

**A CRITICAL ANALYSIS
OF THE SUMTER CHERAW INDIAN TRIBE'S
APPROPRIATION OF THE TURKISH PEOPLE'S HISTORY**

**(New Research Has Discredited Cultural Appropriation and
Helped Correct the Official Record of Sumter County Ethnohistory)**

By Glen Browder

**Prepared for Presentation
to Sumter County Genealogical Society
Sumter, SC
February 17, 2020**

ANNOTATION

(South Carolina Commission for Minority Affairs; Nov. 26, 2019)

The historical and ethnological backgrounds of numerous dark-complexioned families of Sumter County, SC, have until recently been matters of oral tradition and weak documentation. Some, who considered themselves of Native American ancestry, hailed ties to North Carolina Indians from the Revolutionary War era; and others, who considered themselves of Turkish descent, subscribed to a narrative of an Ottoman patriarch dating back to the same period in Sumter County.

The Native Americans (including some individuals who also were related and associated with the Turkish community) organized themselves as the Sumter Cheraw Indians early in the current century. They believed the Turkish people to be Native Americans who long ago adopted the ‘Turk moniker’ in order to avoid persecution by White authorities. Their application for tribal certification was approved by the SC Commission for Minority Affairs in 2013.

However, new research provided in a recent publication has demonstrated conclusively that the Turkish people of Sumter County originated from patriarch Joseph Benenhaley and constituted a separate, distinct community of their own for most of the past two centuries; and it would be erroneous for anyone to characterize the Turkish people as Native Americans or as part of any Indian Tribe recognized by the South Carolina Commission for Minority Affairs.

Therefore, the South Carolina Commission for Minority Affairs hereby acknowledges the history and heritage of the Sumter County Turkish community and adds this annotation to its official files regarding certification of the Sumter Tribe of Cheraw Indians.

CONTENTS

I.	INTRODUCTION.....	4
II.	CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF CULTURAL APPROPRIATION.....	7
III.	SOUTH CAROLINA LAW FOR TRIBAL RECOGNITION.....	10
IV.	OUR RESEARCH CONFIRMING THE TURKISH PEOPLE’S TRADITIONAL NARRATIVE.....	11
V.	STEVEN PONY HILL’S APPROPRIATIVE VERSION OF INDIAN-TURKISH HISTORY.....	21
VI.	SUMTER CHERAW INDIANS’ APPROPRIATIVE APPLICATION FOR TRIBAL RECOGNITION.....	56
VII.	SC COMMISSION FOR MINORITY AFFAIRS’ APPROVAL OF THE APPROPRIATIVE CHERAW NARRATIVE.....	76
VIII.	CONTINUING CONTROVERSY AFTER CERTIFICATION OF THE SUMTER CHERAW INDIAN TRIBE.....	82
IX.	SCCMA’S CORRECTION OF THE RECORD ACKNOWLEDGING THE TURKISH PEOPLE’S ETHNOHISTORY.....	108
X.	SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS.....	113
	POSTSCRIPTS.....	115
	REFERENCES.....	115

I. INTRODUCTION

The historical and ethnological backgrounds of the dark-complexioned Indian and Turkish families of rural Sumter County, SC, have always been matters of oral tradition and weak documentation. Those who considered themselves of Native American ancestry hailed ties to North Carolina Indians from the Revolutionary War era; and those who considered themselves of Turkish descent subscribed to a narrative of an Ottoman patriarch dating back to the same period in Sumter County. Unquestionably, some of each group shared mixed ancestry with the other group; and some outsiders—most prominently White Europeans—“married-in” during the early generations and at later times. But no one in either group could chart their ethnohistory very far beyond family genealogies.

That situation took a different and contentious turn early in the current century.

Some Native American activists organized themselves as the Sumter Cheraw Indians about fifteen years ago. They asserted that the “Turks” in reality are/were Native Americans who long ago adopted the “Turk moniker” in order to avoid persecution by White authorities. Essentially, they devised an epic tale incorporating the Turkish people as part of Cheraw history; and this account was vital to their application for tribal certification that was approved by the South Carolina Commission for Minority Affairs in 2013.

For the last decade, Dr. Terri Ann Ognibene, my co-author and a Turkish descendant, and I have been studying the fascinating story of her relatives. We have investigated not only their history (what happened to them in the past), but also their ethnology (the evolving culture of their past), in order to help them understand their heritage (who and what they are today as a result of that past). We have concluded that the Turkish people were indeed descended from an Ottoman Turk and they have constituted an enclosed, reclusive society of their own since the American Revolution. Those who married-in usually acculturated into the group known disparagingly by outsiders as the “Sumter Turks”; and only since the middle of the past century have these people been assimilating into broader society. We published our research in *South Carolina’s Turkish People* (University of South Carolina Press, 2018).*

* Our research was published—as a book entitled *South Carolina’s Turkish People*—by the University of South Carolina Press (2018). Two anonymous, professional experts reviewed our draft manuscript for USC Press as part of its consideration for publishing this book; and they pronounced it “original,” “complete,” and “accurate.” One reviewer wrote: “What the book accomplishes is a remarkable vindication of the establishment, persistence through centuries, and modern survival of a distinctive culture using historical research methods coupled with state-of-the-art DNA research. It is an example of the power of scholarship to provide answers to questions that few would imagine to have answers. To my mind this manuscript parallels emerging research in North Carolina on the Croatan Settlement. That group of colonists was ‘lost’ for centuries. The Sumter Turks have never been ‘lost’ but they certainly have been sometimes invisible and at other times an ethnic and cultural problem to be ignored. Cultural hegemonists who routinely hammer square pegs into round holes have been completely overthrown and

that event calls for acknowledgment and even celebration.” The other reviewer added: “This is an important work and for the most part is a workmanlike endeavor by two dedicated writers. The story is both convincing in its historical accuracy and in its relevance to modern southern history.”

*Two other distinguished scholars provided statements for inclusion on the published book-jacket. James L. Roark—Samuel Candler Dobbs Professor Emeritus of American History at Emory University—said: “Glen Browder’s analysis of documentary sources and Terri Ann Ognibene’s gathering of oral testimonies combine to make South Carolina’s Turkish People very likely the closest we will ever come to understanding the origins and tangled history of this elusive but persistent community in Sumter County” William R. Ferris—founding director of the Center for the Study of Southern Culture at the University of Mississippi and co-editor of *The Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*—wrote: “South Carolina’s Turkish People is a fascinating study that reveals a deeply moving story of families who maintained their identity for over two hundred years within the segregated worlds of rural South Carolina.”*

Additionally, throughout our project, we consulted recognized experts (who, just as in the case with the four historians cited above, were previously unknown to us) to examine our work and to make recommendations about how it could be improved.

For example, Michael Gomez, professor of History, Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies at New York University, wrote: “I think you have done extraordinary work in tracking down information regarding Joseph Benenhaley/Yusuf b. ‘Ali, and that you have clearly established the plausibility of his presence in South Carolina during this period.”

James Bindon, former chair of the Anthropology Department at the University of Alabama, wrote: “I think the report of the DNA results is well-stated and certainly is consistent with the Turkish hypothesis ... You have clearly done a great deal of work to untangle this mystery ... Congratulations.”

Wesley Taukchiray, a long-time ethnohistorian who compiled substantial information on the Sumter Indians and Turkish people for a report to the Smithsonian Institute in the 1970s, said: “You have proven Benenhaley was the Turkish progenitor and you have validated the oral history of that community.”

It did not take long for the Sumter Indians to realize that our project was a challenge to their version of history; and, even before publication of our book, some of them began attacking and misrepresenting our research in various forums.

Steven Pony Hill, a Native American author of the most outrageous rendition of Indian-Turkish history in this area, launched a pre-emptive attack on a Facebook group page (“You Might Be From Sumter, SC If You Remember...; May 4, 2017):

Mr Browder is preparing to publish a book “proving” the “Turks” of Sumter were “not Native American” but instead were a “flourishing Middle Eastern community.”

He has no idea the hornet’s nest he is kicking.

If you’re a guy with no blood connection to this community (other than being born in Sumter but living most of your life in Alabama) you better cross your t’s and dot your i’s with the research!

Unfortunately, from the conversations he and I have had, he didn’t even have the correct Scott ancestors, did not have any knowledge of the numerous “affidavits of Indian

ancestry” from the mid-1800’s, ignored the Oxendine, Deas, etc families of Robeson Indians who also married in, and claims to have “DNA evidence” but nobody we know provided him with this “evidence.”

Also, Claudia Benenhaley Gainey, who had compiled most of the 2012 Cheraw tribal application, posted the following comments excerpted from the same Facebook thread:

Browder has no right to be digging into our history anyway. He’s only doing it for notority and money. (May 4, 2017)

He’s really in the dark about who he is messing with. (May 4, 2017)

Anyone can write about what ever they want; but this guy is so SOS (stuck on stopid).. Does he really think he can come in here and make his version of our history his? If he had been a member of our community then I could see him asking questions; but he’s not and not quallified to write a book about us. He tried to friend me on FB and I didn’t want anything to do with him. I smelt a rat then. (May 10, 2017)

He is really dumber than I thought. He tried several times to engage me in conversation about our people. What a coniving snake. Let him hobo his behind down here; we’ll kick it back where it came from; lala land. (May 10, 2017)

Of course, this attack continued after publication of our book. For example, Steven Pony Hill, posted a warning for potential readers on our *Amazon.com* book page: “Because of the above discrepancies (easily independently researched and verified by anyone with an internet connection) the reader should view this publication with healthy skepticism and be warned that this book edits much historical documentation, and flatly ignores others, to promote a baseless hypothesis...” (Apr. 15, 2018). He also added a lengthy response to a *Smithsonian.com* article about our book, in which he claimed that “this publication fails to break any new ground, fails to include a mountain of historical documentation, and cherry picks much of the included information to fit the author’s narrative” (Sep. 24, 2018). I also received this Facebook threat from one Cheraw Indian, who shall remain anonymous for now: “You’re a liar and I have documentation to destroy everything you’ve said. I will Sue you for defamation of character” (May 6, 2018). *

** I will use a variety of in-text citations to reference source material throughout this paper. Most are conventional citations directing the reader to the Cheraw application, books, articles, reports, statutes, and other documentary material listed in the “References” section at the end of the paper. However, there are many cases where I will cite online comments that do not fit into conventional categorization, such as material from Facebook pages, electronic websites, and email messages.*

Judicial scholars generally hold mixed, uncertain, evolving ideas about legal rules dealing with the privacy of online sources such as social media; and there are no established standards among journalists for using this information. In fact, Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg and his lawyers have declared in recent years that there is no expectation of privacy because that medium is simply an electronic town square. However, most of us acknowledge the ethical question of whether such discussions should be considered part of the public or private

arenas; and the prevailing answer seems to be “It depends.” Therefore, after considering suggestions from several people affiliated with reputable institutions (including Poynter News University and the Center for Digital Ethics and Policy at Loyola University Chicago), I have devised guidelines that explain my use of online material in this paper. First, I will consider as public material any conversations on sites addressing the Indian-Turkish controversy, such as Facebook, that are open to general readership and responsive comments (as opposed to private discussions among a few close friends); second, I will quote comments made on sites such as Facebook by individuals whose posts convey the substance and spirit of the Indian-Turkish controversy; and, third, I will quote pertinent messages sent by those same individuals to my Facebook page.

I similarly will consider other internet sites relating to the Indian-Turkish controversy that are open to general readership/response to be in the public sphere. Also, I will consider electronic communications (such as email exchanges relating to the Indian-Turkish controversy) with individuals who occupy positions of governmental authority and who write in that capacity to be of public nature.

Finally, I will identify the name of each individual quoted when that person is a recognized Cheraw or Turkish leader or public figure who has spoken out in news media regarding this controversy. Also, I will quote the writers/speakers verbatim, with no editing for language and punctuation; and I will state the specific source and date of each quotation.

These competing Indian and Turkish claims represented very different versions of Sumter County ethnohistory. The Turkish people asserted—based on our 2018 book, their oral history, and personal experience—that they are people of Arabic descent and that their community has never been a Native American tribe. The Cheraw Indians continued to insist that they and most of the Turkish people are of Native American ancestry and history; they touted the certification of their tribal story by the South Carolina Commission for Minority Affairs in 2013 as official affirmation of their claim; and they attacked us and our research—professionally, personally, and viciously.

I decided that, sooner rather than later, I would have to confront this problem head-on. I was confident that we had properly researched and affirmed the Turkish people’s narrative; therefore, I set out to demonstrate that the Indians improperly appropriated Turkish history in their application and certification as the Sumter Tribe of Cheraw Indians.

In the rest of this paper, I will document that the Sumter Indians improperly claimed Turkish history as Cheraw history; and I will show how that flawed history achieved state certification. Most importantly, the combined research in this manuscript and our book will help resolve this strange and dramatic controversy in Sumter County ethnohistory.

II. CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF CULTURAL APPROPRIATION

Our 2018 book confirmed the Turkish people as a separate and distinct community of their own for the past two centuries. However, the Sumter Cheraw Indians continued to claim the “Turks” as Native Americans and argued that state certification in 2013 officially ordained their tribal narrative. Therefore, I designed a systematic investigation to document and expose the Indians’ improper appropriation of Turkish history.

Problem of Appropriation

“Cultural appropriation” can be defined very generally as one social group’s adoption and incorporation of elements of another group’s ways, traditions, and symbols. Such borrowing is often considered a benign act of normal interaction and evolution among societies. However, it sometimes constitutes improper appropriation, as when one culture purposefully, inaccurately, and disrespectfully claims elements of another culture for its own purposes. (For a variety of interesting and useful essays on this topic, see *The Ethics of Cultural Appropriation*, edited by James O. Young and Conrad G. Brunk, 2012.)

Cultural appropriation has engendered extensive discussion lately, as small ethnic groups protest encroachment by dominant societies on a wide array of issues. These debates sometimes focus on seeming trivialities such as foods and fashions; but the basic issue is that cultural appropriation involves sensitive matters of heritage and identity for originating peoples. Quite often, such transgressions target Native Americans, African Americans, and other people of color; however, the problem also has pitted vulnerable ethnicities against each other, as in the current controversy among the Sumter Indians and Turkish people.

The case at hand suggested an egregious example of improper cultural appropriation. To be specific, I suspected early on that the Sumter Cheraw Indians had simultaneously denied the Turkish people’s ancestry, disparaged their oral tradition, and laid claim to the group’s history in applying for certification as a Cheraw Indian Tribe.

Plan of Analysis

I approached this assignment as an exercise in “critical analysis,” an investigative style that involves more than simply attacking something you deem objectionable. This method of academic inquiry requires that one gather credible evidence—as thoroughly and rigorously and objectively as possible—in order to test the validity of an idea or thesis. (There are many online sources that deal with this academic method; for example, see “How To Write a Critical Analysis,” University of Washington, Tacoma; undated.)

More precisely, critical analysis is an effort to identify and explain how various aspects or elements of written documents and communications relate to an issue or question of concern to the analyst. In our case, that issue was cultural appropriation; or, to put it in question form: “Did the Sumter Cheraw Indians improperly appropriate the Turkish people’s history in their pursuit of state recognition as a Native American tribe?”

From the time we started the research for our book, I had routinely reviewed the Sumter Cheraw tribal application and noted what the Indians were writing/saying in other publications and on

social media. The initial objective was to find useful information and sources for our study of the Turkish community; also, I needed to be aware of and address complex, multicultural issues in our upcoming publication. However, I grew increasingly concerned about the overlap between the Indian and Turkish stories; and that changed the nature of my inquiry. For the past few years, I have closely monitored the Sumter Indians' written/online discussions about local ethnohistory; and I have collected data relevant to their thesis. In that process, I have found many "items of concern"—i.e., assertions of fact that supported Cheraw tribal recognition through exploitation of the Turkish story, including numerous such items with nonexistent, inconsistent, misleading, and even erroneous evidence and documentation.

I plan to address those items of concern in straightforward fashion in the rest of this manuscript:

- (1) I will identify and compile an extensive list of claims reflecting appropriative intent or effect, as drawn from various source materials of the past two decades;
- (2) I will evaluate each appropriative claim to determine whether it meets standard tests of internal/external validation—such as accuracy, consistency, and documentation. I also will add our research and historical material from other sources for comparison with those allegations.
- (3) My compilation/evaluation of these many claims, considered collectively, will reveal a pervasive pattern of historical misinterpretation and misrepresentation—i.e., appropriation—by the Sumter Cheraw Indians.

This manuscript identifies dozens of Cheraw assertions—some major, some minor, organized by source and topic—along with my responses; and interspersed in the discussion are many more comments by Indian, Turkish, and other individuals that add valuable information and flavor to the analysis.

This exercise is designed, of course, to answer the basic question of concern in this project; and the end product will be a documented picture of improper cultural appropriation. Eventually, too, this critical analysis will help end the bitter historical dispute in Sumter County.

Before analyzing serious flaws in the Cheraw story (as reflected in Steven Pony Hill's version of their narrative, the Sumter group's application for recognition, and the South Carolina Commission for Minority Affairs' certification of the Sumter Cheraw Tribe), it is important to understand the legal context within which this appropriation took place.

III. SOUTH CAROLINA LAW FOR TRIBAL RECOGNITION

The South Carolina Commission for Minority Affairs was created by the State Legislature in 1993; and its statutory operation has been amended several times. Among its powers and duties are to “determine, approve, and acknowledge by certification state recognition for Native American Indian entities.” It is also authorized to “promulgate regulations as may be necessary regarding State Recognition of Native American Indian entities.”

The Commission for Minority Affairs can recognize a group as a Native American Tribe if that group meets specific requirements as provided in Chapter 139, Commission for Minority Affairs, Article I, State Recognition of Native American Indian Entities (Statutory Authority: S.C. Code § 1–31–40). Here is the language of Chapter 139, with important “specific requirements” underlined.

- Reg 139-102 (D) defines a “Tribe” as: “an assembly of Indian people comprising numerous families, clans, or generations together with their descendents, who have a common character, interest, and behavior denoting a separate ethnic and cultural heritage, and who have existed as a separate community, on a substantially continuous basis throughout the past 100 years. In general, core members of the tribe are related to each other by blood. A tribal council and governmental authority unique to Native American Indians govern them.”
- Reg 139-105, lists the “Criteria for State Recognition” as: Native American Indian Tribe - requirements 1 through 9 must be satisfactorily met to achieve State Recognition. Requirements 10 and 11 are optional.
 - (1) The tribe is headquartered in the State of South Carolina and indigenous to this State. The tribe must produce evidence of tribal organization and/or government and tribal rolls for a minimum of five years.
 - (2) Historical presence in the State for past 100 years and entity meets all of the characteristics of a “tribe” as defined in R. 139–102 (D)
 - (3) Organized for the purpose of preserving, documenting and promoting the Native American Indian culture and history, and have such reflected in its by-laws.
 - (4) Exist to meet one or more of the following needs of Native American Indian people - spiritual, social, economic, or cultural needs through a continuous series of educational programs and activities that preserve, document, and promote the Native American Indian culture and history.
 - (5) Claims must be supported by official records such as birth certificates, church records, school records, U.S. Bureau of the Census records, and other pertinent documents.
 - (6) Documented kinship relationships with other Indian tribes in and outside the State.
 - (7) Anthropological or historical accounts tied to the group’s Indian ancestry.
 - (8) A minimum of one hundred living descendents who are eighteen years of age or older, whose Indian lineage can be documented by a lineal genealogy chart, and whose names, and current addresses appear on the Tribal Roll.
 - (9) Documented traditions, customs, legends, etc., that signify the specific group’s Indian heritage.
 - (10) Letters, statements, and documents from state or federal authorities, that document a history of tribal related business and activities that specifically address Native American Indian culture, preservation, and affairs.

(11) Letters, statements, and documents from tribes in and outside of South Carolina which attest to the Indian heritage of the group.

How does this legal context relate to the “Indian-Turk” controversy? The explanation is that the Sumter Indians had categorically and generically incorporated the Turkish people into their Cheraw tribal narrative and application while our book confirmed the Turkish people as a separate, distinct, enduring community of their own. In other words, the Indians inaccurately and disproportionately used material relating to the Turkish people’s history to document their Cheraw tribe, which seemed not only improper but also incongruent with statutory requirements defining a tribe as “an assembly of Indian people comprising numerous families, clans, or generations together with their descendents, who have a common character, interest, and behavior denoting a separate ethnic and cultural heritage, and who have existed as a separate community, on a substantially continuous basis throughout the past 100 years.”

I will begin my analysis with a review of our earlier research showing that the Turkish people constituted a separate, distinct, and enduring community of their own for the past two centuries.

IV. OUR RESEARCH CONFIRMING THE TURKISH PEOPLE’S TRADITIONAL NARRATIVE

Our investigation of the Turkish patriarch and his people was too extensive to incorporate fully into this paper. Therefore, I will summarize that investigation in the next few pages (as drawn, with some modifications, from *South Carolina’s Turkish People*, 2018). *

** I should explain the difference between “our research” and “my research” in this analysis. For South Carolina’s Turkish People (2018), Dr. Ognibene conducted most of the personal interviews; I conducted most of the historical research; and we collaborated on the narrative text. I conducted all of the new investigative research and wrote the text for “A Critical Analysis” (2020). I will commonly use “our research” to refer to either the co-authored book or a combination of that book and my critical analysis manuscript. I will use “my research” in a very few cases to refer to information compiled for this manuscript. Also, I will try to clarify the issue at appropriate points in this analysis.*

Analytic Model

We began by designing an analytic model that defined “the Turkish people” and guided our research on the Turkish community. This theoretical and operational framework consisted of seven propositions and two strategic methods for discovering the true story of the Turkish people.

First and most significantly, we asserted as our central proposition that the Sumter County Turkish family began, ancestrally, with Joseph Benenhaley, the original Ottoman Turk, during the early years of the American nation.

Propositions two and three were judicious elaborations of connectedness in the evolving community. We posited that Turkish lineage extended, mainly, to and through Benenhaley's descendants. Outsiders who married descendants thereby gained entry to the Turkish group; and being born to Turkish parents carried birthright inclusion.

Proposition four related to the ethnic makeup of the Turkish settlement in its formative years—and this historically involved racial connotations and practices. As already acknowledged, the original Ottoman Turk sat atop the familial line. White Europeans (the wives of Benenhaley and Scott) were part of the group from the beginning and others married in later; and some persons of partial American Indian descent married in during the first few generations. The Turkish people thus comprised a mainly dark-skinned gathering; however, Sub-Sahara Africans—whether runaway slaves or free black individuals—were not received in this community. Of course, the group became more diverse over time, especially during the twentieth century.

The fifth proposition was the reality of isolation in rural Sumter County for these people. Trapped by the social dynamics of southern history, most of them settled among relatives in the Dalzell area, and they were estranged from the rest of the county for almost two centuries. Furthermore, it seemed to be a case of mutual estrangement. The Turkish people were generally leery of outsiders, and they may have preferred living among themselves almost as much as they were spurned by the outside world.

The sixth proposition was the ordeal of discrimination. Many years of isolation and segregation engendered personal and systemic mistreatment of the Turkish people; and this abuse had deep, lasting, and oppressive impact on the Turkish community. This adversity kept them from realizing their potential, and many lived their entire lives as second-class citizens.

The seventh and final proposition was that Turkish people consciously identified with the Turkish community as an outcast society throughout their history. Whatever the reason—their self-perceptions, physical isolation, or treatment by the broader population—they mentally bonded and banded together.

We then employed two different but connected strategies in examining—and confirming or denying—these propositions. First, we analyzed countless documents relating to Turkish history, with the discussion organized around the thematic question: “Who are the Turkish people of Sumter County?” Second, we asked the Turkish people themselves to talk with us personally about Turkish history, with the comments reflecting their thematic answer: “We are the Turkish people of Sumter County.”

Our research findings reflected this analytic framework and were presented in a summary section of the book, as follows:

“The Traditional Narrative Is Confirmed”

This assignment necessitated an exceptionally broad and creative strategy, intense research, and constant processing of disparate documents and data; and it produced results—the mystery was solved.

When we started this investigation, we doubted that we would be able to resolve questions about Joseph Benenhaley and the history of the Turkish community. We were very aware of the doubts and disparagements expressed in other forums and throughout many years; and we wondered whether we would find anything of value for today’s Turkish people.

But we had confidence in our analytic model and personal commitment. If there were anything out there that could confirm or deny the traditional narrative, we had a plan for resolving the issue and we were driven to do so. We devised logical propositions about Turkish history and culture, and we employed sound strategies in exploring and testing those propositions. We diligently gathered and systematically scrutinized countless historical documents; we discovered previously unknown or unavailable material; and we conducted innovative analyses of data from public and private sources. Equally important, we interviewed real, live Turkish persons of all ages. As is demonstrated in this manuscript, they substantiated our research about Turkish history; they made available important documents that they had treasured among themselves for generations; and they talked, personally and passionately, about the human side of the Turkish experience. Each of these efforts contributed to an increasing feeling that we were on the right track.

We hereby absolutely endorse the traditional narrative as passed down through generations. Of course, that narrative has been amended and embellished along the way. However, our judgment is that the body of evidence presented in this section weighs in heavy favor of the long-cherished story of the Turkish people.

We base this judgment on seven findings that we consider collectively convincing.

Historical Documentation

1. In the first place, colonial and state governmental documents show that some individuals of Mediterranean/ Middle Eastern/North African origins found themselves in strange circumstances in South Carolina during the latter half of the 1700s, just as did Joseph Benenhaley. US Census documents certify his presence in the Dalzell area in 1810 and 1820; and Thomas Sumter’s 1815 deed and survey plat confirm Benenhaley’s ownership of land where and when the Turkish people began their community. Finally compelling, authoritatively and emotionally, are the letters of Matilda Ellison Benenhaley, who was well positioned to have learned about his circuitous journey from the Mediterranean, to slavery in the Caribbean, to service in the American Revolution, and to settlement in the Carolina backcountry. These historical documents lend circumstantial plausibility, official certification, and powerful personal testimony to the narrative of the mysterious Ottoman Turk.

Benenhaley Patriarchy

2. Dramatic new evidence supports our designation of Joseph Benenhaley as patriarch of the Turkish people. Matilda's letters and General Sumter's legal documents point to Benenhaley as the founding father of the communal family; and just as important, our genealogical research shows his strong and sustained role as progenitor of the lineage. Benenhaleys comprised slightly over half (51 percent) of the individuals on our master list of Turkish citizens who lived in the community during the nineteenth century; and, similarly, a slight majority (51 percent) of deceased persons in the graveyards of Long Branch Baptist Church and Springbank Baptist Church—which have been attended by congregants who were born and died in the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries—bore the Benenhaley name at some time in their lives. Joseph Benenhaley clearly predominates over any other figure in the history of this community.

Turkish Ancestry

3. We are especially impressed with recent scientific data indicating Turkish lineage in this community. We have acquired DNA reports for several of Joseph Benenhaley's descendants, including descendants of direct paternal linkage, descendants with blood of both the patriarch and outsiders who joined that community, and descendants who left that area without mixing their blood with that of later members of the Turkish community. These subjects allow us to consider ancestry from several different perspectives. Most important, this genetic analysis is congruent with the notion of varying but significant Mediterranean/ Middle Eastern/North African origins among six of the eight reports of living descendants. This was never a family of singly sired consanguinity; other groups—particularly white Europeans and Native Americans—entered the community over time. Overall, however, genetic analysis complies with the claim of Mediterranean ancestry; and the Ottoman Turk's bloodline demonstrably impacted these people throughout the period of the traditional narrative.

Subcultural Ethnicity

4. A fourth supportive factor is that extensive historical reporting and a few personal writings—such as Eleazer Benenhaley's biography about growing up in Dalzell—have authenticated this ethnic subculture. Our investigation has documented that the community of mainly dark-skinned people was founded by the Ottoman Turk, and it was nurtured by a nexus of patriarchy, blood, marriage, color, isolation, discrimination, and identity. The Benenhaleys began their secluded existence at the beginning of the 1800s and others joined them over the years. These huddled families—mainly the Benenhaleys, Oxendines, Rays, Hoods, Buckners, and Lowreys—assumed a common identity as an outcast group, and they kept to themselves for many generations in rural South Carolina. The Turkish people neither blended openly and prominently into mainstream society nor dissipated in the shadows as scattered refugees. They sustained themselves as the single clear case of an ethnic community that went its own separate way toward cultural isolation for almost two centuries. The community numbered about five hundred at its peak in the mid-twentieth century; and only in the past few decades have they begun assimilating into broader society.

Outside Testimony

5. Additionally, numerous accounts, news reports, academic analyses, and journalistic

profiles by outsiders attest to the narrative with stories about the history of the Turkish people. For example, two knowledgeable observers— Thomas Sebastian Sumter and F. Kinloch Bull, who lived and spent considerable time among Turkish people in the 1800s and 1900s—related the tale of Joseph Benenhaley and reported events, traditions, and folkways of this unique society. Their writings indicate that, in many ways, Turkish lives, days, and activities were like those of other southerners in rural areas; but in everything they did or hoped to do, there was always the reality that Turkish people were different and precluded from the full blessings of American democracy.

Self-Identification

6. Of special importance as an argument for the traditional narrative is the matter of self-identification and self-definition. The Turkish people themselves have provided witness to who they are and were over many years. They have consistently asserted themselves as Caucasians of Arab descent, or white people of Turkish background, to past writers and to us in recent, in-depth interviews. Some now are reconsidering their origins; however, as demonstrated in numerous documents and public statements, the members of this community generally considered and still consider themselves as the Turkish people of Sumter County (and they have always been singled out as such by other segments of the broader society). It is hard to deny a people's right to claim their own cultural identity, especially if that group has suffered isolation and adversity throughout most of our country's history.

Absence of Convincing Contradiction

7. The final point in favor of the traditional narrative is simply that no evidence has been presented convincingly contradicting that narrative. Some early critics faulted the oral history; but their criticisms were based on inappropriate presumptions and incomplete information. Others have offered interesting, alternative notions about the community, supported by their own sentiments, oral traditions, and various records; but their notions and sentiments and records do not withstand scrutiny. The collective information presented in this discussion depicts a community of “the Turkish people” that existed for two centuries; and that narrative is a fact of history that stands without serious challenge.

Therefore, our opinion—based on the aforementioned documents and other evidence—is that we have compiled the true history of the Turkish people of Sumter County and their traditional narrative has been validated.

To summarize, we now know—based on solid evidence, reliable sources, and logical reasoning—that Joseph Benenhaley was a dark-skinned Caucasian of Mediterranean origins, an Ottoman subject most likely from North Africa. Somehow—arguably through the slave trade—he made his way to the New World. During the American Revolution, he served General Thomas Sumter, perhaps as a scout or maybe as a wheelwright, in South Carolina. After the war, Sumter gave Benenhaley some land near Stateburg, and the general vouched for his status as a white man. Benenhaley was the patriarch of the familial enclave and his bloodline dominated in that community. Other surnames and bloodlines entered the established family of “Benenhaleys”; however, they considered themselves, collectively, as Turkish people. For many generations, they charted a difficult course, marked by isolation and adversity, in the Carolina

backcountry.

It is true that the narrative has evolved and this community has changed over the years. However, the results of this investigation show that it has been wrong for critics to disparage their culture as “so-called Turks.”

Dealing with the Indian Issue

The local community was in the midst of an “Indian-Turkish” debate as our investigation wound down; and here is how we addressed the controversy in our book:

Seeking information relevant to the Indian matter, I went to the South Carolina Commission for Minority Affairs in Columbia to review the petition for tribal certification filed by the Sumter Band of Cheraw Indians. There were slightly over one hundred petitioners, including some whose surnames have been identified with the Turkish community (twenty Oxendines and seventeen Benenhaleys). After signing a Freedom of Information Act request, I inspected all 1,474 pages of material included in the application and certification. I copied and pored over many pages for months, all the while comparing their claimed history and genealogy with our research and the Turkish traditional narrative.

Eventually, I came to a simple and clarifying conclusion. The Benenhaley crowd and the American Indians of Sumter County traveled an entwined, conjoined course, with some ancestral links, in this area since the Revolutionary War. However, contrary to the Cheraw application, the Turkish people endured as a distinct, subcultural community of their own for the past two centuries.

Conjoined Lineages

United States Census records and various historical accounts allow us to trace these two lineages in rural South Carolina back to the early history of our nation. (For examples of these sources, see Bull, *Random Recollections*, 1986; Federal Writer’s Project, *Pockets in America*, late 1930s; Gregorie, *History of Sumter County*, 1954; Hodge, *Handbook of American Indians*, 1912; McPherson, “Report,” 1915; Nicholes, *Historical Sketches*, 1975; Oxendine, *Oxendine Census Records*, 1997; Sider, *Living Indian Histories*, 2003; Sumter, *Stateburg and Its People*, 1920; and White, *A History of the Turks*, 1975.)

According to these sources, Joseph Benenhaley, presumably from the Ottoman Empire, settled his family in Dalzell on land given by General Thomas Sumter after Benenhaley’s service in the American Revolution. Obviously, this was not a purely Turkish endeavor, since both his first and second wives were White Europeans and their children married outsiders. Those early years have been chronicled by relatives of General Sumter, who grew up in the area and around the Turkish people (Bull, 106-107; and Sumter, 43-45).

