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Lumbee Origins: The Weyanoke-Kearsey Connection

J. Cedric Woods
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The contemporary Lumbee are considered a North Carolina tribe in terms of their political relationships with the state and the programs administered by the federal government on behalf of Indians, such as housing and economic development. They define home as a small, roughly rectangular area encompassing most of Robeson County as well as parts of Hoke, Scotland, and Richmond Counties. Most of the Lumbee political and cultural interactions are with other tribes in North Carolina, whether it be through the North Carolina Commission of Indian Affairs, United Tribes, or the numerous Pow Wows held throughout the state. Their interaction with tribes in South Carolina and Virginia are limited to visiting each other through the medium of Pow Wows, but rarely extend into the political arena. For all intents and purposes, the Lumbee are at home in North Carolina.

Given their contemporary connection with the state of North Carolina, many scholars have attempted to push this connection back to the colonial era. After all, in the mid to late nineteenth century, they were identified as Croatan, a place name linked with a historic North Carolina tribe. And, when questioned as to their origins, some Lumbee elders spoke of formerly residing on the Roanoke River, or even on Lake Mattamuskeet. References to a settlement of Cheraw on Drowning Creek, at the border of Anson and Bladen Counties, where most of the Lumbee reside, also tends to connect the contemporary Lumbee with the North Carolina-South Carolina border region. There is even a Lumbee family ancestor, Thomas Grooms, linked to the Cheraw lands (Lumbee River Legal Services, 1987). All these things justified attempting to link Lumbee families to historic North Carolina tribes in the colonial era.

Still, in spite of the contemporary geographical location of the Lumbee, the existence of a Cheraw settlement as late as 1771 (*South Carolina Gazette*, 1771), and a long historical presence of core families such as Locklear, Chavis, Revel, Braveboy and others from 1790 forward, there is evidence that points in another direction for the origins of some Lumbee families. Genealogists such as Virginia DeMarce, with the Branch of Acknowledgment and Research for the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and Paul Heinegg, a genealogist who focuses on the “free colored” populations traces other early colonial origins. Most of their research suggests Virginia, rather than North Carolina, as the ancestral origin of many contemporary Lumbee families.

While DeMarce and Heinegg's research is valuable in identifying the early origins of some of these families and their connections to one another, it is problematic as they equate all free persons of color with exclusively African ancestry. Yet, as early as 1705 in the colony of Virginia, "mulatto" included the offspring of Indian women, regardless of the race of the father (Hening, 1809-23). Their research also ignores linguistic, historic, or political connections between family lines and tribes. However, by using their genealogical research as a framework, I maintain it is possible to reconstruct tribal affiliations for many of these families identified as free persons of color. And, while it may surprise many people, English forenames and surnames existed before the eighteenth century for many eastern Native people. For example, Dixon Coursey is described as emperor of the Nanticoke, a tribe of the Eastern Shore of Virginia, Delaware, and New Jersey, in 1680 (Rountree, 1993).

Colonial Virginia and finding the Indians

While it seems that a description of the political milieu would be essential to understanding ethnicity in the colony of Virginia, genealogists overlook most of this. Historians discuss the political and historic happenings; yet do not discuss specific families and individuals involved. To successfully identify the tribal affiliations of specific families and individuals, the ethnohistorian must do both.

The most prominent historian of Virginia Indians, Helen Rountree, does so in describing the surviving Indian communities in Virginia. She also describes a process called "spin off," when Indians left their home communities and were absorbed into either the African-American or European-American communities. This process led to the depopulation of Native groups to the point that they ceased to exist. I would argue that spin off also had another unanticipated consequence. As this case study will show, what may initially be viewed as spin-off of what I would maintain is a Weyanoke individual, was actually the continuation of a cross border movement to friendlier social and political environs. These persons also did not move in an isolated fashion. They are the individual faces of historic movements of tribes. Additionally, they did not move to isolation, but maintained contact with their kinsfolk and allies, and recreated their communities as much as possible in new territory. This process created new Native communities in North Carolina with very ancient roots in Virginia.

Research Methods

To determine the historic Virginia tribe or tribes from which the Lumbee may be descended, I have taken a different approach from that of most genealogists or anthropologists. Rather than looking for tribes indigenous to the area that Lumbees now occupy, I have decided to search the records of North Carolina and Virginia and see where surnames linked to the Lumbee in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and

early twentieth centuries appear. My goal is to see which, if any, have documented ties to specific Virginia Indian communities.

