1990), Baldwin (1993), and Steen (1994) all speculate that Champion may have shared his knowledge of alkaline glazing with someone in South Carolina, who in turn may have passed this knowledge on to the Landrums.

Carl Steen (1994:11–16) suggests that Abner Landrum's political tendencies may have led him to the discovery of alkaline glaze. Abner Landrum was a Unionist, and Union politics of the early 19th century emphasized self-sufficiency and the industrial development of the young United States. Steen, citing Charles Zug (1986), notes that accounts published in Baltimore and Philadelphia recommended replacing lead glaze with alkaline glaze. According to Steen (1994), the use of a glaze made from locally available materials—sand and wood ash––would have appealed to the Unionist Abner Landrum.

While the discovery of alkaline glazing was one aspect in the creation of a stoneware industry in Edgefield, its development was also a product of geology and geography. The region is known for its deposits of kaolin clay, a fine white clay prized by ceramicists and used in some elements of the production of Edgefield stoneware. Steen (1994:15) cites a 15 July 1809 announcement in the *Augusta Chronicle* that "Dr. Landrum has lately discovered a Chalk in the Edgefield District, S.C., that is represented to be of superior quality—equal at least to that which Edgeworth manufactures near Liverpool." With the discovery of local clay suitable for pottery manufacture, and the creation of a glaze formula, also from local materials, the stage was set for Edgefield's pottery industry.

Edgefield also benefited from its proximity to Augusta, Georgia, and Hamburg, South Carolina, port cities on opposite banks of the Savannah River that were the major urban centers for the backcountry of both states. Augusta and Hamburg provided accessible markets for Edgefield stoneware, as well as the facilities to ship pottery to other locales. Their presence would also influence the development of railroad lines, and

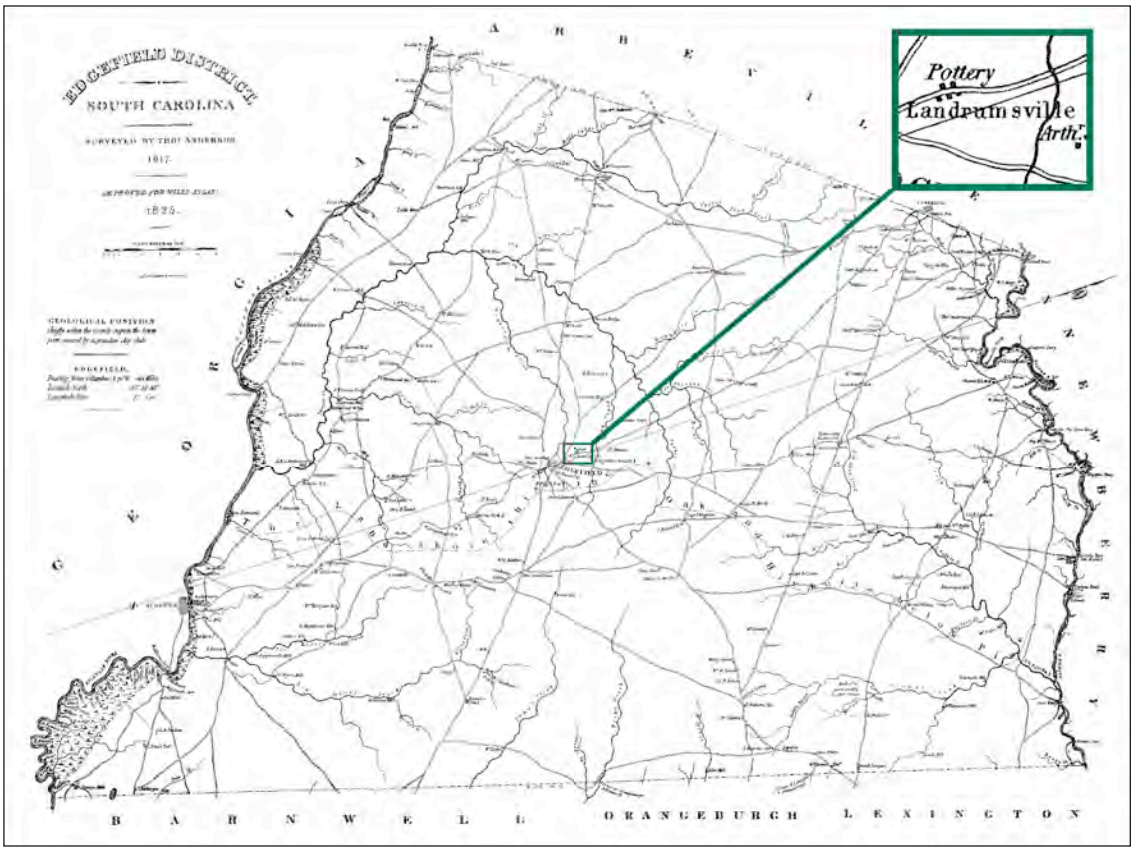

FIGURE 1. Map from the Mills *Atlas of the State of South Carolina*, 1825, showing the location of the pottery at Landrumsville (later known as Pottersville).

one of the earliest rail lines in the southeast connected Charleston and Hamburg, and crossed through the Edgefield District. This combination of technological knowledge and capability, natural resources, and location led to the development of an extensive stoneware industry within the district.

Four centers of stoneware production would emerge. The first was Pottersville, a community established on the outskirts of the town of Edgefield by Dr. Abner Landrum. This town is shown as Landrumsville on Robert Mills's 1825 *Atlas of the State of South Carolina* (Figure 1). The earliest record of a pottery there was the 1820 census, which recorded a factory employing five men and two children, with four wheels, and a capital of $8,800 (Baldwin 1993:33).

The financial prospects of the Edgefield stoneware industry would lead to a series of investors and operators at the Pottersville factory, which would in turn result in spin-off pottery developments. Abner Landrum sold the Pottersville operation to Harvey and Reuben Drake in 1828; Collin Rhodes purchased Harvey Drake's interest in the business following Drake's death in 1832; Nathaniel Ramey purchased a third interest in the firm of Drake, Rhodes, and Company in 1836; Jasper Gibbs bought into the firm in 1838, and it became known as Rhodes, Ramey and Gibbs; John Hughes bought out Collin Rhodes in 1839, and the firm became N. Ramey and Company. The pottery would continue to cycle through investors over time. Several of these one-time partners in the operations would go on to establish their own ceramic enterprises, most notably Collin Rhodes and Roger Mathis (Holcombe and Holcombe 1986; Baldwin 1990, 1993).

The second center, in the Horse Creek valley, was also developed by the Landrums. Here, Rev. John Landrum established his factory prior

to 1820, and a number of pieces with inscribed dates from the early 1820s have been recovered through archaeological excavations, and preserved in private collections. The archaeology of the John Landrum site (Castille et al. 1988) identified a considerable degree of experimentation at this early stoneware factory, with a variety of glazes, forms, and marks appearing on Rev. Landrum's pottery (Baldwin 1993:40).

Other stoneware factories in the Horse Creek valley included one operated by Benjamin Franklin Landrum, the Rev. Landrum's son, and Lewis Miles, Rev. John Landrum's son-in-law. They acquired much of Rev. John Landrum's property at this death in 1846, including "18 likely Negroes, among whom are … an excellent Stone Ware Turner" (Baldwin 1993:41–42). Prior to 1850, this partnership split, and the Lewis Miles factory in 1850 was listed as employing seven male and three female workers, and was valued at $4,000. In the 1850 census, B. F. Landrum was identified as the owner of a separate factory. The African American slave potter, Dave, would work for Lewis Miles from the 1830s until the early 1840s, when he went to work for Rev. Landrum and subsequently his son B. F. Landrum. Following Rev. Landrum's death, Dave would return to Lewis Miles through the inheritance of Sarah Mary Landrum, Lewis Miles's wife (Koeverman 1998c:31).