Later generations established themselves as White people of Turkish descent in a secluded enclave with curious folkways. Some commentators cast them as backward people of uncertain origin (for example, Federal Writers’ Project, 1-4). Later, they were described more compassionately as simple, law-abiding citizens who stuck together and clung to an

unconfirmed narrative about their history (Gregorie, 467-470; and Nicholes, 136-138).

At about the same time and continuing through subsequent decades, several families who claimed mixed Native American and White European ancestry began relocating from North Carolina to Sumter County and other locales in South Carolina. Some of the North Carolinians appear to have associated themselves with people of comparable background who lived in Privateer township, which was about twenty miles south from Dalzell. The Privateer Indians were known generally as “Red Bones,” a term often used in derogatory manner; they also were sometimes identified as the “Smiling” or “Smilings” Indians and the “Goins Family” or “Goins Community” of Sumter County. Their mutual association would not be surprising since, according to research for the United States Senate and the Smithsonian Institution, the Sumter Red Bones were “a similar people” and “evidently of similar origin” and shared some of the same names as the Indians from North Carolina, particularly those from the Robeson County area. Over time, there developed some contention among factions in the Privateer area; and that may have contributed to their ultimate dispersal and disappearance about the turn of the century. (See Hodge, 365; McPherson, 7; and Sider, 74-78, 171; also consult *Oxendine Census Records*, “Furman Papers,” and “Redbone Nation” website).

The relationship between the Turkish and Indian people has always been unclear and debatable. General Sumter’s great grandson, Thomas Sebastian Sumter (1852-1934), grew up in the Stateburg area; and he insisted that the two groups never mixed. “It has been unfortunately, but nevertheless true,” he wrote in the early 1900s, “that on account of their inherited dark complexions, they [the Turkish people] have been confused with that class of people known as Red Bones, scattered about in North and South Carolina, but this is entirely a mistake.” He also added, erroneously: “They have never made any alliances, except with white people, as all of us know who are conversant with their history” (*Stateburg and Its People*, p. 71).

Charles James McDonald Furman (1863-1904), a respected history enthusiast, spent his life observing the Red Bones, who lived near his plantation in Sumter County; and he too claimed that the Indians kept to themselves. Writing in the 1890s, he estimated their number at about 70-80, with their own school and church. He identified Tom Gibbes as the “spiritual head” of the group; and he listed their names as Chavises, Gibbeses, Goinses, Smilings, and some others. He considered them a peculiar gathering, of uncertain heritage, and “worthy of ethnological research.” He wrote that “While these people are classed with the negroes, their features and color as a race show unmistakable evidence of white or Indian blood, or both”; and “as a people, they are if anything, more apart to themselves than are the Hebrews of our State” (“Furman Papers”).

The most complete inquiry into the nature of the reclusive Turkish group in Dalzell—until our project—was a compilation of material for the Smithsonian Institution by contract scholar Wesley DuRant White, Jr., almost a half-century ago (*A History of the Turks*, 1975, unnumbered pages). White struggled, just as had others, to understand these mysterious people; and he raised as many questions as answers. But his collection of documentary material proved to be a very useful resource for our study.

Most importantly, White concluded that “Benengeli seems to have been a native of Turkey, and of Arabic descent”; and he acknowledged that Joseph was founder of the Dalzell community. He identified some of the key Turkish families as “Benenhaleys, Hoods, Oxendines, Rays, Scotts, and others.” The Benenhaleys accounted for an overwhelming majority of his references, which derived from census, legal, and journalistic documents; and the rest of his statements mainly cited Oxendines.

White seemed just as uncertain as many other analysts about the geographical and cultural relationship between the Turkish settlement and the nearby Indians. In one section of his report, he wrote: “The two communities never had anything to do with each other, any more than if they lived on different planets”; but, as will be noted shortly, he observed in another section that some of the Privateer group provided “Indian ancestry” to the Turkish community.

Specific information in White’s collection may seem trivial and confusing; but his general observations were historically consequential, such as his findings of Benenhaley dominance and Native American presence in the community. Perhaps most important for our project was his characterization of the Indians in the Dalzell group as a peculiar ancestral phenomenon: “They were probably American Indians not belonging to any tribe and completely acculturated ... the only group that I know of of that description in the United States today who have absolutely no tradition whatever of Indian ancestry.” Instead, he said, they traced their origins to “founders of the community from Turkey” and called themselves “Turks” or “white Turk-Americans.”

Writing under his Native American name two decades later, Wesley DuRant Taukchiray and co-author Alice Bee Kasakoff revisited the ethnic issue of the Sumter County community (“Contemporary Native Americans,” 1992); and these scholars decided to exclude the Turkish people from their study of American Indians in South Carolina. They explained: “We do not discuss groups that some outsiders have speculated have Indian ancestry, such as the Sumter Turks near Dalzell ... The Sumter Turks do not concur that they are Indian and have said that they consider themselves to be ‘white Turk Americans’” (73).

Both the Indians and Turkish people in Sumter County had endured a world of unpleasant realities; and they struggled to survive as isolated settlements. Considering their proximity—and passage of the Indian Removal Act in 1830—it seems logical that certain members of the Indian group began drifting toward Dalzell and eventually married into and became part of the Turkish community, which had been recognized as White people decades earlier. (See discussions of this idea in Hobson, et al, *The People Who Stayed*, 2010, 4-9; and Steen, “An Archaeology,” 2012.)

Eventually, in the early decades of the twentieth century, most of the Privateer settlers dispersed, with many returning to North Carolina, where they hoped to merge with the Indians there and attend Indian schools established by the state. (See Gross, *What Blood Won’t Tell*, 2008, 118-125; Sider, 2003, 69-90; and Taukchiray and Kasakoff, 1992, 76.) The Red Bone Indians faded away as a distinct community; and today there is little documentary

or physical evidence, other than a few surnames and tombstones, showing that they ever lived in this part of the country.

I could find no evidence of the most common Red Bone surnames (Chavis, Gibbs, Goins, and Smiling) in the first century of the Turkish community's existence. However, census and genealogical reports indicate that roughly a dozen Oxendines, mostly women, married into the Dalzell group; and a few other individuals with names sometimes associated with Native American lineage—such as Scott, Buckner, Lowrey, Deas, and perhaps others—entered that Turkish settlement in the 1800s.

Benenhaleys and Oxendines

Closer analysis of the forces that were at play generations ago also provides insight and specific details about how the Turkish community's two most prominent families—the Benenhaleys and the Oxendines—may have hooked up back then.

Our analysis in the rest of this chapter will confirm the Benenhaleys as a “home-grown” family in this part of South Carolina ever since the patriarch appeared in the late 1700s; here, in a page or two, I want to cover how the Oxendines arrived here and became part of the Turkish community.

A variety of sources provide an overview of Oxendine history in this area. For example, census and genealogical records indicate that the Oxendines were among the families who began relocating from Robeson County, NC, to the Privateer area of Sumter County in the late 1700s and early 1800s; a few Oxendines began mixing and marrying into the Turkish people in the 1830s and 1840s; and several Oxendine families were settled near Stateburg by the 1860s.

Also, the previously cited McDonald Furman—who based his work on personal observation—mentioned Oxendines along with the Chavises, Gibbeses, Goinses, and Smilings among surnames of the Privateer group in the 1890s; and an undated, hand-written document in his collection showed a “Jessey Oxendine” as a member of the Bethesda Baptist Church, attended by the Red Bones, in that area (“Furman Papers”).

Additionally, a 1915 North Carolina Supreme Court case included trial testimony placing Oxendines among the Privateer Indians back in South Carolina (Sider, *Living Indian Histories*, 2003). Most Sumter County Indians had left Privateer and gone back to the Robeson County, NC, area in hopes of attending the new public school for Indian children; but officials there challenged their right to attend that institution. What is important for our discussion is an exchange during the trial in which one of the South Carolinians mentioned Oxendines in the Privateer settlement: “Upon the direct examination of W.W. Goins ... counsel for plaintiff asked the witness ... ‘What did Dr. Furman (meaning the same Dr. Furman who was a [White] neighbor of the plaintiff while they were living in Sumter County, SC) do toward establishing the fact that you were Indian people?’ “ Goins replied: “He traced up our origin and found out that we—our parents went from North Carolina, some of the older ones, and there was a lot of names, Oxendine, Hunt, Chavis, and Goins ... he having

traced them up first give me a little light and that was what I found out about it” (75).

Finally, Wesley White—whose examination of various documents has already been referenced—concluded that some of the Privateer Indians, specifically the Oxendines, had merged into the Turkish community in Dalzell generations ago. Writing in the 1970s, he said: “Since the largest family today (after the Benenhaleys, who seem to constitute at least half of the group) appears as that of the Oxendines, I will consider the Indian ancestry among the Sumter Turks today to have come from them.” White also noted that there were “no Indian customs left and no members of entirely Indian ancestry” among the Oxendines in the Turkish community (*A History of the Turks*, 1975, unnumbered pages).

These historical findings raised an interesting and important point for our investigation. The Oxendines had established their physical presence and an Indian identity in this area before a few of them merged with the Benenhaleys. Therefore, while some Oxendines went on to become a core family of the Turkish settlement, not all of the Oxendines of Sumter County could be considered, automatically, as Turkish people; and resolving this issue was a complex challenge in my next task, attempting to identify Turkish individuals in this area during the 1800s. I decided that, during the first half of the century, it depended mainly upon if and when individual Oxendines married or were born into that community; however, due to extensive intermarriage and the vagaries of history and records, I included most Oxendine descendants mentioned in connection with this group who had birthdays in the latter half of the century as members of that community (likely exaggerating the presence of that surname in my compilation). Such determinations would prove to be an arduous task; but it made sense to me. For the record, I employed the same strategy for the Rays, Hoods, Buckners, Lowreys, and other surnames in that inventory; but calculations for those families were relatively simple compared to the situation with the Oxendines.

Thus, it seems reasonable that Privateer may have been the geographical pivot point from North Carolina to Dalzell for the Oxendines; and the Indian Removal Act could have been the historical impetus for some of them marrying into the Benenhaleys. Isolation and adversity likely forged these and other family groupings together as a communal society centered in the Dalzell area in the late 1800s.

Ever since, the Benenhaleys and Oxendines have served as leading families among the Turkish people of Sumter County.

Enduring, Distinct Turkish Community

It is understandable that some members of the Turkish community now question the traditional narrative. Interestingly, too, some living members of this community enjoy dual or multi-cultural ancestries. Most can continue to assert, with confidence, their Turkish identity; others are free to celebrate their Indian legacy; and some undoubtedly will argue forever about jumbled heritages.

However, readers should understand that these findings do not negate the legend of Joseph Benenhaley or significantly alter the Turkish traditional narrative. The historical evidence

recounted in this book documents their separate, distinct history over the past two centuries.

Our research thereby identified a fundamental flaw in the Cheraw narrative and application. The Sumter Indians touted a single, continuous Native American tribe over the past two centuries; however, their own statements and data—when scrutinized—suggested different visions of community among the people of this area. Very significantly, a cross-check analysis of progenitors, surnames, locales, activities, and timelines cited in their application revealed at least two different cultural communities—the Indians and the Turkish people—doing different things, in different places, at different times, and with very little to indicate their commonality or connectedness as a single Cheraw community other than strained claims of such community. In fact, most of the Indians of Privateer Township had left Sumter County in the early 1900s; and many of those who remained married into the Dalzell community.

Clearly, different bloodlines mixed among the dark-skinned people of Sumter County; however, a full and accurate reading of the historical record belies the Cheraw tale of local ethnohistory. Our investigation of that record, along with the work of reputable analysts, demonstrates that Joseph Benenhaley was the patriarch of the Turkish people; and their group survived as a distinct community in rural South Carolina for two centuries. Thus, these continuities—persistent identity as a people of Arab descent and prolonged existence as a social subculture—stand as both historical realities and central foundations of the Turkish traditional narrative, regardless of whether and when some individuals of different ancestry entered or exited that community. The Turkish people were a separate, distinct, enduring community of their own; and their history cannot be used, opportunistically, as documentation of an American Indian tribe.

Our research in *South Carolina's Turkish People* (2018) confirmed the Turkish oral narrative; and it provided a very different picture of local history from what has been presented by the Sumter Indians. Here, for example, is Steven Pony Hill's version of Indian-Turkish history, along with my analysis of his appropriative claims.

V. STEVEN PONY HILL'S APPROPRIATIVE VERSION OF INDIAN-TURKISH HISTORY

Steven Pony Hill is a Native American author of the most outrageous effort at cultural appropriation. He presented his version of Indian-Turkish history in a brief chapter on “The Cheraw” (*Strangers in Their Own Land: South Carolina's State Indian Tribes*, published by Backintyme Press, 2010 and 2013) and in countless online postings.

Hill consistently and improperly appropriated the Turkish people's story in order to substantiate the Sumter Cheraw Indian movement for tribal recognition. His work was fundamentally flawed and typically undocumented or poorly documented; and he spent a lot of time attacking the research and statements of other people. As might be expected, some of his ideas and allegations ended up in the Cheraw application for tribal recognition.

I will not attempt to assess Hill's other work on Native Americans; but—drawing from our research in *South Carolina's Turkish People* and my research for this manuscript—I will rigorously challenge his claims and statements about the Sumter Indians and the Turkish people.

(Readers will note that some of the material presented in Section V and Section VI is repetitive; the explanation is that certain information was related to multiple parts of the manuscript. For assembled material/notes related to Steven Pony Hill's work, see Browder's Files on *South Carolina's Turkish People* at South Caroliniana Library in Columbia, SC. Also, see *South Carolina's Turkish People*, Steven Pony Hill's writings, and other locations in this manuscript regarding source material cited and uncited in the following discussion.)

Steven Pony Hill and Sumter County Ethnohistory

Hill expressed his interest in Sumter County ethnohistory this way: "The information I have gathered on the so-called 'Turks' is due to an attempt to locate the original ancestors of my Indian community here in northwest Florida. The only 'oral tradition' that exists in my family is that we originated from Indians. No one ever mentions our white ancestors (although it's obvious that we are far from full-bloods). I descend from the Isham Scott family and the James Moses family who lived in Sumter from 1810 to about 1820, after moving down from Halifax NC and then moving on to Florida." ("The 'Turks' of Sumter County are descendants of American Indians"; 2005) Then, over the next decade, he produced many writings appropriating the Turkish people among the Indians of Sumter County.

Hill apparently was closely involved with the Cheraw Indian movement from its beginning. Mandy Oxendine Chapman, one of the organizers and a former Chief of the Sumter Band of Cheraw Indians, stated in a 2015 Facebook discussion: "For the Record I did all the research in the beginning with lots of help from Steven Pony Hill. We got charted and started our Tribal Roll." ("The Sumter Band of Cheraw Indians"; Feb. 25, 2015) Also, Hill was listed as a living descendant on the application for certification filed in 2012 by the Sumter Cheraw Indian Band with the South Carolina Commission for Minority Affairs; and the "Sumter Tribe of Cheraw Indians Membership Roll" currently lists him as a member of that Facebook group. ("The Official Sumter Tribe of Cheraw Indians"; 2019) Finally, Hill posted a personal and emotional statement on a Facebook page in response to a debate over membership in the Sumter Cheraw Tribe: "I see a lot of comments regarding 'membership'...we must remember, and stress always, that it's CITIZENSHIP!!!! The Indian people of Sumter struggled to survive for over 200 years in a completely insulated community totally separate from other races...led by Indians...ran by Indians...there was no help from the county..no help from the state...no help from the Feds...This is not about 'membership' like it was the Boy Scouts or something...this is about being a citizen of a tribe...a community...an interwoven connection of families who banded together for survival..." ("The Cheraw Indians of Sumter County South Carolina and Florida"; Oct. 30, 2014)

The information presented here clearly shows that Hill personally identified with the Sumter Indians and had a professional arrangement with the group in their effort to document/certify their tribal history; and this relationship provides important background for examining some of his writings about Sumter County ethnohistory.

In the rest of this section, I will examine what Hill has written about Joseph Benenhaley, Benenhaley's descendants, Turkish cultural identity, Turkish community history, and his own Scott ancestors over the past two decades. I will present 25 "items of concern" illustrating how Hill improperly appropriated Turkish history, with responses to those items in italics. The first five items are major thematic claims that require detailed discussion. I will respond to each claim with "our research" and "other historical sources"; and I will pass judgment on these items of concern. The twenty remaining items are rather specific claims that can be handled with quick and simple responses.

1. Joseph Benenhaley

Hill appropriated Turkish history, initially and clearly, by declaring Joseph Benenhaley as one of several founders and core ancestors of the Cheraw Indians. ("The Cheraw," *Strangers in Their Own Land*, 2010; and online posts)

This single allegation was a monumental act of improper cultural appropriation, triggering and permeating controversy between the Cheraw Indians and the Turkish people.

Hill first cited Joseph Benenhaley as a central figure in the early Indian settlement in a 2005 Facebook post, noting that, by 1810, this "community had already spread roots in Sumter county under such individuals as Joseph Benehaley (a man of Arabic descent), Ridd Ammons, John Chavis, Robert Chavis, William Driggers, Obedia Hagan, David Ivy, Lucy Hathcock, Mary Locklear, Aaron Oxendine and Isham Scott (who were all persons of Indian descent migrating in from the Robeson NC area)...because Joseph Benenhaley was such an influential man in this community, they all eventually were given the label of Joseph's nickname....'Turk.'" ("Various American Indian Records"; 2005)

Hill then articulated his standard version of the founding of the Cheraw tribe in *Strangers in Their Own Land* (p. 43): "The core ancestors of the Cheraw Indians were 6 men who arrived in the area of High Hills circa 1804." He listed them as John Scott, Aaron Oxendine, William Deas, John Chavis, John Buckner (all of whom he described as Indians), and Joseph Benenhaley (whom he called a "Caucasian of Arab descent").

In a later Facebook discussion, Hill mentioned a somewhat different, more diverse, and disjointed assortment of founding surnames, with especially interesting conjecture about Benenhaley's history: "The community was founded by the Scott, Benenhaley, Oxendine, Chavis and Goins families. After the close of the Rev War General Sumter invited some of his former scouts to come live on his plantation. Several of the Scott family from the Catawba Rez did just that. A Moraccan Berber named Joseph Benehaley, who had served on

the side of the U as marines in the Barbary pirate campaign, traveled to America with Sumter's close friend Col. Eaton (who had led the Marines). Eaton visited Sumter and the general invited Benenhaley to also live on his lands. Several Indian blooded families moved down to Sumter from Robeson county circa 1805 (the Oxendines, Chavis, Goins) and these families intermarried heavily with the Scott and Benenhaley family. After the civil war the community was joined by a few other Indian men (Deas and Lowry's from Robeson and John Buckner) as well as some white men who married in (Hood and Ray)." ("Cheraw Indians of Sumter South Carolina and Florida"; July 28, 2013)

Curiously, while Hill often acknowledged Joseph Benenhaley's Arabic descent, he sometimes implied that Benenhaley may have been a Native American Indian.

For example, Hill once wrote: "The Benenhaley surname remains spelled almost exactly the same back to its roots among the Eastern Shore Algonquin speaking Indians of Maryland." He added: "I did find the following documentation that seems to support a Maryland origin for the Benenhaleys ... In 1790 a 'Sam Ben' (who is listed in the census 10 years later as 'Sam'l Benhnally') is listed in the census as an 'other free person' in Queen Annes, Maryland." ("The 'Turks' of Sumter County are descendants"; 2005)

Hill also implied that Benenhaley was part of an Indian migration from North Carolina to Sumter County. "By 1810 Halifax county was beginning to fill up with white people, and the Catawba tribe had leased off almost all of its land, and so, some of these Indians moved down to Sumter at the invitation of the General. Scott, Benenhaley, Driggers, Oxendine, etc. Indian families first appear on the records of Sumter, South Carolina in 1810, prior to that time they are identified as residing at Halifax NC, or on the Catawba lands." ("The 'Turks' of Sumter County are descendants"; 2005)

Hill obviously struggled with how to deal with this issue; however, he continued to include the original Benenhaley in his appropriative version of Cheraw history. As he reasoned, "Regardless of where Joseph Benenhaley originated or what his race was, he was only one man among ten other core ancestors who have undeniable documentation of Indian ancestry." (*Strangers in Their Own Land*; p. 46)

In retrospect, Hill's designation of Joseph Benenhaley as a founder of the Sumter Cheraw Tribe was a critical, risky allegation. I will now proceed with our research and other historical sources demonstrating that this decision was indeed an ill-fated act of cultural appropriation.

***Our research regarding
Hill's appropriation of Joseph Benenhaley***

The original Benenhaley made an attractive target for appropriation. He was one of the first dark-complexioned settlers of this area; several of his children married Indians; he produced bountiful progeny over the next two centuries; and his surname carried great

respect and influence among these people. Symbolically and practically, he would be a very valuable progenitor

However, it was a questionable exercise in ethnological linguistics to declare Joseph Benenhaley a founder of the Cheraw Indians. Our research (as presented in South Carolina’s Turkish People, 2018) showed that he was not an Indian—in fact, he was described by General Thomas Sumter’s great-grandson as a “Caucasian of Arab descent” He did not marry an Indian woman, and he fathered no Indian children; nor was there any record that he ever identified or aligned himself with the Indians. Since several of his children married Indians, some individuals among today’s Cheraw Indians can list him as an ancestral relative if they want to; and they can count some of his descendants as people of Native American ancestry. But they cannot claim him as a core ancestor, progenitor, or founder of their Indian tribe.

.....

Of course, the main reason why Hill and the Cheraw cannot claim Joseph Benenhaley as a founder of their tribe is that he was the patriarch of his own distinct subcultural community. Our research has demonstrated that he was the founder of the Turkish people—originating after the American Revolution and extending through several core families who identified with and immersed themselves into the Turkish community—during the formative generations of the 1800s.

While there is no indication of Ottoman culture (other than perhaps the “Benenhaley” surname) in the history of their community, the original Turk bequeathed to his lineage a lasting legacy of dark skin and social stigma. Consequently, a powerful subcultural experience—the nexus of patriarchy, blood, marriage, color, isolation, discrimination, and identity—shaped their historical existence as “the Turkish people”; and that experience continues for many of them today.

In the course of our investigation, we have discovered valuable new evidence regarding the original Benenhaley’s identity and place in the early Turkish community. A letter written by an authoritative source (who lived from the 1840s to the 1930 and married into the family) stated that Benenhaley was “an Ottoman,” who had been “bonded by the Spanish at sea,” and rendered “service with Gen. Thomas Sumter in the War or Revolution in exchange for a homestead”; and legal papers (dated during the 1800s) showed that the General had deeded Benenhaley land in the Long Branch area where the Turkish community originated and adjacent to the property which they later acquired and where they built their church.

.....

We also have documented the primacy of the Benenhaley surname among the six major families and 270 descendent individuals (whom we have identified as constituting the Turkish community during the 1800s). The Benenhaleys represented slightly over half (51%) of them, followed by the Oxendines (21%), Rays (8%), Hoods (5%), Buckners

(4%), and Lowreys (2%); and these families together accounted for 91% of the listed individuals who lived there during that first century.

Similarly, our analysis of interments in cemeteries of the two local churches that have served historically as places of worship for the Turkish people showed his legacy and their cultural connectedness from early times to the present. A majority of headstones in those graveyards bear the names of people who were either born Benenhaleys or married Benenhaleys.

Finally, we examined DNA reports for eight living Turkish descendants for insights regarding the ancestral origins of Joseph Benenhaley and the primary lineage of this community. These reports comply with hypothetical origins from a Mediterranean/Middle Eastern/North African progenitor, with substantial white European admixture, some evidence of Native American contribution, and no significant Sub-Saharan African linkages, at least during the formative generations of the 1800s.

.....

Our investigation provided persuasive information about and documentation of the ancestral role of Joseph Benenhaley as the Turkish patriarch. These findings supported Benenhaley's place of honor in Turkish history rather than, as Hill claimed, a founding figure in the Indian story.

Other historical sources regarding Hill's appropriation of Joseph Benenhaley

There are few sources of standard historical nature relating to Joseph Benenhaley (other than our book). Most references to this mysterious character consisted of legal papers, census reports, genealogical material, vital records, media stories, and countless passing citations.

.....

However, there were three individuals of some authority who wrote about Joseph Benenhaley; and their accounts provided interesting insights into his life. None of these writers ever met Benenhaley. But two of them lived in the area and knew the Benenhaley family in the latter half of the 1800s; and the other writer, an ethnohistorian, compiled a large amount of data on Benenhaley and the Turkish people in the 1970s.

For example, we discovered a fascinating series of letters from Matilda Ellison Benenhaley (1842-1936), who wrote the aforementioned account of Joseph Benenhaley's family. Matilda was a Black woman who married into the Benenhaley line. She never met Joseph Benenhaley; but she learned about him from his children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. Based on those conversations, she described him as "an Ottoman" who was captured by the Spanish on the high seas, sent to the Indies, gained his freedom, somehow made his way to Charleston, served in some capacity with General Thomas

Sumter, and settled in the Dalzell area on land given to him by the General (South Carolina's Turkish People, 2018; p. 78).

Perhaps the most prominent discussion of Benenhaley related to this project was provided by Thomas Sebastian Sumter (1852-1934)—great-grandson of General Thomas Sumter—who also never met Joseph Benenhaley but claimed to have known his widow as a young boy. The great-grandson included brief remarks in his memoir (Stateburg and Its People, 1920; pp. 43-45). He wrote that Benenhaley was a “white” man, a “Caucasian of ‘Arab’ descent,” who supposedly served as a scout with General Thomas Sumter in the American Revolution and raised a large family in the Dalzell area in the early 1800s.

The most complete inquiry into the nature of the reclusive Turkish group in Dalzell—until our project—was a compilation of material for the Smithsonian Institution by contract scholar Wesley DuRant White, Jr., almost a half-century ago (A History of the Turks, 1975). Most importantly, White concluded that “Benengeli seems to have been a native of Turkey, and of Arabic descent”; and he acknowledged that Joseph was founder of the Dalzell community. He identified some of the key Turkish families as “Benenhaleys, Hoods, Oxendines, Rays, Scotts, and others.” Specific information in White’s collection may seem trivial and confusing; but his general observations were historically consequential, such as his findings of Benenhaley dominance and Native American presence in the community. He characterized the Indians in the Dalzell group as a peculiar ancestral phenomenon: “They were probably American Indians not belonging to any tribe and completely acculturated ... the only group that I know of of that description in the United States today who have absolutely no tradition whatever of Indian ancestry.” Instead, he said, they traced their origins to “founders of the community from Turkey” and called themselves “Turks” or “white Turk-Americans.”

This was a meager historical record; but it characterized Joseph Benenhaley, variably, as an “Ottoman,” a “Caucasian of Arabic descent,” a “native of Turkey,” and founder of the Dalzell community. That record also mentioned Benenhaley’s relationship with General Sumter; it acknowledged that the Benenhaleys dominated the community; it noted that the Indians had “completely acculturated” into the Turkish group; and it indicated that they called themselves “Turks” or “white Turk-Americans.”

.....

These historical sources were consistent with our research on the Turkish people; and they conflicted with Hill’s claim that Joseph Benenhaley was one of the founders of the Cheraw Indian Tribe.

Our research and available historical sources disagreed considerably with Steven Pony Hill’s story. Most importantly, Hill could never explain his designation of a man of “Arabic descent” among the founders of an Indian community. He suggested that some of Benenhaley’s children married Indians; but that fact did not qualify this man as a founder of a

Cheraw tribe.

The individuals and families cited by Hill as early leaders of the dark-complexioned people of Sumter County—including Joseph Benenhaley and about a dozen others—appeared in this area in the early years; but, by his own words, they came from eclectic backgrounds and places. He referenced most of them as Indians and some of them as relatives; however, other than marriage and bloodline in some cases, he failed to explain or document connectedness as a cultural community among these individuals. Nor did he evidence how they constituted the founding of a singular tribe of Native American Indians.

My assessment was that Hill did not evidence or document his declaration of Joseph Benenhaley as a founder and core ancestor” of the Cheraw Indians; and our research indicated instead that Benenhaley was the Turkish patriarch. Accordingly, this discredited claim made many of Hill’s subsequent allegations erroneous and/or irrelevant.

2. Benenhaley’s Descendants

Throughout his writings and in online forums, Hill appropriated Joseph Benenhaley’s descendants—collectively known as the “Sumter Turks”—among the Cheraw Indians (“The Cheraw,” *Strangers in Their Own Land*, 2010; and online posts).

Hill declared early on that “The true history of the ‘Turks’, which can be verified by historical documentation, is that they are of American Indian ancestry from a group of Algonquin and Siouan speaking remnants who gathered at Fort Christianna on the Virginia/North Carolina border.” (“Various American Indian Records”; 2005)

Hill also offered this explanation for how Joseph Benenhaley generated an extended family of Indians. “If, indeed, Benenhaley was of Arabic descent, that still does not nullify the fact that some of his children intermarried with other families in the community who were of Indian descent, and generations later, the people in Sumter were all looked upon as persons of Indian descent, with an Indian school, and an Indian church...” (“The Turks of Sumter County, South Carolina”; 2005).

Hill also connected the “Sumter Turks” and the Indians through a mixed bag of other claims. For example, he once suggested that the term “Turks” covered numerous Native American family lines in this area who went by that label because Joseph Benenhaley was such a popular man that his nickname “Turk” was applied to all of them (“Various American Indian Records”; 2005). On another occasion, Hill stated as fact that his Indian ancestors—the Scotts from North Carolina—were the real founders of the community that became known as the “Turks” (“Patriot Chiefs and Loyal Braves”, 2005; “Historical Documentation of the Scott Family of Sumter County, South Carolina”, Mar. 31, 2006). Hill also said that the “Turks” plausibly originated from an Indian village called “Turkey Town” on the SC/NC border, hence the transition from “Turkey Town Indians” to “Turkey Indians” to “Turks” (“The ‘Turks’ of Sumter County are descendants”; 2005); and, finally, he suggested that the name “Turks” may have been mistakenly attached to the Sumter Indians by ethnologists

(“The ‘Turks’ of Sumter County are descendants”; 2005) or by local neighbors (*Strangers*; p. 43).

Hill dismissed the Turkish oral narrative as imaginative history: “Though known by the name ‘Turks’ ... the swarthy, clannish people were no more realistically ‘Turks’ than the Indian tribes detailed in previous chapters were ‘Brass Ankles.’ These copper-skinned, high cheek-boned people whose grandparents learned that they could gain equality under the identity of ‘Turks’ that they were denied as ‘Indians,’ have in the most recent generation begun to reclaim their rightful birthright as persons of Indian descent” (*Strangers*, p. 41). Later in that same account, he described the Sumter Cheraw Indians as “a large Indian-blooded populace formerly known by the derisive slur ‘Turks’” (*Strangers*; p. 43).

Furthermore, Hill offered this comment: “I believe the most relevant fact about the ‘Turks’ is to analyze the very essence of what made them considered different from the other residents of Sumter, SC. Were they discriminated against for being Arabic? Were their schools listed as separate Arabic schools? Were their churches referred to as Arabic churches by the local townfolk? The answer is obvious. A ‘Turk’ in Sumter was a person generally considered by the local townfolk to bear Indian blood, and lived separately geographically and socially from whites and blacks in the area.” (“The ‘Turks’ of Sumter County, SC”; 2005)

In Hill’s judgment and thesis, Joseph Benenhaley’s descendants are/were Cheraw Indians. But our research and several other sources told a different story.

***Our research regarding
Hill’s appropriation of Benenhaley’s descendants***

Our research attested to Benenhaley’s descendants as “the Turkish people” in much the same manner as it confirmed Joseph Benenhaley’s stature as patriarch of the Turkish community.

.....

*In the first place, I was confident that our project had put together a comprehensive picture of local ethnohistory—based on historical documents, legal files, media stories, genealogical reports, vital records, graveyard surveys, genetic analysis, personal letters and interviews—as presented in *South Carolina’s Turkish People*(2018). Our book demonstrated that Joseph Benenhaley and his descendants constituted their own distinct community—known as the “Turks”—for the past two centuries.*

While there is no indication of Ottoman culture (other than perhaps the “Benenhaley” surname) in the history of their community, the original Turk bequeathed to his lineage a lasting legacy of dark skin and social stigma. Consequently, a powerful subcultural experience—the nexus of patriarchy, blood, marriage, color, isolation, discrimination, and identity—shaped their historical existence as “the Turkish people”; and that experience continues for many of them today.

Also, our research on the families of this area closely complied with that ethnohistorical picture. It showed that Joseph Benenhaley and his Turkish group were settling in the Dalzell area in the late 1700s or early 1800s, at about the same time as the Indian-blooded people from North Carolina were settling in Privateer Township; and there was some intermarriage between the two settlements during the 1800s. Most of the Privateer Indians left the area in the early 1900s; and many of those Native Americans who remained appear to have immersed themselves among the Turkish people during the past century.

.....

Our research further confirmed Joseph Benenhaley's paternal impact on descendent generations of the small settlement of "Turks" during the 1800s and attested to his surname's continuing dominance among those families in the 1900s and 2000s.

We have documented the primacy of the Benenhaley surname among the six major families and 270 descendent individuals (whom we have identified as constituting the Turkish community during the 1800s). The Benenhaleys represented slightly over half (51%) of them, followed by the Oxendines (21%), Rays (8%), Hoods (5%), Buckners (4%), and Lowreys (2%); and these families together accounted for 91% of the listed individuals who lived there during that first century.