Documents used in this search include the *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, the *Colonial Records of Virginia*, *Executive Journals of the Council of Colonial Virginia*, the *Virginia Calendar of State Papers*, and some other miscellaneous articles in the *Southside Virginian*. These sources contain original sources such as vestry lists, reservation rolls, copies of court records in which individual Indians were mentioned, deeds of sale, allotments made to individual Indians by the state or county, and letters in which colonists discussed individual Indians. The main secondary sources I have utilized are Rountree's *Pocahontas's People, Eastern Shore Indians of Virginia and Maryland*, and *Powhatan Foreign Relations* which provide detailed accounting of tribes in Virginia and the specific references to individual members of those tribes.

My focus has been to look for individual Indians with specific surnames and tribal affiliations rather than following movements of towns, villages, or tribes. As a result, I compiled a list of these Indians, where they were located, and in what fashion they enter the records. I contend it is possible to see where groups smaller than the corporate tribe, such as one or two families, were moving and to determine with which other groups they were interacting. This information supports some of the basic premises of the Lumbee petition for Federal recognition, that tribes moved from Virginia to North Carolina. However, my research will also show that individuals and families migrating south to Robeson County came from much farther east than did the Cheraw, and were much less of an amalgam, but were of closely related peoples. My findings seem to contradict DeMarce's notion that persons who left the region of eastern Virginia were of ambiguous racial and ethnic classification. Several of these families, (Carter, Sampson, Sweat, Collins, Griffin, Bolin, Driggers, Revels, Baker, Pierce, Rogers, Bartlett, Kersey, Hunt, Clark) were members of Virginia tribal communities. Further genealogical research will either confirm or deny this assertion.

Among researchers supporting Virginia origins for Lumbees, is Michelle Lawing (1978) who traces Lumbee families to the border region of North Carolina and Virginia. Robert Thomas has examined Lumbee oral tradition and the continual recounting of Virginia origins (1980). Other researchers have studied the evolution and experience of the Lumbee community after the Revolutionary War, but add little to its understanding before that time (Blu, 1980; Sider, 1993).

My research points to a potential geographical origin of Lumbee surnames that is east of the Cheraw's villages along the Dan River. The Native communities in which these names occur are all non-Cheraw communities and the majority are from the Algonquian language family. This paper will review Lumbee surnames that match those in each tribe. The two lists below identify Lumbee surnames. The first derives from the Lumbee petition and is an abstract of names from the 1790 Federal Census of Robeson County. The census identifies all as free persons of color as no category existed for Indians on the 1790 census. The second list is

an abstract of surnames of persons who identified as Indian in the 1900 Federal Census. Lists referenced from years other than 1790 or 1900 are from reservation censuses and allotment records, and should not be confused with these Robeson County, North Carolina records.

1790 Free Persons of Color for Robeson County

Hammonds	Lockileer	Hunt	Stableton	Ransome
Cumbo	Revil	Brooks	Oxendine	Kersey
Carter	Chavers	Braveboy		

(Lumbee River Legal Services, 1987)

Self-Identified Persons as Indian for Robeson County (1900)

Allen	Caulk	Hardin	McLean	Strickland (Stricklin)
Ammanuel	Catter	Hagan(s)	McAllister	Sealy
Baker	Chavas (Chavis, Chaves, Chavous, Chavus)	Hammon(d)s	McGirt	Simeon
Barnes	Clark	Harris	McLaughlin	Smith
Barton	Coats	Hatcher	McMill(i)an	Spaulding
Bell	Collins	Henderson	McNeil	Stuart
Berry	Conner	Hodge	Mercer	Sweet (Sweat)
Black	Cox	Howard	Mitchell	Tadlock
Blanks	Cumbo	Huggans	Moore	Thomas
Blue	Cummings	Hunt	Morgan	Thompson
Borgden	Davis	Jackson	Owens	Ussury
Bowen	Dees (Deese)	Jacobs	Oxendine	Wariax (Warriax)
Brayboy	Demory	Johnson	Peavy	Watson
Brewington	Dial	Jones	Porter	Weatherly
Brigman	Driggers	Kirby	Ransom	Wilkins
Brooks	Edens	Lamb	Ratley	Williams
Broylen	Edwards	Lambert	Revels	Williamson
Bryant	Evans	Lee	Roberts	Wilson
Bullard	Faulk	Lenon	Rodgers	Winn
Bullock	Field(s)	Locklear	Rowell	Wood(s)
Burnett	Freemen	Lowery	Rozier	Woodell (Woddell, Woddle, Woodle)
Burns	French	Loyd	Sampson	Wright
Byrd	Godwin	Lucas	Sanders	Young
Campbell	Goins	Marnes	Sanderson	
Canady	Graham	Maynor (Manor)	Scott	

(DeMarce, 1992)

Comparing these two lists reveals an obvious expansion in the diversity of surnames of persons who considered themselves to be Indian in 1900 and those enumerated as Free Persons of Color in 1790. I will be comparing both the 1900 list and the 1790 census with Virginia Indians' surnames from the seventeenth to early nineteenth centuries.