To the east of the Horse Creek valley was Shaw Creek, where three stoneware potteries were established. Amos Landrum, brother of John and Abner, was the first to establish a pottery there. Like his brother John, his operations would be taken over by his son-in-law—in this instance Collin Rhodes—who had earlier possessed an interest in the Pottersville factory established by Abner Landrum. In 1840, Rhodes and his partner Robert Mathis announced the formation of the Phoenix Stone Ware Factory. Later that year, Rhodes would advertise the sale of his interest in the factory, but stated in his advertisement that "any person desirous of buying and letting the ... Negroes stay to carry on the business, I will remain and attend to the same for them, if desired" (Baldwin 1993:48). His brother Coleman purchased his interest. In 1846 Collin Rhodes would establish a second pottery, the C. Rhodes Factory, on the site of the former Phoenix Factory. Rhodes's stoneware introduced a new decorative element to the Edgefield tradition: the use of kaolin-slip and iron-oxide trailing as decoration. Intact examples of these wares include floral motifs, figural paintings of Southern life, dates, capacity marks, and maker's identification in slip.

The fourth center of production, Kirksey's Crossroads, would spin out of Rhodes's developments. Thomas Chandler, one of the most accomplished potters working at the Phoenix Factory, would establish a partnership with John Trapp in the 1840s. The Trapp-Chandler site was excavated by Keith Landreth in 1983 (Landreth 1985). Apparently in operation by the mid-1840s, Trapp-Chandler extended the decorative of use of kaolin-slip and iron-oxide trailing. The Trapp-Chandler Factory would close in 1849, and by 1850 Thomas Chandler was in business on his own. Due to his failing health, Chandler's operations would cease in the early 1850s (Baldwin 1993:52–54).

While these potteries were the major stoneware factories of the antebellum era, others, about which less is known, were also in operation. As this brief history shows, the stoneware industry of the Edgefield District was very interconnected, through intermarriage as well as business relations between the various potters. Workers, both journeymen potters and experienced African American slaves, also circulated among the factories that developed in the Edgefield District. Knowledge in the region was thus fluid, and ceramic styles developed into a relatively homogeneous pattern that is recognizable as belonging to the Edgefield District. Stylistic innovations, such as Collin Rhodes's use of kaolin-slip and iron-oxide trailed decoration, also spread, and these treatments would be used by Trapp and Chandler, as well as by later potters such as John Seigler. Potters advertised and promoted the quality of their wares in an effort to capture a greater share of the market—Thomas Chandler marked some of his pieces as "warranted," and while the majority of stoneware produced in the Edgefield District was not identified by maker, many pieces were. For the most part, maker's marks consisted of stamps that impressed the manufacturer's name on a vessel (for example, "TRAPP & CHANDLER," "N. RAMEY & CO," etc.). Rhodes, Chandler, and Seigler, who took over Rhodes's operation in 1860, marked some of their pieces with kaolin-slip or iron-oxide "signatures." The work of Lewis Miles, and

particularly pieces produced by the potter Dave, were identified by the inscribed cursive initials "LM." Unique among the marks found on Edgefield stonewares and attributed as maker's marks is a cross decoration referred to as the "Landrum cross" (Holcombe and Holcombe 1989:19). Found on pottery from the Rev. John and B. F. Landrum factories, this paper argues that the makers these marks identify were the African American potters who produced these wares, rather than the Landrums.

African Americans in the Edgefield District

African Americans played a key role in the Edgefield District stoneware industry. Enslaved African Americans were prominent at most of the stoneware factories, and their work as stoneware potters is documented by census directories and advertisements. According to the 1850 census, stoneware-factory owner Lewis Miles held 14 African American slaves, B. F. Landrum 12, and Collin Rhodes 35—the largest number of any of the factory owners at that time. An 1840 advertisement for the sale of the Pottersville factory listed "[t]hree Negro men, two of whom are Turners," while an 1843 listing of the same property identified "four Negroes, viz three Turners and one Wagoner" (Holcombe and Holcombe 1989:22; Baldwin 1993:74). While African Americans worked in all aspects of the factories' operations—from excavating clay and preparing it for turning, to hauling finished ware to market—folklorist Cinda Baldwin suggests that many African Americans were employed in the important role of "turning" pottery. She writes that "[t]he presence of African American slaves in the Edgefield District stoneware factories was perhaps the single most important influence on stoneware production in the area" (Baldwin 1993:71). The Holcombes, collectors and researchers of Edgefield stoneware, observe that "[t]he District's ceramic entrepreneurs never would have been able to manufacture such large quantities of Edgefield wares without the slave participation" (Holcombe and Holcombe 1989:22). Perhaps the best measure of the African presence in Edgefield is the fact that Edgefield's most renowned and most accomplished potter, Dave, was an enslaved African American.

Robert Farris Thompson (1969:130–143), John Vlach (1978:76–95, 1990:17–39), Cinda Baldwin (1993:71–90), and others have looked at the African influence and expression in Edgefield stoneware. Thompson, Vlach, and Baldwin recognize African stylistic elements and cultural traditions in the production of face jugs—anthropomorphic jugs produced on an occasional basis at several of the Edgefield factories. Thomas Davies, the owner of an Edgefield pottery, reported to ceramic historian Edwin Atlee Barber that the enslaved African Americans at his pottery were provided time to make pottery of their own, and that they produced "some weird-looking water jugs, roughly modeled in front in the form of a grotesque human face evidently intended to portray the African features" (Barber 1976:466; Baldwin 1993:79). White kaolin is used to form the eyes of these face vessels; Thompson (1969:138–139) notes that white cowrie shells, white strips of tin, white pieces of mirror fragments, or glass backed with white were used to represent eyes in West African wood sculptures. While Edgefield face vessels resemble African woodcarvings in some respects, they are also evocative of English "Toby" vessels. Toby jugs, however, were also found in Africa, where they were favored by the Kongo royalty, and Vlach notes that the Kongo learned to produce their own versions of Toby jugs out of terra cotta. Kongo people were a major part of the South Carolina slave population, comprising 70% of the enslaved Africans shipped to Charleston in the period from 1735 to 1740 (Vlach 1990:34). The "face vessels" produced in Edgefield thus appear to Vlach to have developed from the African adoption of a Toby-style jug.

Another Edgefield form with African and Caribbean antecedents is the "monkey" jug. An ovoid jug with an upraised stirrup handle and an angled spout, these vessels are similar to unglazed earthenware vessels found in Africa and the West Indies as water carriers and water coolers. Several origins are suggested for the naming of this vessel type as a monkey jug, including the use of the term "monkey" in the late 18th century to indicate a strong thirst, a use still applied by African Americans in South Carolina (Baldwin 1993:86). The appellation could also derive from the West Indian name for these vessels, *m'vungu*, or from a Kilkongo word for a type of clay vessel used to smoke manioc leaves, referred to as a *munkoki* (Vlach 1990:35; Baldwin 1993:86). This form is uncommon in the

British ceramic tradition, and its limited production at the Edgefield potteries is likely a product of the African presence in Edgefield.