Similarly, our analysis of interments in cemeteries of the two local churches that have served historically as places of worship for the Turkish people showed his legacy and their cultural connectedness from early times to the present. A majority of headstones in those graveyards bear the names of people who were either born Benenhaleys or married Benenhaleys.

Finally, we examined DNA reports for eight living Turkish descendants for insights regarding the ancestral origins of Joseph Benenhaley and the primary lineage of this community. These reports comply with hypothetical origins from a Mediterranean/Middle Eastern/North African progenitor, with substantial white European admixture, some evidence of Native American contribution, and no significant Sub-Saharan African linkages, at least during the formative generations of the 1800s.

.....

This research produced real evidence and documentation supporting our thesis about Joseph Benenhaley's descendants and argued against the Hill's appropriation of Benenhaley's lineage to buttress his claims about a Cheraw tribal community.

***Other historical sources regarding
Hill's appropriation of Benenhaley's descendants***

I will repeat here what I reported previously, since it is relevant to the issue of lineage; and it does have some pertinence to the question of whether Joseph Benenhaley's descendants are/were "Turks" or "Indians."

There are few sources of standard historical nature relating to Joseph Benenhaley and his descendants (other than our book). Most references to this mysterious character and his descendants consisted of legal papers, census records, genealogical material, media stories, and countless passing citations of limited value in this discussion.

.....

However, there are a few individual accounts that give us interesting insights into Joseph Benenhaley and his lineage.

For example, we discovered a fascinating series of letters from Matilda Ellison Benenhaley (1842-1936), the authoritative source who wrote the aforementioned account of Joseph Benenhaley's family. Matilda was a Black woman who married into the Benenhaley line. She never met Joseph Benenhaley; but she learned about him from his children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. She described him as "an Ottoman" who was captured by the Spanish on the high seas, sent to the Indies, gained his freedom, somehow made his way to Charleston, served in some capacity with General Thomas Sumter, and settled in the Dalzell area on land given to him by the General (South Carolina's Turkish People, 2018; p. 78).

Perhaps the most prominent discussion of Benenhaley was provided by Thomas Sebastian Sumter (1852-1934)—great-grandson of General Thomas Sumter—who also never met Joseph Benenhaley but claimed to have known his widow as a young boy. The great-grandson included brief remarks in his memoir (Stateburg and Its People, 1920; pp. 43-45). He wrote that Benenhaley was a "Caucasian of 'Arab' descent," who supposedly served as a scout with General Thomas Sumter in the American Revolution and raised a large family in the Dalzell area in the early 1800s.

Thomas Sebastian Sumter's nephew, F. Kinloch Bull (1926-2004), related similar memories of growing up in Stateburg (Random Recollections, 1987). Bull, an eyewitness to Turkish life in the early 1900s, supported the legendary origin of that community; and he observed that "With their straight black hair and copper colored complexion, they looked like Turks" (105). He wrote that they had come down from Virginia with General Sumter about the time of the Revolutionary War; and he recalled them as farmers and laborers who liked to fish, hunt, and play poker. "In all they were a cheerful people," he said, "and with some a drooping mustache and fierce look belied a pleasant disposition" (106).

Contract scholar Wesley DuRant White, Jr., compiled a wealth of material for the Smithsonian Institution almost a half-century ago (A History of the Turks, 1975). White wrote that "Benengeli seems to have been a native of Turkey, and of Arabic descent"; and he acknowledged that Joseph was founder of the community in Dalzell. He identified some

of the key Turkish families as “Benenhaleys, Hoods, Oxendines, Rays, Scotts, and others.” Specific information in White’s collection may seem trivial and confusing; but his general observations were historically consequential, such as his findings of Benenhaley dominance and Native American presence in the community.

*Finally, the autobiographical writings of Dr. Eleazer Benenhaley told a moving first-person story about life among Joseph Benenhaley’s descendants in the twentieth century. Benenhaley, a lineal descendant and perhaps the most respected Turkish person alive today, was born in 1934 and has been deeply embedded in the community for most of his life. He has authored two brief publications, *Moulded Clay* (1983) and *An Analysis of Neophytes and Would Be Historians* (2008). Dr. Benenhaley has expressed complete confidence in the traditional narrative: “But as for me, I trust the oral tradition of my grandmother and those before her” (2008, 36) ... “Oral Tradition and family biblical records can have more creditability than records kept by those whose views are colored by bigotry” (2008, 22). Certainly, he has no doubts about who he is: “God knew what He was doing when He created me ... I have lived 73 years as being of Turkish descent. I have no desire to be anything else” (2008, p. 37).*

This historical record characterized Joseph Benenhaley, variably, as an “Ottoman,” a “Caucasian of Arabic descent,” a “native of Turkey,” and founder of the Dalzell community. That record also mentioned Benenhaley’s relationship with General Sumter; it acknowledged that the Benenhaleys dominated the community, which also included Native American Indians; it indicated that the Benenhaley descendants “looked like Turks,” and that Joseph’s living Turkish descendant has “no desire to be anything else.”

.....

These historical sources comported very well with our research on the Turkish people, much more so than with Hill’s claim that Joseph Benenhaley’s descendants were Cheraw Indians.

Just as with his claim about Joseph Benenhaley, Hill’s allegation and documentation regarding Benenhaley’s descendants were unconvincing and unacceptable. He never provided a complete, consistent, coherent, and documented account of how Benenhaley’s line and the many other lines interconnected and interrelated as a single, functioning, Native American community.

However, our research and other historical sources provide extensive evidence and support for Benenhaley’s descendants as a separate, distinct lineage—known as the “Turks”—over the past two centuries.

Hill and the Sumter Indians can claim Native American ancestry; and some can mark their past as relatives of and as fellow travelers with Joseph Benenhaley, his descendants, and those who considered themselves Turkish people; but his rendition of Cheraw tribal

background cannot be generalized or evidenced as the “true history” of Sumter County’s Turkish community.

3. Turkish Cultural Identity

Hill next attempted appropriation with a tale of shifting cultural identity—from originally Indian to Turkish and now back to Indian—among the mixed-blood people of Sumter County (“The Cheraw,” *Strangers in Their Own Land*, 2010; and online posts).

Hill did not elaborate extensively or often about historical identity conversion; but his statement in *Strangers in Their Own Land* was a dramatic postulation. “Though known by the name ‘Turks’ ... the swarthy, clannish people were no more realistically ‘Turks’ than the Indian tribes detailed in previous chapters were ‘Brass Ankles.’ These copper-skinned, high cheek-boned people whose grandparents learned that they could gain equality under the identity of ‘Turks’ that they were denied as ‘Indians,’ have in the most recent generation begun to reclaim their rightful birthright as persons of Indian descent.” (*Strangers*; p.41)

This claim was a central concept in Hill’s version of Sumter County ethnohistory. Actually, the notion of identity-shifting was not unusual for America of the 1800s, as Native Americans sought to avoid mistreatment by White society. But applying this historical fact to the Sumter County Indians/Turkish people was a different matter, as shown in our research and other historical sources.

***Our research regarding
Hill’s appropriation of Turkish cultural identity***

I found nothing of historical nature to indicate, as Hill implied, a tribal stratagem of re-identification for cultural survival or aspired equality as “Turks.”

Actually, the historical record (as presented in South Carolina’s Turkish People, 2018) showed that the Sumter Indians began departing this area in the late 1800s and most were gone by the early 1900s; apparently this exodus was a voluntary move to North Carolina to rejoin relatives and perhaps attend an Indian school that had been established by that state. Some Indians who remained married Turkish people; and others would do so in later years. Eventually, these Indians fully acculturated into the Turkish community.

.....

While there is no indication of Ottoman culture (other than perhaps the “Benenhaley” surname) in the history of their community, the original Turk bequeathed to his lineage a lasting legacy of dark skin and social stigma. Consequently, a powerful subcultural experience—the nexus of patriarchy, blood, marriage, color, isolation, discrimination,

and identity—shaped their historical existence as the Turkish people; and that experience continues for many of them today.

.....

We were able to collect documents of varied sort that supported Turkish cultural identification among Joseph Benenhaley and his descendants throughout their history in this area.

*The original Benenhaley apparently identified himself as a “Caucasian of Arab descent,” as reported by Thomas Sebastian Sumter (1917); and the Turkish community later described themselves as “Turks” according to Wes White, Jr. (1975) and as “white Turk Americans” according to Wesley Durant Taukchiray/Alice B. Kasakoff (1993). These people further self-identified as “Turks” in a 1930s newspaper ad (The Sumter Item, “Yesteryear”; 1992), as “Turk” litigants in their Federal lawsuit of the 1950s (Hood v. Board of Trustees; 1953-1961), and as individuals of Turkish origin in the 1980 US census (Allen and Turner, *We The People*; 1998).*

Numerous individuals have expressed pride in their Turkish ancestry, such as Julius Benenhaley’s statement in the 1960s that “I’m proud of my Turkish blood” (Trillin, “Sumter County, SC, Turks”; 1969) and Eleazer Benenhaley’s 2008 declaration that “God knew what He was doing when he created me ... I have lived 73 years as being of Turkish descent. I have no desire to be anything else” (An Analysis of Neophytes and Would Be Historians).

*Additionally, there is no reason to believe that the contemporary Turkish people are assuming Cheraw identity in mass. No precise research is available; but Tribal leader Ansley Ray, told a Sumter Item reporter in 2017 that there are about 275 Cheraw Indians, “plus a lot more that haven’t yet embraced their heritage” (Nov. 8, 2017). Discussions on social media and our interviews in the Turkish community convince us that most of the original families still consider themselves Turkish people and subscribe to the narrative of oral history. (For examples of social media discussion, see the occasional Facebook debates at “You Might Be From Sumter, SC If You Remember...”; and for our interviews, see our book, *South Carolina’s Turkish People*, 2018.)*

.....

Our research clearly contradicted Hill’s version of local ethnohistory.

Other historical sources regarding Hill’s appropriation of Turkish cultural identity

Fortunately, other sources provide credible information about these two groups; and these sources indicate that the cultural identities of the Indians and Turkish people defied Hill’s glib characterization.

.....

Useful insight can be discerned by consulting the work of Charles James McDonald Furman, Wesley D. White, and Alice B. Kasakoff, who compiled research on the two communities in the 1890s, 1970s and 1990s.

Charles James McDonald Furman, a history enthusiast held in high regard by professional ethnologists at the Smithsonian Institution, spent his life observing the Indians who lived near his plantation in the southwestern part of Sumter County. Furman authored numerous newspaper articles about the Indians, with whom he also had close personal relations in the latter half of the 1800s (“Furman Papers”). In a profile of James Edward Smiling, whom he described as “the patriarch” of the community, Furman noted that “I have often talked with this old man about his people, concerning whom he has given me a good deal of information.” Furman’s conversations and relationships with the group clearly informed his assessment of them as partial Native Americans. He wrote: “As a race, they bear considerable resemblance in their appearance to the Indians”; and “there is a good sprinkling of Indian blood” among them. He also said: “Redbone is their proper, racial name, and by this name they should be called.” It seems likely that Furman—who lived in the area, befriended the group, studied them for most of his life, and wrote extensively about their lives and ways—would have been aware and would have reported if the Indians had ever “passed as Turks” for survival; and he never made any mention of such identity games.

*Also, ethnohistorian Wesley D. White compiled the best collection of information and documents regarding the Turkish people (*A History of the Turks*; 1975) prior to our research. In his report to the Smithsonian Institution, White wrote that the Dalzell group considered themselves originally from Turkey. Parts of this package were somewhat confusing because it was difficult to determine exactly how specific comments related to which families in the area; however, the gist of his analysis was that some of those who resided in that community constituted a peculiar ancestral phenomenon. He said that they seemed predominately of American Indian descent; but, he said, they were “the only group that I know of of that description in the United States today who have absolutely no tradition whatever of Indian ancestry.” Speaking apparently and specifically of the Oxendines there, he wrote: “They were probably American Indians not belonging to any tribe and completely acculturated.” Instead, he said, they traced their origins to “supposed founders of their community from Turkey” and called themselves “Turks” or “white Turk-Americans.”*

Writing under his assumed Indian name two decades later, Wesley DuRant Taukchiray and co-author Alice Bee Kasakoff again addressed the ethnic issue of the Sumter County community (“Contemporary Native Americans”; 1992); and these scholars excluded the Turkish people from their study of American Indians in South Carolina. They explained: “We do not discuss groups that some outsiders have speculated have Indian ancestry, such as the Sumter Turks near Dalzell ... The Sumter Turks do not concur that they are Indian and have said that they consider themselves to be ‘white Turk Americans.’”

White/Taukchiray thus had concluded that the families of Native American descent had merged—absolutely and completely—into the Turkish people.

.....

Together, these historical sources contradicted Hill’s version of vacillating Indian-Turkish identity. Neither Furman nor White nor Taukchiray/Kasakoff insinuated anything about the fabrication of “Turk” identification as a convenient ruse that was switched “on” in the 1800s and “off” by Native Americans of Sumter County more than a century later.

The important point is that Hill attempted cultural appropriation by stating that the “so-called Turks” were originally Native Americans who at some point decided to reinvent themselves as “Turks” so that they could enjoy equal treatment. But he never provided any real evidence that the Sumter Indian/Turkish people long ago engaged in a calculated scheme of identity shifting to achieve equality.

On the other hand, our investigation has compiled considerable research showing that the Turkish people have consistently self-identified as people of Arab descent, for the most part, over the past two centuries; and the body of historical testimony weighs clearly against Hill’s appropriation of Turkish identity.

Thus, we can dismiss Hill’s allegation as interesting conjecture without serious merit.

4. Turkish Community History

Hill finally presented an appropriative version of history by stating the supposed Indian origin and character of the two settlements of dark-skinned people—Privateer and Dalzell—in Sumter County (“The Cheraw,” *Strangers in Their Own Land*, 2010; and online posts).

In *Strangers in Their Own Land*, Hill wrote: “As time progressed, the Indians of Sumter formed two communities, the Chavis, Gibbs, Goins, and Smilings near Privateer Township and the Benenhaleys, Buckners, Deas, Oxendines, and Scotts near Dalzell. Although the two hamlets were separated by about ten miles the two communities maintained social connections as several members of the Dalzell settlement appear on the records of the Bethesda Baptist Church at Privateer, the opposite is true in the records of the High Hills and Long Branch churches at Dalzell, and several children from Privateer attended school at the Dalzell school.” (p. 43)

Also, in a Facebook post, he wrote that, by the 1860s, the Indian community had “split,” with one group residing near the Manchester post office and the other residing near the Providence post office. “Each of these Indian communities had their own separate ‘Indian’ churches, but

both communities sent their children to the Dalzell Indian School.” (“Indianancestry101”; Feb. 22, 2014)

Additionally, he said, “Both of these small communities were called ‘Red Bones’ by their White neighbors, however the Chavis, Goins, and Smilings of Privateer eventually moved back to Robeson circa 1910 and the people at Dalzell began to be called ‘Turks’ by their neighbors.” (*Strangers*; p. 43)

This seemed to be a pretty straight-forward recitation of factual history—but our research and other historical sources showed that was not the case.

***Our research regarding
Hill’s appropriation of Turkish community history***

Our research produced an extensive body of research regarding the two communities in Privateer township and the Dalzell area of rural Sumter County (South Carolina’s Turkish People, 2018).

.....

The Indians and Turkish people congregated in relatively separate, reclusive settlements in the late 1700s and early 1800s.

The Indians were generally of mixed white European and Native American background, with eclectic ancestral surnames (including, by various accounts, the Chavises, Gibbeses, Goinses, and Smilings of the “Redbone” group at Privateer township, and the Oxendines and Scotts and others who came down from North Carolina and some of whom apparently associated themselves with that settlement or in the Dalzell area).

The Turkish people subscribed to an oral history of Arab descent, beginning with Joseph Benenhaley; and some white Europeans and Native Americans (primarily Oxendines) merged into their communal family. This latter familial group settled mainly in the Dalzell area. Undoubtedly, there were some connections between the two settlements throughout the 1800s.

The Privateer community disappeared in the early 1900s, some going back to North Carolina and others down to Florida; and those who remained likely merged with the Dalzell community. These people generally claimed to be “White people of Arabic descent”; and they have been called “the Turks” by locals for the past two centuries.

.....

This documented account completely defied Hill’s version of community history in Sumter County.

***Other historical sources regarding
Hill's appropriation of Turkish community history***

Fortunately, again, there are several other accounts of the Privateer and Dalzell settlements, which were located about fifteen-twenty miles apart in Sumter County.

.....

For example, Thomas Sebastian Sumter (the General's great-grandson who grew up in Stateburg during the latter half of the 1800s and knew some of both groups) wrote emphatically that the Turkish people were not Red Bones: "It is or has been unfortunately but nevertheless true, that on account of their inherited dark complexions they have been confused with that class of people known as Red Bones scattered about in North and South Carolina, but this is entirely a mistake." (Stateburg and Its People; 1920, p. 45)

Likewise, F. Kinloch Bull (another Sumter relative who grew up in that area during the early 1900s) included sections on the Sumter County "Turks" and "Redbones" in his memoir; and he described the Dalzell community specifically as "Turks," who looked like "Turks," and who had come down from Virginia with General Sumter at about the time of the Revolutionary War. He then discussed the "Redbones" with this comment: "I do not know the origin of the name 'Redbone,' but there are a number of these people scattered throughout the state"; and he cautioned that they "were not to be confused with the Turks." ("Random Recollections"; 1986, pp. 107-108)

Charles James McDonald Furman, a local citizen who lived in Privateer township and studied his Indian neighbors in the late 1800s, wrote: "there are living in this township (Privateer) a mixed breed of people" and "their correct name is Red bone." He said that most of these people were descended from Tom Gibbs and many were related to Jerry and Edie Goins, with other common surnames being Chavis and Smilings. He noted that their church was "situated in this township hardly a mile from the Clarendon line." He speculated that "less than half a dozen have married other than among their race." Finally, he wrote: "They are certainly an isolated people and ... they are if anything, more apart to themselves than are the Hebrews of our State." ("Furman Papers")

Wesley D. White introduced the Turkish group at Dalzell thusly in his 1975 report to the Smithsonian Institution: "In South Carolina along Highway 441 to the immediate north of Shaw Air Force Base in Sumter county, one will find a people known to their neighbors as the Turks." White reported that about half of the Dalzell group were Benenhaleys and the next largest number were Oxendines; and they considered themselves originally from Turkey and to be "Turks" or "white-Turk-Americans."

More pertinent to this discussion, White also demarcated the Turkish and Indian settlements this way: "Notice on this map the towns of Stateburg, Providence and Sumter and inbetween them the lands of 'Ray' and Benenhaly' [the Dalzell area] ... Take note

also of the course of Long Branch, and of a locality marked 'Timmonstown' [in Privateer Township], hardly more than fifteen or sixteen miles due southeast of the Turks, the home of the nearest Indians ... The two communities never had anything to do with each other, any more than if they lived on different planets." (A History of the Turks; 1975)

.....

The fact is that none of the sources cited in this analysis supported Hill's thesis.

Hill's account was deficient in substance and documentation. It is true that most of the citizens of the Privateer area settlement likely were of partial Native American ancestry, as Hill claimed; however, overwhelming evidence indicates that the Dalzell community was comprised mainly of people of who claimed Turkish identity. Just as with the previous claim, there is no need for further discussion.

Of course, there always has been some confusion about the history, geography, makeup, and relationship of familial groupings of dark-hued people in rural Sumter County. In fact, there may have been several settlements of varying surname and ethnic mixtures in the area. No census or survey data provide absolute resolution of their social character or structure; and it is unlikely that any historical analysts got the story completely straight.

However, our research and available historical sources strongly disputed the characterization of the Privateer and Dalzell groups as Native American settlements. Thus, Hill's account of "these Indian communities" accorded with his appropriation strategy; but it failed as true history.

Hill's Scott Ancestors

5. The final thematic problem is that Hill credited his own Indian ancestors—the Scott family from North Carolina—as founders of the “community of ‘mixed-blooded’ persons referred to as ‘Turks.’”; and he thereby appropriated the “Turks” among the “Indian mixed-bloods” in his book and several online postings.

In this section, I will conduct a thorough review of Hill's argument and available historical evidence; and this evidence will demonstrate the deficiencies in his claim. *

** The next few pages will address complex issues in several of Hill's writings and online postings. I will forego the format employed thus far ("our research," and "other historical sources") in favor of a simpler discussion reflecting the logical flow of his claims and my responses in italics.*

Hill mined suspect history, misrepresented select documents, and spun genealogical musings into an appropriative tale about the role of his ancestors in Sumter County ethnohistory; therefore, the discussion in the rest of this section requires more than usual concentration. Interested readers may want to get out their pencils and paper to diagram these familial relationships, since I intend to walk through a complete, point-by-point refutation of Hill's pseudo-research.

To begin, Hill wrote in an early Facebook post: "From the earliest recorded histories of Sumter County, inhabitants of the county have mentioned a community of 'mixed-blooded' persons referred to as 'Turks.' One of the founders of that community was David Scott. The son of famed Revolutionary General Thomas Sumter mentioned in his historical collection that during the War, the General had enlisted the services of Scott as a 'bugler' at the same time he enlisted Scott's compatriot Joe Benenhaley" ("Historical Documentation of the Scott Family of Sumter County, South Carolina"; Mar. 31, 2006). In another early Facebook post, Hill wrote that "Isham Scott" had "founded a community of Indian mixed-bloods who would become known as 'Turks' in Sumter County" ("Patriot Chiefs and Loyal Braves"; 2005). And in his 2010 chapter on "The Cheraw," he tabbed a "John Scott" among six "core ancestors" of the Sumter Cheraw Indians, "formerly known by the derisive slur 'Turks'" (*Strangers*; p. 41).

As demonstrated in these examples, Hill engaged in strange and strained articulations to ascribe roles of historical leadership for his ancestral relatives among the Indian/Turkish people in this area. Incredibly, too, when I stated in an initial Facebook message to him that our research differed from the findings in his book, his reply was cryptic and damning: "Differs how? I was intentionally brief in the 'Strangers' book, and also changed up some ancestor names so that I could easily identify those who enjoyed plagiarizing." (August 17, 2016) This was an astonishing admission on his part; and it reflected the typically unprofessional approach that permeated his research and writing.

Unsurprisingly, Hill provided no real evidence and I have found nothing to substantiate Hill's "Isham Scott" and "John Scott" relatives as core ancestors of the Turkish people; and his strong statement about "David Scott" involved muddled historical inferences from various sources. Thomas Sebastian Sumter did mention "a man who gave his name as Scott" as one of the original individuals in the Turkish group. However, contrary to Hill's implication, Sumter called this individual simply "Scott" without designating a first name for him; and his place in the evolving history of the community is shrouded in uncertainty and argumentation due to a lack of documentation. Revolutionary War pension records indicate that a David Scott served in this area; also Dave Scott was mentioned in an 1889 letter as one of the men who fought with General Sumter in the Revolution, later settled on Sumter's land, lived among the Red Bones, and was a progenitor of the Scotts in this area. (McDonald Furman Papers) However, I have seen no evidence indicating that David Scott or Dave Scott was the "man who gave his name as Scott" or had anything to do with the founding of the Turkish community.

In 2015, Hill began asserting his family prominence among the dark-skinned people of Sumter County by portraying another ancestor, James Scott of North Carolina, as the

mysterious “man who called himself Scott.” For example, Hill made the following claim about James Scott: “Thomas Sebastian Sumter (born 1852, son of Sebastian D’Ambemont Sumter mentioned above, great-grandson of General Sumter) wrote in an article appearing in the Sumter Herald regarding James Scott, a.k.a. ‘the bugler’...” (“Sumter’s Turks,” 2015).

Readers will recall this sleight-of-hand as the same tactic that Hill had used a decade earlier with another of his relatives (David Scott). Once again, Hill incorrectly depicted Thomas Sebastian Sumter’s discussion of Scott the bugler as a reference “regarding James Scott, a.k.a. ‘the bugler.’” The truth is that General Sumter’s great grandson only mentioned “a man who gave his name as Scott”; he never referenced a James Scott in any of his writings.

Hill attempted again, in 2016, to confirm an important role for James Scott in Indian/Turkish history by posting on Facebook a copy of a land survey. Hill stated: “1809 James Scott recorded this survey of 24 acres of land that had been gifted to him by General Sumter.” Hill later wrote: “The old General only gifted two parcels of land to non-relatives, James Scott and Joseph Benenhaley ...” (“Cheraw Indians of Sumter South Carolina and Florida,” May 26, 2016)

Hill repeated this claim in a Facebook message to me and in an email message to various other people: “In 1808, (seven years BEFORE the deed to Benenhaley) General Thomas Sumter, by gift of deed, gave 24 acres of his land to JAMES Scott [surveyed in 1808, filed in 1809]”; and he followed that statement with another “fact” proclamation: “JAMES Scott was the first non-relative of General Sumter to receive a gift of his land” (Apr. 16-17, 2018).

These postings are noteworthy because they illustrate Hill’s continuing, baseless campaign to promote his Scott-centric version of Indian/Turkish history. Hill presented this land survey as supposed documentation that Thomas Sumter had “gifted” property to James Scott—a claim that mirrored the Turkish narrative about Joseph Benenhaley and the man called Scott. If Hill’s account were true, it might enhance the notion of James Scott’s founding role among the Indians/Turkish people.

The problem with these postings is that there was nothing on the survey plat to indicate anything supportive of such presumption. As I read the document, the surveyor only stated that: “I do hereby certify for James Scott a tract of land containing twenty four acres” (along with a geographical description of the location and boundaries of the land, which was situated next to property owned by Sumter). There is nothing on the document indicating that Thomas Sumter gifted or deeded this land to James Scott. Thus, without real documentation that General Sumter “gifted” the land to his ancestor, this survey plat fails as compelling evidence and argument for Hill’s version of Sumter County ethnohistory.

Most recently, in 2018, Hill announced research purporting conclusively and emphatically that his ancestor James Scott was “the bugler” and, by logic, a central figure in the traditional and genealogical story of the Sumter County Turkish community. This reasoning also would appropriate the Turkish people within the Cheraw Indian tribe. I will closely scrutinize Hill’s

convoluted claims—including in a Facebook private message to me and distributed to others via email (Apr. 16-17, 2018).

Hill's basic claims in the email were (1) that James Scott's daughter, Catherine Scott, had married Joseph Benenhaley Jr., aka Joseph Benenhaley II, in the 1830s; (2) that James Scott's grandson Charles Oxendine had married Catherine and Joseph's daughter, Mary Ann Benenhaley, in the 1860s; and most importantly, (3) that Mary Ann had confirmed in a 1928 newspaper interview that her grandfather, James Scott, was General Sumter's bugler. Here are the key "documents" and "facts" of his message.

DOCUMENT ONE:

1928 Article, The State "Sumter County Colony Locally Called Turks":

"...the oldest living member of the tribe, Mary Ann Benenhaley Oxendine, 85, daughter of Joseph Benenhaley the second, and granddaughter of the first Joseph, has blue eyes, dark skin, and straight white hair. She says her grandmother, wife of the first Joseph, was a white woman named Miller, and **her own mother was a Scott, daughter of the Scott who was bugler. She married a man named Oxendine, her first cousin, whose mother was also a Scott.**"

fact: Mary Ann Benenhaley's mother was Catherine Scott Benenhaley.

fact: Catherine Scott Benenhaley was a sister of Jane Scott Oxendine, the mother of Charles Oxendine (making Charles and Mary Ann first cousins)

fact: Charles Oxendine was the son of Aaron Oxendine and Jane Scott Oxendine.

fact: Catherine Scott Benenhaley and Jane Scott Oxendine were both daughters of "the bugler".

Luckily, in 1861, someone filed a document with the Sumter Courthouse **detailing who the parents of Jane Scott Oxendine were (thus also the parents of Catherine Scott Benenhaley)**; that being an affidavit filed on behalf of Michael Oxendine, (older brother of Charles Oxendine):

DOCUMENT TWO:

January 1861 Sumter affidavit of John R Pollard (born 1788):

"I have personal knowledge of **James Scott and Charity Scott his wife the grandparents of Michael Oxendine** the holder of this certificate and that they came into this county from Virginia when I was very young, and that the said **James Scott the grandfather of said Michael Oxendine was a Revolutionary soldier and from and after the passing of the Pension act drew pension money** till the day of his death as a revolutionary soldier and that Charity Scott his grandmother was the holder of a certificate certifying that her mother was a clean blooded white woman and that her father was mixed with Indian and their daughter **Jane Scott married an Oxendine whom I did not know and that the said Michael Oxendine is the offspring of Jane Scott the wife of Aaron Oxendine** and that they lived here and raised a large number of children who always enjoyed their freedom and the general striking physiognomical traits of appearance of the Scott family in general and Relatives is deeply set with European and Indian blood and that there is a number of records in the Clerk's office of Sumter Court house where their relatives have escaped from under the disabling statute."

fact: mother of Michael and Charles Oxendine was Jane Scott
fact: Jane Scott Oxendine was sister of Catherine Scott Benenhaley
fact: father of Jane Scott Oxendine and Catherine Scott Benenhaley was “the bugler”.
fact: father of Jane Scott was JAMES Scott.
fact: JAMES Scott was “the bugler”.

Characteristically, Hill’s “Document One” construed Mary Ann Benenhaley Oxendine’s ambiguous newspaper comment about her grandfather as referring to his ancestor, James Scott of North Carolina; and the several “facts” reflected his speculative interpretation of that article. And “Document Two” presented contrived genealogy to declare that James Scott was the bugler, thereby making the Turkish people part of the Indian community. Nowhere did Hill cite any real sources for his kinship claims, other than the newspaper article and an affidavit that is irrelevant to his argument.

.....

Let’s start with Mary Ann Benenhaley, Hill’s prime witness for Hill’s claim that his ancestor James Scott was “the bugler” and therefore an original founder and progenitor of the “Turks.” According to Hill, Mary Ann presented first-person testimony to this effect in the 1928 newspaper interview, as the reporter wrote the following: “...the oldest living member of the tribe, Mary Ann Benenhaley Oxendine, 85, daughter of Joseph Benenhaley the second, and granddaughter of the first Joseph, has blue eyes, dark skin, and straight white hair. She says her grandmother, wife of the first Joseph, was a white woman named Miller, and her own mother was a Scott, daughter of the Scott who was bugler. She married a man named Oxendine, her first cousin, whose mother was also a Scott. Oxendine’s father, she says, came from North Carolina.”

The problem with Hill’s interpretation of this newspaper statement is that neither the unidentified reporter nor Mary Ann Benenhaley Oxendine ever mentioned James Scott or anyone by name in this particular quotation; and I dispute Hill’s use of her comment to claim that she was the granddaughter of his ancestor James Scott. I believe, instead, that Mary Ann was talking about her kinship to the original “man who called himself Scott” as depicted in the Turkish traditional narrative. I read that statement as indicating that her mother was the daughter of the man who, according to oral history, had come to South Carolina with Joseph Benenhaley, was reputed to be of partial French descent, and had served as General Sumter’s bugler.

.....

*Fortunately, Mary Ann Benenhaley Oxendine was not the only individual from inside the early Turkish community who provided testimony regarding the fabled Scott. Matilda Ellison Benenhaley, granddaughter of South Carolina’s largest black slave-owner, like Mary Ann, was born in the 1840s and died in the 1930s; she grew up and associated with the Sumters and Benenhaleys; she married Lawrence Benenhaley (great grandson of Joseph Benenhaley) in the 1870s; and she recorded in her own handwriting a reference to the man known as Scott. (See *South Carolina’s Turkish People*, 2019; pp. 75-80.)*

Matilda wrote several letters that were passed down from generation to generation among Turkish relatives; and in one of those letters, written in 1934 to the children and grandchildren of Noah Benenhaley (grandson of the original Benenhaley), she recounted the story of the patriarch's saga—identifying him as an Ottoman and including his capture by the Spanish on the high seas, his enslavement in the Caribbean, his service with General Sumter in the Revolution, and his settling on Sumter's land afterward. Most importantly, she mentioned what she had always heard about the original Scott and where he came from. At one point in that letter, the 90-something-year-old Matilda recounted the story as told by the daughter of Joseph Benenhaley: "Hold close these words and the stories told by the others under the Old Oak. Mr. Noah knows these stories well having heard them many times. Old Mrs. Jensey told how he and Frenchie came to old Charleston from the Indies." This letter called the original Scott "Frenchie" and never mentioned the term "bugler"; but it clearly favors our account of "the man who called himself Scott" over Hill's tale of "James Scott the bugler."

Of course, it is impossible to cross-examine Mary Ann Benenhaley Oxendine and Matilda Ellison Benenhaley about their recorded statements. Each provided interesting fuel for conjecture about the original Scott; but neither identified "James Scott" of North Carolina as the grandfather in question. Mary Ann simply referenced her relationship to "the Scott who was bugler"; and Matilda wrote about how "Frenchie" came with Joseph Benenhaley "to old Charleston from the Indies." Most importantly, both of their statements are compliant with our version of the "man who called himself Scott." Interestingly, too, whatever the truth of their statements about this aspect of ancestral history, our survey of cemetery interments at the churches traditionally attended by the Turkish people suggests that no long-ago Scott ancestor—neither Hill's relatives, nor Mary Ann's grandfather, nor Matilda's "Frenchie"—provided many Scott-surnamed progeny to the Turkish community. Our headstone survey revealed only two Scotts buried among almost 500 graves in these two cemeteries.