The tribes in Virginia with English surnames in this period are as follows: Nottoway, Meherrin, Chickahominy, Pamunkey, Mattaponi, Weyanoke, Wicocomoco, Saponi, Tuscarora, Gingaskin, and Metomkin. Comparing names for these tribes with English names found among the Lumbee from both the 1790 Robeson County census as well as the 1900 census yields the following:

<i>Weyanoke</i>		<i>Lumbee Match</i>	
Pierce	1710	Pierce	(post 1900)
<i>Wicocomoco</i>		<i>Lumbee Match</i>	
Paptico	1710	none	
Vesey	1713	none	
<i>Saponi</i>		<i>Lumbee Match</i>	
Bowling	1742	Bolin	(post 1900)
Collins	1742	Collins	(1900)
Ervin	1728	none	
Griffin	1742	Griffin*	(post 1900)
Irvin	1728	none	
Irwin (Irvin)	1728	none	
Isaac	1742	none	
Mack	1728	none	
Sauno	1728	none	

*(post 1900 cite from Gingrich, 1989)

<i>Pamunkey</i>		<i>Lumbee match</i>	
Bolling	1700	Bolin	(post 1900)
Collins	1830	Collins	1900
Rosen	1708	none	
Sampson	1748	Sampson	1900
Tawhaw	1708	none	
West	1677	none	
<i>Nottoway</i>		<i>Lumbee match</i>	
Bartlett	1808	Bartley(?)	1900
Edmunds	1808	none	
Green	1710	none	
Rogers	1808	Rogers	1900
Turner	1808	none	

<i>Meherrin</i>		<i>Lumbee match</i>	
King	1727	none	
Major	1710	none	
Querro	1712	none	
<i>Gingaskin</i>		<i>Lumbee match</i>	
Baker	1816	Baker	1900
Bingham	1831	none	
Carter	1819	Carter	1790, 1900
Collins	1824	Collins	1900
Drigghouse (Driggers)	1831	Driggers	1900
Francis	1823	none	
Jeffrey	1815	none	
Povell	1831	none	
Press	1816	none	
Stevens	1862	none	
West	1813	none	
<i>Chickahominy</i>		<i>Lumbee match</i>	
Mush	1704	none	
Perry	1704	none	
<i>Metomkin</i>		<i>Lumbee match</i>	
Revell	1688(?)	Revil, Revels	1790, 1900
<i>Tuscarora</i>		<i>Lumbee match</i>	
Blunt	1713	none	
Jumper	1707	none	
Mason	1707	none	
<i>Seneca</i>		<i>Lumbee match</i>	
Gils	1713	none	
<i>Unknown Tribal Affiliation</i>		<i>Lumbee match</i>	
Bif	1711	none	
Brown	1717	none	
Fri	1712	none	
Ridle	1767	none	
Williamson	1727	Williamson	1900
Tucker	1710	none	

There are fourteen distinct surnames with tribal affiliations that match surnames in the Lumbee community in either 1790 or 1900. This seems to be a substantial number, given that there was only one identifiable Cheraw surname matching a name positively linked with a Lumbee family. Proximity between the ancestral territory and village sites of the Cheraw and the contemporary Lumbee

settlements seems to be the rationale behind focusing on the Cheraw, rather than Virginia Algonquins as the founders of the Lumbee community.

However, a similarity in names, many of which are common English names in the Southeast, cannot be taken as proof that these are the same families in different regions and at different times. But, Lawing's study tracks the introduction of these names and the Lumbee families associated with them in the coastal border region of North Carolina and Virginia (Lawing, 1978) and DeMarce identifies these names in Tidewater Virginia (predating their appearance in North Carolina). Together, this evidence gives greater credence to a Virginia origin. My research goes further and links some of these families with specific Indian communities in Virginia. Lastly, Lumbee oral traditions as documented in Dial (1996), Thomas (1980), Lowery (1960), and Barton (1967), all place the Lumbee point of origin north and east of the contemporary Lumbee settlement.