While folklorists and ceramic historians have looked for African antecedents in the forms of Edgefield District pottery, and while Dave's written words have been analyzed in depth as African American expressions (Burrison 1998; de Groft 1998; Koeverman 1998a; Miller 1998), little attention has been given to the marks used on Edgefield pottery by Dave and other African American potters. Various cross marks found on Edgefield pottery, as well as other symbols, may also be African elements in the stoneware of the Edgefield District.

Landrum Crosses and Other Xs

Documentation on the Landrum cross and other cross marks found on pottery of the Edgefield District is taken from a number of sources. Informal excavations of kiln sites associated with the Landrums were conducted by the Holcombes, and reported in *South Carolina Antiquities* in the 1980s (Holcombe and Holcombe 1986, 1989). An archaeological survey of Edgefield District was prepared by George Castille, Cinda Baldwin, and Carl Steen under a grant-funded project administered by the University of South Carolina's McKissick Museum, and is reported in Castille et al. (1988). Drawing from this survey, as well as historical research and extensive review of private collections, Cinda Baldwin published a history of stoneware pottery in South Carolina in 1993 (Baldwin 1993). Additional archaeological survey and limited excavation of kiln sites was completed in the following year by Carl Steen (1994). More recently, Arthur Goldberg and James Witkowski (2006) have published a review of signed and dated pieces by the African American potter Dave, which includes information on other marks used by Dave on his pottery.

While the archaeological studies have examined pottery sherds found in the waster dumps associated with various kiln sites, most of the pottery produced in these kilns emerged intact, and was put into service in Southern farms and plantations, as well as in Southern homes. Documentation of marked pieces for this article was taken from auction catalogs, particularly those produced by the Southern Folk Pottery Collectors Society (SFPCS). Founded by Roy Thompson and operated by the North Carolina folk potter Billy Ray Hussey, the SFPCS publishes newsletters on various pottery topics and histories, as well as holding biannual auctions whose catalogs include researched and detailed descriptions of Southern pottery.

Circle-and-cross, cross, and X marks appear on Edgefield pottery in three primary contexts: cross and X marks, including circle-and-cross versions, found at the Rev. John Landrum Pottery (38AK497); the Landrum cross, formed by a cross-in-circle motif and found on the B. F. Landrum Pottery (38AK496); and Dave's use of the X, found on pottery he produced at the Lewis Miles Pottery. Cross/X marks appear less frequently at other Edgefield potteries.

Figure 2 shows examples of cross marks found at the Rev. John Landrum site (Figure 2*a*, *b*, and *c*), the B. F. Landrum cross mark (Figure 2*d*), and an X mark attributed to the potter Dave (Figure 2*e*). Pottery from the Rev. John Landrum site is marked by both an impressed cross (Figures 2*a* and *b*) as well as a cross-in-circle mark (Figure 2*c*). From his excavations of the waster dump at the Rev. Landrum Pottery (38AK497), Carl Steen reports that

> [c]ommon marks include the impressed Landrum cross. ... These Crosses were made in two steps with a tool like a [regular] screwdriver. Variations on this mark include examples with one or two parallel impressions. Circular and triangular punctate marks were also seen, almost always near the base of the vessel. The X marks tended to be on the lower handle attachment point of jugs (Steen 1994:32).

At this site Castille et al. (1988:85) and Baldwin (1993:40) also report recovering another version of the cross, which was formed of a stamped "X," with L- or T-shaped terminals (Figure 2*b*). Baldwin states that "[a] number of maker's marks were used on ware produced at the John Landrum site. The most commonly used mark was a stamped X, often with L- or T-shaped terminals. Some variants on this include a mark that appears to be an X with one leg missing, and two examples of an X formed from four separate marks" (Baldwin 1993:40).

This latter symbol noted by Baldwin appears to represent a cross-in-circle motif and is formed from four triangular punctations pressed into the wet clay body (Figure 2*c*). This mark is not precisely circular, and the cross is created by

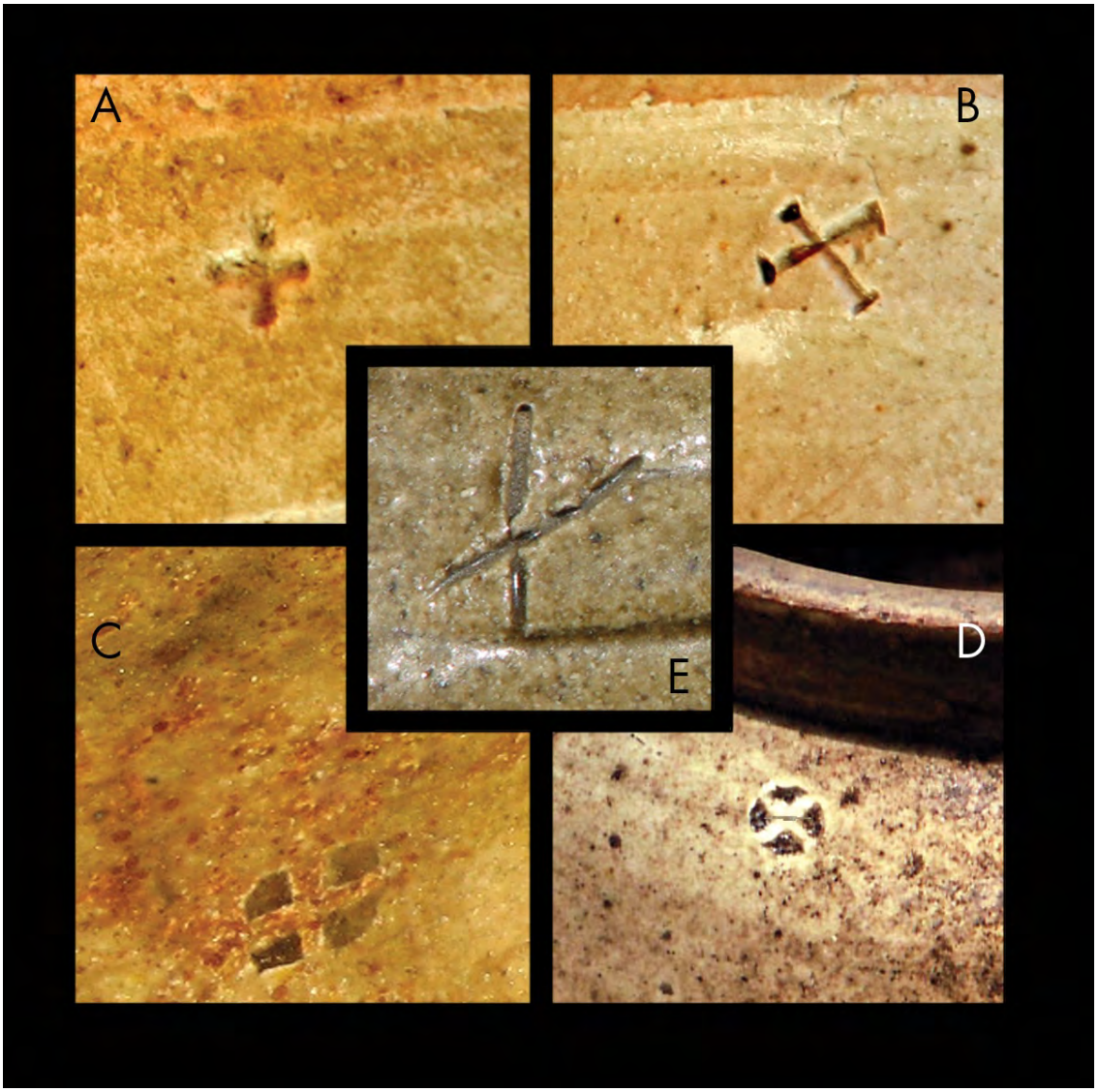

FIGURE 2. Cross, circle-in-cross, and X marks recovered from the Rev. John Landrum, Benjamin Franklin Landrum, and Lewis Miles pottery sites of the Edgefield District: (A) Impressed Rev. John Landrum–cross mark, courtesy of Carl Steen; (B) Impressed Rev. John Landrum–cross X mark with T terminals, courtesy of Carl Steen; (C) Impressed Rev. John Landrum four-punctate mark, forming a cross-in-circle; (D) B. F. Landrum–cross mark; and (E) X mark attributed to the potter Dave. (Photographs by author, 2007.)

the space left unimpressed between the marks, but the mark is immediately recognizable as a cross, while the curving outer edges of the impressions suggest the appearance of a circle. The mark appears to have been made from a carved wooden dowel or similar device, as the placement and shape of the four punctates is the same from one mark to another, indicating the mark was not made from four separate punctations. All of these marks are small, measuring 7 to 9 mm in diameter.