To generalize, we all can agree that Mary Ann Benenhaley Oxendine was the granddaughter of the original Scott, about whose precise name and extended lineage there seems to be no clear evidence. Mary Ann's newspaper quotation can be read from different perspectives; but our interpretation of her reported words and Matilda's handwritten letters—considered together—leads us to favor Turkish oral history over Hill's tale about "James Scott the bugler."

Next, we need to examine "Document Two" tying together Hill's ancestor James Scott and the quoted Mary Ann Benenhaley through a questionable assortment of genealogical linkages. Hill attempted to accomplish this finding by asserting roundabout kinship among James Scott, Catherine Scott, Charles Oxendine, and Mary Ann Benenhaley.

Countless genealogical sources (such as the US Census, Vital Records, Ancestry.com, FamilySearch.org, and other online sites) include partial/messy/inaccurate information about these four individuals. However, none provides a reliable family tree for them; and Hill obviously assembled suspect snippets from various sources—with no specific citations—as counterfeit documentation for his preferred version of ethnohistory.

.....

In the case of Catherine Scott (whom Hill claimed to be the daughter of James Scott), I could find no authoritative records that might disclose such parentage. There was an 1850 US census report indicating that a “Catherine” was married to Joseph Benenhaley Jr. and they lived with several children—including Mary A. Benenhaley—in Sumter County, SC; and this likely was Catherine Scott. Cemetery records indicate that she was born in 1820 and died in 1886; and there is a marker for her at Long Branch Baptist Church in Dalzell, SC. (For the record, some call this person “Catherine Oxendine” or “Catherine Scott Oxendine.”) These records are useful indicators of this woman’s presence in the Turkish community; but they provide no indication of any kinship with James Scott.

Perhaps the most glaring glitch in Hill’s account of James Scott’s family situation was the Revolutionary War soldier’s 1821 pension application (which Hill himself used in the email message to emphasize his ancestor’s service with General Sumter). A closing paragraph of the application stated: “and this Deponent further swears that he was originally and is now a farmer, That he is now about 68 years old and that he at present pursues the Occupation of a Planter in a small degree though he is not able to perform more than half the labor of an ordinary laborer. That he has 2 daughters and one son and his wife residing with him. That his wife is named Charity is about 56 years of age and unable to labor. That one of his daughters is named Renty aged 20 years in very good health. The other daughter aged about 19 years and much afflicted with Rheumatic Pains. The son is named Stephen aged 23 years and is able to labor well and is residing with this deponent in the capacity of a cropper on land rented for this year.” (Southern Campaigns American Revolution Pension Statements & Rosters, Pension Application of James Scott)

This sworn statement was dated and signed by James Scott in 1821. The affidavit listed two daughters aged 19 and 20 and a son aged 23; and it showed Scott’s age as 68 and his wife Charity as about 56 years of age, both in declining health (and, according to some accounts, both died shortly thereafter). There was no mention of or reference to Catherine Scott (reportedly born in 1820) in that statement; and it seems a reasonable assumption that James and Charity would not have had such a young child considering their advanced age and health condition.

In light of these fuzzy, jumbled, and disparate findings, Hill cannot declare as documented fact that James Scott was the father of Catherine Scott and grandfather of Mary Ann Benenhaley.

.....

Similarly, I challenge Hill’s claim regarding Charles Oxendine as a link between James Scott and the Turkish people.

In his “documents” and “facts,” Hill had stated that Charles Oxendine (husband of Mary Ann Benenhaley) was the son of James Scott’s daughter Jane Scott and Aaron Oxendine, thereby inserting Hill’s ancestor early into the line of Sumter’s “Turks” and incorporating most of them among the Indians.

Actually, there is considerable documentation indicating that a “Charles Oxendine” spent most of his life in Sumter County, SC. An 1850 census report showed “Charles Oxendine” as a twelve-year-old boy living in a household of mainly Rays and Oxendines in Sumter District; an 1870 census report showed “Charles Oxendine,” age 29, as the husband of “Mary A. Oxendine” and father of several children in Stateburg Township; and a headstone at High Hills Baptist Church cemetery indicates “Charles Oxendine” was born in 1840, died in 1881, and was buried there in Stateburg, SC.

However, I found no official birth or death records for the Charles Oxendine of this story; nor could I find anything documenting who his parents were; and there was no convincing evidence of where he came from. Also, just as with Catherine Scott, genealogical sites were an unreliable hodgepodge.

Hill’s single piece of evidence cited as documentation here was an 1861 affidavit about connections among James Scott, his wife Charity Scott, their daughter Jane Scott, her husband Aaron Oxendine, and Aaron/Jane’s son Michael Oxendine. Hill then declared, with no documentation provided, that Michael was the “older brother of Charles Oxendine” (who would marry Mary Ann Benenhaley). This affidavit may have evidenced James Scott’s kinship with Jane, Aaron, and Michael Oxendine. But that sworn statement never mentioned “Charles Oxendine”; and I could find nothing anywhere that connected the Charles Oxendine of our interest to the aforementioned family. This affidavit was thus irrelevant to the discussion; and, again, there is no basis for Hill’s claim.

Additionally, there are many confusing references to a “Charles Oxendine” in local Indian/Turkish discussions. For example, as already noted, Hill claimed that Charles Oxendine was the son of Aaron and Jane Scott Oxendine of Sumter County, SC. (“Sumter’s Turks, 2015) But former Cheraw Chief Mandy Oxendine Champion wrote in a website post that Charles Oxendine, “my great great grandfather,” was from Robeson County, NC; and she cited a census report listing “Charles W. Oxendine” as the son or grandson of Lewis and Amy Oxendine in that county. (“The ‘Turks’ of Sumter County, South Carolina”; June, 2006) Also, the page for “Charles W. Oxendine” on the Singleton Family genealogical website includes information apparently provided by Cheraw leaders Ralph Justice Oxendine and Claudia Benenhaley Gainey; but this page reports that “Charles W. Oxendine” was the son of Benjamin and Sila Oxendine of Robeson County, NC. (<http://www.singletonfamily.org/getperson.php?personID=I70992&tree=1>) Others offer discreet and different opinions about Charles Oxendine’s parentage. I have found no convincing documentation for any of these possibilities.

Thus, Hill seems to have crafted a sketchy scenario involving James Scott, Catherine Scott, Charles Oxendine, and Mary Ann Benenhaley in order to anoint his ancestor as “Scott the bugler.” He provided no serious support for his “documents” and “facts”; and, based on substantial evidence contradicting this material, it can be discarded along with his many other claims.

The Scott name has a long and prominent history in this area. I have no doubt that several Scotts had served with Thomas Sumter; and a few Scotts married Turkish individuals. However, Hill’s statements about his Scott ancestors did not survive rigorous investigation. Perhaps he has in his possession official or genealogical information that I have been unable to locate; however, without additional, credible, verifiable documentation regarding the points presented here, there is no rational reason to consider Hill’s long-ago relatives as founders of the Turkish community.

To summarize, the five thematic topics discussed thus far—relating to patriarch Joseph Benenhaley, his Turkish descendants, Turkish cultural identity, Turkish community history, and Scott ancestors—clearly contradicted Hill’s appropriation of the Turkish people into the Cheraw Indian tribe.

Specific Claims and Statements

Considering the preceding discussion of Hill’s misinterpretation and misrepresentation of Sumter County ethnohistory, we should not be surprised that he would try at every opportunity to denigrate the Turkish traditional narrative and bring Joseph Benenhaley and his Turkish descendants into the ranks of the Cheraw Indians.

In the rest of this section, I will address specific, miscellaneous examples of Hill’s appropriative efforts—that are irrelevant, misleading, and/or erroneous—about the Turkish people. These items can be handled with short and simple responses.

6. Although Hill sometimes acknowledged Joseph Biennial’s Arabic descent, he just as often tried to disparage the Turkish narrative by insinuating that this central character may have been a man of Native American Indian ancestry. For example, Hill once wrote: “The Benenhaley surname remains spelled almost exactly the same back to its roots among the Eastern Shore Algonquin speaking Indians of Maryland.” Also, he added: “I did find the following documentation that seems to support a Maryland origin for the Benenhaleys ... In 1790 a ‘Sam Ben’ (who is listed in the census 10 years later as ‘Sam’l Benhnally’) is listed in the census as an ‘other free person’ in Queen Annes, Maryland.” (“The ‘Turks’ of Sumter County are descendants”; 2005)

Hill’s speculations of Indian ancestry were simply the old game of inferring lineage from unclear census names and data, which will support almost any claim if manipulated enough. I have seen nothing regarding the Benenhaley surname “spelled almost exactly the same” back to the Indians of Maryland. I found a name that might be “Sam Ben” in the 1790 census; but Hill provided no specific citation for his claim and I could not find a “Sam’l Benhnally” in any census report.

7. Hill also wrote that Benenhaley's wife may have come from a Native American background: "From what I can gather the Benenhaleys of Sumter all descend from Jose Benenhaley who married Elizabeth Oxendine in Halifax (most likely)." Hill told a different story later in that same post: "Joseph's wife (Miller) was also recorded as an 'other free person' and may have been connected to the Miller Indian family among the Tuscarora of Bertie County, NC." ("The 'Turks' of Sumter County are descendants"; 2005)

I can find no evidence to support Hill's statements about Benenhaley's wife. He failed to reconcile mentioning Benenhaley's wife as an Oxendine in one place and as a Miller in the other; and he provided no clear citation for either of these speculations.

8. Hill implied that the Benenhaleys were part of an Indian migration from North Carolina to Sumter County. "By 1810 Halifax county was beginning to fill up with white people, and the Catawba tribe had leased off almost all of its land, and so, some of these Indians moved down to Sumter at the invitation of the General. Scott, Benenhaley, Driggers, Oxendine, etc. Indian families first appear on the records of Sumter, South Carolina in 1810, prior to that time they are identified as residing at Halifax NC, or on the Catawba lands." ("The 'Turks' of Sumter County are descendants"; 2005)

Hill provided no specific citation for his implication that Benenhaley was one of the Catawba tribe, that he moved to Sumter at the invitation of the General, or that he had previously been a resident of Halifax, NC. This was another case of historical misinterpretation based on loose genealogical inferences.

9. At other times, Hill conceded that Joseph Benenhaley may have been of Arabic ancestry; however, he downplayed the original Benenhaley's contribution to the lineage/history of the dark-skinned people of Sumter County. He wrote: "I do recognize that the weight of evidence suggests that Joseph Benenhaley was most likely of 'Arabic ancestry...'" ("The 'Turks' of Sumter County are descendants..."; 2005) But, "If, indeed, Benenhaley was of Arabic descent, that still does not nullify the fact that some of his children intermarried with other families in the community who were of Indian descent, and generations later, the people in Sumter were all looked upon as persons of Indian descent, with an Indian school, and an Indian church..." ("The Turks of Sumter County, South Carolina"; 2005)

These comments reflect the fact that, when confronted with contradictory information, Hill continued to interpret Turkish history within the rigid framework of his appropriation strategy. Our findings, based on thorough research, are that Joseph Benenhaley was an Ottoman; he married a white European woman; several of his children and extended progeny married outsiders, including some Indians; but these outsiders merged into the Turkish community; they attended what was commonly known as the "Turk school" and the "Turk church"; and the people of Sumter considered and called them "the Turks."

10. On another occasion, Hill offered this comment about Benenhaley's role in the history of the Sumter Cheraw Indian community. "Regardless of where Joseph Benenhaley originated or

what his race was, he was only one man among ten other core ancestors who have undeniable documentation of Indian ancestry.” Hill then quoted a Cheraw council member, who said “He was only one man, and one man does not make a bloodline.” (*Strangers*; p. 46)

It is ironic that Hill consistently denigrated Benenhaley while appropriating his descendants to support the Cheraw narrative. The reality, as admitted here by Hill and as demonstrated by our research, is that Benenhaley’s place in Cheraw lineage was irrelevant; his role of significance rests in Turkish history.

11. While Hill sometimes acknowledged that the term “Turks” likely was tied to Joseph Benenhaley’s Arabic background, he speculated at other times about an Indian derivation of that term. In 2005, he wrote: “A group of these English speaking, Christianized Indian-White mixed-bloods was living in Halifax, North Carolina at the time of the revolutionary War, and also maintained a village among the Catawba at the NC/SC border (this village was called TURKEY TOWN).” ... “A plausible theory as to where the ‘Turk’ label originated was from ‘Turkey Town Indians’ shortened over time to ‘Turkey Indians’ to ‘Turks.’” (“The ‘Turks’ of Sumter County are descendants”; 2005)

This speculation apparently derived from biased interpretation of historical information. There is no evidentiary link between the “Turkey Town Indians” and the Dalzell community.

12. A few years later, Hill again erred in implying the following situation and timeline for the appearance of the “Turk” name for this community. He wrote that, after the Privateer Redbones moved back to North Carolina about 1910, “the people at Dalzell began to be called ‘Turks’ by their neighbors.” (*Strangers*; p. 43)

Historical records contradict Hill’s story. Most people knew the Dalzell group as “Turks” and called them “the Turks” as far back as 1833 (land survey recorded in 1852 in the Sumter County Land Conveyance Office), 1887 (High Hills Baptist Church annual report), and 1909 (Manning Times letter-to-the editor).

13. Hill also cited reputable sources to besmirch the “Turk” nomenclature for the people of this community. For example, he invoked sociologist Brewton Berry to depict Joseph Benenhaley as a “mestizo” (generally meaning a combination of European/Amerindian background) rather than a “Turk”. On one occasion, Hill wrote: “Berry notes that Benenhaley was called to testify as to his racial origin” and “an important note here is that Berry recounts the testimony as that Benenhaley was a ‘Mestizo’ but no mention of ‘Turk.’” (“The Turks of Sumter County”; 2005) Hill also wrote in another post: “Berry mentions that General Sumter testified on Joe’s behalf and explained that he was a ‘Mestizo.’” (“Various American Indian Records”; 2004)

Checking Hill’s cited sources often calls into question his characterization of those writings about the Turkish community. I have examined Brewton Berry’s 1945 article (“The Mestizos of South Carolina”) and 1963 book (Almost White); and the original sources definitely differ in important respects from Hill’s report. Berry indeed

considered the Sumter Turkish people and many of the mixed-race people of South Carolina as “mestizos”; and he mentioned Joseph Benenhaley as one of a “community of mestizos.” But Berry also acknowledged the Sumter group was “known locally as ‘Turks’”; and he wrote that Joseph Benenhaley “was said to have been of Moorish origin, or maybe Turkish, or maybe Arab.” Berry also referenced Benenhaley as “the Turk” and his group as “the Turks.” Furthermore, Hill’s statement that Berry recounted court testimony as that General Sumter and Joseph Benenhaley presented Benenhaley as a ‘mestizo’ is inaccurate. I found nothing in Berry’s writing indicating that the General or Benenhaley ever called Benenhaley a “mestizo.” Berry simply wrote about how General Sumter shook Benenhaley’s hand, apparently signifying his “whiteness,” and asked the court, “Is that sufficient?”

14. Hill also quoted General Sumter’s relatives to buttress his disparagement of the “Turks.” He wrote: “Tom Sumter, the General’s grandson, called Benenhaley a ‘mestizo’ in his history book but made no mention of Turkish origin.” (“The Turks of Sumter County”; 2005) Hill later implied that another of the General’s relatives, F. Kinloch Bull (who lived in that area during the early 1900s), referred to the Turkish people as the “Sumter Indians” and to their leader as the “Chief” of the group. Hill stated: “F. Kinloch Bull, born 1896, wrote in his memoir ‘Random Recollections of a Long Life’ that the Sumter Indians generally had ‘straight black hair and copper colored complexion.’ Bull remembered in the early 1900s that the undisputed ‘Chief’ was an old veteran called Tom Turk...” (*Strangers*; p. 48)

*These are simply misrepresentations. Thomas Sebastian Sumter (who grew up in Stateburg during the latter half of the 1800s) never mentioned the word “mestizo”; he wrote, about Benenhaley, that “He was a Caucasian of ‘Arab’ descent” and that the group “got to be called ‘Turks’ by the country people.” (*Stateburg and Its People*; 1920)*

Hill’s habit of selectively quoting and inaccurately paraphrasing original sources was clearly demonstrated in his statement about Kinloch Bull. In fact, Bull repeatedly referred to the Turkish people as “the Turks” in the section of his memoir dealing with this group; and he never used the term “Sumter Indians” in reference to them or the word “Chief” in reference to their leader. His description of “the Turks of Sumter County” read this way: “In the early part of the century when I was a boy growing up in Stateburg, there was a colony of Turks, consisting of probably several hundred men, women and children, living and farming on an area about eight miles northeast of Stateburg and near the small town of Dalzell. Their origin is obscure, but it is legendary that when General Sumter came down from Virginia at about the time of the Revolutionary, he brought with him several Turks ... With their straight black hair and copper colored complexion, they looked like Turks”; and he wrote this about their leader: “The acknowledged head of the clan was an old veteran called ‘Tom Turk.’” (“Random Recollections”; 1986, pp. 105-106)

15. Hill often disparaged aspects of the Turkish traditional narrative: “The story of the ‘Turks’ descending from pirates, Arabs, Turkish sailors, etc. all appears to have begun with the 1930s publications of several ethnologists like Brewton Berry who interviewed local white people

about their theories as to where the ‘Turk’ label originated.” (“The ‘Turks’ of Sumter County are descendants”; 2005)

This was another simplistic and inaccurate explanation for the origin of the Turkish traditional narrative. The fact is that elements of the traditional story can be found in written reports of their history pre-dating Berry (1945 and 1963) and other ethnologists (who wrote about these people in the 1940s and 1950s). For examples of these earlier reports, see Sumter, 1917 and 1920; The State, 1928; Gregorie, 1931; Federal Works Progress Administration, 1936; Federal Writer’s Project, late 1930s and 1941; and Mitchell, 1943.

16. Hill has written extensively about developments during and after the Revolutionary War, often belittling aspects of the Turkish narrative and enhancing the Indian narrative. For example, he specifically questioned Joseph Benenhaley’s reputed recruitment in the wilderness near Goose Creek, which is about 15-20 miles from Charleston. “War records show Sumter’s forces spent most of the War camped ‘on Indian land’ at the NC/SC border (which also blows out of the water that story about ‘while fighting the British at the coast, Sumter enlisted two pirates, Joe Benenhaley, possibly Ysef ben Ali, and a French man who changed his name to Scott’...)” (“The ‘Turks’ of Sumter County are descendents”; 2005)

Hill intended this “blows out of the water” statement to counter Turkish oral history and Thomas Sebastian Sumter’s report in Stateburg and Its People (1920). Of course, Sumter spent most of the war camped in rural areas that were considered Indian land, since much of the rural land in SC/NC of that time either had been or still was Indian land. But Hill ignored the fact recounted in military records and history books that Sumter recruited followers wherever and whenever he was fighting, which included the Goose Creek area. (For detailed accounts of Sumter’s military career and campaigns, see Buchanan, The Road to Guilford Courthouse, 1997; Griswold, Washington and the Generals, 1847; McCrady, South Carolina in the Revolution, 1902; Sumter, Stateburg and Its People, 1920, Gregorie, Thomas Sumter, 1931; Bass, Gamecock, 1961; Flood, Rise and Fight Again, 1976; Heitzler, Goose Creek, 2005; and Southern Campaigns of the American Revolution, 2005).

17. Hill also implied that the reported recruitment of Benenhaley in Goose Creek Parish could not have happened because “Sumter never served near the coast” (“The ‘Turks’ of Sumter County are descendants “; 2005) and “Sumter never approached the coast.” (“The ‘Turks’ of Sumter County”; 2005)

The actuality/details of this reported recruitment can be debated; but, as noted in the previous item, General Sumter’s regiment skirmished in and around Charleston and throughout the Carolina Lowcountry. These statements are indicative of Hill’s gratuitous and erroneous belittling of the traditional narrative.

18. Hill consistently provided misleading accounts about the Sumter Turkish people’s historical ties to the Indians of North Carolina. In one online post, he wrote, “Here are a few historical references as to the racial origin of the ‘Turks’”; then, he cited an 1888 pamphlet, an 1891 paper, and a 1914 letter—which contained various references to mixed-blood people of

Sumter County as a branch of the North Carolina Indians who were sometimes known as “Redbones.” (“Various American Indian Records”; 2005)

All three of the cited documents pertained to the Indians of Privateer township not the Turkish people of Dalzell. A more complete reading of these and other historical references clearly indicates that this is another case of Hill’s effort to incorporate the Turkish people as Indians through inapplicable accounts of the Indian presence and experience in this area.

19. Hill wrote several times about a local Indian school, apparently in order to assert Native American status and descent for both groups of dark-skinned people of Sumter County. In a 2014 Facebook blog, he wrote this statement about the Privateer and Dalzell settlements of the 1860s: “Each of these Indian communities had their own separate ‘Indian’ churches, but both communities sent their children to the Dalzell Indian School.” (“Indianancestry101”; Feb. 22, 2014)

This reference to a “Dalzell Indian School” seems to have been an effort by Hill to mix/merge the two groups. It is true that there had existed a school of some kind for Indian children, which was run by Bethesda Church in the Privateer area in the 1800s and disappeared in the early 1900s; and there was a “Dalzell School” (commonly referred to as the “Turk School”), an institution which operated in some manner as far back as the 1800s and as a public school until closing about 1960. But the Privateer school and the Dalzell school were different institutions serving these two different communities.

20. In another Facebook post, Hill mentioned a specific incident at a special “Indian School”. “In the 1930s, a court case was pressed to allow ‘Turk’ children to attend white schools. Reports from this case reveal that all the children subject to the proceedings (including Benenhaley, Scott, Ellison, Tidwell, Deas families) were presently attending a special ‘Indian School’ and all the grandparents claimed to be ‘of Indian ancestry.’” (“The ‘Turks’ of Sumter County, South Carolina”; 2005)

This comment about a court case is perplexing and baseless. Turkish parents did raise an issue during the 1930s with the Sumter County school board about the need for a better schoolhouse for their children; and they self-identified as “Turks” (The Sumter Item, “Yesteryear”; 1992). Also, in my investigation of the school issue, I have found no court case in the 1930s and I cannot imagine any report during that time or later showing that Turkish families attended a special “Indian School” or claiming that they were all “of Indian ancestry.”

21. Hill also cited a news article about the visit of a Turkish Parliament member to support his dismissal of the Turkish people’s claim of Arab ancestry. That official, Muhittin Guven, visited Sumter County in 1963; and Hill wrote: “The news article reported that Guven did not recognize the Sumter people as having any traits of Turkish people he was familiar with ...” (*Strangers*; p. 49)

This was another case of misrepresenting an historical event—and with inadequate sourcing. The local newspaper, The Sumter Daily Item, carried a preview of Guven’s coming to Sumter as part of a State Department tour; and among his local interests, as outlined by the sponsoring Governmental Affairs Institute and reported by The Item, was a visit to the “descendant community” of Turkish people. The only other reference to the Turkish people in the story was a planned “visit with Julius Benenhaley and a selected group of the Turkish American community for historical purposes” in a crowded schedule over several days. (The Sumter Daily Item; Sept. 2, 1963) That story did not characterize any interaction at the planned meeting; and I could find no other local news story that did so. The only other account of this visit that I have found was a piece six years later by Calvin Trillin (“Turks “in The New Yorker; Mar. 8, 1969); and I think that is the source used by Hill. My review of the Trillin article indicates that Hill’s writing entirely distorted the nature of that visit by the Turkish parliamentarian. According to Trillin, a representative of the Sumter Chamber of Commerce told him they took a picture of the Turkish Parliament member and Julius Benenhaley and “they could have passed for brothers.” The Chamber representative also said that the parliamentarian and his interpreter stated that the Sumter Turkish people resembled people of various parts of the Mediterranean world: “The Chamber of Commerce man says that Guven thought Turks might have originally been Maltese. Taspinar, the interpreter, believes they could have been North Africans who were part of the Ottoman Empire.”

22. In that same section of his book dealing with the visit by the Turkish parliamentarian, Hill reported a comment by Julius Benenhaley, a respected leader of the Sumter Turkish community. “Julius Benenhaley himself was quoted as saying he didn’t know much about the Turk ancestry but thought that they ‘had some Indian blood.’” (*Strangers*; p. 49) Hill repeated this claim in a 2015 online document, changing the language to a statement that Julius Benenhaley said he “‘knew nothing about Turkish ancestry’ yet explained that ‘we probably have Indian blood.’” Hill credited this quotation to a report for the Smithsonian Institution. (“Sumter’s Turks”; 2015)

This discussion was also a misrepresentation of the actual conversation; and it came not from The Item or the Trillin piece but from an interview by University of South Carolina student Mike Boliver in 1972 as recounted in Wesley D. White Jr.’s History of the Turks Who Live in Sumter County (dated 1975 and compiled for the Smithsonian Institution). It is true that Benenhaley said, “Yes, we probably have Indian blood” in response to a direct question from Boliver about the possibility of Indian ancestry. However, nowhere in either interview by Trillin or Boliver did Julius Benenhaley say that he “did not know much” or “knew nothing” about Turkish ancestry. The true sense and tenor of Benenhaley’s remarks are more accurately revealed in the following Benenhaley quotation from the Trillin article: “I’m proud of my Turkish blood ... That’s why I was proud to meet that man who came all the way from Turkey.” It is hard to fathom such mischaracterizations by Hill.

23. More recently, in late 2015, Hill posted online a lengthy compilation of materials under the title of “Sumter’s Turks.” This posting was a collection of miscellaneous information and documents—ostensibly a comprehensive presentation of the community’s history—along

with Hill's interpretive comments. ("Sumter's Turks"; 2015)

This was another ambitious effort—replete with factual misstatements and irrelevancies—to define “Sumter’s Turks” within an underlying framework of the Native American story. It included fragmented elements of Turkish history and Indian history, mixing documents and interpretations without clear distinction or sufficient sourcing information; and there was no rational discussion of how these items individually or collectively related to the community of “Sumter’s Turks.” Finally, it seems strange—considering his previous reference to the term “Turks” as a slur—that Hill entitled this document “Sumter’s Turks” rather than “Sumter’s Indians.”

24. One item in Hill's online post, "Sumter's Turks" (2015), will serve to illustrate his dubious reporting of this community's history. Hill included in that document a copy of a handwritten legal paper which he described thusly: "1878 Plat and Deed of Jane 'Jinsy' Oxendine Ray to Herbert Ray to include 10 acres 'on the head waters of Long Branch.' One acre of this land was donated by Herbert Ray to found the Long Branch Baptist Church in 1904."

This item/wording apparently was intended to characterize the founding of the Long Branch Baptist Church as a venture among families of alleged Indian surnames; however, close examination of that deed and church records would reveal the disingenuous nature of Hill's documentation. The problem with Hill's supposed documentation this time is that it totally ignored—or perhaps concealed—the central role of Turkish patriarch Joseph Benenhaley's descendants (of various surnames) in the founding of what was commonly known as the “Turk church.” First, contrary to Hill's statement, the name cited in that deed was not “Jane ‘Jinsy’ Oxendine Ray”; it was “Jinsey Ray.” Our research showed that this lady was Jensey/Jency Benenhaley (daughter of the patriarch), who had married an outsider by the name of Ray. In 1869, according to other court records, Jensey Ray had purchased the 10-acre tract adjoining land deeded by General Thomas Sumter to the original Benenhaley in 1815. Also, as written in the 1878 deed, Jensey transferred that tract to her son Herbert Ray “as Trustee for his son, Jas. Ray” (the intent of such wording reportedly reflective of Jensey's disapproval of Herbert's marital choice and a desire that the property remain in her family's line). Finally, as noted in Long Branch church records, it was James Ray (great-grandson of the patriarch and husband of Nellie Benenhaley Ray, great-granddaughter of the patriarch), who donated the acre upon which Long Branch Baptist Church was built in 1904. It is impossible to know whether Hill's depiction of the 1878 deed and 1904 donation was due simply to poor research or was just another case of purposeful distortion; however, it illustrated the persistent and pervasive misinformation throughout his version of Turkish history.

25. I include this final item as Hill's most bizarre offense against the Turkish people. In his 2013 edition of *Strangers in Their Own Land*, Hill used an old, undated photograph of a large family as the front cover and back page of his book about South Carolina Indians. He had also used the photograph in a 2010 edition of *Strangers*; it served as the front page of his “indianancestry101” website; and it appeared in some of his online posts. On an inside page

of his 2013 book the photograph description read, in its entirety, as follows: “The cover photo is of a Sumter Cheraw family.”

This photograph, taken at the beginning of the 1900s, included a man, William Joseph Benenhaley (great grandson of the Turkish patriarch), his wife, Cathreen Oxendine Benenhaley (great granddaughter of the Turkish patriarch), and 11 Benenhaley children. William Joseph Benenhaley was an original deacon of Long Branch Baptist Church (known commonly as the “Turk Church”). For the pictured Benenhaley children for whom pertinent information was available, six of them married, including three to other Benenhaleys, one to an Oxendine, one to a Hood, and one to a Ray. Both parents and nine of the children were recorded as buried in the Long Branch cemetery (and a son born later was buried at Springbank cemetery). Both parents and all five children for whom records could be located were identified as “Turk” on their death certificates. In Hill’s various uses of this photograph, he listed no identifying names of the photographed individuals, no source for the photograph, no permission statement for usage of the photograph, and no explanation for why he called them a “Sumter Cheraw family.” This Benenhaley family represented mixed bloodlines; so, today, people of various ethnic identities can claim them as ancestors. However, considering the totality of their ancestral, familial, and cultural ties, they clearly were part of the Dalzell Turkish community of that time. Hill’s portrayal of this Benenhaley family as Sumter Cheraw Indians was a blatant case of improper appropriation.

The scorecard of critical analysis has now been tallied. All five of Hill’s broad, appropriative allegations can be dismissed because of problems in substantive content and documentation; and all twenty specific claims/statements of appropriative nature can be dismissed as unfounded, erroneous, and/or irrelevant. Altogether, these “items of concern” demonstrated a pattern of improper cultural appropriation throughout Hill’s version of Indian-Turkish history.

.....

It was not easy critiquing Hill’s work because he wrote so much, so often, in so many forums, in such disingenuous manner, and commonly with misleading evidence and documentation. So, I spent a lot of time the past few years chasing countless claims and sources. Eventually, I was able to access most of Hill’s published and online writings; and I found that he routinely engaged in speculations, exaggerations, half-truths, and untruths designed to appropriate the Turkish people as Cheraw Indians. Fortunately, real history and historiography challenged and quite often negated his allegations.

In sum, Steven Pony Hill’s version of Sumter County ethnohistory failed the test of critical analysis; and his claims constituted improper cultural appropriation. Our research and other historical sources revealed that he appropriated Joseph Benenhaley, his Turkish descendants, Turkish cultural identity, and Turkish community history.

Thus, Steven Pony Hill’s research wilted under close scrutiny of his claims and inspection of his sources; and his appropriation of the “Sumter Turks” has been exposed and discredited as sham history.

However, there is no doubt that Hill substantially influenced the movement for Sumter Cheraw Indian tribal status. He claimed that his ancestors founded the Sumter Indian community; and he fashioned himself as an expert on local ethnohistory. He did contract research for the Sumter Band of Cheraw Indians for a while; and an Indian leader of that time credited him for “lots of help ... in the beginning.” The Sumter Indians accepted his chapter on “The Cheraw” as a useful source of information and included it in the Cheraw application for state recognition. Some of them argued with Hill on specific points, but—as the next section will attest—they similarly incorporated Turkish history as a major element of their tribal story.

VI. THE SUMTER CHERAW INDIANS’ APPROPRIATIVE APPLICATION FOR TRIBAL RECOGNITION

The Sumter Band of Cheraw Indians applied for tribal recognition three times beginning in 2007, each time withdrawing their petition prior to an official decision by the South Carolina Commission for Minority Affairs. They filed a fourth application in 2012; and they were certified in 2013.

The final, successful application was a massive project, portraying an elaborate, expansive picture of the Sumter Indians’ history. The three-volume package included almost 1,500 pages of interpretive text and supportive material, as compiled mainly by Claudia Benenhaley Gainey (the daughter of Benenhaley and Oxendine parents).

However, the application was fundamentally flawed because it appropriated Turkish history—categorically, generically, and improperly—to support Cheraw tribal recognition. The petition also failed to evidence and document its claims and statements in accord with acceptable standards of historical research.

In this section, I will identify the Cheraw application’s appropriative claims; and—drawing from our research in *South Carolina’s Turkish People* and my research for this manuscript—I will challenge and contradict the petition’s version of Sumter County ethnohistory.

(Readers will recognize the repetition of some material from Section V in Section VI; this was necessary because certain information was related to multiple parts of the manuscript. For assembled material/notes related to the Sumter Cheraw Indians Application for State Recognition, see Browder’s Files on *South Carolina’s Turkish People* at South Caroliniana Library in Columbia, SC. Also, see *South Carolina’s Turkish People*, the Cheraw tribal application, and other locations in this manuscript regarding source material cited and uncited in the following discussion.)

Concerns about the Sumter Cheraw Application

A quick survey of the 2012 Sumter Cheraw tribal application suggested the same “items of concern” that characterized Steven Pony Hill’s writings, i.e., disingenuous allegations, insufficient evidence, and poor documentation; and closer examination revealed that it replicated Hill’s improper appropriation of Joseph Benenhaley, his Turkish descendants, Turkish cultural identity, and Turkish community history.