DeMarce asserts that the Lumbee surnames of Goins, Chavis, and Manuel (Emanuel) also originated from Tidewater Virginia (1993). Although my research has not yet tied these families to specific tribes, their origins in the same region of Virginia may indicate that they were part of the same Virginia Algonquin communities from which other Lumbee families originated, or that they in-married with these Indian lines.

Leaving Virginia

If the hypothesis is correct that many Lumbee families originated in Tidewater and south-central Virginia, why did they leave Virginia and their tribal communities? Oral tradition provides several reasons as do certain pivotal historical events. First, Lumbee oral tradition as documented in McMillan (1888) states that Lumbee families left the Tidewater region of North Carolina and Virginia because of their friendship with the white colonists. This alliance caused them to be chased south by other coastal Algonquians, eventually leading them into colonial Anson/Bladen County, North Carolina (Thomas, 1980). Also, some Lumbees interviewed in the late nineteenth century pointed out that by siding with the colonists in the Tuscarora war, they were given the lands of the Tuscarora after their expulsion from North Carolina. Several Lumbees said their grandparents used to reside in cabins near Lake Mattamuskeet, which was part of the Tuscarora and Mattamuskeet Reservations. However, given their historic animosity toward the Tuscarora and their confederates, they chose to move further south (McMillan, 1888).

Weeks, the first historian to study the Lumbee, places their migration into the Lumbee River basin as early as 1650 based on his interviews with the elder members of the community in the nineteenth century. Weeks speculated that the removal of the "Croatan" community was linked with the growth of the Jamestown colony (Weeks, 1891). Lowery (1960), Barton (1967), and other Lumbee proponents of the Lost Colony theory¹ do not think that the Lumbee came from Tidewater Virginia, but do recognize Tidewater North Carolina origins for them.

Events in Virginia that played a role in Native dispersal included a series of wars between the Powhatan confederacy and the English (1610-1646), enslavement of Indians, and a continual loss of legal rights (Rountree, 1993). Native communities were further depopulated through the use of the indentured servant system. As a result of this system, many Native youth left the community, some never to return to Native society (Rountree, 1993).

Many of the tribes, such as the Nottoway, Occaneechi, and Saponi, suffered continual depredations from the Iroquois. They found their lands had been taken over by colonists after they returned from Fort Christiana (a settlement and trading center created by the Virginia colony to keep the peace among the various tribes as well as to Christianize and civilize them through education).

In the aftermath of Bacon's Rebellion (1676) and having been forced out of their traditional territory, many of the Saponi and Tutelo migrated to join their former enemies, the Six Nations. By the 1740s, Saponi using traditional hunting methods of firing the woods were being arrested and tried in Virginia courts for killing the hogs of colonists (Grinnan, 1895). Thus, the Virginia legal system was operating to drive the Saponi and other tribes out of central Virginia. The Saponi, like other tribes of the region, utilized parts of North Carolina for their southern range, and moved south after the dissolution of Fort Christiana.

Following the War of 1812, the termination of the Nottoway and Gingaskin reservations in 1813 and 1824 led to another potential cause for out migration of Natives from Virginia. The Nottoway's overseers petitioned the Virginia assembly to divide their land, asserting that the Nottoways no longer desired to live communally. The Gingaskins were terminated after constant complaints by their neighbors that they were no longer Indian due to continual association with free blacks. These complaints started as early as 1754 in Northampton County and usually correlated with recommendations to force all free non-whites from the county altogether. Also, their white neighbors were quite bothered that the Gingaskin men refused to farm like European men using draft animals and plows, but instead continued to follow the traditional Algonquin hunting, fishing, trapping, and clearing land. The Gingaskin women were responsible for horticultural crops until their reservation's termination (Rountree and Davidson, 1997).

After termination, each Gingaskin family was given an allotment. Most were encouraged to sell their allotments and leave the region, although most did not until the Nat Turner Revolt of 1831. Northampton County went so far as to collect funds to forcibly relocate "free persons of color" from the county. Gingaskins would have fallen into this category (Rountree and Davidson, 1997). These "free persons of color" also were subject to legislation that limited their ability to gather in groups and own firearms if any African ancestry could be proven (Weslager, 1983). Most of the matches for Lumbee surnames come from this group (Collins, Baker, Carter, Drigghouse [Driggers]).