At the B. F. Landrum Pottery, the cross-in-circle style is evident. The B. F. Landrum–cross marking is also formed in relief, with four pie-shaped impressions circling the cross that is left upraised in the center (Figure 2*d*). The body of

the cross itself is more distinctive than the cross formed on the Rev. John Landrum's pottery, and suggests that the impression was pushed into the clay to the point at which the base of the cross itself appears, whereas on the Rev. John Landrum circle-in-cross marks the four impressions were made, but the body of the vessel within the impressions, the cross, was untouched. The B. F. Landrum mark resembles the impression that would have been made by a Phillips-head screw if it were pressed into wet clay. Irregularities in the line of the cross on some marks, however, suggest the B. F. Landrum cross was also created using a carved round wooden dowel, possibly similar to the implement used to create the version of this mark seen at the Rev. John Landrum Pottery. B. F. Landrum crosses are seen most frequently on the shoulders of storage vessels (jars, churns, and crocks) (Figure 3), as well as around the bottom handle attachment of jugs.

Carl Steen describes these marks based on his excavations (Steen 1994:82):

> The most common mark on sherds from this site is a cross or X. The legs of these X's are in relief and the marks look like they were made with a simple tool, like a dowel with two lines carved into it, or a round headed Phillips screw. They are between 7 and 9 mm in diameter. Cross marks tend to be found primarily on jugs, and primarily at the bottom handle attachment points. Single and multiple impressions are seen. In this collection as many as five impressions were seen on a single vessel, although some extant pieces have even more.

FIGURE 3. One-gallon storage jar marked with the B. F. Landrum cross, showing the cross location on the jar's shoulder. (Photo courtesy of Walt Joseph, 2007.)

In addition to the Landrum crosses and cross marks, the X mark was used by the African American potter Dave (Figure 2*e*). The Holcombes, who conducted excavations at three sites on which Dave worked—the Rev. John Landrum Pottery, the B. F. Landrum Pottery, and the Lewis Miles Pottery—found several examples of Dave's pottery marked by Xs at these sites. They state, "The 'X' is a production mark commonly seen on Dave vessels" (Holcombe and Holcombe 1998:77). The Holcombes illustrate among the examples of Dave's use of the X mark a sherd from the Pottersville site, marked with an X and three punctations to indicate gallon capacity. Steen (1994:79) also reports the recovery of sherds marked with an inscribed X from the B. F. Landrum site (38AK496) excavations, while another piece has been recorded marked with the B. F. Landrum cross and two inscribed Xs (SFPCS 2006c). Koeverman (1998c) and Goldberg and Witkowski (2006) also recognize X as a mark used by Dave. A large number of Edgefield stoneware pieces exist that have the characteristics of Dave's work and are marked by an X.

An X was incorporated into some of Dave's pieces with incised words. The Holcombes (1998:76) illustrate a one-gallon jug manufactured by Dave that is marked with an X and the inscribed word "New." Goldberg and Witkowski (2006:69–60), in their study of Dave's dated pottery, record 10 known examples where Dave inscribed his signature "Dave," the initials LM for Lewis Miles, a date, and an X. These are listed in Table 1. Examples include a jar listed in the catalog of the McKissick Museum's exhibit

TABLE 1
RECORDED AND KNOWN EXAMPLES OF POTTERY BY DAVE WITH THE X MARK

X Mark	Signature	Date	Other Marks	Form	Source
X	LM Dave	? October 1855	Three punctations	Jar	1
X	LM Dave	12 March1858	Three punctations	Jar	1
X	LM Dave	9 June 1858	None	Jar	1
X	LM Dave	15 June 1859	None	Jar	1
X	LM Dave	21 December 1859	None	Jar	1
X	LM Dave	3 April 1860	Two slashes	Jug	1
X	LM Dave	2 June 1860	None	Jar	1
X	LM Dave	25 April 1860	None	Jar	1
X	LM Dave	10 October 1861	None	Jar	1
X	LM Dave	13 February 1863	None	Jar	1
X	LM Dave	10 March 1864	Three punctations	Jar	1
X	None	None	Four slashes	Jar	2
X	LM Dave	18 June 1861	None	Jar	3
X	None	None	Two slashes and five punctations	Jar	4
X	LM	None	Two punctations	Jar	5
X	None	None	Two slashes	Jar	6
X	None	None	Two punctations	Jar	7
X	None	None	Two slashes	Jug	8
X	LM	None	None	Jar	9, 10
X	None	None	"Sisty"	Jar	9

Sources: 1. Goldberg and Witkowski (2006); 2. SFPCS (1993:item 88); 3. SFPCS (2001b:item 322); 4. SFPCS (2004b:item 219); 5. SFPCS (2005a:item 225); 6. SFPCS (2005b:item 227); 7. SFPCS (2006b:item 180); 8. SFPCS (2006c:item 290); 9. Private collections; 10. Daniel Auction Company (2008:item 307).

FIGURE 4. Two-handled storage jar attributed to Dave, marked with an X, and "Sisty" or "Sewty" (?). (Photo courtesy of Walt Joseph, 2007.)

of Dave's work, incised "LM April 26 1861 Dave," which also includes an incised X (Koeverman 1998b:98); one listed in a catalog for the auction of the Pottersville Museum collection, "X LM Oct 1855 Dave" (Harmer Rooke Gallery 1995); and one in the 16th auction catalog of the SFPCS, "LM June 15 1859 Dave X," (SFPCS 2000); all of which are also included in Goldberg and Wikowski's table listing 169 dated pieces of pottery from Dave. Figure 4 shows a two-handled jar which bears several hallmarks of Dave's production, namely the throwing ridges around the shoulder which are distinctive of some examples of his work, the deep finger impressions at the base of the handle, which is also recognized as an attribute of Dave's production, and an incised X. It bears an X and what has been interpreted as the word "Sisty." The two appear to have been inscribed at different times. The X mark on this vessel is 21 mm in height.

Table 1 lists known examples of Dave's work bearing an X and other signatures, marks, or attributes that are indicative of his production.

This table only records known pieces marked with an X and some other signature or mark; as noted above, there are a number of pieces of Edgefield pottery attributed to Dave that are marked solely by an X, or by an X in combination with slashes, punctuates, or other marks.