The inclusion of these four elements of Turkish experience in the Cheraw application constituted monumental cultural appropriation; and it set the stage for intense debate about Sumter County ethnohistory. I will present responsive research challenging and rejecting the accuracy of these appropriative allegations; and, as in the previous section, my concerns will be organized thematically, accompanied by “our research” and “other historical sources” in italics.

1. Joseph Benenhaley

The most consequential act of appropriation in the application was the Cheraw allegation that Joseph Benenhaley was a founder/progenitor/ancestor of the Sumter Cheraw Indian Tribe. The petition thereby laid claim to the original Benenhaley and his bloodline as part of that tribe—simply and quietly, without solid evidence or real documentation.

Here is the definitive statement in the historical linkages section of the Cheraw application: “The historical and modern Sumter Cheraw community was essentially founded by Aaron Oxendine, Charles Oxendine, William Deas, John Buckner, James Ray, James Scott, and Joseph Benenhaley.”

The petition elsewhere stated: “All Sumter Band of Cheraw Indians are descendants of and therefore linked by ancestral ties to the following list of progenitors of our contemporary Native American Indian Tribal Community: Charles Oxendine, Joseph Benenhaley, James Scott, Isham Scott, John Buckner, Marion Hood, John Chavis, William Deas, James Ray, Goins, and Lowerys.”

In another place, the application said: “Charles Oxendine, Aaron Oxendine, Joseph Benenhaley, William Deas, John Buckner, James Scott and James Scott are the top progenitors of our community... These were and are the members of our core group.”

Yet another section stated: “We are naming below a list of the progenitors of our Native American Indian Tribe”; and listed were “Charles Oxendine, John Scott, Herbert Ray, Joseph Benenhaley, John W. Buckner, John A. Woodell, Aaron Oxendine, Marion Hood.”

Inexplicably, however, the Cheraw Indians’ own words impugned Benenhaley’s stature as a founder of their tribe. Although they included him prominently in every listing of their founders, the application articulated confusing and deprecating statements about his background.

Here, for example, is one rambling paragraph: “Joseph Benenhaley’s origins still remains a mystery to most. There is no documentation that can definitively attest to his origin. There are several versions as to who and what he really was. Most of the research that we have found regarding his origin is that he was found by General Thomas Sumter in a place called Turkey Town. All of the surnames listed above are Native American Indians. Joseph Benenhaley’s origin is the only one in question. Some believe that he was Arabic from Turkey. We believe due to the fact that he was traveling and living among Indians, that he as well was Native American.”

Also, in another section, was this flimsy account of Benenhaley’s role in the lineage: “As there seems to be no viable proof to his origin; we will not speculate as to what he was. What we do know is that he raised a large family in Sumter along side the Oxendines, Scotts, Buckners, Rays and the rest of the above listed progenitors.”

These confusing statements reflected unacceptable ambiguity about Joseph Benenhaley; and they certainly belied his prominence as a founder in the submitted application.

This examination of the tribal application will begin with our research and other historical sources that depict the man in a manner that differs significantly from the Cheraw thesis.

***Our research regarding
the Cheraw appropriation of Joseph Benenhaley***

As mentioned in a previous section, counting Joseph Benenhaley among their ancestral founders was a tempting option for the Cheraw tribe. He was one of the early settlers of this area; some of his children married Indians; he produced bountiful, mixed-blood progeny over the next two centuries; and his surname carried tremendous respect and influence among dark-skinned people. Symbolically and practically, the original Benenhaley would be a very valuable progenitor.

.....

However, there are two powerful reasons—based on research in our book—why the Cheraw cannot claim Joseph Benenhaley as a founder of their tribe.

First, by all accounts, he was not an Indian. He apparently claimed to be of “Arab descent.” He did not marry an Indian woman; and he never fathered any Indian children. Also, there was no record or indication that he had ever identified or aligned himself with the Indians. Some of Benenhaley’s children and other descendants married persons of Native American background; but most of that line merged into and identified with the Turkish people.

An equally important reason why Joseph Benenhaley cannot be claimed as a founder of the Cheraw Tribe is that he was the patriarch of his own distinct subcultural community.

Our research has demonstrated that he was the founder of the Turkish people—originating after the American Revolution and extending through several core families who identified with and immersed themselves into the Turkish community—during the formative generations of the 1800s.

While there is no indication of Ottoman culture (other than perhaps the “Benenhaley” surname) in the history of their community, the original Turk bequeathed to his lineage a lasting legacy of dark skin and social stigma. Consequently, a powerful subcultural experience—the nexus of patriarchy, blood, marriage, color, isolation, discrimination, and identity—shaped their historical existence as “the Turkish people”; and that experience continues for many of them today.

To illustrate, we have discovered valuable evidence regarding the original Benenhaley’s identity and place in the early Turkish community. A letter written by an authoritative source (who lived in that area from the 1840s until the 1930s and married into the family) stated that Benenhaley was “an Ottoman,” who had been “bonded by the Spanish at sea,” and rendered “service with Gen. Thomas Sumter in the War or Revolution in exchange for a homestead”; and legal papers (dated at various times in the 1800s) in the Sumter County courthouse showed that the General had deeded Benenhaley land in the Long Branch area where the Turkish community originated and adjacent to the property which they later acquired and where they built their church.

We also have documented the primacy of the Benenhaley surname among the six major families and 270 descendent individuals (whom we have identified as constituting the Turkish community in the 1800s). The Benenhaleys represented slightly over half (51%) of them, followed by the Oxendines (21%), Rays (8%), Hoods (5%), Buckners (4%), and Lowreys (2%); and these families together accounted for 91% of the listed individuals who lived there during that first century.

Similarly, our survey of interments in cemeteries of the two local churches that have served historically as places of worship for the Turkish people showed his legacy and their cultural connectedness from early times to the present. A majority of headstones in those graveyards bear the names of people who were either born Benenhaleys or married Benenhaleys.

Finally, we examined DNA reports for eight living Turkish descendants for insights regarding the ancestral origins of Joseph Benenhaley and the primary lineage of this community. To generalize, these reports comply with hypothetical origins from a Mediterranean/Middle Eastern/North African progenitor, with substantial white European admixture, some evidence of Native American contribution, and no significant Sub-Sahara African linkages, at least during the formative generations of the 1800s.

.....

Thus, the Cheraw Indians can cite Joseph Benenhaley as a long-ago relative if they want to do so; and they can count some of his descendants as people of partial Native

American ancestry. But the Cheraw cannot claim the original Benenhaley as an ancestral founder of their tribe. To the contrary, as our research has confirmed, Benenhaley was patriarch of his own distinct cultural community—the Turkish people—that endured for two centuries.

***Other historical sources regarding
the Cheraw appropriation of Joseph Benenhaley***

To repeat from the previous section, there are few sources of standard historical nature relating to Joseph Benenhaley (other than our book). Most references to this mysterious character consisted of legal papers, census records, genealogical material, media stories, and countless passing citations of limited value in this discussion.

.....

However, there were three individuals of some authority who wrote about Joseph Benenhaley; and their accounts provided interesting insights into his life. None of these writers ever met Benenhaley. But two of them lived in the area and knew the Benenhaley family in the latter half of the 1800s; and the other writer, an ethnohistorian, compiled a large amount of data on Benenhaley and the Turkish people in the 1970s.

For example, we discovered a fascinating series of letters from Matilda Ellison Benenhaley (1842-1936), the authoritative source who wrote the aforementioned account of Joseph Benenhaley's family. Matilda was a Black woman who married into the Benenhaley line. She never met Joseph Benenhaley; but she learned about him from his children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. Based on those conversations, she described him as "an Ottoman" who was captured by the Spanish on the high seas, sent to the Indies, gained his freedom, somehow made his way to Charleston, served in some capacity with General Thomas Sumter, and settled in the Dalzell area on land given to him by the General (South Carolina's Turkish People, 2018; p. 78).

Perhaps the most prominent discussion of Benenhaley related to this project was provided by Thomas Sebastian Sumter (1852-1934)—great-grandson of General Thomas Sumter—who also never met Joseph Benenhaley but grew up in the area during the latter half of the 1800s and claimed to have known his widow and other Turkish individuals as a young boy. The great-grandson included brief remarks in his memoir (Stateburg and Its People, 1920; pp. 43-45). He wrote that Benenhaley was a "white" man, a "Caucasian of 'Arab' descent," who supposedly served as a scout with General Thomas Sumter in the American Revolution and raised a large family in the Dalzell area in the early 1800s.

The most complete inquiry into the nature of the reclusive Turkish group in Dalzell—until our project—was a compilation of material for the Smithsonian Institution during the 1970s by contract scholar Wesley DuRant White, Jr. (A History of the Turks, 1975). Most importantly, White concluded that "Benengeli seems to have been a native of Turkey, and of Arabic descent"; and he acknowledged that Joseph was founder of the

Dalzell community. He identified some of the key Turkish families as “Benenhaleys, Hoods, Oxendines, Rays, Scotts, and others.” Specific information in White’s collection may seem trivial and confusing; but his general observations were historically consequential, such as his findings of Benenhaley dominance and Native American presence in the community. He characterized the Indians in the Dalzell group as a peculiar ancestral phenomenon: “They were probably American Indians not belonging to any tribe and completely acculturated ... the only group that I know of of that description in the United States today who have absolutely no tradition whatever of Indian ancestry.” Instead, he said, they traced their origins to “founders of the community from Turkey” and called themselves “Turks” or “white Turk-Americans.”

This was a meager historical record; but it characterized Joseph Benenhaley, variably, as an “Ottoman,” a “Caucasian of Arabic descent,” “a native of Turkey,” and founder of the Dalzell community. This record mentioned Benenhaley’s relationship with General Sumter; it stated that the Benenhaleys dominated the community; it noted that the Indians had “completely acculturated” into the Turkish group; and it indicated that they called themselves “Turks” or “white Turk-Americans.”

.....

These historical sources were consistent with our research on the Turkish people; and they conflicted with the Cheraw application’s claim that Joseph Benenhaley was one of the founders of the Cheraw Indian Tribe.

The most important, incongruent conclusions of the items cited above were that (1) the Sumter Indian application claimed Joseph Benenhaley as a founder/progenitor/ancestor of a Native American tribe; however, (2) our research and other historical sources showed that the original Benenhaley was patriarch of the Turkish people. The application provided no real explanation or documentation of how a man of reputed Arabic ancestry could be a founding father for the Indians; in fact, parts of the petition undermined their allegation by disparaging and discounting Benenhaley’s ancestral origins. Correspondingly, our research and other historical sources provided solid documentation for Benenhaley’s patriarchy of the Turkish people.

Furthermore, the application did not show how Joseph Benenhaley and the other fourteen founders/progenitors/ancestors interconnected and interrelated; it never weaved a complete, consistent, and coherent account of what made them founders of a single, functioning community; and it lacked a family tree that included all these supposed progenitors and their lineages. Of course, our research and other historical sources provided abundant evidence that Benenhaley was the founder of a separate, distinct, and enduring community known as the “Turks.”

The appropriation of Joseph Benenhaley as a key Cheraw forefather was an erratic venture for the Indians. They have never been able to reconcile troubling intricacies of the man’s life

and role in the founding of their tribe; and they still struggle, internally and externally, to deal with this problem. In retrospect, it would have been wise of them to have used his name more accurately and judiciously in their application.

Therefore, my assessment was that the Cheraw application failed to provide convincing documentation for their claim that Joseph Benenhaley was one of their founders.

2. Benenhaley's Descendants

In equally questionable manner, the Cheraw Indians appropriated Joseph Benenhaley's descendent lineage throughout their application.

Of course, the previously cited declaration of Joseph Benenhaley provided the basis for appropriating his descendants. However, the most impressive documentational statement of that appropriation was a 49-page genealogical chart that evidenced a long and continuous Cheraw history in and outside Sumter County. The chart listed family lines stretching from the 1700s to the present, including about 150 surnames and a thousand-plus individuals; and it showcased Joseph Benenhaley and the Benenhaley surname extensively. In fact, Benenhaleys accounted for 30% of the listed names—more than any other family—in the Cheraw family tree.

Additionally, several other families that had intermarried with the Benenhaleys figured very prominently in the genealogical diagram. Altogether, those six Benenhaley et al families accounted for slightly over half of the individuals shown in the Cheraw chart.

However—again inexplicably—other parts of the Cheraw application's narrative text discounted the role of the Benenhaleys in their tribal story. For example, the petition stated in one section that "The ancestry of the Benenhaleys remains a mystery. No historian can definitively say where they originated." Another sentence added: "The Benenhaleys cannot be ignored, nor can they be explained." Finally, the petition added this dismissive commentary: "Then again, we are not trying to prove to this Honorable Review Panel or the Honorable Commissioners who the Benenhaleys are; its the Native blood we know we have."

The application also oddly characterized other families in that area who intermarried with the Benenhaleys. A key sentence in the discussion read this way: "When discussing the history of lineage of our people, you must take into consideration that there are more bloodlines in Sumter, South Carolina that must be addressed. These people are Benenhaleys, Buckners, Lowerys, Hoods, Scotts and Rays that identify themselves as being of Arabic or Turkish origin."

Therefore, the Cheraw application promoted antithetical arguments. On one hand, the tribe submitted a genealogical chart disproportionately showcasing Benenhaleys and families who married into that line; but at certain points in its textual narrative, it belittled the Benenhaley et al families.

Now, I will present our research and other historical sources demonstrating that Benenhaley’s descendants cannot be characterized—categorically and generically—as Native American Indians.

***Our research regarding
the Cheraw appropriation of Benenhaley’s descendants***

Again, to repeat, our research attested to Benenhaley’s lineage as “the Turkish people” in much the same manner as it confirmed Joseph Benenhaley’s stature as patriarch of the Turkish community.

.....

In the first place, I was confident that our project had put together a comprehensive picture of local ethnohistory—based on historical documents, legal files, media stories, genealogical reports, vital records, graveyard surveys, genetic analysis, personal letters and interviews—as presented in South Carolina’s Turkish People(2018). Our book demonstrated that Joseph Benenhaley and his descendants constituted their own distinct community—known as the “Turks”—for the past two centuries.

While there is no indication of Ottoman culture (other than perhaps the “Benenhaley” surname) in the history of their community, the original Turk bequeathed to his lineage a lasting legacy of dark skin and social stigma. Consequently, a powerful subcultural experience—the nexus of patriarchy, blood, marriage, color, isolation, discrimination, and identity—shaped their historical existence as “the Turkish people”; and that experience continues for many of them today.

Also, our research on the families of this area closely complied with that ethnohistorical picture. It showed that Joseph Benenhaley and his Turkish group were settling in the Dalzell area in the late 1700s or early 1800s, at about the same time as the Indian-blooded people from North Carolina were settling in Privateer Township; and there was some intermarriage between the two settlements during the 1800s. Most of the Privateer Indians left the area in the early 1900s; and many of those Native Americans who remained appear to have immersed themselves among the Turkish people during that century.

.....

Our research confirmed Joseph Benenhaley’s paternal impact on descendent generations of the small settlement of “Turks” during the 1800s and attested to his surname’s continuing dominance among those families in the 1900s and 2000s.

To illustrate this last point, we have documented the primacy of his surname among the six major families and 270 descendent individuals (whom we have identified as constituting the Turkish community during the 1800s). The Benenhaleys represented slightly over half (51%) of them, followed by the Oxendines (21%), Rays (8%), Hoods

(5%), Buckners (4%), and Lowreys (2%); and these families together accounted for 91% of the listed individuals who lived there during that first century.

Similarly, our analysis of interments in cemeteries of the two local churches that have served historically as places of worship for the Turkish people showed his legacy and their cultural connectedness from early times to the present. A majority of headstones in those graveyards bear the names of people who were either born Benenhaleys or married Benenhaleys.

Finally, we examined DNA reports for eight living Turkish descendants for insights regarding the ancestral origins of Joseph Benenhaley and the primary lineage of this community. These reports comply with hypothetical origins from a Mediterranean/Middle Eastern/North African progenitor, with substantial white European admixture, some evidence of Native American contribution, and no significant Sub-Sahara African linkages, at least during the formative generations of the 1800s.

.....

Just as important as our research, the Cheraw genealogical chart failed as testimony for tribal recognition. The genealogical chart was indeed impressive—at first glance. It displayed Benenhaley names often, from earliest times to the present. However, the problem is that the Sumter Indians disparaged and discounted the Benenhaley line at other points in the application.

Furthermore, the predominance of Benenhaleys in that diagram struck me as strange considering that the application listed the original Benenhaley as just one of fifteen founders and described his descendants as a “mystery” which cannot be “explained” and who perhaps were not as important as “native blood” Indians.

Additionally, several other families that had intermarried with the Benenhaleys—the “bloodlines” whom the Cheraw Indians said “identify themselves as being of Arabic or Turkish origin”—seemed over-stacked in the genealogical diagram. How could so few suspect bloodlines dominate a Native American family tree that included about 150 surnames.

Finally, the surnames of about half of the fifteen individuals cited in the application as founders/progenitors/ancestors of the Cheraw Tribe were missing from their own tribal genealogy. Many of the early Indian leaders and names that played important roles in the narrative (such as the Chavises, Gibbeses, Goinses, and Smilings of the Redbone community in Privateer Township) were never mentioned or were scarcely present in the submitted tree of Cheraw family history.

It seemed as if the Cheraw Indians had crafted an expansive tribal narrative and extensive genealogical chart to depict a continuing tribe over the past century, as required by law; but that bloated document undermined the narrative by slighting what they called “native blood” Indians and relying mainly on the Benenhaleys et al, many of

whom identified as people of “Arabic or Turkish origin.”

.....

The Cheraw application simultaneously appropriated Benenhaley’s descendants and disparaged/discounted that same lineage. These problems of substance and documentation severely weakened the petition; and it was not hard for our research to contradict this claim.

***Other historical sources regarding
the Cheraw appropriation of Benenhaley’s descendants***

I will repeat here what I reported in the previous item, since these other sources are relevant to the issue of lineage; and this research does have some pertinence to the question whether Joseph Benenhaley’s descendants are “Turks” or “Indians.”

.....

There are few sources of standard historical nature relating to Joseph Benenhaley and his descendants (other than our book). Most references to this mysterious character and his descendants consisted of legal papers, census records, genealogical material, media stories, and countless passing citations of limited value in this discussion.

.....

However, several individual accounts that give us interesting insights into Joseph Benenhaley and his lineage.

For example, we discovered a fascinating series of letters from Matilda Ellison Benenhaley (1842-1936), the authoritative source who wrote the aforementioned account of Joseph Benenhaley’s family. Matilda was a Black woman who married into the Benenhaley line. She never met Joseph Benenhaley; but she learned about him from his children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. She described him as “an Ottoman” who was captured by the Spanish on the high seas, sent to the Indies, gained his freedom, somehow made his way to Charleston, served in some capacity with General Thomas Sumter, and settled in the Dalzell area on land given to him by the General (South Carolina’s Turkish People, 2018; p. 78).

Perhaps the most prominent discussion of Benenhaley was provided by Thomas Sebastian Sumter (1852-1934)—great-grandson of General Thomas Sumter—who also never met Joseph Benenhaley but claimed to have known his widow as a young boy. The great-grandson included brief remarks in his memoir (Stateburg and Its People, 1920; pp. 43-45). He wrote that Benenhaley was a “Caucasian of ‘Arab’ descent,” who supposedly served as a scout with General Thomas Sumter in the American Revolution and raised a large family in the Dalzell area in the early 1800s.

Thomas Sebastian Sumter's nephew, F. Kinloch Bull (1926-2004), related similar memories of growing up in Stateburg (Random Recollections, 1987). Bull, an eyewitness to Turkish life in the early 1900s, supported the legendary origin of that community; and he observed that "With their straight black hair and copper colored complexion, they looked like Turks" (105). He wrote that they had come down from Virginia with General Sumter about the time of the Revolutionary War; and he recalled them as farmers and laborers who liked to fish, hunt, and play poker. "In all they were a cheerful people," he said, "and with some a drooping mustache and fierce look belied a pleasant disposition" (106).

Contract scholar Wesley DuRant White, Jr., compiled a wealth of material for the Smithsonian Institution almost a half-century ago (A History of the Turks, 1975). White wrote that "Benengeli seems to have been a native of Turkey, and of Arabic descent"; and he acknowledged that Joseph was founder of the community in Dalzell. He identified some of the key Turkish families as "Benenhaleys, Hoods, Oxendines, Rays, Scotts, and others." Specific information in White's collection may seem trivial and confusing; but his general observations were historically consequential, such as his findings of Benenhaley dominance and Native American presence in the community.

Finally, the autobiographical writings of Dr. Eleazer Benenhaley told a moving first-person story about life among Joseph Benenhaley's descendants in the twentieth century. Benenhaley, a lineal descendant and perhaps the most respected Turkish person alive today, was born in 1934 and has been deeply embedded in the community for most of his life. He has authored two brief publications, Moulded Clay (1983) and An Analysis of Neophytes and Would Be Historians (2008). Dr. Benenhaley has expressed complete confidence in the traditional narrative: "But as for me, I trust the oral tradition of my grandmother and those before her" (2008, 36) ... "Oral Tradition and family biblical records can have more creditability than records kept by those whose views are colored by bigotry" (2008, 22). Certainly, he has no doubts about who he is: "God knew what He was doing when He created me ... I have lived 73 years as being of Turkish descent. I have no desire to be anything else" (2008, p. 37).

This historical record characterized Joseph Benenhaley, variably, as an "Ottoman," a "Caucasian of Arabic descent," a "native of Turkey," and founder of the Dalzell community. The record also mentioned Benenhaley's relationship with General Sumter; it acknowledged that the Benenhaleys dominated the community, which also included Native American Indians; it indicated that the Benenhaley descendants "looked like Turks," and that Joseph's living Turkish descendant has "no desire to be anything else."

.....

These historical sources comported very well with our research on the Turkish people, much more so than with the application's claim that Joseph Benenhaley's descendants belonged to the Cheraw Indian Tribe.

Just as the Cheraw application failed to explain how the patriarch was a founder of the tribe, so it never provided a complete, consistent, coherent, and documented account of how his descendants and the many other lines interconnected and interrelated as a single, functioning, Native American community. Actually, the petition sometimes testified against itself.

On the other hand, our research and other historical sources provided extensive evidence and support for Benenhaley's descendants as a separate, distinct lineage—known as the “Turks”—over the past two centuries.

Thus, there was ample evidence supporting our thesis about Joseph Benenhaley's descendants and arguing against the Sumter Indians' appropriation of his lineage to buttress their claims about a Cheraw tribal community.

3. Turkish Cultural Identity

Perhaps the most dramatic tactic of Cheraw appropriation was the group's assertion that their Native American ancestors had assumed a new identity as “Turks” in order to survive in early Sumter County. Hence, they included the Turkish people in their narrative and application.

Steven Pony Hill expressed this idea of shifting cultural identity in his chapter on “The Cheraw” (which was included in the application): “Though known by the name ‘Turks’ ... the swarthy, clannish people were no more realistically ‘Turks’ than the Indian tribes detailed in previous chapters were ‘Brass Ankles.’ These copper-skinned, high cheek-boned people whose grandparents learned that they could gain equality under the identity of ‘Turks’ that they were denied as ‘Indians,’ have in the most recent generation begun to reclaim their rightful birthright as persons of Indian descent” (*Strangers*, p. 41)

This claim became an important aspect of the Cheraw group's overall strategy; and it was promoted with emotional statements throughout the application. Here is the most direct and dramatic statement of the claim: “It is the belief of the people in the community today that using the term ‘Turk’ was a means to escape the Indian Removal Act implemented by Pres. Andrew Jackson. This act would cause death, enslavement and all other atrocities known to mankind. Indians were afforded no kindnesses or humanity by the whites or blacks. They called us clannish; which I now know we were. We had to be in order to hide our identities as Native American Indians. The ‘Turk’ name or moniker causing us to be a third race most definitely saved our lives.”

In a subsequent paragraph, there was another remark about using the “Turk” nomenclature as an act of survival: “We must keep in mind that being known as an Indian during this era with the Indian Removal Act; being known as Indian was the last thing one would want to be. The Turk moniker in many ways saved the lives of our ancestors.”

That reasoning also was repeated as a continuing fear among present-day Sumter Indians: “When the Indian Removal Act was put into place in 1830 and all Indians had to be moved west of the Mississippi; what better way to hide one’s identity than to say ‘I’m Turkish’. This fear of removal and imprisonment for being Native American Indians still today remain with some of our people.”

The text further provided this commentary about the triumph of Cheraw identity in the past few years: “Several members of the community have many questions about their ancestry and the reason we were called ‘Turks’. Most of the community at first did not want to discuss it. Research began. Native leadership began to re-organize the Tribe ... Community members actively started to practice old Customs and traditions of our Native American people amongst the opposition from some of the community. On January 18, 2007, we were officially chartered by the Secretary of State’s Office as The Sumter Band of Cheraw Indians.” And here is the most recent declaration of tribal identity: “We, The Sumter Band of Cheraw Indians know who and what we are. We are a tribe of Native American Indian people that are proud of our history.”

This tale sounded logical; and it resonated with many people. But our research and other historical sources did not support that story.

***Our research regarding
the Cheraw appropriation of Turkish cultural identity***

Contrary to the Cheraw tale, our research (as presented in South Carolina’s Turkish People) showed that the Turkish people have enjoyed their own distinct identity and comprised their own subculture for many generations.

.....

While there is no indication of Ottoman culture (other than perhaps the “Benenhaley” surname) in the history of their community, the original Turk bequeathed to his lineage a lasting legacy of dark skin and social stigma. Consequently, a powerful subcultural experience—the nexus of patriarchy, blood, marriage, color, isolation, discrimination, and identity—shaped their historical existence as “the Turkish people”; and that experience continues for many of them today.

.....

The original Benenhaley apparently identified himself as a “Caucasian of Arab descent,” as reported by Thomas Sebastian Sumter (1917); and the Turkish community later described themselves as “Turks” according to Wes White, Jr. (1975) and as “white Turk Americans” according to Wesley Durant Taukchiray/Alice B. Kasakoff (1993). These people further self-identified as “Turks” in a 1930s newspaper ad (The Sumter Item, “Yesteryear”; 1992), as “Turk” litigants in their Federal lawsuit of the 1950s (Hood v.

Board of Trustees; 1953-1961), and as individuals of Turkish origin in the 1980 US census (Allen and Turner, We The People; 1998).

Also, numerous individuals have expressed pride in their Turkish ancestry, such as Julius Benenhaley's statement in the 1960s that "I'm proud of my Turkish blood" (Trillin, "Sumter County, SC, Turks"; 1969) and Eleazer Benenhaley's 2008 declaration that "God knew what He was doing when he created me ... I have lived 73 years as being of Turkish descent. I have no desire to be anything else" (An Analysis of Neophytes and Would Be Historians).

Finally, there is no reason to believe that the contemporary Turkish people are assuming Cheraw identity in mass. No precise research is available; but Tribal leader Ansley Ray, told a Sumter Item reporter in 2017 that there are about 275 Cheraw Indians, "plus a lot more that haven't yet embraced their heritage" (Nov. 8, 2017). Discussions on social media and our interviews in the Turkish community convince us that most of the original families still consider themselves Turkish people and subscribe to the narrative of oral history. (For examples of social media discussion, see the occasional Facebook debates at "You Might Be From Sumter, SC If You Remember..."; and for our interviews, see our book, South Carolina's Turkish People, 2018.)

.....

Our research clearly challenged the application's appropriation of cultural identity.

***Other historical sources regarding
the Cheraw appropriation of Turkish cultural identity***

Also contrary to the Cheraw application's tale of shifting cultural identity was substantial research that provided no hint of altered self-identification among either group. Useful insight can be discerned by reviewing these materials (which also were covered in a previous section).

.....

Charles James McDonald Furman, a history enthusiast held in high regard by professional ethnologists at the Smithsonian Institution, spent his life observing the Indians who lived near his plantation in the southwestern part of Sumter County. Furman authored numerous newspaper articles about the Indians, with whom he also had close personal relations in the latter half of the 1800s ("Furman Papers"). In a profile of James Edward Smiling, whom he described as "the patriarch" of the community, Furman noted that "I have often talked with this old man about his people, concerning whom he has given me a good deal of information." Furman's conversations and relationships with the group clearly informed his description of them as partial Native Americans. He wrote: "As a race, they bear considerable resemblance in their appearance to the Indians"; and "there is a good sprinkling of Indian blood" among

them. He also said: “Redbone is their proper, racial name, and by this name they should be called.” It seems likely that Furman—who lived in the area, befriended the group, studied them for most of his life, and wrote extensively about their lives and ways—would have been aware and would have reported if the Indians had ever “passed as Turks” for survival; and he never made any mention of such identity games.

*Also, ethnohistorian Wesley D. White compiled the best collection of information and documents regarding the Turkish people (*A History of the Turks*; 1975) prior to our research. In his report to the Smithsonian Institution, White wrote that the Dalzell group considered themselves originally from Turkey. Parts of this package were somewhat confusing because it was difficult to determine exactly how specific comments related to which families in the area; however, the gist of his analysis was that some of those who resided in that community constituted a peculiar ancestral phenomenon. He said that they seemed predominately of American Indian descent; but, he said, they were “the only group that I know of of that description in the United States today who have absolutely no tradition whatever of Indian ancestry.” Speaking apparently and specifically of the Oxendines there, he wrote: “They were probably American Indians not belonging to any tribe and completely acculturated.” Instead, he said, they traced their origins to “supposed founders of their community from Turkey” and called themselves “Turks” or “white Turk-Americans.”*

Writing under his assumed Indian name two decades later, Wesley DuRant Taukchiray and co-author Alice Bee Kasakoff again addressed the ethnic issue of the Sumter County community (“Contemporary Native Americans”; 1992); and these scholars excluded the Turkish people from their study of American Indians in South Carolina. They explained: “We do not discuss groups that some outsiders have speculated have Indian ancestry, such as the Sumter Turks near Dalzell ... The Sumter Turks do not concur that they are Indian and have said that they consider themselves to be ‘white Turk Americans.’” White/Taukchiray thus had concluded that the families of Native American descent had merged—absolutely and completely—into the Turkish people.

.....

There always has been some confusion about the dark-hued people in rural Sumter County. However, these historical sources, considered together, cast doubt on the application’s tale of Indian-Turkish identity. Neither Furman nor White nor Taukchiray/Kasakoff insinuated anything about the fabrication of “Turk” identification as a convenient ruse that was switched “on” in the 1800s and “off” by Native Americans of Sumter County more than a century later.

The glaring problem with the Cheraw application was that it declared a dramatic story of shifting cultural identity as part of the Indian story—without supportive documentation, other than a few recent and dramatic statements about “atrocities,” “death,” and “fear.” Tales of altered ethnic identity to avoid persecution were common among Native Americans of the

Southeast and among scholars of that period; but there is no evidence supporting the retrospective claim as it pertained to the Sumter Indians in the 1800s and 1900s.

The petition made a dramatic assertion about their early assumption of Turkish identity and the Turkish people's recent resumption of Indian identity; but it failed to provide any corroboration of those claims. Also, our research and other historical accounts showed that the Turkish people have always believed and still believe, for the most part, that they are/were of Arabic descent.

An appreciable body of evidence challenged and refuted the Cheraw application's appropriation of Turkish identity.

4. Turkish Community History

The final and most brazen Cheraw appropriation tactic was a strained articulation of community history among the dark-toned people of Sumter County. The application fashioned a broad narrative of Native American culture over the past two centuries—with detailed discussion of Indian social life in the Privateer and Dalzell areas.

Steven Pony Hill stated this claim (again in his brief chapter on “The Cheraw”), with the following account of these two communities from the 1800s into the 1900s: “As time progressed, the Indians of Sumter formed two communities, the Chavis, Gibbs, Goins, and Smilings near Privateer Township and the Benenhaleys, Buckners, Deas, Oxendines, and Scotts near Dalzell. Although the two hamlets were separated by about ten miles the two communities maintained social connections as several members of the Dalzell settlement appear on the records of the Bethesda Baptist Church at Privateer, the opposite is true in the records of the High Hills and Long Branch churches at Dalzell, and several children from Privateer attended school at the Dalzell school.” And, he wrote: “Both of these small communities were called ‘Red Bones’ by their White neighbors, however the Chavis, Goins, and Smilings of Privateer eventually moved back to Robeson circa 1910 and the people at Dalzell began to be called ‘Turks’ by their neighbors.” (*Strangers*; p. 43)

Also, the application provided narrative discussion with several examples and references to Cheraw community history and experiences. For example, the section on “Separate Community” stated: “From the year 1810 to the era after WWII the Sumter Cheraw community has maintained an ethically, unique, easily defined and almost self-isolated community separate from non-Indians that surround them. Census schedules for 1850 to 1920 clearly shows a compact community centered on a church a school that was specifically for the use of their race.” The “Chronological Time Line” of Cheraw history noted: “1900s - Cheraw leave the High Hills Baptist Church and build a church of their own. Long Branch Baptist Church was built in September 1904.” And, in the section on “Common Characteristics, Interests, and Behaviors” of the Cheraw tribe was this statement: “As mentioned at length in Sections 4 and 5, it was very hard to get an education for the members of our community. We had to have separate schools that were inferior to white or black schools. The school was known as the Dalzell School. The common consensus of the whites

was that no student from our community should receive an education above the tenth grade. Court action was required in order for the children to attend white schools.”

These accounts drew a comprehensive picture of Cheraw community history over the past two centuries—but, as will be demonstrated in our research and other historical sources, this was a disputable depiction.