Like the Gingaskins, the Nottoway were affected by Virginian's views of persons of color. However, unlike the Gingaskins, many were still found in the region of

their former reservation until late in the nineteenth century. This is not to say that all Nottoways remained in the area (Rountree and Davidson, 1987). There are two matches found in Nottoway surnames who were on the 1808 Nottoway census and the 1900 federal census of Indians in Robeson County (Bartlett, Rogers). Relatives of the Nottoway, the Weyanokes, were already living in Northeastern North Carolina and could have aided Nottoways leaving their community (VMHB, Vol. 8).

This process of community splintering and disintegration had an effect other than the disappearance of Native communities. It led to the creation of new communities. An example of this was the Pamunkey Reservation and what became a secondary, dependent community at Mattaponi which was formed of displaced Indians from other groups of the old Powhatan confederacy.

I maintain that some of these persons did leave their Native communities, but the only change in their ethnic identity was in the eyes of the new state in which they resided. It is my hypothesis that some Gingaskins, as well as members of the Pamunkey, who drifted to the "New Kent fringe" Indian community left Virginia. They drifted further south and became members of what would become the Lumbee community; passing along their sense of Indian identity and group cohesion. Members of disassociated groups such as the Metomkin of the eastern shore also joined this migration. Many Natives were already living among non-Indians (VMHB, Vol. 3:158), and having entered indentured servitude, lost ties to their home communities. This could have made the move out of Virginia easily.

DeMarce identifies a general migration pattern from Virginia to North Carolina, from the Eastern Shore and Richmond south to coastal North Carolina and eventually the North and South Carolina border region that is now home to the majority of Lumbee families. This path was most commonly used during the early eighteenth century (DeMarce, 1993). It is also my contention that this migration did not stop in the eighteenth century. These Gingaskin, Pamunkey, Metomkin, and detribalized Indian families followed this path, and joined with what was left of the Cheraw community.

Like the Revolutionary War, the Civil War led to displacements of people. Native people were to be no exception to this process. Some Chickahominy and Rappahanock went as far north as Canada to avoid being embroiled in this conflict, where they took refuge with a band of Ojibway (Rountree, 1990). Just as some took refuge with northern Indians, it is possible that during and following the Civil War, families no longer part of their tribal community ventured south to join what would become the Lumbee. It might be safer to be part of a community than to settle as isolated families of color. This was a continuation of "spin-off."

A Case Study

To show the potential for this line of research, I provide additional analysis of one particular family from whom numerous descendants of the contemporary Lumbee descend, and whom also have clearly identifiable Virginia roots. What does not

seem clear from a strict reliance on the genealogical records is the Native identity of this family. The family is the line of Thomas Kearsey. Thomas Kearsey was an indentured servant of Benjamin Harrison's Surry County household in the early eighteenth century, and identified as a mulatto (Heinegg, 2000). He moved to Chowan and Bertie County, North Carolina in 1720 and 1726. He purchased land, had children, and grandchildren. Most were identified as mulatto in various tax and court records. Perhaps his most famous descendant in the Lumbee community was Celia Kersey, also known as Sally. She was the wife of James Lowrie Sr., from whom the Lumbee Lowries descend. Thousands of contemporary Lumbee are the descendants of this marriage.

Celia became famous as a result of her famous, or infamous, grandson, Henry Berry Lowrie (the son of her son, Allen). In numerous accounts during the Lowrie War, Celia Kersey is described as a "half-breed" Tuscarora (Norment, 1895). Her father was Thomas Kearsey, who lived in Edgecombe County, and was the son of Thomas Kearsey, formerly of Surry County Virginia. Heinegg uses the genealogical information of her father to discount any Native ancestry on the Kearsey line, because her father and grandfather were both identified as mulattos. He attributes whatever Native ancestry she possessed from her mother, who to this day is still unknown. Many other historians have also accepted this interpretation, without looking closely at the identity of the Kearsey paternal line.

A Fresh Look at Thomas Kearsey

As stated earlier, Thomas Kearsey was a mulatto indentured to Benjamin Harrison on his Surry County, Virginia plantation. On the surface, this tells us little about Thomas or his background. Given the ambiguous definition of mulatto in Virginia colonial law and practice, all we really know is that he was not white. However, when we start placing Thomas and his employer in their proper historic context, more clues appear as to his origin. First, we know that Benjamin Harrison was a well-known Indian trader who dealt extensively with Saponis, Nottoways, Meherrins, and Weyanokes. Also, the Weyanokes were reported to have cabins in his orchards on his Surry County plantation until 1667, following a conflict between the Tuscarora and Weyanoke (Binford, 1967).