As seen in Table 1, X marks are frequently found on pieces that Dave also signed, most often with his own name, but also with the initials of his owner, Lewis Miles. The association of the LM initials, Dave's name, and the X suggests Dave used the X as an expression of identity, although not strictly his personal identity, since these vessels were also signed with his name. Other examples are signed LM and also marked with an X, and lack Dave's signature, however. Dave also used slash marks, most often in pairs, but also occurring in groups of three and four, to mark vessels he signed and dated. Goldberg and Witkowski (2006:67–70) record 48 signed and dated examples marked with paired slashes (including the one listed in Table 1), and five that are marked with three slashes.

The Context of Markings on Edgefield Pottery

The meanings of these symbols must be understood in the relationship to their contexts. The cross and circle-in-cross marks appear on pottery produced at both the Rev. John Landrum and the B. F. Landrum potteries in Edgefield. These various marks (Figure 2*a–d*) are referred to as Landrum crosses in the following discussion, except where specific examples are referenced. Both potteries employed European American journeymen potters, as well as enslaved African Americans, to produce jugs, churns, pitchers, jars, and other forms, and it is impossible to say by form alone whether a piece was produced by a European American or by an African American potter. (The *Southern Folk Pottery Collectors Society Newsletter* [SFPCS 2006a] describes pottery made by the African American potter Rich Williams, a potter working in the second half of the 19th century in Greenville County, South Carolina, north of Edgefield. According to this article, Williams was born around 1847 in an unspecified location. The newsletter article, "A Glimmering Light on South Carolina's Lone Rich Williams," describes a piece that is "adorned with a simple tree or foliage pattern made from circled Xs resembling the capacity markings used at the B. F. Landrum's (Edgefield area) shop." William's use of this mark thus may represent the continuation of the use of the Landrum cross by later African American potters, and supports an African American association for this mark.)

The context can be assessed, however, by examining these marks in relation to marks found elsewhere in the Edgefield District. Five classes of marking are known for the district: capacity marks, pottery maker's marks, production (pottery turner's) marks, decoration, and miscellaneous marks that do not fit into any of these other categories.

In location, Landrum-cross marks more closely resemble capacity marks. Capacity for Edgefield stoneware was recorded in a number of manners. Some potters used an inscribed Arabic numeral, and Collin Rhodes, Thomas Chandler, John Seigler, and perhaps others, recorded capacity on some vessels in kaolin slip. Slash marks and punctations were also used to indicate a vessel's capacity, and the use of slash marks to indicate capacity in particular, has been attributed to the work of enslaved African Americans. The capacity of some vessels was designated by either a series of slash marks or a series of punctations signifying the number of gallons a vessel could contain. Dave is known to have used slash and punctate marks to record the capacity (Table 1) of some of the pieces he produced, these marks also appear in combination, however, where one but not the other is equivalent to a vessel's capacity. Slash and punctate marks were usually found on the shoulders of Edgefield jars, churns, and jugs.

From excavations at the B. F. Landrum site, the Holcombes (1989) and Steen (1994:81) identified a number of jug handles, which exhibited B. F. Landrum crosses at the base of the handle where it attached to the jug body. This is a location that was not frequently used for capacity or other types of marks. Pieces marked with a B. F. Landrum cross, illustrated in the SFPCS auction catalogs, include a jug with a mark at the base of the handle (SFPCS 1993:20,No. 82), a storage jar with five marks grouped in a circular pattern adjacent to a slab handle (SFPCS 1993:20,No. 84), a storage jar with three marks on top of the handle (SFPCS 2001a:114,No. 285), a churn with two marks next to the slab handle (SFPCS 2002:96,No. 290), a storage jar with four marks

grouped in a circle next to the handle (SFPCS 2004a:66,No. 210), a storage jar with a single mark next to the handle (SFPCS 2004a:66,No. 211), a jug with a single mark whose location is not specified (SFPCS 2005b:87,No. 220), a storage jar with two impressed marks on a lug-handle top (SFPCS 2008:119,No. 359), and a storage jar marked with a single mark (location not specified) as well as two incised Xs near the base (SFPCS 2006c:110,No. 287). The SFPCS publications also illustrate a preserve jar marked with a Rev. John Landrum impressed cross on the shoulder (SFPCS 2005a:79,No. 216) and a storage jar marked with an incised X and three slashes (SFPCS 2002:97,No. 292) that is attributed to the Landrum families. The SFPCS catalogs illustrate one other example of a jar marked with both an X and slashes. Attributed to the Jesse Pits Bodie Factory, the strap handle on this jar is marked with four parallel slashes over which an X has been incised (SFPCS 2008:127,No. 376).

Landrum crosses appear on shoulder and handle locations that are highly visible points, which are also locations where capacity marks were found. They also appear below jug handle attachments, a location not used for capacity or other markings. The Landrum crosses, however, do not appear to have served as capacity marks, or at least are not purely capacity marks. While gallon capacity is not specified in the SFPCS catalogs, there are examples for which the Landrum-cross marking clearly does not reflect capacity; for example, the jar shown in SFPCS 2006c (No. 287) is obviously four to five gallons in size, and SFPCS 2004a, No. 211 is two to three gallons, yet both are marked with a single B. F. Landrum cross. In other cases the number of marks and gallonage appears to be the same: SFPCS 1993, No. 84 and SFPCS 2004a, No. 210 both appear to be four to five gallons in size, and are marked with five and four crosses, respectively. While the number of crosses can reflect the gallon capacity of the vessel on which they are found, there is not an absolute correspondence between the number of marks and the vessel capacity in marked Landrum vessels. Figure 5 shows a one-gallon jug from the Rev. John Landrum site that contains eight circle-in-cross marks, four on each side of the handle. Capacity in Edgefield, and in all areas were Southern pottery was made, was marked in gallons, and hence these eight marks cannot be considered capacity marks as they would indicate an eight-gallon vessel. The Landrum potteries' use of the cross mark is thus not strictly as a capacity mark, although on some vessels the number of marks does appear to correspond to capacity.

FIGURE 5. Rev. John Landrum one-gallon jug marked with eight cross-in-circle markers around the shoulders. (Photo by author, 2007.)

The Landrum cross is considered by the Holcombes and others to be a maker's mark. These marks are unlike any of the other maker's marks employed in the Edgefield District, however. Edgefield potteries marked the production of their shops as an advertisement, and the mark was most commonly composed of the stamped name of the pottery. "CHANDLER MAKER," "W. H. HAHN," "J. P. BODIE MAKER," "L. MILES," and "N. RAMEY & CO" are some of the many examples of this style of indicating the pottery manufactory. Steen (1994:82) recovered sherds

stamped "LANDRUM" at the B. F. Landrum Pottery site, indicating use of a stamped-name maker's mark as used by other Edgefield potteries. Maker's marks are typically placed on the shoulders of vessels and are usually centered between the handles—the most highly visible location on a jar or jug. Figure 6 shows the W. H. Hahn, Trenton, South Carolina, maker's mark, placed in just such a location. Maker's marks are typically large and visible; the Hahn mark shown in Figure 6 measures 71 mm across and 33 mm high. Hence these marks are much larger and more prominent than any of the Landrum-cross marks.