***Our research regarding
the Cheraw appropriation of Turkish community history***

Our research—backed up with sound documentation—provided strong historical support for the Turkish community as an enduring, distinct subcultural society of their own and therefore not part of an Indian settlement.

.....

The Indians and Turkish people congregated in relatively separate, reclusive settlements in the late 1700s and early 1800s.

The Indians were generally of mixed white European and Native American background, with eclectic ancestral surnames (including, by various accounts, the Chavises, Gibbeses, Goinses, and Smilings of the “Redbone” group at Privateer township, and the Oxendines and Scotts and others who came down from North Carolina and some of whom apparently associated themselves with that settlement or in the Dalzell area).

The Turkish people subscribed to an oral history of Arab descent, beginning with Joseph Benenhaley; and some white Europeans and Native Americans (primarily Oxendines) merged into their communal family. This latter familial group settled mainly in the Dalzell area. Undoubtedly, there were some interconnections between the two settlements throughout the 1800s.

The Privateer community disappeared in the early 1900s, some going back to North Carolina and others down to Florida; and those who remained likely merged with the Dalzell community. These people generally claim to be “White people of Arabic descent”; and they have been called “the Turks” by locals for the past two centuries.

.....

Our research directly contradicted the application’s account of community history in Sumter County.

***Other historical sources regarding
the Cheraw appropriation of Turkish community history***

There also are other historical accounts that record the Indians and Turkish people as separate communities.

.....

For example, Thomas Sebastian Sumter (the General's great-grandson who grew up in Stateburg and knew some of both groups) wrote emphatically that the Turkish people were not "Red Bones," as the Privateer Indians were known by locals: "It is or has been unfortunately but nevertheless true, that on account of their inherited dark complexions they have been confused with that class of people known as Red Bones scattered about in North and South Carolina, but this is entirely a mistake." (Stateburg and Its People; 1920, p. 45)

Likewise, F. Kinloch Bull (another Sumter relative who grew up in that area) included a section on the "Sumter County Turks" in his memoir; and he described the Dalzell community specifically as "Turks" who looked like "Turks." He then discussed the "Redbones" in another section with this comment: "I do not know the origin of the name 'Redbone,' but there are a number of these people scattered throughout the state"; and he cautioned that they "were not to be confused with the Turks." ("Random Recollections"; 1986, pp. 107-108)

Also, in the late 1800s, Charles James McDonald Furman wrote this about his Indian neighbors: "there are living in this township (Privateer) a mixed breed of people" and "their correct name is Red bone." He said that most of these people were descended from Tom Gibbs and many were related to Jerry and Edie Goins, with other common surnames being Chavis and Smilings. He noted that their church was "situated in this township hardly a mile from the Clarendon line." He speculated that "less than half a dozen have married other than among their race." Finally, he wrote: "They are certainly an isolated people and ... they are if anything, more apart to themselves than are the Hebrews of our State." ("Furman Papers")

Additionally, Wesley D. White introduced the Turkish group at Dalzell thusly in his 1975 report to the Smithsonian Institution: "In South Carolina along Highway 441 to the immediate north of Shaw Air Force Base in Sumter county, one will find a people known to their neighbors as the Turks." White reported that about half of the Dalzell group were Benenhaleys and the next largest number were Oxendines; and they considered themselves originally from Turkey and to be "Turks" or "white-Turk-Americans." (A History of the Turks; 1975, unnumbered pages)

More pertinent to this discussion, White also demarcated the Turkish and Indian settlements this way: "Notice on this map the towns of Stateburg, Providence and Sumter and inbetween them the lands of 'Ray' and Benenhaly' [the Dalzell area] ... Take note also of the course of Long Branch, and of a locality marked 'Timmonstown' [in Privateer Township], hardly more than fifteen or sixteen miles due southeast of the Turks, the home of the nearest Indians ... The two communities never had anything to do with each other,

any more than if they lived on different planets.” (A History of the Turks; 1975, unnumbered pages)

.....

Of course, to repeat a caveat from an earlier section, there always has been confusion about the history, makeup, and relationship of familial groupings of dark-hued people in rural Sumter County; and it is unlikely that any historical analysts got the story completely straight. However, the reports presented here strongly dispute and contradict the characterization of both the Privateer and Dalzell groups as Native American settlements.

The notion that both the Privateer and Dalzell communities were Native American settlements was an important plank in the application. However, available research has drawn clear distinctions between these two areas.

It was stunning to read so many references to Cheraw cultural and community life that actually were accounts of what has commonly been considered Turkish history. Just as telling—but not surprising—was the scarcity of material (other than such borrowed accounts) evidencing the existence of a real Indian tribe during the past century.

To summarize, the Cheraw claim about Turkish community history was unsubstantiated in the application and contradicted by our research and historical sources.

The scorecard tally for the Cheraw application showed that all four of these “items of concern”—Joseph Benenhaley, his Turkish descendants, Turkish cultural identity, and Turkish community history—can be dismissed due to substantive content and documentary problems. The prevailing pattern throughout was improper cultural appropriation.

Fundamental Flaw and Troubling Question

In conclusion, our research discovered the fundamental flaw in the Cheraw narrative and raised a troubling question about the underlying strategy of the group’s application.

(1) The major flaw of the narrative was its misstatement of local ethnohistory, i.e., the claim that the “Turks” were really Native Americans. The Sumter Indians touted a single, continuous community of dark-toned people—whom they portrayed as a Native American tribe—over the past two centuries; however, their own statements and data—when scrutinized—suggested varied visions of community among the outcast people in rural Sumter County. Very significantly, a cross-check analysis of progenitors, surnames, locales, activities, and timelines cited in their application revealed at least two subcultural communities—the Indians and the Turkish people—living different lives, doing different things, in different places, and at different times. Thus, it may be true that families of Native American ancestry settled in Sumter County and some have lived here ever since the Revolutionary War. However, the Turkish people were a distinct, enduring community of

their own for the past two centuries; and their history cannot be generalized—wholesale and opportunistically—as central documentation of an American Indian tribe.

(2) An immediate follow-up question is, “Why did the Sumter Indians so conclusively yet ineptly appropriate the Turkish people into the Cheraw Indian tribe?” It may be that they genuinely believed that all the dark-skinned people of this area constituted a single, continuous tribe of Native Americans. Maybe they were convinced of their reclusive community’s Indian history because so many of their relatives could trace their ancestry back to similarly surnamed families from North Carolina; and, certainly, southern history endowed the Indian narrative with greater credence than the idea of Ottoman origins. Perhaps, too, they were so intent on discovering their Indian history that they failed to investigate as rigorously and as impartially as such discovery required. The cultural appropriation revealed here may be explained by a combination of factors as identified above; however, it is a legitimate and troubling question to ask whether the narrative/application was designed—strategically, ostensibly, and misleadingly—to comply with SC requirements for certification.

If the Sumter Indians had done further, more rigorous, less biased research, they may have discovered the same evidence and reached the same conclusions as were produced in our project; and, presumably, this information would have tempered their claims about the Turkish people. But that was not the course they chose.

.....

Examining the Cheraw application had been a very tedious and time-consuming task, stretching over several years as I pursued elusive answers to countless questions. There were almost 1,500 pages in all, arranged to address numerous and seemingly duplicative topics. Every visit to the South Carolina Commission for Minority Affairs in Columbia meant hours of sitting at a table and poring over a complicated array of text, documentation, and supplementary material. I usually copied pertinent pages that I took home for further research, always leading to new questions and, eventually, back to the Commission’s office to repeat that process.

It took a while, but I began to realize that the Sumter Indians had fabricated an ambitious ethnological story; and I found that certain information and portions of documentation presented as evidence of a Cheraw tribe in Sumter County over the past 100 years derived from the Turkish experience.

Summarily, the Cheraw ploy of veiling the Turkish people as Indians did not stand up very well to factual challenge; and our critical analysis of the Cheraw application exposed and discredited their exploitation of Turkish history. More specifically, our research and other historical sources indicated that the petition appropriated Joseph Benenhaley, his Turkish descendants, Turkish cultural identity, and Turkish community history into the Cheraw story. Altogether, these “items of concern” projected a pattern of improper cultural appropriation throughout the Cheraw application.

Articulating an expansive Native American tribal narrative—while covertly evidencing and documenting that story with Turkish history—was a bold and errant strategy; but that is what the

Sumter Indians did in their application for certification by the South Carolina Commission for Minority Affairs.

VII. S.C. COMMISSION FOR MINORITY AFFAIRS' APPROVAL OF THE APPROPRIATIVE CHERAW NARRATIVE

The Sumter Indians filed their final application for tribal recognition in 2012; and the South Carolina Commission for Minority Affairs certified the Sumter Tribe of Cheraw Indians in 2013.

Overall, the SCCMA profusely praised the Cheraw application as it moved through the recognition process. But various aspects of the petition should have rung warning bells. Unfortunately, the Commission did not have available the findings of our research; nor did it possess sufficient resources to scrutinize the application as thoroughly as merited. Consequently, it approved the Cheraw narrative and effectively endorsed cultural appropriation.

In this section, I will critique problems in the Commission's certification of the Sumter Cheraw Indian Tribe.

(For assembled material/notes related to the SCCMA, see Browder's Files on *South Carolina's Turkish People* at South Caroliniana Library in Columbia, SC.)

Brief Review of Submissions

A brief review of the Sumter Indians' difficult road to tribal status is in order here as introductory background for my analysis of their certification. Beginning in 2007, the group applied three times; and each time they withdrew their petition short of an official vote, probably due to substantive issues and internal squabbling. They submitted their fourth application in September, 2012; and they were certified on November 22, 2013.

At some point prior to the 2012 submission, the SCCMA notified the Cheraw that it could not consider their application again because the group did not have a state charter as required by legislation for tribes formed after January 1, 2006. The Cheraw wrote a letter of appeal explaining that they were told by SCCMA technical support personnel that this limitation would not apply to them if they could demonstrate that their tribe had been organized for at least five years: "The law states that we must have a charter through the Secretary of State's office; or be organized for at least 5 years and be able to prove it ... the panel decided to allow us to pull our petition without prejudice ... we are now submitting our petition for your review." The SCCMA then accepted the group's petition for review in 2012 and certified the tribe in 2013.

When we were compiling research for our book on the Turkish people, I visited the SCCMA in Columbia, SC, several times to examine the Cheraw application. I expressed my concern about

the appropriation issue to Commission staff several times, to no avail; and I soon realized that I would need to access and inspect SCCMA's internal files to figure out how that agency approved a dubious version of Sumter County history.

Recognition Committee Deliberations

The SCCMA Recognition Committee was composed of the SCCMA Executive Director and four outside members with recognized experience and expertise in Native American history. They reviewed the Cheraw petition and recommended approval of the Sumter tribe in late 2012; and the full Commission certified the Sumter Tribe of Cheraw Indians in late 2013.

Sometime in 2015, I verbally asked for a transcription of the Committee's deliberation in hope that it might shed some light on the recognition process; but I was informed by SCCMA that there were no written minutes available at that time. Fortunately, tribal official Claudia Benenhaley Gainey had attended and taped the meeting; and she posted her transcription on a Facebook website ("The Real Sumter Tribe of Cheraw Indians"; July 17, 2015 and again on Apr. 27, 2017). This unofficial, handwritten document was difficult to read in certain places; and it may not be a perfect, word-for-word reflection of that meeting. However, the content of the discussion was clear—and it provided new information and valuable insights into the wayward certification of the Sumter Tribe of Cheraw Indians.

As already noted at the beginning of this section, the Sumter Indians had previously submitted and withdrawn three applications; and the Commission at first told the Indians that it could not consider their petition again because of legal limitations regarding the lack of a state organizational charter. Then, after a letter of appeal, it allowed them to submit their own documentation of tribal organization and to proceed with the application.

The Recognition Committee's deliberations did not yield a direct and clear confession of cultural appropriation. But Committee members confirmed their reliance on alternative documentation and the import of that decision at several points in their deliberations. For example, while reviewing an important part of the application, one member stated that "although this charter's dated after the 1/1/06 deadline, this petition has documented organization and substantial presence in SC. CMA's Board has allowed this group to use other documentation to prove its organization so therefore it is pass." In considering another section, this same member said: "I have a comment ... that there is a narrative of explanation that addresses the charter and there is a letter of appeal and subsequent documentation about the churches as to organization, so I passed it." Another member said "I'm glad they gave us a narrative of the waiver from the CMA" before praising and approving a litany of evidentiary documentation included in the application.

I decided to take a closer look at the Recognition Committee's transcribed deliberations; and it was obvious that substantial portions of the aforementioned "other" and "subsequent" documentation derived from the Turkish experience and that this material enhanced the Committee's evaluation of the Cheraw petition.

Particularly illustrative were frequent and favorable comments apparently referencing appropriated material:

“I appreciated their narrative in explaining all of the important things that they clarified from the last time.”

“I truly appreciate the validation of their trees with all the census records and all the other documents that were lacking in their previous petition.”

“I appreciate ... putting in the charters of the churches that were the centers of their community to validate and corroborate the fact that they were organized in a variety of different ways including the school prior to the corporate structure and I just really appreciate the effort made there because that is very important.”

“I appreciate the timelines. I think it was great. I’m glad that they did give us the last 100 years as specifically as they could. I appreciate the information about the stores, the schools, the churches and the families and I add too the things they were engaged in even if it were legal battles regarding their schools and that sort of thing. All of that is very important.”

Also revealing was this interesting commentary about the value of this material in evaluating Cheraw Indian status as a distinct community. “It has a defined location, family land, churches, schools, stores. I do believe, I’ve never been there, but I think I can find it.”

The transcript showed, furthermore, that some members raised questions, stated concerns, and identified deficiencies that might have triggered discussion of the appropriation issue; however, these comments were articulated with no follow-up requested or conducted.

For example, one Committee member posed a question about the charter but did not dig very deeply or doggedly on this important matter: “The only question I had was the charter question that was referred to. Given that I don’t have the background that some people on the committee has I would rather have had something in there that is relevant to that particular corporate information on Long Branch. Other than that it was good to go.”

Another member implied problems with the group’s submitted history but gave this section a “pass”. “I would like to say and I wanted to say it at the beginning. This group has a wealth of documented history and its very hard to organize this history and consolidate it and present it in a comprehensive format and we would love to have our history to kind of take that next step when we get to that point of recognition that we have professional assistance for this”; and “I would like to have seen so much more documentation on their schools and the churches in here.”

This same member also criticized the genealogical chart covering claimed progenitors and descendants: “I put pass with a little star or an addendum or a note that because these are multiple lines and we have only like 4 trees for the progenitors. If you’re going to list 8 or 9 progenitors, we need to see 8 or 9 trees even though you’re reporting your membership names. I

know. I know all about it. And I see the names, they're on the tree and they're on multiple trees, you're going to see them, but I would like to have seen all of the trees in this document.”

At another point in the discussion, a member expressed concern about the chapter on common characteristics, interests, and behaviors—but he concluded that this matter did not require further exploration: “Again, as is typical in that there are some things that I would be interested in knowing that were not there. But you know what? There's a whole lot of stuff in other places that weren't included but yet again it was there. I read it. It's a solid pass.”

These comments pointed to problems in the application; but there was no indication in this transcription that anyone on the Recognition Committee ever questioned the veiled Turkish material, asked for additional information, or demanded corroboration of unsubstantiated claims. This pattern of deference increased my concern about the appropriated material's impact on the Committee's approval of the petition.

Site Visit Report

Additional insight into the Cheraw certification came through examination of the SCCMA's Site Visit report prepared by commission staff in late 2013. (This report was posted online by Claudia Benenhaley Gainey (<https://www.facebook.com/tgainey1>; on Nov. 25, 2014).

The staff seemed to have spent most of its time talking with the “Chief and Tribal Chairman” and checking records and photographs in Claudia Benenhaley Gainey's Dalzell home. The report noted that tribal records confirmed each tribal line, which were listed as Oxendine, Scott, Benenhaley, Ray, Buckner, Hood, and Woodell. Interestingly, most of these family surnames also have been historically associated with the Turkish community; and unmentioned were those Indian lines prominently mentioned in the application and commonly connected to the Indian settlement—such as Chavis, Gibbes, Goins, and Smiling. Furthermore, most of the visited places were located in the Dalzell area, traditional home of the Turkish people; and there was no indication that the visits included any school, church, cemetery or other sites in Privateer township where many of the early Indians congregated.

In actuality, it appears that the Site Visit's meager findings did not substantiate the elaborate Cheraw story as presented in the application; instead, it checked off a list of appropriated items and material. Nevertheless, the report back to the full Commission concluded: “Information reviewed verifies and supports the State Recognition Committee's recommendation that this organization meets the criteria for recognition in the State of South Carolina as a Tribe.”

SCCMA Board Meeting

Finally, the SCCMA Board unanimously accepted the Recognition Committee's recommendation to certify the Sumter Cheraw Indian Tribe. At that meeting, the audible discussion (taped by Claudia Benenhaley Gainey and posted on her Facebook website, “The Real Sumter Tribe of Cheraw Indians,” undated) did not cover substantive issues. However, the person conducting the meeting said that the petition was a “very good” and “well written” application and that the Board had “no problem” approving it.

The Recognition Committee transcript, the Site Visit report, and the taped Board meeting conveyed a stream of interesting developments. Those sources indicated that the SCCMA at one point refused to consider another Cheraw application because of the organizational charter issue; but it then accepted alternative documentation reliant on Turkish heritage. The Recognition Committee never addressed the Turkish issue; but it acknowledged the new material as important evidence for their positive recommendation. The Site Visit focused on surnames and places often associated with Turkish families and their Dalzell community; but it rendered confirmation of the Indian narrative. And the full Commission Board generously endorsed and unanimously approved the tribal application.

Unasked and Unanswered Questions

This documentary review thus raised two crucial unasked and unanswered questions about the SCCMA's certification of the Sumter Tribe of Cheraw Indians.

(1) Most importantly, it seems that the Commission never asked the Cheraw Indians an obvious question about progenitors and lineages: "What is the full and true story of Joseph Benenhaley and those people who claimed Arabic descent?" The application mentioned Benenhaley prominently in all listings of founders, progenitors, and ancestors of the Cheraw Indian tribe; but it characterized him several times as a man of reputed Arab background. The application also stated that there were some "Benenhaleys, Buckners, Lowerys, Hoods, Scotts and Rays that identify themselves as being of Arabic or Turkish origin." However, there is no indication in examined documents that anyone probed these matters with the applicants. Apparently, no one brought up Benenhaley's reputed Arab background; none asked about the Benenhaley et al descendants who reportedly claimed Arabic ancestry; none raised the issue of why these families accounted for such a large proportion of names in the Cheraw genealogical chart or why so much community life cited in the petition and site visit related to activities and institutions in the Dalzell area, home of the Turkish people; none asked for evidence of their purported shifts in cultural identity from Indian-to-Turk long ago or from Turk-to-Indian in recent times; and none expressed any interest in how many of today's descendants identify as Indians and how many identify as Turkish people. It seems strange that there would be no curiosity about the very curious issue of Turkish history in a suppositious Cheraw tribe.

(2) More generally, SCCMA personnel seemingly never asked themselves a simple question central to the statutory requirements for certification: "Was there a single, connected, functioning Native American tribe over the past century; or were there multiple, somewhat entwined, but culturally distinct ethnic settlements during that time in rural Sumter County?" Rigorous investigation of cited progenitors, surnames, locales, activities, and timelines would have demonstrated at least two and perhaps several groups doing different things at different times and places. The histories of these groups clearly merited stronger scrutiny to determine whether the application inaccurately subsumed different subcultures into the Sumter Tribe of Cheraw Indians.

If the SCCMA had probed beyond what the Sumter Indians told them, then they may have discovered—as we did—a very different version of local ethnohistory. For prime example, Long Branch Baptist Church, referenced often in the application as an Indian church and as evidence of Cheraw history, has a visitor’s package which states that this was a Turkish church:

About Us:

As early as the nineteenth century, Sumter County churches were already providing Christian teaching for many area ethnic groups. One such church, High Hills Baptist Church, accommodated three ethnicities: Caucasians, African Americans, and those of Turkish descent.

While all three ethnicities worshipped under one roof, the groups were still separated. According to one source, “...during the mid 1800’s, all three groups attended [High Hills], with the White worshippers sitting on the right, Turkish worshippers on the left, and Black slave worshippers in the [balcony].”

Immediately following the Civil War, the African American congregation chose to plant separate churches. Shortly after, an effort to provide facilities for the Turkish Community was launched. Long Branch Baptist Church was established in 1904 in order to provide for the spiritual welfare of the Turkish Community.

More than a hundred years have passed and racial tensions often linger, both locally and nation-wide. Long Branch strives to build a community of worshippers who seek to share the Gospel message to every person in our community, bringing reconciliation to all ethnicities, and providing a place of worship that looks a lot like heaven.

(transmitted via email message; April 18, 2018)

The Commission also would have learned—if it had searched available sources—that the Cheraw narrative did not square with most accounts of these two communities. To illustrate: (1) authoritative observers in the area have historically drawn clear distinctions between the Indian and Turkish settlements in Sumter County; (2) the Dalzell school cited in the Cheraw application was never considered an Indian school but was historically called “Dalzell School for Turks”; and (3) the litigants mentioned in the Cheraw application as having gone to court in the 1950s on behalf of better educational opportunities for the children of “our community” actually identified themselves and were characterized in Federal court records and media reports as the “Turks” of Sumter County. (See previous sections of this analysis and *South Carolina’s Turkish People* for numerous such examples/sources contradicting the Cheraw appropriation thesis.)

It was clear that the SCCMA accepted what was really Turkish history as evidence for a positive recommendation; and the full Commission generously endorsed and unanimously approved the tribal application.

Final Analysis

I do not know the regulations and standards for the SCCMA’s review of applications in 2012. However, the documents and developments considered here strongly suggest that the SCCMA did not exercise sufficient diligence regarding South Carolina law, which defined a “Tribe” as: “an assembly of Indian people comprising numerous families, clans, or generations together with their descendents, who have a common character, interest, and behavior denoting a separate ethnic and cultural heritage, and who have existed as a separate community, on a substantially continuous basis throughout the past 100 years” and required that “claims must be supported by official records such as birth certificates, church records, school records, U.S. Bureau of the Census records, and other pertinent documents.”

I learned from my examination of the SCCMA Recognition Committee deliberations that the Commission allowed the Cheraw Indians to submit their own evidence of organizational history (“other documentation” and “subsequent documentation”) instead of providing a normally-requisite charter of tribal organization from the Secretary of State. Furthermore, the Recognition Committee and Site Visit staff member seemed very impressed with historical evidence that I discerned to be derived from the Turkish experience.

Also, at about the same time that Claudia Benenhaley Gainey had posted her Recognition Committee transcription on Facebook, I ran across an argument among Cheraw Indians, also on Facebook, that lent hearsay credence to my concerns about the recognition process. Mandy Oxendine Chapman (Chief of the Sumter Cheraw Band and sister of the current Chief of the Cheraw Tribe) had done most of the work on a previous, withdrawn application. She posted the following comment in a testy exchange with Gainey, who compiled most of the final application. “I can also say that I have looked at the Petition and SC did not do there job ... I am ashamed of the petition that the state of SC approved. That is now an historical document that is very incorrect.” (“The Real Sumter Tribe of Cheraw Indians”; Feb. 25, 2015)

To repeat, the SCCMA did not have access to our research back then. But I submit that due diligence would have and should have addressed serious problems in the 2012-2013 process.

In the final analysis, I was convinced that the South Carolina Commission for Minority Affairs had endorsed a Cheraw narrative surreptitiously strengthened with Turkish history. Thereby, the Commission erroneously but officially endorsed cultural appropriation; and, consequently, a dark cloud hung over the certification of the Sumter Tribe of Cheraw Indians.

VIII. CONTINUING CONTROVERSY AFTER CERTIFICATION OF THE SUMTER CHERAW INDIANS

As might be expected, the Indian-Turkish controversy continued to rage in Sumter County following official certification of the Sumter Cheraw Indian Tribe. While neither side ever

mentioned the term “cultural appropriation” or couched their comments in such anthropological language, the central issue of continuing controversy was the Cheraw claim that the “Turks” were really Native Americans and members of the Sumter Cheraw Tribe.

Three distinct and important subcurrents contributed to this extended argument: (1) Most Turkish people never accepted the legitimacy of the recognition process; (2) The Indians often bickered among themselves about their tribal story; and (2) our research triggered new debate about key aspects of Turkish and Cheraw ethnohistory.

Furthermore, some folks have seemed more interested in personal recriminations than resolution of the controversy.

In this section, I will cover the long-standing debate among the Sumter Indians and the Turkish people, the Indians’ bitter response to our research, and dramatic developments since the 2013 certification of the Sumter Tribe of Cheraw Indians. I will identify the name of the individual quoted when that person is a recognized Cheraw or Turkish leader or public figure who has spoken out publicly in news media regarding this controversy; and I will state the specific source and date of each quotation. Also, I will quote these writers/speakers verbatim, with no editing for language and punctuation. The comments in this section demonstrate the tone as well as the course of debate over time; and they set the stage for an even more dramatic development in 2019.

(For assembled material/notes related to the continuing controversy, see Browder’s Files on *South Carolina’s Turkish People* at South Caroliniana Library in Columbia, SC.)

Arguments Among the Sumter Indians and Turkish People

As covered in the Introduction, the current controversy began early in this century when some supposed “Turks” began re-identifying as Native Americans, disparaging Turkish oral tradition, and organizing themselves as a Cheraw Indian Tribe. I will not attempt a full, blow-by-blow account of arguing among the Sumter Indians and Turkish people over the past two decades; that information is available elsewhere, spread out across numerous and diverse sources.

First, I will cover a few “Indian-versus-Turk” exchanges, which present the basic substance of the dispute over the past 15 years.

Steven Pony Hill’s initial claim about the “true history” of Sumter County’s dark-complexioned folk appeared in a 2005 online post (“Various American Indian Records”), followed by elaborations in his 2010 book (*Strangers in Their Own Land*):

The true history of the “Turks”, which can be verified by historical documentation, is that they are of American Indian ancestry from a group of Algonquin and Siouan speaking remnants who gathered at Fort Christianna on the Virginia/North Carolina border. (2005)

and

Though known by the name “Turks” ... the swarthy, clannish people were no more realistically “Turks” than the Indian tribes detailed in previous chapters were “Brass Ankles.” These copper-skinned, high cheek-boned people whose grandparents learned that they could gain equality under the identity of “Turks” that they were denied as “Indians,” have in the most recent generation begun to reclaim their rightful birthright as persons of Indian descent. (2010)

Almost immediately, a lady describing herself as “a true Turk in every sense of the word” angrily criticized Hill and his claimed kinship with her family (“Various American Indian Records”; June 19, 2005):

Mr Hill, I read your information on the turks.. Me I am not a turk descentant but I have been married into the family for 34 years..never once have I heard the stories as you have told them...many in my family have passed down stories of the orgin and some of the story tellers are very old like 90 to 100..grant you the beginning came much earlier than that but this is a group of people that are proud of where they came from so they passed it down thur generations...I myself am sick and tired of the benenhaley’s being put down..my kids are benenhaley’s...they are good law abiding commiunty citizens..in the book, History of Sumter, they are they are deemed a poor class of people...well just check Shaw records and see how much land was purchased from the Benenhaley’s...the Turks have had thier fill of all trying to explain them...they know who they are now so everyone should leave them alone..my son has reseached them also and his findings and yours appear to be different..just let me say this:The turks are family loyal people that cause no problems in society and they would really like to be left alone. They know how they got here so why is it posted on the internet..if there name was brown would there be all this attention? No I don’t think so...As far as you being in Fl kin to the Turks well thats hard to swallow cause they all stick together..every Turk I know of resides in the state of SC.....any response to this would be appreciated....

Hill responded in his usual fashion, with rambling misinformation aptly configured to further the appropriate thesis (“Various American Indian Records”; June 19, 2005):

... thanks so much for your mail, it is good to hear from people in your area so a balanced story will be known...since those ‘mails’ were printed by Dr. Clark, I have since seen documents which have convinced me that Joe Benehaley was indeed a man of Arab (Turk) descent...because of Joe’s prominant position as a community leader and land owner, the rest of the community began to be called “Turk” as well, but make no mistake, The Benenhaley family was most likely the only family with a Turkish ancestor.....Joe married Elizabeth Miller, a woman descended from Isaac Miller of Bertie County, North Carolina. Isaac was included on the Tuscarora Indian census of 1777 Betie County. Others who moved down into Sumter at about the same time as Joe (1805) were the Lowry,Ivey, Johnson, Chavis, Locklear, Hathcock, Ammons, Oxendine and Scott families (see 1790 census of Halifax NC). All of these families were from Halifax County North Carolina, and they also had brothers and sisters who settled at Robeson County, and Marlboro County South Carolina.The ancestors of these families have many documents identifying them as Indians. It is my understanding that many of the Benenhaleys

intermarried with these families (Joe Benehaley jr. married Catherine Scott..etc etc). If a member of the Benehaley family claims to be of Turkish descent, they would be telling the truth...however, many of the other families (Ellison, Scott, Oxendine, Tidwell) do not have a Turkish ancestor and primarily descend from white and Indian ancestors, as all of the 1860, 1880, and early 1900 documents attest.

Most of the information you observed on that site was taken from 1930's records from the Turk school board case and from reports of several ethnologists who visited Sumter in the 1920's, 30's, and 40's. I do not testify as to the accuracy of those records, I have only quoted them (which is why I state where the quote came from, not push it forward as my opinion). For example, a letter from Sumter County in 1861 which recorded that Isham Scott, the father of Fleming Thomas Scott, was descended from French and Catawba Indian parents, and that he had married Margaret, a white woman.

As to who I descend from.....several of my ancestors had moved down from Halifax and settled briefly at Sumter just after 1805. (Isham Scott..1st cousin of the older Isham Scott mentioned above) and James Manning, were both listed on the 1810 Sumter Co. census, and I descend directly from them, as do many of the Indians in my community. In 1829, these Indians moved down into northwest Florida and served as "Friendly Indian" scouts in the local militia. We are not Turks, do not claim to be, or state that we are closely related...but we do all descend from the same Indian ancestors, and share common ancestors with the Lumbee Indians, the Hali-wa Saponi Indians, The Waccamaw Sioux Indians, etc. etc.

This early skirmish was only a sample of what was to follow in social media and other forums over the next decade or so, as the Indians often repeated their claim and the Turkish people just as often voiced their disagreement. Here for example, is a Facebook statement posted in 2013 by an exasperated Claudia Benenhaley Gainey (in response to an unspecified provocation):

You know I really thought all the BS about our movement had stopped for a while. But, as usual, with this clan, and that's what it is referred to as, some of you can't leave it alone. You guys must be much more interested in it than you propose to be. You just can't stay off of our page with your negative feedback. What's up with that? We do not try to convince anyone of anything. I think that was done conclusively to the proper authorities in the correct forum. Since you find it necessary to continue this; I have a few questions as well. 1) Have none of you read about the "Trail of Tears" that began in 1830? 2) Why would General Thomas Sumter need a turk or Arabic man to show him around his home turf? 3) Can you show me an authentic document that states definitively who Joseph Benenhaley was or better yet what he was? 3) We have proven with an absolute certainty who the Oxendines are and any bloodline that crossed the Oxendine's whether it was Benenhaleys, Rays, Hoods, Buckners, Scotts, Lowerys, etc and had children, they carry Native American Indian blood. Claim it or not. Matters not to me. 4) The civil rights actions for the "clan"; have you read these court records? I have. I also have copies of them from Atlanta. It Woodrow and Peggy Hood to exclude the Buckners making it quite clear that this action was not represented in this action as they were not a part of the community. How many of you that are doing all of this talking out of both sides of your mouth are related to Woodrow Hood and his wife Peggy Benenhaley? Then look at your first cousins and explain it to them. 5) Eleazar "aka" Boaz, Benenhaley's "book", I

mean pamphlet, is nothing but another attempt to hide his and your identity. Why did he feel the need to black out parts of Wes White's report on the turks? When we got the real un-tampered with version from the Smithsonian Institution, everything that was blacked out was the information about the Oxendines being Native American Indians. We met the writer, Wes White in Columbia and asked him about it. We asked him why it was marked through. He told us that Eleazer did it and even tried to get a copy from the Governor's office. When confronted as to why he did this, knowing the Oxendines were Indians, Eleazer replied "I know son; but why do you want to bring this up now". The truth, that's what we wanted and that's what we got. All the comments about us wanting something? What do you have that we would possibly want? I know that I grew up very poor with a lot less than some of you; but my daddy made sure we had what we needed. I was born poor and will die poor, does it really matter anyway? I have never seen a hearse with a U-Haul behind it. When I married and had 9 children I didn't ask you for anything then and I don't ask you for anything now. Yes, I live in a double-wide trailer sitting on 14.3 acres of land with no mortgage. Wayne worked hard and saved well so if I wanted mansion on a hillside; I have no doubt I could have it. That's not me. I've never been materialistic. I make no comments about where you go or what activities you participate in; so please show us the decency to do the same. I enjoy pow wows and will attend as many as I possibly want or can. To be quite frank; I just don't see where it's any of your business. Tired of hearing about it? STAY THE HELL OFF OF OUR PAGE AND OUT OF OUR BUSINESS. That being said; have a wonderful night and as always I'm open for feedback ("Sumter Band of Cheraw Indians," Apr. 16, 2013).