Additionally, Surry County was the English boundary region of the area reserved for Indians following the last Powhatan-English War. The Weyanokes were known to have a village, Warekeck, in the Blackwater River region as early as 1653, which bordered on Surry County, and later established the village of Musketank in Surry County itself and resided there as late as 1676 (Binford, 1967). Their last village, identified as a Weyanoke town, was abandoned in 1693 on the boundary of the Blackwater, perhaps at the earlier site of Warekeck (Binford, 1967). After this last Weyanoke town in the Blackwater was abandoned, they are thought to have gone to join the Nottoway on their reservation. We do know that in 1710, the daughters of Captain Pierce, a Weyanoke headman, were living in Nottoway terri-

tory (*Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 1900). The surname “Wynoak” appears in Nottoway records from 1792-1808, giving the impression that they were still somewhat distinct at this late date (Rountree, 1979). Pierce does not appear as a surname, leading to one of two conclusions. This line died out, or relocated.

Another strong connection that predisposed the Weyanoke to relocate to Tuscarora-controlled territory is their pre-contact relationship with the Tuscarora as ambassadors for Powhatan’s chiefdom (Rountree, 1993). In fact, the Tuscarora queens (clan mothers) are on several occasions documented as entreating with them to relocate to North Carolina. This begs the question, what did the Tuscaroras have to gain by the relocation of the landless Weyanokes to their homeland? A couple of possibilities seem evident. First, this was an infusion of additional Native people in a region that was coming under increasing pressure from the English (pressure that would eventually result in the Tuscarora Wars). The Tuscaroras, although clearly an Iroquoian people, had other Algonquin speakers as allies, and recruiting others is not surprising. Second, the Weyanoke were Algonquins that had already had extensive dealings with the English, and knew their customs fairly well, particularly as a result of the experience of indentured servitude. They also had connections with English traders in Virginia, who might be more willing to supply the Tuscarora with guns and powder as opposed to the English traders who lived in their area. Perhaps they were viewed as potential go-betweens with the English. In any case, by the mid-eighteenth century, Weyanokes were very much a part of the Tuscarora political structure, as is evidenced by their names on land deeds (Powell, 1758).

Given this historic information on the Weyanoke, Surry County, and the Blackwater region, it becomes apparent that Benjamin Harrison had extensive geographic contacts with Indians, and even had a band of Weyanoke residing on the same plantation where Thomas Karsey was indentured. The “when” of Thomas Karsey’s indenture also fits with Weyanokes being closely affiliated with Harrison’s plantation. Dispossession and their sad political status made it more likely that Weyanoke boys would be indentured to friendly, prosperous, powerful whites. However, this still does not allow us to reach a definitive identification of Thomas Karsey. The simple presence of Indians on and around the plantation does not mean he was one of them, simply because he was not white. More evidence is needed.

This evidence comes in the form of names and linguistics. After his indenture ends at the Harrison household, Thomas Kersey Sr. relocates to the colony of North Carolina where he purchases land. Here, he is near the former Weyanoke settlements at Ahoutsky and Cotchawesco in Chowan County, on Meherrin Creek (Binford, 1967). It is also assumed that his wife was from this area. One of their daughters is named Mary Poheigan/Poheigon. This unusual name is not an English name. In fact, it bears close resemblance to surnames and place names found among the Mohegan-Pequot dialect of southern New England. Pohegnut, Paugunuck, Pahegansuk, are all names found that are of clear Algonquin affiliation (Hughes,

1976). In these dialects, it refers to an area of cleared land, or a bare hill. While the meaning of Poheigan in the various southeastern dialects spoken in Virginia could have varied from its more northerly meanings, it clearly is an Algonquin-based word. This evidence, while not absolute, does point to one of several possibilities. First, the mother and father of Mary were not Native, but had a strong affinity for Algonquin Native people, and named their daughter accordingly. Second, the mother, father, or mother and father of Mary were of Algonquin extraction. If the first of these possibilities were the true scenario, it would probably be the first documented case of African-descended peoples giving their child an American aboriginal name.