Some of the potters, including Chandler, Rhodes, and Seigler, marked their pottery with kaolin-slip signatures. The pottery of J. G. Baynham was marked with the stamped initials JGB, while the pottery made by Dave while working for Lewis Miles was inscribed in cursive with the initials LM for Lewis Miles. No other pottery in the Edgefield District used a symbol as its mark, nor did any use such a small mark to symbolize its production. It has been suggested by Carl Steen (Steen 2003) that the Landrums' use of the cross mark may reflect the service of the elder Landrum, John, as a Methodist minister, and hence the symbol of the cross may have had a strong enough connection with the Rev. Landrum to be recognized by the purchasers of Edgefield pottery as the Landrum mark. As noted and described, however, the Landrum cross does not represent a Latin or Christian cross, which is defined by the presence of one longer axis. The Landrum cross more closely resembles an X in which all axes are of the same length. It is also unclear why this mark would also be used, and far more frequently, by the Rev. Landrum's son, Benjamin Franklin Landrum, who was not a reverend, and hence would not have had as strong an association with Christianity and the cross. Finally, if the Landrum cross were intended to serve as a maker's mark, signifying the production of a vessel at either the Rev. John or B. F. Landrum potteries, then the multiple stamping of a vessel would be unnecessary, as a single mark would have been sufficient to indicate the manufacturer.

FIGURE 6. Stoneware jar showing the W. H. Hahn maker's mark. (Photo by author, 2007.)

The same would apply if the Landrum cross were a production mark intended to represent the work of a particular potter within a factory. Production marks occur infrequently on Edgefield stoneware and appear to have been used at some of the larger factories to identify the work of a particular journeyman potter who was probably paid on the basis of the number of pieces turned, glazed, and successfully fired. The Holcombes identified several production marks from the excavations at the Pottersville Factory, many of which consisted of an impressed or incised letter. Single letters appear to have been most common, as well as a letter with an associated character or mark. Production marks were usually found near a vessel's base, in a relatively obscure location, and only one mark was used to indicate a vessel's maker.

While the Landrum crosses do not appear to represent production marks, the same cannot be said of Dave's use of the X symbol. As noted above, there is a strong, although not absolute, association between this symbol and pottery turned by Dave. Since Dave also signed pieces marked with an X with his name, however,

Dave's use of the X does not strictly represent a production mark; rather, it represents a symbol commonly found on the production of this particular potter, but one that does not solely identify a piece as his work, since some X-marked pottery was also signed.

Examples of X-marked pieces described by the SFPCS catalogs include a storage jar marked with four slashes and an X, "possibly by Dave" (SFPCS 1993:22,No. 88); a pitcher signed with an X at the handle, whose "glaze example matches several examples from the Lewis Miles shop made by Dave," and which is attributed to Dave (SFPCS 2004a:112,No. 333); a stew pot with an incised X on the shoulder "[a]ttributed to Dave" (SFPCS 2004b:70,No. 217); a storage jar "[a]ttributed to Dave," marked with two slashes, five punctates, and an X on the shoulder (SFPCS 2004a:70,No 218); a storage jar marked with "LM," two punctates, and an X on the shoulder, and identified as "Dave's" (SFPCS 2005a:83,No. 225); a churn marked with two slashes and an X on the shoulder, which is described as "probable that Dave made this piece" (SFPCS 2005b:91,No. 227); a jug with throwing shoulders and an incised X on the shoulder top (SFPCS 2008:120,No. 363); a single-handled small storage jar with shoulder ridges and an incised X on the shoulder top (SFPCS 2008:121,No. 364); and a two-handled storage jar marked with an X and two punctuations, identified as Dave's and possessing "Dave's trademark deeply set lug handles" (SFPCS 2006b:83–84,No. 180).

As used by Dave, the X can thus been seen as a production mark at times, when it does not appear in association with Dave's name or the initials LM; but as something other than a production mark when found on signed pieces. Dave's use of the X mark is always singular, so it does not reflect capacity. As with the Landrum crosses, the use of this mark does not fit the defined contexts of marks found in the Edgefield District.

Impressed or inscribed decoration is uncommon on Edgefield pottery, but the known examples also do not fit the applications used for the Landrum crosses or Dave's X. Where inscribed or impressed decorations are found, they most typically occur as banded decoration, as Baldwin (1993:figure 2.10) illustrates with an example of a jar marked by a band of impressed triangles. Inscribed shapes and figural drawings are also seen on occasion. The occurrence of X and Landrum-cross marks as single designs or as small clusters does not conform with this context of the decorative use of symbols, although the repeated use of the Rev. John Landrum cross seen in Figure 5 does share some attributes of decorative effect, as do the grouping of B. F. Landrum crosses in circular patterns, as described above. As a class of marks, however, the Landrum crosses and Xs do not appear to be decorative.

Miscellaneous marks occur on Edgefield pottery in a variety of contexts. These include pieces that were signed by a potter, pieces with inscriptions, and the combination of slash/punctate/U marks seen on Dave's, and perhaps other potters' work, where one class of these marks may have a contextual application, but not all. X marks that can be classified as miscellaneous marks are also found on Edgefield pottery. Xs were sometimes used by potters to designate a piece made with an experimental glaze or clay, to help the potter recognize that piece after a kiln load was fired. The X mark was also sometimes used to indicate a vessel whose contents could be harmful. Figure 7 shows an Edgefield snuff jar marked with an X; in this instance it is presumed that the X was intended to warn off children and others from sampling the contents of this jar. This X measures 65 mm in height, significantly larger than Dave's X or the Landrum crosses. Finally, an X was used sometimes used by illiterate itinerant potters to mark pieces they had turned. None of these explain Dave's use of the X or the Landrum cross, which appear on jugs and jars with standard forms and glazes and that were made by the Edgefield District's most literate potter and other turners at two of the district's most successful potteries. Hence these marks also do not fit any of the miscellaneous categories known for the district.

The meaning of Dave's Xs and the Landrum crosses has eluded researchers on the Edgefield tradition. The potential linkage of X and cross marks to Africa has been recognized, however. In a question-and-answer session during a 1998 symposium on Dave's pottery, McKissick Museum curator Jill Koeverman commented on Dave's use of the X mark (Koeverman 1998c:30–31):

> The "X" is another kind of, almost unidentifiable makers mark, it's on some pieces of Dave's pottery. Along with other slashes. So again it's still open on what all of that means.

FIGURE 7. Edgefield District snuff/tobacco jar marked with an X. The X measures 65 mm in height, appreciably larger than Landrum-cross and Dave-X marks. (Photo by author, 2007.)

> Vlach I think is the one who has delved into that area the strongest with the "X's" being the "crossroads" and linking it up to the scarification from African pots. We don't have the same sense of, I guess the direct links to Africa in the Edgefield area that are a little more clear down in the low-county, so it's very difficult to make those strong statements about some of the spiritual and religious meanings of those markings.

Marks of the Crossing—A Crossing of Marks

Cross marks, X marks, and cross-in-circle marks have been identified in a number of archaeological contexts on African American sites. As Chris Fennell (2003) observes in his article "Group Identity, Individual Creativity, and Symbolic Generation in a BaKongo Diaspora," archaeologists have encountered artifacts marked with Xs and possible cosmograms, as well as cached deposits including quartz crystals, bone disks, chalk, polished stone, nails, coins, bird skulls, and other objects that demonstrate the transmittal and continuation of African religious beliefs and practices and symbols to the New World (Patten 1992; Ferguson 1993, 1999; Brown 1994; McKee 1995; Wilkie 1995, 1997; Samford 1996; Young 1996, 1997; Franklin 1997; Leone and Fry 1999; Galke 2000). Cross marks have also been recorded on a number of pieces of colonoware, an earthenware pottery made by enslaved African Americans on the coastal plantations of North and South Carolina and Georgia, and also produced by Native Americans for trade. The most comprehensive treatment of the appearance and meaning of Xs and cosmograms is provided by Leland Ferguson (1993, 1999).