Steven Pony Hill joined in: "Stay strong, Claudia...even in my own immediate family I have relatives who just wanna be 'white' and 'don't want none of that business'... You just gotta keep on loving them but most importantly make sure the info is still there for future generations who may not be so close minded."

In 2015, we interviewed Brian Benenhaley—a lineal descendant of the Turkish patriarch—and he expressed strong concern about his relatives who had re-identified as Native Americans (*South Carolina's Turkish People*, p. 198):

I can accept and respect that; but I don't like anyone turning his or her back on our history or insinuating anything negative about the Turkish heritage. I don't think they realize how deeply they have hurt many older members in the community who fought to set the label "Turk" on equal footing with anything else. Now that so much of that vision has been achieved, this Indian movement decides they don't want to be "Turk" any longer. The folks who waged the fight feel betrayed and it's understandable. They have taken the uniqueness of our story and traded it for a story that belongs to someone else. Fortunately, most Turkish people have remained strong and loyal to our culture.

Finally, in another contentious Facebook discussion, in 2017, Gainey adamantly posted:

I am archiving the 1,457 page petition that I wrote and gained State Recognition for the Sumter Tribe of Cheraw Indians at the Sumter County Genealogical Society. Everything that is written in it is backed up by official documentation. One of the panel members is

actually Dr. Knowles; a professor from Georgia University; the same school that Terry Ogalbine attended. So fell free to go down and have a look. You won't come away without the truth. No conjecture there. Proof! (“You Might Be From Sumter, SC If You Remember ...” Apr. 21, 2017)

Just as interestingly—and perhaps more important for understanding local ethnohistory—our monitoring of social media has revealed vitriolic in-fighting among the local Indians regarding their own account of the Cheraw experience. As the following paragraphs will show, these exchanges revealed serious weaknesses in the Cheraw narrative (which our research efforts would eventually probe and document).

For example, in periodic posts on her Facebook page prior to tribal certification, Gainey attacked Hill’s research on Indian history and his claimed ties to the Sumter Cheraw family. Here are a few statements (in chronological order) in which Gainey directly and personally confronted Hill:

STEVEN PONY HILL, YOU MAKE ME SICK. YOU HAVE INVADED OUR PRIVACY AND INSINUATED YOUR WAY INTO THE LIVES OF SOME OF OUR PEOPLE, BUT YOU HAVE NOT BEEN INVITED INTO MINE. (Sept. 26, 2009)

I did read your draft for your book, but as always in your case, the story changes. Which version are you printing or trying to sell this time? (Sept. 26, 2009)

You just shut up about the Sumter Cheraw and I will shut up about you. (Oct. 9, 2009)

You are so very wrong! You really need to do some research! (June 24, 2010)

I've seen where you have shared some of my postings of documents and your comments for the most part are incorrect. (Jan. 2, 2014)

Gainey then challenged Hill’s account of Joseph Benenhaley’s background on another Facebook site (“Cheraw Indians of Sumter County South Carolina and Florida”; Jan 3, 2014):

Steven Pony Hill lets not get this started again! There is alot going on in our community that you have never been a part of for you to start this bs again.

Next are three posts on her Facebook page in which Gainey shared her comments about Hill with other individuals and unspecified readers:

I'M FURIOUS AT STEVEN PONY HILL! PLEASE DON'T ANYONE BE DECEIVED BY THIS GUY! HE IS NOT ONE OF OUR FAMILY MEMBERS! HE'S DESPERATELY SEEKING HIS IDENTITY. (Sept. 26, 2009)

Hi all. Just wanted those of you that may want to know; Steven pony Hill's "book" is out. I have a copy of it. No, I didn't buy it in a bookstore. He cites no sources and his genealogy is wrong! Its cover is the very same picture that we pleaded with him not to

use as he does not own the copyright to it. Any one that would like a copy of this garbage; please let me know; I will email it to you. (Oct. 14, 2009)

I would be happy to discuss your heritage with you. Let me tell you right away, don't believe everything that Steven says or writes. (Apr. 11, 2010)

Hill attempted several retorts on Gainey's Facebook page. For example, he once posted a message that included the following text: "As much as I hate to do it, I guess deleting you as a friend will be the only way to avoid you broadcasting these negative comments to the world...I hope Jesus will speak to your heart and remind you of his message of love and goodwill to all people...I personally forgive you even before you ask..." (Oct. 2, 2009). On another occasion, he stood his ground. "If the 'don't believe everything' reference is about the book 'Strangers' then I would have to say...If you don't want to believe statements made backed up by solid historical documentation (census records, taxation forms, old newspaper articles, etc) then I guess no-one can make you...heck, some people still don't believe that a man walked on the moon....some people even believe that aliens assassinated JFK!" (June 23, 2010).

This intra-tribal bickering intensified and took dramatic turns after official certification in 2013. Some Cheraw leaders challenged Claudia Benenhaley Gainey's interpretation of Cheraw lineage and financial management in 2014; and, in short order, they kicked her out of the tribe, charged her with theft, and re-organized the Sumter Cheraw Indian Tribe with a new narrative and website. (See "The Official Website of the Sumter Tribe of Cheraw Indians" at <http://www.thesumtertribeofcherawindians.org>.)

Gainey began a separate Facebook website ("The Real Sumter Tribe of Cheraw Indians"); and, on February 25, 2015, she presented her side of the story. Several pertinent statements by Gainey and others can be gleaned from that site, beginning with Gainey's post:

I have been researching the history of our people for over 15 years now. At first in 2005 Mandy Oxendine Chapman was working on the belief that we were Native American Indians. I started to do my own research after a split in the tribe. There was so much going on that was not right and we held an election following the by-laws. I was elected as chairperson.

...

In 2011 we were told by the reviewers that there could not be factionalism. Ralph Oxendine and I talked and agreed that we would come together to further our quest for recognition. I immediately sat out researching and preparing our petition.

...

We submitted the petition to the CMA on the last working day in August, 2011 to meet the September 1, deadline. Through many delays due to internal problems at the CMA; our petition was reviewed on November 22, 2012. On that date, we were formally recognized as The Sumter Tribe of Cheraw Indians; the 8th state recognized tribe in the state. It was this date that several of the members showed up to get their pictures taken; never having

contributed any funds or help preparing the petition.

...

I have been defamed on social media (Facebook) by Ansley Ray, Dana Ray and Tammy Ray Stevens. This has caused me much embarrassment and challenged my credibility. I want to seek compensation for this and to get the personal money that my husband spent to build this tribe.

...

I feel like now that I have given them what they wanted, state recognition, they feel I am of no more value to them. I am very hurt by all of this because I put my heart and soul into this. In return all I wanted was the joy of finally knowing who I am and enjoying my true heritage.

Cheraw Band Chief Mandy Oxendine Chapman quickly countered Gainey's post:

First off I don't do drama but will comment on this. For the Record I did all the research in the beginning with lots of help from Steven Pony Hill. We got Chartered and started our Tribal Roll. I didn't think we were Indians!!! I knew it!! Just as I know it now. The Sumter Band of Cheraw Indians was running great until we voted to have only blood line kin on our rolls. Claudia Benenhaley Gainey was approached to become a member by me Mandy Oxendine. What a nightmare that became. Claudia sued the Tribe for our Charter and did not win. The Judge said have an Election and we did. I am still a Chief of The Sumter Band of Cheraw Indians and will be until I am voted out legally. I will stay a member of The Sumter Band of Cheraw Indians because it is the REAL DEAL. Our rolls are pure bloodline and always will be. The Sumter Band of Cheraw Indians name is on the Certificate from the State as a recognized Tribe and that's what we will remain. Do not put my name in any more of your post. This Tribe would have been great by now had it not been for people like you. And now The Sumter Tribe of Cheraw Indians tell me that I'm not a member and that the members don't want me on there Tribal Council. How can I not be a Member of a Tribe that I started. Yall can all say what you will; those who were really there know the truth.

Chapman then said: "I can also say that I have looked at the Petition and SC did not do there job ... I am ashamed of the petition that the state of SC approved. That is now an historical document that is very incorrect."

A member of the tribe then interjected: "This is the saddest shit I have ever heard, I swear it. Whatever heart was put into this project is lost."

Two years later, after having asked, unsuccessfully, for re-admission to the tribe, Gainey blasted the new tribal leadership, questioned its conduct of tribal business, and challenged its definition of tribal lineage ("Real Sumter Tribe of Cheraw Indians"; Oct. 27, 2017):

Just a question; I've posted this on the web site of thesumtertribeogcherawindians and get no response. The just delete it. I've just counted 34 people on thier tribal roll that are

either deceased, under the age of 18 or not even and my husband has been deleted/connected. I also noticed that everyone of my children and my husband have been deleted. Why? If you wish to make a nomination from the floor you have 90 days to do it. That would be Dec. 9, 2017 for the election; yet they have not posted the election date The absentee ballots have not been posted. In their story on their website has Woodell and Hammonds as being related by married. Do some more research and you'll see its BLOOD! This "tribe" is a joke.

An individual claiming Native American ancestry also complained on that site and date: "I sent my tribal enrollment forms two years ago to the Cheraw tribe. I was told and encouraged to do so to this day I have never heard anything back from them."

And another member opined:

Every Tribe has their woes. This is one of them. Things really seemed to get off the ground at first, but there is a lot of failure that continues. Communication is one of them, participation is another. Many of the heavy workers are stepping down or have already left. That was a lot of volunteer work that has simply faded away. I know the positions are shifting. I know there are a lot of long distance members, myself included, that aren't contacted to participate in much. Unless people move in to volunteer their time and effort, it won't continue. In my personal opinion, we should have become an annex branch of the Lumbee when we had an opportunity to do so. I know there are state lines now, but there wasn't long ago. DNA tests confirm many of us, myself included plus lineage through my mother, but DNA doesn't matter much without participation, passion for culture and hard work to connect us all I would like to see less fighting and more work done. I've volunteered for many things and presented ideas, but I have not received a response on the matter. I don't want to fight with anyone and I can only continue to hope that change is on the horizon.

The next month, Gainey continued on her Facebook page with more complaints about the new leadership and miscellaneous problems of the Cheraw Tribe; and several other people joined the discussion (Nov. 5, 2017):

So much on my mind lately. I from time to time look at the Sumter tribe of Cheraw indians web page and I have noticed some very incorrect things posted there. They have the Tribal roll listed there and it seems to change alot; most recently in the last month. These are names that have been deleted from the roll without reason or notification and might add that these people are blood connected: Melissa Benenhaley, Daniel Patterson, James Patterson, Kim Shue, Wendy Benenhaley, Marian Benenhaley, Ammie Burdick, Jessie James Brown, Danielle Gainey Held, Cameron Gainey, Amanda Gainey Ross, Kristian Gainey, Candace Bndy, Taylor DeJesus, Ashliegh DeJesus, Alexander Storm Bundy, Amanda Scott Farmer, Kayla McLeod, Janis Stiltner, Wayne Ganey Woodell. I also see children under the age of 18 on there. I don't see people on there that should be; but their cousins and aunts are. I always kept up with contact information on the members. I sent out birthday cards from the tribe every month and I also sent out a newsletter to all members to keep them informed on tribal news that they were entitled to

know. Long and short of this is some people want power and prestige. They don't know what they are doing. I'm not the shiniest star in the sky; but I know alot more than they do. I own the copyright to the Petition and it was submitted as The Sumter Band of Cheraw Indians. Change is on the way. Thanks for hearing me out.

Mandy Oxendine Chapman chimed in likewise:

I think that we have all been put in a bad situation and pushed beyond our limits. I have sat idle for many many years with a broken heart over this Tribe. As I recall about 3 years ago Tammy Ray kept talking to me and saying they needed me. Literally begged me to meet with them. So I did about three times. Well they picked my brain good. I was so excited, I was excited to get back involved and to help finish what I started. That was short lived. Karen and Ansley came to my home and informed me that the Members of the Tribe did not want me on the Council. All I can say is that did me in. I knew well that they had no meeting and no Members voted on such a thing. After these meetings with me, they changed the Logo, got a new Federal ID #!(they were still using the one in my name)! I pray they were not using it illegally. Well I will sit idle no more. I have a calling in my Life and it is to dutifully work for our people to get Federal Recognition!! I will knock on every door in this State if I have to. The people make up a Tribe, not a Council. The Council is supposed to protect the people. The Sumter Band of Cheraw Indians is the original and most legitimate Tribe here today. I have been humbled through the years and I will not throw out harsh words. The Time for Action is now and we will let our Members decide which route we need to take. A team of wild horses will not stop me this time, Nor will any appointed Council.

A member then jumped in to criticize both Claudia Benenhaley Gainey and Mandy Oxendine Chapman: “Mandy Oxendine everything I said to Claudia goes for you too you didn’t start no tribe you started a Culture Club.” Chapman responded: “... boy I was doing our genealogy while you was still running around being a Turk. Enough is enough. You want to talk trash to me. Come do it like a man! In person. I’ll show you a true INDIAN Woman.” She also added: “I hope everyone can learn from this angry soul This is why our people are where we are today. Because of backstabbing, non truth telling people like this. These actions are horrible and a direct hit in our people. You should be ashamed of yourself.”

Finally, Claudia Benenhaley Gainey strongly implied that the new tribal leaders had engaged in genealogical malpractice for several years (“Real Sumter Tribe of Cheraw Indians”; Oct. 27, 2018): “We, The Real Tribe of Cheraw Indians have not forgotten those of you that were booted out of the tribe because the people that are in charge of the geneology don’t know what they are doing. I KNOW OUR GENEOLGY. I DON’T JUST PICK AND CHOOSE WHO I WANT IN THE TRIBE. WE’RE GOING TO GET THROUGH THIS. I PROMISE.”

These exchanges among the Sumter Indians and Turkish people—most of which are publicly available in social media and other sources—seemed to serve little constructive purpose at the time, since the participants usually talked past each other with personalized insults; and they were never held accountable for the truthfulness of their charges and counter-charges.

However, the exchanges among key Cheraw activists (such as Steven Pony Hill, Claudia Benenhaley Gainey, and Mandy Oxendine Chapman) reveal more than personal bickering. These arguments are historically significant in demonstrating that the leaders who compiled the Cheraw narrative have disagreed among themselves from early days to the present time about substantive issues relating to the founding and bloodline of their tribe. Our research addressed some of those same issues; and our findings completely changed the dynamics of the debate.

Cheraw Reaction to Our Research

Our research—consisting of solid theory, rigorous examination of original sources, and discovery of new evidence—represented a turning point in the controversy. After a decade of comprehensive investigation, we produced compelling documentation that the Turkish people endured as a distinct community of their own for the past two centuries.

It did not take long for the Indians to realize that our project was a direct challenge to their appropriative version of history; and, in 2017, some of them began attacking us personally and misrepresenting our upcoming book in various forums.

For the record (as documented with Facebook messages and dated phone calls), I had tried on several occasions to arrange meetings to talk about our research with then Cheraw Tribal Secretary Claudia Benenhaley Gainey in 2014, former Chief Mandy Oxendine Chapman in 2014, Chief Ralph Justice Oxendine in 2016, and Steven Pony Hill in 2016 . These efforts were never successful, due likely to tribal and health issues and disinterest on their end of the discussion. Most recently, on Sunday, November 5, 2017, I sent a Facebook message to Ansley T. Ray, Jr., who apparently was acting as leader of the Tribe during the ill-health of Chief Oxendine. My message was: “Good morning, Mr. Ray. I don’t think we’ve ever met. However, a colleague and I have compiled extensive research on the Sumter County Turkish people; and our research differs significantly from the Cheraw narrative. Would you be interested in discussing this situation?” Thus far, no response.

The Indians began their pre-emptive attack in a far-ranging discussion on a Facebook page (“You Might Be From Sumter, SC If You Remember ...”) in April-May, 2017. Thereafter developed an extended, often heated conversation among “Indians,” “Turks,” and outsiders about this intriguing community and our upcoming book. After reading weeks of commentary, I posted the following note on May 4, 2017, as my single contribution to that discussion:

I have been keeping up with this discussion over the years; and it is very interesting how so many people have different versions of history based on their collection and interpretation of information. I am not inclined to get involved in personal squabbles and “my facts are better than your facts” arguments on this forum; but I will offer input when appropriate, such as now. Numerous sincere and well-meaning individuals have posted statements about the history of the Turkish people of Sumter County. However, that historical story will never be understood without rigorous and unbiased consideration of all available evidence. Some of what has been commonly argued as proof is of questionable nature; and there is new evidence that has never been presented for public

review. I would suggest that anyone truly interested in the history of the Turkish people wait to see forthcoming historical articles this Summer and the Spring 2018 book by my co-author and myself. Of course, certain people will never accept anything contrary to their version of history. But most of the issues raised here and elsewhere will be addressed in those publications; and I am confident that the true story then can be sorted out in the open court of public debate.

In that Facebook discussion, Steven Pony Hill became a persistent and vocal online critic. As already mentioned, I had contacted him via Facebook in 2016; but he never responded to my question about getting together and insisted that his account was factual and documented. He then posted numerous times in that 2017 Facebook conversation, including the following comments completely distorting our Facebook exchange and the upcoming book:

I had a long conversation with the ‘Sumterite’ who was a former Alabama legislator regarding his plans to write a book on the Sumter “Turks.”

I was shocked at his lack of knowledge on the people of their true historical documentation.

Example: he had no idea that “John Scott,” a white Rev War veteran who was living in Sumter in 1800, had moved on with his small family to Georgia by 1820 and WAS A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT INDIVIDUAL than “James Scott,” the Native/White mixed man who farmed on General Sumter’s land (and received a gift of a parcel of land from the old General). James Scott also served as a bugler during the Sumter militia’s musters under the command of General Sumter’s son (the “Sumterite” also didn’t know even this basic info (April 27, 2017)

Mr Browder, I certainly hope that our lengthy discussion opened your eyes to the volume of information that you had previously (at best) failed to include or (at worse) ignored in your “history” of my relatives in Sumter.

I will take the liberty of posting (again) the compilation of REAL, first-hand, historical documentation of the REAL ancestry of the “Turks”.

Please feel free to include any historic documents from this compilation, however please also be sure to credit myself, Claudia Benenhaley Gainey, Mandy Oxendine Chapman, Carrie Scott Ardis, and Ralph Oxendine as the individuals who collected and compiled the documentation of OUR ancestry.

As persons who are actually of blood descent from the “Turk” community, we have a vested interest to ensure that a truthful account of our ancestry is presented to the public, especially when “historical articles” and “books” are produced by outsiders to profit off our unique history. (May 4, 2017)

There are so many “accounts” based on peoples’ opinions (actually just taking a few documents that fit their theory and filling up 100 pages with pointless narrative based on incomplete research) that I wanted to make available JUST THE COLD HARD FACTS...put the REAL historical documentation out there and LET THE READER DECIDE for themselves.

--as you can see in the compilation, I didn’t post only the “Indian” documents, or only the

*“Turk” documents, I posted every extant historical document, unbiased and unfiltered.
(May 4, 2017)*

Mr Browder is preparing to publish a book “proving” the “Turks” of Sumter were “not Native American” but instead were a “flourishing Middle Eastern community.”

He has no idea the hornet’s nest he is kicking.

If you’re a guy with no blood connection to this community (other than being born in Sumter but living most of your life in Alabama) you better cross your t’s and dot your i’s with the research!

Unfortunately, from the conversations he and I have had, he didn’t even have the correct Scott ancestors, did not have any knowledge of the numerous “affidavits of Indian ancestry” from the mid-1800’s, ignored the Oxendine, Deas, etc families of Robeson Indians who also married in, and claims to have “DNA evidence” but nobody we know provided him with this “evidence.” (May 4, 2017)

Also, Claudia Benenhaley Gainey posted the following among her comments on the same Facebook thread:

I totally agree with you and Mandy Oxendine. Browder has no right to be digging into our history anyway. He’s only doing it for notority and money. (May 4, 2017)

He’s really in the dark about who he is messing with. Not one person that I know that has had their DNA done including myself and no one has ties to Turkey or any other Arabic countries; but all have Native American blood if only a few percent. Let him come on up and I’ll be glad to have a sit down with him. (May 4, 2017)

Anyone can write about what ever they want; but this guy is so SOS (stuck on stupid).. Does he really think he can come in here and make his version of our history his? If he had been a member of our community then I could see him asking questions; but he’s not and not quallified to write a book about us. He tried to friend me on FB and I didn’t want anything to do with him. I smelt a rat then. (May 10, 2017)

He is really dumber than I thought. He tried several times to engage me in conversation about our people. What a coniving snake. Let him hobo his behind down here; we’ll kick it back where it came from; lala land. (May 10, 2017)

Gainey then sent me the following Facebook message a month prior to the publication of our book:

... You and Terri and your work of fiction. You put nothing out there that is baked up with truths. My mother was an Oxendine and my father was a Benenhaley with an Oxendine grandmother. I don’t know the story about Joseph Benenhaley and neither do you and Terri. I have two heritages to choose from and I choose Native American Indian! Did you delibertyly leave out the fact that some of our relatives are buried at High Hills Church. New Hope and Bethesda Churc? Do you know about th Hidden Cemetery and the private homestead burial places; like my son? I have Cassie Nichols

book; who by the way was a bigot here from Sumter. Eleazer's pamphlet that contains numerous lies ieg. his uncle Sidney Oxendine preaching in a church in Pembroke, NC and never heard about Oxendines there.

I knew you were dectettful and after something when you contacted me on FB; that's why I wouldn't allow you to promote propaganda at my expense. Why don't you read "commissioners final report on my page and you can take it up with Prof.. Fred Knowels at the University of Georgis. I base my reasearch on facts and documentation; not oral history.

Being dectettful and a liar is part of being a politician. (March 10, 2018)

Two weeks before our opening public event for *South Carolina's Turkish People* at the Sumter County Museum, I posted a promotional piece about the book/event on Facebook ("You Might Be From Sumter County SC If ..."; Apr. 2, 2018). About a hundred individuals responded to the statement in some manner; and the vast majority of their reactions were positive. However, Hill and Gainey unleashed a frenzy of negative remarks about our upcoming book, often citing "facts" and "knowledge" reflecting their elaborate, appropriative thesis (which our research eventually would invalidate). Here are some of those comments:

Claudia Benenhaley Gainey: *Can't wait for this meeting or should I say face-off with these two. I'll be there with petition in hand waiting for the Q&A period. This Glen Browder tried to friend me on Facebook about a year or so ago. Pearl Ray's daughter, Terri, I have never had the pleasure of meeting; but I would like for her to know that one of the reviewers of our petition for state recognition as The Sumter Tribe/Band of Cheraw Indians is a professor at Georgia State University; Dr. Fred Knowles. How dare they imply that our research and genetic testing is incorrect when examined and proven by archiologists, anthropoligists and Phds. Some may find themselves a bit upset about the true lineages of some of these people; but hey you can't hide from the truth. We have proven without a shadow of doubt that our Oxendine progenitor was Native American Indian. At anytime the Benenhaleys married an Oxendine and had offsprings; those offsprings carried and carry Native American Indian blood. That will do it for now. If you wish to hear more; come on out to the meeting, ya hear?*

Pony Hill: *This "historical sketch" was obviously written by someone who did little, to no, actual historical research.*

Only two non-family members received gifts of land from General Sumter, those being Joseph Benenhaley (never appears on any record by any alternate spelling) a man of Morrocan Berber descent, who was born in the British West Indies. Sumter first encountered Benenhaley in Charleston, SC where Sumter recruited Benenhaley (a master wheelwright) to Work in Sumter's manufacturing venture.

The other individual was James Scott, a Rev War veteran of mixed White-Native blood who was born in Halifax, NC.

Sumter first encountered James Scott when Jakes and his two cousins (David Scott and Isham Scott) had been transferred from the NC Continental Line to the Southern

Command, and the trio were training in the High Hills of Santee in preparation for the Siege of Charleston.

James, Isham and David were all personally invited to live and farm on the General's land. David bought his own land in Kershaw, and Isham moved on to Florida to live with his eldest daughter, but James stayed on with Sumter and was rewarded by a gift of 28 acres of land.

Benenhaley too was eventually gifted with 17 acres of the General's land.

General Sumter never wrote anything regarding the origins of the Benenhaley/Scott/Oxendine people who lived on his land, and neither did his son. It was the General's grandson, who grew up most of his life in Brazil, who wrote down his own theories as to their origins some 50 years after the men had died (but even then the Sumter grandson first admitted that he had no idea where they had come from, or how they came to live on his grandfather's property).

At no point did ANY writer's from Sumter refer to the Benenhaleys, Scott's, or Oxendine's as "Moors"...this came from post-1900 writers who erroneously conflated the Sumter people with the "petition of Free Moors" that was filed on behalf of a Moorish family living in Charleston.

While Joseph Benenhaley was indeed a man with Middle Eastern ancestry, the Scotts and Oxendine's ALL had affidavits of Indian-White ancestry filed with the Sumter Court house in the 1850's, and several Scott and Oxendine individuals were also taxed as "Indian" and appeared in military enlistments and Court case filings as "Indian".

Claudia Benenhaley Gainey: *Go back to the drawing board Glen Browder.*

Pony Hill: *In the above synopsis of the upcoming book, the authors propose that they have proven their theory that the "Turk" community was founded by a single family of middle eastern ancestry, that the entire community maintained that middle eastern identity, and that community identity and cohesion was solidified by intermarriage with that single middle eastern family.*

For this theory to be bore out the following TRUTHS (verified by source historical documentation) must be explored, and dismissed:

- 1) James Scott, Isham Scott, David Scott, and Aaron Oxendine, all equal co-founders of the "Turk" community (EVERY post-1900 "Turk" community member can count these men as their direct ancestors AS WELL AS Joseph Benenhaley) all arrived in Sumter by a different route than Benenhaley, and ALL received affidavits of Indian-White ancestry which they filed in Sumter courthouse in the 1850's (if they had been absorbed by a middle eastern identity, why the need to secure documentation of their Native ancestry?)*
- 2) one of Joseph Benenhaley's daughters married a white man and moved to Georgia. By ALL accounts she and her children were recorded as, and self-identified as, "white". If the core "Turk" identity was based on this Benenhaley bloodline, why did she and her children not identify as "Turk"? And why did one of her grandsons, after moving to Oklahoma, apply for citizenship with the Cherokee Nation claiming he was of "Indian blood, descent from a remnant tribe that was adopted by the Cherokee in North Carolina"?*
- 3) why were several members of the "Turk" community taxed and enlisted in the military as "Indian"?*

4) why did various members of the “Turk” community, who moved to other areas of the country, NOT once maintain a “middle eastern” identity, but instead self-identify as descendants of “white” and “Indian” ancestors?

5) why does the term “Turk” NOT APPEAR IN ANY HISTORICAL RECORD OF THIS COMMUNITY PRIOR TO 1900? Why does all extent documentation reflect that these people were referred to as “Red Bones” (a term common in South Carolina to refer to people of mixed Native and white blood...this term has been hijacked post-1950 to refer to light skinned persons of African descent)?

6) finally, why did not ONE SINGLE example of middle eastern culture, language, life ways, or food preference survive within this community, but somehow enough cultural artifacts of Native American lifeways existed to bear repeated remark by ethnologists who visited the community in the early 1900’s (including, interestingly enough, an interview of the eldest Benenhaley who stated that he “knew nothing of the Turkish origin” but instead remarked that he assumed “they had some Indian blood”)?

Pony Hill: During the course of our direct communication via email, I shared with Mr Browder the vast majority of the source historical documentation that is included in the above linked historical compilation, including the large amount of documentation of “Indian” ancestry and “Indian” self-identification.

So, if this overwhelming amount of historical documentation of this Native American origin (large enough to win this community state recognition as a tribe under the stringent SC rules) is not included, and thoroughly covered, in this publication, then I can’t see how this book could possibly be accepted or viewed as honest or accurate.

Pony Hill: Numerous times throughout this book, the authors repeat the oral myth of “Joseph Benenhaley, a scout for General Sumter” yet there is ZERO evidence to support this claim.

Joseph Benenhaley never appeared on ANY enlistment or pay rolls of ANY company or unit during the Rev War.

Joseph Benenhaley never applied for a Rev War veteran’s pension.

Joseph Benenhaley’s widow never applied for a Rev War Widow’s pension.

Joseph Benenhaley never appeared on any of the “Rev War Veterans List” for Sumter County.

General Sumter’s grandson stated that it was his understanding that Joseph Benenhaley “did not arrive in this area until well after the current century” (i.e. after 1800).

Joseph Benenhaley was a master wheelwright, a skill he most likely learned from his own father, and was an EMPLOYEE of General Sumter, and arrived in Sumter after being recruited for Sumter’s fledgling manufacturing BUSINESS (not as a “scout”).

Due to his lifelong service as a faithful employee, the General eventually gifted Joseph 17 acres of land.

Pony Hill: James Scott, David Scott, and Isham Scott were actually the “first Fathers” of the community, having arrived on the General’s land some five to ten years earlier than Joseph Benenhaley.

Aaron Oxendine, also one of the earliest “first father” of the community, arrived around the same time as Joseph Benenhaley, though he immigrated from the north (Robeson

County, Home of the Lumbee Indians) while Joseph immigrated from the south (Charleston).

Pony Hill: This book also erroneously claims that the term “Turk” was used for the Sumter people, both individually and as a community, before 1900.

This is simply not true, and is NOT supported by ANY extent historical pre-1900 documentation.

From 1800 to 1900 we see the individuals and families of this people documented as “free persons of color” or “mulatto”, several times as “Indian”, “deeply set with European and Indian blood”, and the ENTIRE COMMUNITY specifically described as “Egyptians and Indians” in an 1858 petition of Sumter residents to the SC Legislature. While it IS true that Joseph Benenhaley himself was consistently identified as an “Arab” or “Ottoman” this ethnic identification was certainly NOT universally applied to the other individuals or families of the community.

Pony Hill: The authors, in the course of this publication, proudly proclaim (over and over) that they have “solved the mystery of Joseph Benenhaley”, yet there was never any “mystery” here to be solved.

From the very time pen met paper to mention Benenhaley (early 1900’s) he was referred to as “Arab descent”, an “Arab”, an “Ottoman”, and a “Turk”.

These identifications of Benenhaley’s ancestry have never been questioned, and even this ONE individual’s middle eastern origin was included in the Sumter Cheraw Tribe’s research materials submitted to the State of SC.

The authors break no new ground here, as the source materials have been easily found online at various websites, and are even referenced in the Sumter Cheraw’s website.

Where this book strays from all previous publications, is the authors’ theory that this one man’s partial Middle Eastern ancestry (DNA testing has revealed that Joseph could not have been more than 1/2 Moroccan Berber) somehow dominated, overwhelmed, and washed out the Native American blood of the six other founding families.

This theory of “Turk dominance” is based on one simple piece of evidence, that being that, after 1900, local white neighbors began referring to the community as “Turks”. No evidence of middle eastern religion, no evidence of middle eastern life ways, no evidence of middle eastern language, no evidence of middle eastern culture, etc etc. Just the use of the “Turk” slur by the local white populace.

By these standards of evidence, the Santee Indians of Orangeburg really did have “Brass Ankles”, the Pee Dee Indians of Marlboro were really “Croatans” and the Saponi Indians of Halifax were really “Cubans”.

Pony Hill: From the writings about this community of brown skinned people near Dalzell, from 1900 all the way up to today, ALL writers have agreed on ONE thing (even the authors of THIS book):

That these people strongly, even violently, rejected being called “Turk” and NEVER used the term to refer to themselves.

EVERY white neighbor who was quoted over the course of these 100 years all quoted varying versions of the same thing: that “Turk” was just a slur the local whites used and “don’t say it where they can hear you!”

So, the question remains, how can these authors claim that a “vibrant and cohesive community of Turkish people” existed when the people themselves never self-identified as such and even soundly rejected use of the label?

Claudia Benenhaley Gainey: *I can backup everything I said with documentation. Just make sure you have yours.*

Claudia Benenhaley Gainey: *Conjecture and oral history is not documented proof.*

Claudia Benenhaley Gainey: *Getting off of here for now before he really ticks me off and I say alot of things that some would dare to hear!*

Pony Hill: *I agree....which is why I posted a link to a complete compilation of source historical documentation of the Sumter community...for free...so that the public can view the documents first hand, without biased filters, and come to their own conclusions.*

Pony Hill: *Things which should be addressed by this book (but are ignored):*

1) James Scott, David Scott, and Isham Scott, all mixed Indian-white Rev War veterans who had served under General Sumter were living on the General’s land as early as 1800...a full ten years before Joseph Benenhaley arrived. The Scott-Oxendine-Dial (all Indian-White mixed) were already an intermarried/established “community” on General Sumter’s land BEFORE Joseph Benenhaley arrived in the area and his children by his white wife married children of the Scott/Oxendine’s.

2) of the 8 children of Joseph Benenhaley by his white wife, 3 sons married Scott women and stayed in the community, one son married a Ray and stayed in the community, one daughter married a Scott (then an Oxendine) and stayed in the community, one son married a Goins and left the community, and two daughters married white men and left the community (notice the pattern? Benenhaley’s who married Scott, Oxendine, or Ray stay in the community, Benenhaley’s who marry others leave the community...so what family(s) are REALLY the core of the community?)