The next generation of marriages between the Kearsey families that may shed light on this naming pattern involves the brother of Mary, Thomas Kearsey Jr. According to numerous recorded documents written in the nineteenth century, his daughter, Celia Kersey, was half-Tuscarora. We already have shown that Thomas Kearsey Sr. was most likely not Tuscarora, thus meaning that his wife must have been. How does this marriage shed information on the probable identity of Thomas Kearsey? During this same time, several land deeds record the selling or leasing of Tuscarora land to neighboring whites. The signatories on many of these deeds bear English names, as well as ones of obvious Algonquin extraction, such as "Netops," which means friend or ally in Narragansett and Pequot-Mohegan (Williams, 1936). These Algonquin-surnamed individuals were obviously considered part of the Tuscarora community. Thus, the marriage between a Weyanoke man, Thomas Kearsey, Jr., and a Tuscarora woman seems less unusual. It also points that Mary Pohaigan was not an anomaly in the Native community during her time, but would be outside this Algonquin/Tuscarora context. Her niece, Celia, is identified as a Tuscarora woman who married James Lowrie Sr. Again, this identification is not surprising. Given the matrilineal nature of the Tuscarora and the landless status of the Weyanokes, it should be no surprise that the identity of Celia Kearsey is in terms of her mother rather than her father's tribal ancestry. Still, it is unfair to neglect the male Kearsey tribal affiliation.

Thomas Kersey, Jr.'s land seems to have been directly across the river from King Blount's town, one of the Tuscarora settlements on the Bertie County reservation (Seib, 1983). His wife could easily have visited her relatives across from her home. Additionally, he petitioned for a pension from the colony of North Carolina as a result of his service in the French and Indian War. He served as a scalp hunter with Captain Hugh Waddell's North Carolina regiment (Lawing, 1977). We know that there were both Tuscarora and Nottoway auxiliaries in this conflict with North Carolina and Virginia regiments. Given his occupation as a scalp hunter, we can infer that he was most likely affiliated with one or both of these Native auxiliary units. He received a pension as a result of a serious musket injury. His wife, according to oral tradition, was linked to the Tuscarora, and they resided near the Tuscarora reservation at King Blount's Town. Lastly, his sister carried an Algonquin surname, Poheigan. Little clarity comes from these facts, other than he was a non-white

person with possible linkages to two Native communities, both through marriage and birth. This does not preclude African ancestry, but points to a cultural affinity that is linked with Native peoples in Virginia and North Carolina.

Drowning Creek, North Carolina

Thomas Kersey, Jr., is documented as being in Edgecomb County between 1733 to 1761. His first land grant in Bladen County was issued in 1764 on Jacob Swamp, east of Drowning Creek. He first settled in the Peters Bay (Wisharts) Community in 1772 and 1775. This community consisted entirely of Kersey, Cumbo, and and Freeman families (Seib, 1983). Given the continuing land pressure on the Tuscarora reservation, it is not surprising that he and his family would look to relocate to a less populated area.

In the early eighteenth century, the region of Drowning Creek/Lumbee River was considered a frontier, or Indian country. Waccamaw and Cheraw villages are shown on the banks of the river. The Cheraw, while maintaining two parcels of land on which to hunt, were diminished in both numbers and territory (Lumbee River Legal Services, 1987). The Cheraw had also carried on chronic warfare with the colony of South Carolina during the eighteenth century and had made frequent trips to Richmond to purchase powder and guns to use in this conflict. This provided a context for interaction with the coastal tribes of Virginia. The Metomkin, Gingaskin, Pamunkey, and others had compelling reasons for settling in this region including its geographic isolation, the presence of a Cheraw Indian community, and the possibility of kin relationships with earlier settlers (Revels, Carter). It is my contention that Thomas Kersey, Jr., and his siblings were individual Weyanokes participating in this southward movement.

Weyanokes and Siouans

While it may seem to be of only passing interest that William Chavis may have left the Weyanoke community and connected with a Saponi community, this single incident deserves a second look when linguistic analysis points to this connection occurring at other places and other times. For example, some scholars point to the village named Wianee in the Catawba-Wateree Valley. This village shows up in the early-to-mid-eighteenth century in the Catawba Nation (Rudes, 2004) and its name points to the possible presence of Weyanokes much further south and west of where the Kersey family would ultimately reside. Other linguistic traces found among the contemporary Lumbee may be the name "Lumbee" itself. According to Rudes (2004), what is now Lumbee may have started as Arambe, a village name identified by the Spanish in 1520-1522. The Catawban version of this word would be Yambee or Yamba. In Woccon, a Catawban dialect spoken near the Neuse River, it would show up as Ranbee, and potentially the source of the modern term "Lumbee". Ranbee/Yanbee translates as "river bank" (Rudes, 2004). Lumbees interviewed in

the early twentieth century identified this as the original name of the river, and a fitting one given its Siouan interpretation (Knick, 1992).