Ferguson (1999) notes that the Bakongo cosmogram, or *yowa*, or Kongo *dikenga*, in elemental form consists of a cross within a circle. The cosmogram, identified by Chris Fennell (2007:31) as the *dikenga dia Kongo*, is formed by a circle overlaid by a cross—the terminals of the cross end in smaller circles, while arrows form the outer band of this symbol, oriented in a clockwise rotation. The lines of the cross reflect the separation of life and death, but also the connection between the worlds above and below. The horizontal line separates above from below, life from death, good from evil. The vertical line reflects the connection between both worlds, as well as the boundary or crossroads that can lead a person down or up (Thompson 1983; Ferguson 1999:119). The circle represents the cyclical nature of life, the rising of the sun, and the coming of night. In the Kongo cosmology, the land of the living is a mountain that is separated from the land of the dead by a watery barrier. The sun illuminates the mountain of the living during the day, and at night illuminates the mountain of the dead. Interestingly, the mountain of the dead is called *mpemba,* white clay (Thompson 1983:50). The use of white kaolin clay at the Edgefield potteries, and the presence of kaolin outcrops in the district, possibly supported elements of Kongo ideology in the belief systems of African Americans in the district.

The connections between the living and the dead, above and below—the relationship embodied by the cross—are contained within the circle of sunrise and sunset and the cycle of life—birth, death, and rebirth (Thompson 1983; MacGaffey 1986; Ferguson 1999:118). These elements, the cross and the circle, thus form the Bakongo cosmogram in its purest form. Thompson (1983) illustrates variations on the appearance of the cosmogram as applied (Figure 8); included

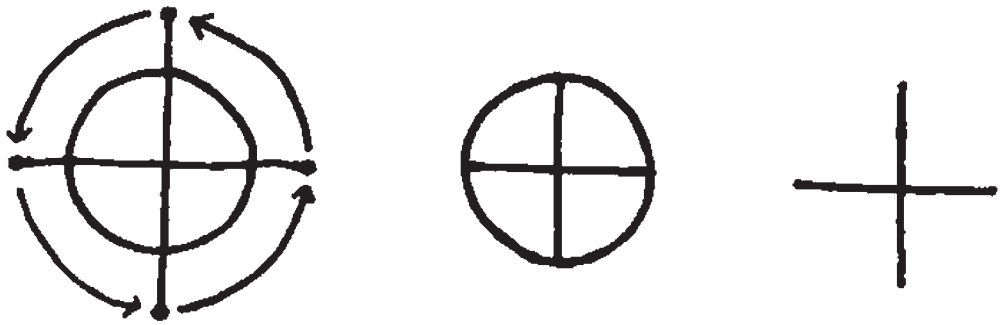

FIGURE 8. Various expressions of the Kongo cosmogram *dikenga,* after Thompson (1983). (Drawing by author, 2008.)

among these are the cross-in-circle form used as the Landrum cross, as well as the cross alone.

As Ferguson notes (1999:120), African ideology was carried to the New World, and Southern African Americans interviewed by the Works Progress Administration (WPA) reported that "the cross is a magic sign." Benjamin Washington said, "If you ever see a cross mark in the road, you never walk over it. That's real magic. You have to go around it. It's put there by an enemy, and if you walk across it an evil spell will cause you harm. The cross is a magic sign and has to do with spirits." Jane Lewis told the WPA interviewers: "I know plenty of signs. ... When you go out on a journey and you have to turn back, you make a cross in the dirt and spit on it" (WPA 1940:135,148). Ferguson (1999:120) describes several African and African American rituals that involve the image of the cross within a circle inscribed into the earth as a means of "centering" the spirits invoked by the ritual. He also notes the use of the cosmogram in the preparation of *minkisi*—ritual cures, talismans, and medicines. The containers used in the preparation of *minkisi* were various, but according to Thompson "Ne Kongo ... prepared the primordial medicines in an earthenware pot set on three stones above a fire. Clay pots have therefore always been the classical containers of minkisi" (Ferguson 1999:120). These pots were often marked with the cosmogram (Ferguson 1999:120).

Leland Ferguson identified 24 examples of African American colonoware from South Carolina that contain marks appearing to represent the Bakongo cosmogram. More examples have been identified since the publication of Ferguson's *Uncommon Ground* in 1992. These are most commonly represented by a cross, or by a cross within a circle or square. In all of these examples the mark was found within the base of a bowl, on either the interior or exterior, and these marks were all centered within their placement. A number were found within the circle formed by a ringed footing, and Ferguson suggests that the ring-footed vessels occur with a greater frequency in association with these markings than they do within the total universe of colonoware. He reports that a large number of cross-marked colonowares are found in river contexts and concludes that these marked vessels were used in African American ritual, and that vessels with the Bakongo cosmogram were intended for use in the preparation of *minkisi* or a related ritual (Ferguson 1992:127). The contextual associations of marked colonowares, however, and particularly river-borne vessels, has been debated (Espenshade 2007; Ferguson 2007a, 2007b; Joseph 2007).

The Bakongo cosmogram or cross-in-circle mark has been recorded in other contexts where a direct ritual association is not as certain. Examples of spoons with Bakongo cosmogram–like marks have been identified in Virginia, Maryland, and New York (Klingelhofer 1987; Ferguson 1993:117; Wall 2000:3). Martha Zierden recovered a colonoware marble with a cross-in-circle during excavations at Willtown, South Carolina (Zierden et al. 1999). Laurie Wilkie reports an industrially manufactured, hand-painted sherd with a Bakongo cosmogram–like decoration from Clifton Plantation in the Bahamas (Wilkie 2000:21). Ferguson (1992) provides ethnographic accounts of the cosmogram being painted on the wall of a house,

as well as additional accounts of the cosmogram being scratched into the earth. The cosmogram thus appears to have had a ritual significance both as an active and a passive element in the Kongo ideology, and it is possible that its meaning shifted to more passive roles over time and across space, as the significance of the symbol itself was recalled in contexts where the rituals invoking its powers were no longer remembered.

It is important to note that the Bakongo cosmogram was not the only symbol to employ a cross within a circle. The Celtic cross or Irish high cross was also composed of a circle centered on a cross, although in this instance one leg of the cross was longer that the others, representing a Latin cross rather than an X, which more accurately describes the Bakongo cosmogram. Symbolically, circles (representing cycles and continuity) and crosses (representing direction and separation) are perhaps the most common symbols used in human history, and examples of both, as well as symbols which combine both, are found in a broad range of cultures spanning several continents and a considerable amount of time.

The Meaning of These Marks

Chris Fennell (2003:4) suggests that the Bakongo cosmogram represents an "emblematic" "core symbol." Following Ortner (1973), emblematic symbols embody an array of ideas and emotions, and represent to their social members key aspects of their cultural system. The meanings that these emblematic symbols carry are multiple, and the associations of meanings and emblematic symbols are not directly tied to a physical context or a rational association. The Christian cross is an example of an emblematic symbol; the symbol and meaning are recognizable whether the cross is found in front of a church, on the side of a road, carved in a tombstone, or hanging on a chain from a person's neck. Emblematic symbols, by their nature, have strong associations and define identities.

Fennell (2003:7–8) also suggests that emblematic symbols may be "abbreviated" into their most elemental aspects, and that in abbreviated states may become "instrumental" (Fennell 2003:4). Instrumental symbols are those used in practical applications, symbols that are meant to be applied, and whose meaning is constructed from their application. Fennell cites Ortner (1973:1341), who writes that instrumental symbols are "culturally valued in that they formulate the culture's means–ends relationships in an actual form." Returning to the Christian cross analogy, a small simple cross placed by the side of the road is read as a symbol that someone has died in an accident at this spot. While embedded with the full emblematic meaning of the cross, in this context the cross also carries a practical, instrumental, value and association. Fennell (2003:7–8) argues that both the X and the equilateral cross are abbreviated and instrumental representations of the Bakongo cosmogram and are used in contexts in which individuals needed to express symbolically an action or desired result.

An instrumental symbol's meaning is derived from its context, while an emblematic symbol possesses a broader association that forms part of a group's identity, and that can be read and recognized in a variety of settings. As demonstrated by the Christian cross contextual analogies offered above, a symbol might be emblematic as well as instrumental, depending on how it is used. Cross marks and Bakongo cosmograms have been found in ritual contexts, and as a result archaeologists have interpreted their meanings as religious instruments. Recognizing the appearance of these marks in the pottery of the Edgefield District as well as other contexts suggests that the cross was not only a "magic sign," but that it also may have served as an emblem of African American presence and identity.

Wyatt MacGaffey (1986:45) writes:

> Contrary to what most students have said, the sign of the cross was not introduced into this country [the Congo] and into the minds of people by foreigners. The cross was known to the Bakongo before the arrival of Europeans and corresponds to the understanding in their minds of their relationship to the world.

The significance of the cross as an African symbol is demonstrated by its appearance in other African American mediums. In her study of African American quilts, *Signs and Symbols: African Images in African American Quilts,* Maude Southwell Wahlman writes (2001:98):

> Crosslike patterns occur frequently in African American quilts. Although now interpreted as Christian crosses, they could once have been adopted because of the resemblance to the Yoruba belief in a sacred crossroads, or the Kongo symbol for the four points of

> the sun. Mary Twining commented on the design in a quilt made in John's Island, South Carolina: "It was not a Christian cross, according to the residents. …"

If the Bakongo cosmogram were an emblematic symbol to the Bakongo, the cross of the crossroads emblematic to the Yoruba, and the Christian cross emblematic to the religion to which Africans were introduced in the New World, then it is reasonable to hypothesize that an equilateral cross, sometimes expressed as an X, might have become the emblematic symbol of African American identity in the New World. I believe that the cross mark was adopted as a symbol of African American identity because it incorporated varying African symbols and religious beliefs in a form that was also compatible with Christianity and African Americans' new social and religious order.

The use of symbols to express cultural identity is one that is found in West Africa, as well as in other cultures. In his important book on the formation of an African identity in the Southern colonies, *Exchanging Our Country Marks*, historian Michael Gomez discusses the use of markings to distinguish various African tribal affiliations. Gomez (1998) offers compelling documentation that African identities were recognized by symbolic markings, and the Africans were accustomed to reading marks as symbols of identity.

Gomez records the appearance of African marks in runaway slave notices. The correlation between some of these markings and Edgefield pottery marks is striking. An October 1751 notice by James Conyers of Black River, South Carolina, described a runaway as a "Gambia new negro fellow marked on the forehead with a cross, and had three perpendicular strokes on each cheek" (Gomez 1998:39). Gambians were described in several notices by the appearance of three slash marks on each cheek, which were referred to as their "country marks": "[H]is country marks thus ||| on each cheek," was the description David Huguenin of Silk Hope offered of a runaway Gambian in 1769 (Gomez 1998:39). The author believes that an expression of identity through symbolic marking was what Dave and other African Americans in Edgefield were attempting to achieve, and that they expressed this association through four symbols with strong African associations: the equilateral cross, the cross-in-circle, X, and slashes. Of these three, the cross and X would ultimately endure as the marks of a new identity.

The cross mark may have been adopted for African American identity, in part because it also embodied elements of the Christian cross. Carl Steen (2003) sees these marks as Christian symbols and writes that "the famed slave potter 'Dave' made x-marks that were clearly Christian crosses." Neither the X nor equilateral cross is "clearly" a Christian cross, however. The symbol for the Christian cross, the Latin cross, or the cross of the crucifixion, is characterized by its one long axis, without which Christ's crucifixion could not have occurred. Thus, an X or an equilateral cross is not a Latin or Christian cross. The X itself, however, does have another association with Christianity. The Greek letter chi, formed by an X, was used as an abbreviation for Christ, either alone, in combination as "XP" or "Xt," or as a labarum, a symbolic combination of the letters X (chi) and P (rho). All of these are symbolic abbreviations representing the Greek word for Christ. As abbreviations, they are found and defined as shorthand expressions of words, as is familiar in the writing of "Christmas" as "Xmas." These abbreviations are not symbols that have recognizable meaning in themselves, and their association with Christ is found only in their combination with other words and letters. This association applies only to the letter X, either alone or in combination with a P or T, and does not apply to the equilateral cross or cross-in-circle marks. Dave's use of the X does not appear to meet these definitions, as the X mark is found by itself, or when found with other words, the mark is separate from the words (Figure 4). Finally, none of the known Dave X and word combinations make sense if Christ is inserted as the meaning of the X.

Southern African Americans' use of the X and the equilateral cross may contain elements of an "abbreviated" Christian identity, but as a constellation of symbols, the X, the equilateral cross, and the cross-in-circle have a stronger and deeper association as African symbols.

The appearance of cross, X, and cross-in-circle marks on Edgefield pottery, similar to the use of crosses in African American quilts, suggests that the meaning of these marks was in their appearance as an African symbol, rather than from a ritual application. Edgefield stoneware was manufactured for use in a variety of contexts

in Southern homes, and on Southern farms and plantations. Churns were employed in the making of butter and other dairy products; jugs held liquids, alcoholic and otherwise; syrup jugs were used to store cane syrup; storage jars for packing and storing meats and other products; preserve jars for storing fruit preserves; bowls, pitchers, and occasional plates and mugs as tablewares. Landrum crosses and Dave's Xs and slashes have been found on jugs, jars, and churns, all forms that would have been used in plantation homes and work yards, and all are objects that would have come into contact with other African Americans (Figure 9).

Edgefield vessels were manufactured for sale and distribution. Thus, unlike some of the marked colonoware pieces documented from the South Carolina low country, these pieces were not intended for use within the African American community where they were made. Yet these storage vessels were likely to be used and seen by other African Americans working on Southern plantations and in Southern kitchens. The importance of these marks is considered to rest primarily in identity, as emblems of an African American presence and hand in the manufacture of Edgefield pottery. The Landrum cross and Dave's X and slash marks, at their fundamental and elemental level, identified a piece of stoneware as African-made. It signaled to other Africans, isolated in rural communities, the presence and work of Africans in an important Southern industry. By their presence these marks claimed the products of an early Southern industry as African. In essence, the marks symbolized the potter Dave's words—"I [an African American] Made this Jar."

As covert symbols, they also conveyed the ability of African Americans to communicate in a language that was not understood by Southern whites. Landrum crosses, Xs, and slashes, which may have been seen by European Americans as identifying the work of a pottery, as indicating capacity, as production marks, or possibly as a Christian symbol could be read by African Americans as a marker, an emblem, of African identity. When Dave marked a jug with an X, just as when a quilter incorporated cross marks into the design of a quilt, both were employing an old symbol in a new context, one that served as an emblem of their new identities. It is worth noting that the X mark as a symbol of African American identify persists today, demonstrating that it is a deeply rooted and fundamental mark of African America.

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FIGURE 9. An undated, ca. 1900 photograph of African Americans at a well on a Southern plantation. Stoneware jars and churns, such as the three shown in this view, were used by African Americans on Southern plantations and in Southern homes. (Photo courtesy of University of Georgia Press.)

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