Additionally, some of the descendants of the Kersey/Poheigan families have phrases of Siouan passed down as part of an oral tradition. Reverend Dawley Maynor, interviewed by Robert Thomas in 1976, relayed to Thomas that his grandmother had taught him the phrase “epta tewa newasin” and that she told him that it meant “I love you Jesus.” Thomas believed this to be a Saponi phrase, which for him made sense, given that many ancestors of the contemporary Lumbee lived for a time in central North Carolina. However, more recent linguistic analysis look more Catawban in nature. “The second and third words look like the Catawba words for I (tewa) pray (newasin) and the first word appears to be the New Testament Greek word Hepta “seven,” which is used in the New Testament as a reference to the Holy Spirit, but also occasionally to Jesus. The prayer could have been brought to the Lumbee by missionaries from the Methodist church established in Fayetteville in the late 1700s.²

This personal story and oral tradition suggests Siouan roots, when the same individual’s genealogy may tie him to ancestors with Algonquian connections. This is indicative of the type of complexity that is at the root of the formation of the contemporary Lumbee community. It also reveals the type of information that may be found given careful analysis and sifting of data.

Conclusions

Some Lumbee family lines have documented origins beyond the current homeland of the Lumbee. Many of these family names have been shown to originate from Tidewater North Carolina and Virginia (Lawing, 1978; DeMarce, 1993). Also, the Lumbee community may not have resulted from one migration from Virginia. Instead, this process of “spin-off” described by Rountree could have added Native families from Virginia Native communities to the Lumbee community until the late nineteenth century. The appearance of new names of self-identified Indians speaks to community expansion; it is my contention that some of this expansion resulted from the introduction of new Indian families.

If only one source of information is used, such as census records, it is easy to conclude that none of the families examined in this paper were part of the racial and political category known as Indian. All show up as “mulatto,” “free persons of color,” “black,” or “white” in various federal and state census records. Only after reviewing records that enumerate or list Indians for specific purposes (such as land allotments, land sales, or reservation rolls) it becomes apparent that many of these family names associated with the Lumbee community could have had tribal origins beyond the borders of North Carolina. When researching the family roots of Native communities, it is not sufficient to examine only the immediate area in which the contemporary Native community resides. Doing so will result in incomplete research and leave sources unexplored that provide the necessary

information to link them with specific tribes. In addition to going beyond the local area, the researcher must look for those Indian specific sources to begin to understand the links between Indian families before and after termination or loss of political status.

With the southerly migration of these family names, ethnic identification appears to have been replaced by a "racial" one. Instead of being identified as Nottoway, Saponi, Pamunkey, or Gingaskin, they were identified as white, black or as free persons of color depending on time and location. This lack of consistency could have many explanations. First, the racial composition of this group could be shifting with each passing generation. The Virginians maintained that the Gingaskins were at least as much African as they were Indian by the early nineteenth century. In the minds of the Virginians, this racial mixture meant they were no longer Indian, although they still maintained a community, political organization, and practiced a subsistence pattern that, to the chagrin of the Virginians, still reflected their Algonkian cultural roots (Rountree, 1990).

Another potential explanation for the evolving racial designations is the changed political geography. In Virginia, these families were members of distinct political communities that had separate political rights to certain territories that varied from that of whites and blacks, at least until their reservations were terminated. Others left their reservations behind to cast in their lot with other Native people and as they crossed the line into North Carolina, they lost their peculiar political status and associated entitlements. Rather than being part of a separate political community, they became part of the free colored population. North Carolina had no particular reason to care what their ethnic identification was, as long as they did not pose a threat to safety of the state. In other words, there was no ethnic affinity recorded in the North Carolina records because it was irrelevant to those records. A clear example of this occurred in the state of Delaware, where a man named Levi Sockum was listed as Indian during the reservation period, and later as a free black after the termination of the reservation (Rountree, 1997).

Areas for Further Research

This paper is just the preliminary groundwork for a much larger undertaking. Several obvious flaws exist with the conclusions of this paper. First, without significant genealogical research, there is no definitive connection between the Virginia Indian families and contemporary Lumbee families that carry those same names. However, given the definitive links done by Lawing that take many of the Lumbee families to the border region of North Carolina and Virginia, it would be unfortunate if this trail were not followed further.

Notes

1. The Lost Colony theory is a belief that the current day Lumbee are the descendants of the Hatteras and survivors of Sir Walter Raleigh's Roanoke colony on the Outer Banks of North Carolina. The colony, composed of over two hundred adult men and women, vanished. Only the word "Croatan" was found carved in a tree at the site of their settlement. There is much debate as to the ultimate fate of these colonists.
2. The Methodists never missionized the Catawbias, who instead were missionized first by Baptists and later in the nineteenth century by Mormons (Rudes, 2004).

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