3) James Scott was given a gift deed of land a full six years before Joseph Benenhaley

4) in 1858 the Sumter tax collector and the Sumter legislative representative, concerned that the brown-skinned community near Dalzell were being taxed as “whites”, filed a resolution to impose a higher capitation tax on them and described the community as “Egyptians and Indians” (notice no overall identification as “Turks”)

5) in 1889, General Sumter’s grandson reported that Joseph Benenhaley had not arrived in Sumter County until at least 1810 and that the General had no hand in Benenhaley arriving in the area. Sumter’s grandson, in his several writings on the Scott and Benenhaley family, never once uses the word “Turk”.

6) in 1889, K. E. L. Peebles, a long time resident of Sumter, referred to the community of Benenhaley/Scott/Oxendine’s as “Red Bones”. He never once refers to them as “Turks”.

7) in 1914, the GREAT grandson of General Sumter (who was born after James Scott, Joseph Benenhaley, and Aaron Oxendine had died) writes an article where the FIRST mention of the term “Turk” is used. Even here he does NOT mention the people themselves using it, but instead says “they got to be called ‘Turks’ by the country

people.” In this article (and subsequent writings), the General’s Great-grandson places the Scott family in equal importance as the Benenhaley’s.

8) finally, in 1975 an ethnologist interviewed Julius Benenhaley, then an 80 year old and considered “head man, or King of the Turks” the ethnologist reported that Julius “knew nothing of Turkish ancestry” but instead offered “...we probably have Indian blood.”

Pony Hill: The first settlers on General Sumter’s land were three Rev War veterans from NC: James Scott, David Scott, and Isham Scott who moved into Sumter’s land soon after he was given the huge grant by the State of SC circa 1800.

All three of these Scott men were mixed Native/White and ALL “Turks” descend from one or two of these men.

Around 1805 Aaron Oxendine and Wiley Deas moved down to Sumter from Robeson County, NC. Aaron married James Scott’s daughter and Wiley Deas was married to Aaron’s sister. Both Aaron Oxendine and Wiley Deas were both mixed Native/White. ALL “Turks” descend from Aaron Oxendine.

Around 1810 Joseph Benenhaley, a master wheelwright living in Charleston, was hired by General Sumter to work in Sumter’s new wagon manufacturing business. Sumter has first met Benenhaley during the Rev War when Joseph repairs wagons, and artillery and canon wheels for Sumter’s forces.

ALL of Joseph Benenhaley’s children were no more than 1/2 Middle Eastern (white mother) and married children of either one of the Scotts above, or one of Aaron Oxendine’s children.

That means that the next generation of Benenhaley’s were 1/4 Native, 1/8 Middle Eastern, and 5/8 white. At no point in “Turk” history did the Middle Eastern bloodline grow greater than this 1/8th.

One daughter of Joseph Benenhaley married a white man, and moved away (one grandson of this family applied for citizenship in the Cherokee Nation, Indian Territory, but was rejected).

Around 1840 John Buckner, a man of at least 1/2 Native blood also married in as well as several white men (Hood, Ray, Exum)

Modern DNA testing confirms what the historic record says regarding the racial makeup of the historic “Turk” community. Circa 1900, the average “Turk” was 1/2 white, 7/16 Native, and 1/16 Middle Eastern.

The Benenhaley family, since the offspring of those first out marriages with Scotts and Oxendine’s, has historically and modernly had more Native blood than Middle Eastern.

Pony Hill: This book falsely claims that JOHN Scott a “dark skinned Caucasian man” was the progenitor of ALL the Scotts. Browder took this info from Thompson who took it from Bass. Bass erroneously took the “man named Scott” identification by Gen Sumter’s grandson and added it to the Rev War Pension application of a white man named JOHN Scott who lived in Sumter circa 1800-1810 and had served under the General.

HOWEVER, this JOHN Scott moved his ENTIRE family over to Georgia after the Cherokee land lottery and he has NO DESCENDANTS IN SUMTER.

Bass (and subsequently Thompson and Browder) have excluded the Sumter records pertaining to JAMES Scott, DAVID Scott, and ISHAM Scott. Bass excluded them because he had not found them during his early era, Thompson & Browder exclude them INTENTIONALLY because it adds more Native bloodlines into the “Turk” community.

Pony Hill: *The book also COMPLETELY ignores that, for a community to qualify as a “surviving community of such-and-such ethnicity” it must produce NOT ONLY direct bloodline from that ethnicity, but also surviving examples of LANGUAGE, CULTURE, RELIGION, and other lifeways that would be unique to that ethnicity and different from surrounding communities.*

This book provides ZERO examples of “Turkish” or Middle Eastern languages, words, foods, culture, beliefs, superstitions, religion, etc etc that can be specifically pointed out as “Turkish” or Middle Eastern. Period. Full stop.

The claim of the book is that these people are “Turkish” simply because they have one “Turkish” ancestor way back in the early 1800’s.

If that is qualifying evidence, then I guess the entire Cherokee tribes in Oklahoma and North Carolina should be immediately terminated from official tribe status as they ALSO descend from at least one white ancestor in the early 1800’s.

Perhaps Thompson & Browder should collaborate on their next book: “The Scottish People of Cherokee North Carolina”

Two weeks later, I posted another message on Facebook about how reputable scholars had endorsed our book (“You Might Be From Sumter County, SC If ...”; Apr. 15, 2018). Hill offered the following sarcastic comments:

Pony Hill: *Congrats on arguing FOR something that no one was arguing AGAINST. I don’t believe that anyone has ever published anything to contradict the consistent statements about the ethnicity of Joseph Benenhaley, that being that he was a man of Middle Eastern descent.*

Perhaps some future books could be “we have solved the great mystery of Martin Luther King, Jr...he was of African descent!” or “we have solved the great mystery of Andrew Jackson...he was of European descent!”

Where your book DOES break new ground, sadly, is the blatant ignoring of the six other men who were ‘founding fathers’ of this community and who, in fact, established the community almost a full DECADE BEFORE Benenhaley arrived in Sumter.

By focusing on the Middle Eastern descent of ONE ANCESTOR, and consciously ignoring the ethnicity of the other overwhelming MAJORITY of community founders

(which is reflected, even in your own published DNA findings that reflect only a minute amount of Middle Eastern markers in modern descendants and large amounts of markers from both European and Native American roots).

It is disingenuous to promote, twist, and censor certain historical documents to bolster the nearly inconsequential contribution of ONE MAN (and his white wife) and purposely edit out evidence of the TRUE majority racial composition of this “Turkish” community (not to mention editing out that the people themselves adamantly, violently even, rejected being called “Turk”).

Pony Hill: *OMG mr Browder...over a year ago I informed you of your faulty info regarding “JOHN Scott” being the progenitor of the Scott surname among the “Turks”. I shared with you nearly twenty pre-1900 historic documents that proved, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that JAMES Scott, DAVID Scott, and ISHAM Scott were the forefathers of the Scott surname in this community.*

I further shared with you documentation that JOHN Scott, a white man, had lived near Stateburg from the close of the Rev War, but had removed to Georgia WITH HIS ENTIRE FAMILY before 1820, leaving NO Scott descendants in Sumter. Even though I had shared this documentation with you over a year ago, you STILL chose to publish erroneous information in your book, namely that “JOHN Scott” was the progenitor of the Scott surname among the “Turks”.

One has to wonder if this disregard of proven historical fact is simply intentional to further your “Turkish people” hypothesis? If so, it’s truly sad that you would knowingly mislead readers of your book.

Although the Sumter County Museum had secured unformed security personnel because of contentious social media exchanges, the book event was less a “face-off” than a presentation of our work and a spirited Q&A session. We shared our research with a very receptive, overflow audience, which included a large number of Turkish people and a handful of Cheraw Indians.

Steven Pony Hill has continued ranting since publication of our book by USC Press, our presentations at professional conferences (such as the South Carolina Historical Association) and articles in popular magazines (such as *Carologue*, a publication of the South Carolina Historical Society) and other reputable outlets (such as *Smithsonian.com*, the *New York Times*, the *Charleston Post and Courier*), all in 2018.

Here was his lengthy diatribe on the *Smithsonian.com* website (Sept. 24, 2018):

While this book has rehashed quite a bit of previously published materials regarding Joseph Benenhaley, this publication fails to break any new ground, fails to include a mountain of historical documentation, and cherry picks much of the included information to fit the author’s narrative. Where this ‘study’ fails, the most egregiously, is failing to tackle the following glaring discrepancies:

(1) No written account of the “Turks” prior to 1950 makes claim that Joseph Benenhaley ever served in the Revolutionary War. There is no military enlistment record for Joseph, nor did he or his widow apply for Rev War veteran’s benefits later in life. Some mid-Twentieth Century authors mistakenly conflated the earlier recounting of “Scott the bugler”’s enlistment under General Sumter in the Revolutionary War and subsequent service as a bugler in the militia under the General’s son with some possible service for Joseph Benenhaley, and this author has reinvigorated that glaring mistake.

(2) The author does not answer the fundamental question of how Benenhaley, a master wheelwright who had recently immigrated from the West Indies to Charleston, could have provided any credible service to General Sumter as a “scout”. Surely he would have been wholly unfamiliar with the terrain of the Carolina interior and utterly useless scouting for Sumter’s forces. There are volumes of records extant on those white and Native American Carolinians who served as scouts for Sumter, including James Scott, Isham Scott and David Scott (the mixed-blood Native American progenitors of the “Turks”), however Benenhaley’s name does not appear on any of these documents.

(3) The author promotes a ludicrous theory that this community is anything other than “Turk” in name only (in fact, even the author has been unable to demonstrate any historic usage of the “Turk” label for this community prior to 1900). The author glosses over the glaring fact that no examples of Middle Eastern language, religious practices, foods, or any hint of cultural practices were EVER recorded as taking place within the families of this community. The author’s theory is essentially this: The members of this community have more European and Native American genetic contribution along with a minute amount of Middle Eastern, have absolutely no tradition or examples of Middle Eastern culture, religion, or culture, vigorously (even violently at times) resisted being called “Turks” by local whites and did not self-identify as such, yet these people have one Middle Eastern ancestor way back in the early 1800’s therefore they are a “Turkish community.” This is tantamount to claiming that the Cherokees of North Carolina, who speak Cherokee and practice Cherokee culture, are really a “Scottish Community” because they descend from a Scottish trader back in the early 1800’s.

(4) This book completely misidentifies the progenitors of the Scott family, a family who was not only the founder of the non-white community on the Sumter property (living on the General’s property for nearly a decade before Benenhaley moved north from Charleston), but remained a core and influential family among the “Turks” well into the 1900’s.

(5) The author, in an unabashed attempt to bolster his theory of a “Turkish community” excludes volumes of historic documents including mid-1800’s ancestry affidavits, taxation records, and court records that identify a large number of the “Turk” ancestors as “Indian.” Furthermore, the author downplays the core participation/influence of the Scott and Oxendine families (most likely because these families/individuals are specifically identified as “Indian” in the majority of pre-1900 records). The author purposefully misidentifies the progenitor of the Scotts as one John Scott, a white man who left Sumter with his entire family prior to 1805 and removed to North Carolina leaving no descendants in Sumter, South Carolina. Even more of an intentional error is

the author's complete ignoring of the fact that ALMOST ALL of Joseph Benenhaley's children married Scotts or Oxendines, spouses of Native American ancestry, excepting one daughter who took a white spouse and moved to Georgia (and yet even a few of the grandchildren of this marriage claimed Native American ancestry during the Cherokee land claims of the early 1900's).

To summarize, this publication is 100% correct that Joseph Benenhaley was a "Turk", a man of Middle Eastern descent, and the Benehaley family was one of the more sizeable and influential of the "Turks" of Sumter (though even those who carried the Benenhaley surname had more Native American and European blood than Middle Eastern even as early as the Civil War era), a great disservice has been performed by ignoring the large Native American contribution to the genetic makeup of this distinct ethnic community in furtherance of the incredulous claim that one Middle Eastern ancestor combined with five Native American ancestors and two European ancestors somehow equals a "Turkish" people.

And this is how he appraised our book on *Amazon.com* (April 15, 2018):

While there IS a fascinating expose of new info regarding Joseph Benenhaley's origins in the Indies, this book can hardly be viewed as an accurate or complete history of the "Turks" of Sumter County.

If the authors can't even get the Scott progenitors of this community correct (JAMES Scott and DAVID Scott were the actual ancestors of EVERY modern member of this community, not JOHN Scott who was a white man who left Sumter with his entire family prior to 1820 and moved to Georgia), then how can ANY of the other assumptions of the authors be viewed as valid or properly researched?

Facts are, James Scott and David Scott (both White-Indian mixed bloods) as well as James' son-in-law Aaron Oxendine (also a White-Indian mixed blood) had established a community on General Sumter's land almost a full decade BEFORE Joseph Benenhaley and his white wife arrived in Sumter.

Because of the above discrepancies (easily independently researched and verified by anyone with an internet connection) the reader should view this publication with healthy skepticism and be warned that this book edits much historical documentation, and flatly ignores others, to promote a baseless hypothesis, that being the children of a Middle Eastern man and his white wife intermarried with a Native American mixed blood community and the "Turk" identity supplanted any indigenous culture or self-identity.

I also received several Facebook messages attempting to dissuade me from continuing this research; one persistent member of the tribe eventually wrote:

You got a lot nerve Glen wait tell my book comes out I'm going make you look like a ass... You're a liar and I have documentation to destroy everything you've said. I will Sue you for defamation of character. (May 6, 2018)

Our project clearly challenged the Cheraw group's appropriative story; and they did not respond very well to our research. They attacked us repeatedly—both before and after publication of our book—with stale “facts” and “findings” from their research (which our book and this manuscript have thoroughly invalidated). Their attacks were inaccurate and intemperate; and they did not speak well for the cause of the Sumter Indians. Nor could those attacks on us conceal fundamental fault-lines and dramatic developments in their tribal community.

Dramatic Developments

The preceding discussions served as prelude to very dramatic developments since the Cheraw Indians achieved tribal status in 2013. Strangely, the Indians appear to have wandered into a contentious and ill-fated identity crisis.

In this section, I will attempt to describe my interpretation of these developments.

(1) The first and most obvious development is that the Sumter Tribe of Cheraw Indians have traveled a difficult road as South Carolina's newest tribe. At first, their membership swelled; but a bitter struggle broke out among the group's leadership in 2014. Tribal secretary Claudia Benenhaley Gainey (who had compiled the application) was removed from office and even banned from the tribe. Furthermore, most of the signed-up memberships were cancelled. Competing Internet websites and Facebook pages were established, with back and forth sniping among the Indians. The SCCMA stepped into the fray in late 2014 by blessing an official new regime under Chief Ralph Justice Oxendine. Tribal member Ansley Ray, who is part of the new leadership, told a *Sumter Item* reporter in 2017 that there are about 275 Cheraw Indians, “plus a lot more that haven't yet embraced their heritage” (Nov. 8, 2017).

Early this year, Claudia Benenhaley Gainey, the person who did most of the work for state recognition, lamented her fate and the state of the Cheraw Tribe on her website (“The Real Sumter Tribe of Cheraw Indians”; Mar. 21, 2019):

Where Did It All Go?

There was a time when we were all united and heading places. Then a few newbees lowered the boom ... What happened to the grand celebration that we were to have after Recognition? Who is writing grants to better your tribe. So many people were cast aside that were not supposed to be. What do you think a tribe is; a group of relatives that live in the same place all of thier lives? No; its family including our children that move away and have children that carry Native blood. I've been accused of some terrible things and was kicked out without having a chance to explain the situation fully while the proposed Tribal Council sat in a room and decided my fate. I went to a council meeting once and from his hospital bed; Ralph Oxendine told Jeannie Galiano to lock the door to the establishment to prevent me from coming in. Only 2 or 3 of us participated in evevts such as vending at the Iris festival, the Native American Indians Study Center. pow wows; all to earn money for the tribe. We went to schools, churches and anywhere people wanted to learn about our culture. I worked very hard on Recognition for the Sumter Cheraw Indians just to get kicked in the teeth. Oh I think about it now and then but I don't dwell

on it any more. Of course I would still like to be just a member; a participant in it. I stood up and fought for our people when no one else would. I am so sorry that we have so many narrow-minded people that we once called our friends.

It is clear, judging from personal interviews and social media discussions, that bad feelings and squabbling continued both within and outside the tribe.

The basic problem, as explained throughout this analysis, was that the Cheraw Indians had identified numerous and varied people—including a key Ottoman individual and families of reputed Arabic kinship—among their founders and constituent lineage; and they never made a solid case for a single, distinct tribal community. Living descendants of these lineages who claim Native American ancestry began squabbling about who was “real Indian” and who was “fake Indian”; and many who considered themselves of Arabic descent resented their Indian relatives’ denial of the Turkish traditional narrative.

(2) A second and surprising development is that the Cheraw Indians have written a new, online version of tribal history that is remarkably different from the narrative presented in the 2012 application and approved in 2013 by the SCCMA.

The new version was created by the regenerated regime in 2014; and “Our Story” now introduces the Cheraw Indian Tribe this way: “Our people have lived for over 250 years in a community outside of Sumter, SC. For most of this time, we, the Benenhaleys, Rays, Buckners, Lowerys, Oxendines, Scotts, and Hoods, have been known as the ‘Turk’ community.” (www.thesumtertribeofcherawindians.org)

Their social community is described thusly: “We were set apart from both the white and the African American communities; neither one nor the other. We had our own school, our own church. We were a people apart. Marriages were within the community. It wasn’t until the 1940’s when Shaw Air Force Base was built that many ventured outside the community.”

Then, the site offers this account of “local lore” and “undisputed facts” regarding their historical background: “Local lore identified our people as Turks of Moorish decent who had escaped from pirate ships off the coast. This seemed to explain our ethnicity, being neither white nor African American. But this explanation did not fit with some of the undisputed facts that we did know about our people. General Thomas Sumter recruited Joseph Benenhaley and John Scott to fight with him in the Revolutionary War; Benenhaley as a scout and Scott as a bugler. After the war, General Sumter allowed the Benenhaleys, Buckners, Oxendines, Scotts and Ray families to live on his land in Statesburg.”

Finally, the site presents a skimpy account of the “seven interconnected” family lines of the Cheraw Tribe (which account confusingly drops the Lowerys and adds the Woodells to the list of core surnames cited earlier in “Our Story”):

Members of the Sumter Tribe of Cheraw Indians are descended from seven interconnected lines dating back to the late 1790’s and early 1800’s as documented in Census Records.

Documentation contained in the Tribe's petition for State Recognition notes the head of each family clan to be "Indian", "Turk", "free person of color", and/or "mulatto".

*The **Oxendine** family is documented as "free persons of color" in the 1800, 1810, and 1820 Census Records; as "mulatto" in the 1850 and 1879 Census Records of Sumter County with Charles Oxendine and other members of the Oxendine family being identified as "indian" from Robeson County, North Carolina. This line connects back to the Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina in the 1800's.*

*The **Scott** family, which is part of the line connecting with Santee Community, was identified as "free persons of color" in the 1820 Census Records and as "mulatto" in the 1850 Census Records of Sumter County.*

*The **Benenhaley** family was identified as "free person of color" in the 1820 Census Records and as "mulatto" in the 1850 Census Records. This family and others of this tribe have been known in the surrounding community as "Turks" throughout history to modern day (i.e. "History of the Turks Who Live in sumter County, SC-From 1805-1970"). Additionally, this line has also been associated with the leadership of the community with Julius Benenhaley referred to as the Head Man or Clan Leader in the 1960's. In 1972, Mr. Julius Benenhaley identified the community as Native American Indian during interviews with the City of Sumter and the University of South Carolina.*

*The **Ray** family is documented on the 1850 and 1870 Census as "mulatto", living in Sumter County.*

*The **Buckner** family are documented in the 1800 Census and the 1870 Census as "mulatto"/"indian" working on farms and other trades.*

*The **Hood** family is documented as "turk" in the 1900's through court records.*

*The **Woodell** family is documented through Census and other historical documents as marrying into this Community.*

The new website is of more than passing interest because there are important, unexplained differences between the elaborative tale presented in the original application/certification process and the cryptic narrative on the current website; and there's something obviously wrong with the mutating story of "Cheraw history."

The most stark incongruity is that several family surnames supposedly documented in the 2012 application as Indian founders/progenitors/ancestors have disappeared from the 2014 rendition of Cheraw history; and the new tribal story has elevated to central stature those families awkwardly cited in the original application as having claimed "Arabic or Turkish" ancestry. In truth, the current website seems more reliant upon and resonant with the tradition and experience of the "Turkish community" than a "Cheraw Indian tribe."

These dramatic developments—internal squabbling among the Cheraw Indians and their shifting version of "Our Story"—have been very vexing for contemporary descendants trying to sort out who their people were back then and who they themselves are today; and the Cheraw Tribe has been unable to define itself clearly, consistently, and convincingly to people of Native American bloodline or to explain their relationship with people who claim to be of Arabic descent. Therein lay the source and nature of the identity crisis besetting the group despite its possession of a Cheraw Indian tribal certificate.

It looked like the Indian-Turkish controversy might continue forever as an unresolved impasse, with the Cheraw Tribe touting state certification to support their claim and the Turkish group citing our book as documentation for their argument. However, in 2019, we took our new evidence to the South Carolina Commission for Minority Affairs; and they agreed to address the issue of cultural appropriation.

IX. SCCMA'S CORRECTION OF THE RECORD ACKNOWLEDGING THE TURKISH PEOPLE'S ETHNOHISTORY

The most recent and striking development is that the South Carolina Commission for Minority Affairs has corrected the public record with a clarifying memorandum and annotation officially acknowledging the Turkish people's ethnohistory.

As the Commission's Executive Director wrote in a 2019 memo:

"In 2013, the S.C. Commission for Minority Affairs awarded state status to the Sumter Cheraw Indians based on information that was submitted at that time. Since then, Dr. Glen Browder, on behalf of the Turkish community, has provided new information to be added to the file of the Cheraw Indians. The Commission has accepted his submission and will include it with the Cheraw Indian documents on file." (Memorandum, South Carolina Commission for Minority Affairs; Nov. 26, 2019)

And, as stated in the accompanying annotation for the record:

... new research provided in a recent publication has demonstrated conclusively that the Turkish people of Sumter County originated from patriarch Joseph Benenhaley and constituted a separate, distinct community of their own for most of the past two centuries; and it would be erroneous for anyone to characterize the Turkish people as Native Americans or as part of any Indian Tribe recognized by the South Carolina Commission for Minority Affairs. (Annotation, South Carolina Commission for Minority Affairs; Nov. 26, 2019)

"Therefore," the annotation concluded, "the South Carolina Commission for Minority Affairs hereby acknowledges the history and heritage of the Sumter County Turkish community and adds this annotation to its official files regarding certification of the Sumter Tribe of Cheraw Indians."

In this section, I will explain the interesting background and pertinent facts of this development.

(For assembled material/notes related to the SCCMA's memorandum/annotation for the record, see Browder's Files on *South Carolina's Turkish People* at South Caroliniana Library in Columbia, SC.)

This correction certainly was not an easy or routine action for the SCCMA. In fact, for a long time, Commission personnel seemed resistant to my questions and insinuations that there was something wrong with the Cheraw story. In my opinion, it took several years of outside scrutiny and new leadership before the agency was ready and able to address an issue as sensitive and significant as this particular controversy.

A review of the Commission's recent struggles provides context for this latest twist in the pursuit of justice for the Turkish community.

Institutional Dysfunction, New Leadership, and Renewed Vision

For most of its young history since being established in 1993, the South Carolina Commission for Minority Affairs operated without much notice as a small state agency with limited staff and jurisdiction.

However, a Performance Review by the SC Inspector General in 2015 reported that the Commission was deficient in leadership, management, and accountability. Included in its Executive Summary was a multiplicity of terms such as "red flags," "inaccurate/nonsensical data," "hollow management jargon," "lack of management due diligence," "mission drift," "thinking small," "fallen short," and "dysfunction." (Maley, Patrick, SC Office of the Inspector General. "Performance Review of the Commission for Minority Affairs"; June, 2015)

In 2017, the SC Legislature conducted an online survey of public opinion regarding the Commission for Minority Affairs. There were few responses (24), but a majority of respondents said they had a "negative" (42%) or "very negative" (17%) opinion of the CMA. A majority also said the CMA functioned "worse" (35%) or "much worse" (22%) than the average state agency in South Carolina. (SC Legislative Oversight Committee. "Notification of the Economic Development, Transportation, and Natural Resources Subcommittee's Study of the Commission for Minority Affairs"; June 27-28, 2017)

In 2018, the SC House Legislative Oversight Committee concluded after months of hearings that "The Committee has no confidence that the Commission for Minority Affairs is efficiently or effectively fulfilling its mission." (SC Legislative Oversight Committee. "Study of the Commission for Minority Affairs"; July 13, 2018) The Committee also found that the SCCMA was not doing what the law required and described it as "a state agency that's failing minorities and all taxpayers." Furthermore, the Oversight Committee recommended to the Governor that the Executive Director be fired and the entire Board of Trustees be replaced. (Chad Mills, "Lawmakers Reprimand 'Failed' State Agency, Ask Governor To Fire Its Board"; WIS-TV, July 8, 2018)

One legislator, Rep. Neal Collins, also observed on Facebook: "The mission of CMA is clear in statute and nearly none of the goals are being met. In short, my takeaway from CMA is that its

\$1 million budget is being wasted and the biggest losers were the very minorities the commission is meant to support. With that, today, my bipartisan colleagues and I had to inform CMA's directors and employees of our viewpoints. I then made a motion that our subcommittee has no-confidence in the commission, which passed unanimously. (This by the way was a compromise as I preferred abolishing the CMA.)" (www.bradworthen.com; Apr. 11, 2018)

The outcome of this institutional turbulence was new leadership and renewed commitment to a vision of public service at the Commission. An outsider—Dr. Deborah Dacosta—was appointed Executive Director in 2018; and she promised that change was coming to the agency. Her first budget presentation, on January 15, 2019, stated: "CMA has faced some major challenges over the last few years, most resulting from noncompliance of the law and poor performance." That printed presentation also included a powerful promise. "As this agency continues to improve, it will become true to its vision that: All ethnic minority citizens of the State of South Carolina will be treated equitably and achieve economic prosperity through socio-cultural awareness, collaboration, policy change and research." (South Carolina Commission for Minority Affairs, "Subcommittee Budget Presentation, Fiscal year 19-20"; Jan. 15, 2019)

After reading this presentation, I decided it might be helpful to approach Dacosta about the improper appropriation of Turkish history.

Valid Concerns and New Evidence

On June 25, 2019, I emailed Dr. Dacosta with a request to meet with her regarding a problem with the 2013 certification of the Sumter Tribe of Cheraw Indians; and I presented my concerns and evidence to her at a July 22 meeting at SCCMA's offices in Columbia, SC. I also told her that I was not asking that the Cheraw tribe be decertified; I simply wanted the CMA to review and amend its records in a manner that acknowledges the appropriative error and articulates respect for the history and heritage of the Turkish people. She suggested that she would try to arrange a follow-up meeting in September at which we could further discuss the problem and that I might want to present our research to the full Commission in an accompanying session. She also expressed the sentiment that, if my concerns were valid, then something should be done to respect the historical integrity of the Turkish people.

We were unable to schedule a follow-up meeting in early September; and, on September 24, 2019, I submitted a lengthy, formal, electronic statement of my concerns (including an early version of this analysis) with the following request:

I therefore request that the South Carolina Commission for Minority Affairs respond to several questions regarding the certification of the Sumter Cheraw Tribe in 2013 and that the Commission address the improper appropriation of the Turkish people in a manner that acknowledges their true story.

Additionally, I made Dacosta aware that, according to a South Carolina Attorney General's opinion, the Commission has authority to address such situations (Alan Wilson, Attorney General's opinion; Sept. 9, 2011). SCCMA Executive Director Thomas J. Smith had asked for guidance on several matters, including the Commission's authority if it discovers a problem in a

tribe's submitted information and documents after having certified that tribe. Smith's request for guidance was as follows:

The Commission seeks guidance and clarification in regards to the authority the Commission/State of South Carolina has over recognition after an entity has been recognized. The statute does not address this within its sections, but it is presumed that the Commission would have the authority to remove, review or reassign status after an entity has been recognized. Can information submitted in a petition application for Recognition be reviewed or can information be added to the petition after the entity has been recognized? If the Commission has the authority to do this, how should the process of review/audit occur and does the statute need to be changed to reflect this process? If the Commission reviews documents and information submitted and finds something fraudulent, would the Commission or the State of South Carolina then have the authority to correct information or act on the entity's recognition status? If an entity dissolves its status as a non-profit and/or is no longer acting in accordance with the recognition criteria of Section R. 139-105 (A) (B) (C), does the Commission have the authority to remove recognition status? If so, how should the process of removal occur and does the statute need to be changed to reflect this process?

Attorney General Alan Wilson's response generalized that the agency had considerable latitude in its discretion in promulgating regulations. The AG wrote:

In dealing with the power of the Commission after State Recognition, we note the South Carolina Supreme Court has stated that a governmental body of limited power is not in a strait jacket in the administration of the laws under which it operates, because it also possesses powers which may be inferred or implied in order to effectively exercise the expressed powers possessed by it ... To carry out the express duties in § 1-31-40 (A) (6), it is a logical conclusion that the Commission implicitly has authority to subsequently review (i.e.,remove) State Recognition of an entity. It would seem that such authority would be sufficiently connected to the Commission's initial approval authority so as to come within the "implied powers" principal enunciated by the Darby Court.

And in his "Conclusion," the AG reiterated this point:

Finally, we believe it is logical to conclude that implicit with the power to approve State Recognition, the Commission has authority to subsequently review (i.e.,remove) State Recognition of an entity based upon circumstances determined by the Commission.

Correcting the Official Record

The SC Commission for Minority Affairs settled this controversy in late 2019 with a two-part document—consisting of a memorandum and annotation for the record—that clarified and corrected the record regarding the Turkish people and certification of the Sumter Tribe of Cheraw Indians.

This correction occurred after the Commission reviewed our concerns and research and as a result of follow-up telephone and email conversations, during which it was agreed that I submit a draft annotation for consideration. The Executive Director then notified me by memorandum (dated Nov. 26, 2019) that the Commission acknowledged our “new information” and accepted the annotation, which would be added to the Sumter Cheraw certification file.

Here is the memo (addressed to “Dr Browder and Members of the Turkish Community”):

In 2013, the S.C. Commission for Minority Affairs awarded state status to the Sumter Cheraw Indians based on information that was submitted at that time. Since then, Dr. Glen Browder, on behalf of the Turkish community, has provided new information to be added to the file of the Cheraw Indians. The Commission has accepted his submission and will include it with the Cheraw Indian documents on file.

And here is the full annotation:

The historical and ethnological backgrounds of numerous dark-complexioned families of Sumter County, SC, have until recently been matters of oral tradition and weak documentation. Some, who considered themselves of Native American ancestry, hailed ties to North Carolina Indians from the Revolutionary War era; and others, who considered themselves of Turkish descent, subscribed to a narrative of an Ottoman patriarch dating back to the same period in Sumter County.

The Native Americans (including some individuals who also were related and associated with the Turkish community) organized themselves as the Sumter Cheraw Indians early in the current century. They believed the Turkish people to be Native Americans who long ago adopted the “Turk moniker” in order to avoid persecution by White authorities. Their application for tribal certification was approved by the SC Commission for Minority Affairs in 2013.

However, new research provided in a recent publication has demonstrated conclusively that the Turkish people of Sumter County originated from patriarch Joseph Benenhaley and constituted a separate, distinct community of their own for most of the past two centuries; and it would be erroneous for anyone to characterize the Turkish people as Native Americans or as part of any Indian Tribe recognized by the South Carolina Commission for Minority Affairs. Persons interested in the story of this group should consult South Carolina’s Turkish People (University of South Carolina Press, 2018) by Dr. Terri Ann Ognibene and Dr. Glen Browder.

Therefore, the South Carolina Commission for Minority Affairs hereby acknowledges the history and heritage of the Sumter County Turkish community and adds this annotation to its official files regarding certification of the Sumter Tribe of Cheraw Indians.

The bottom-line, big-picture significance of this two-part document is that the South Carolina Commission for Minority Affairs thereby rendered an official and conclusive judgement in favor of the Turkish narrative.

Thus ended this final chapter in the long ordeal of the Sumter County Turkish community. Our book, this manuscript, and the Commission’s memorandum/annotation have confirmed Turkish ethnohistory and invalidated Cheraw appropriation of their cultural experience. Now, the Turkish people can fully celebrate their story and pass a proud heritage along to their children.

X.

SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS

1. Dr. Terri Ann Ognibene and I conducted our research to determine, if possible, the true story of the Turkish people. Our book, *South Carolina’s Turkish People* (2018), confirmed the Turkish narrative of oral history by demonstrating that this intriguing group comprised a separate, distinct, enduring community of their own—identifying as people of Arabic descent and known by locals as the “Sumter Turks”—for the past two centuries. We checked and rechecked our research continuously to ensure the accuracy of our work; and outside experts have praised both our methods and findings. I also decided to check our research by examining the work of those who criticized our book and the Turkish narrative; and those criticisms, as covered in this manuscript, do not stand up to scrutiny. More importantly, in that latter process, I have documented a pervasive pattern of cultural appropriation of Turkish history by the Sumter Tribe of Cheraw Indians.
2. The first case of cultural appropriation examined in this manuscript was Steven Pony Hill’s writings and online statements about the Sumter Cheraw Indians. Hill relentlessly disparaged the Turkish people, compiled false documentation of his thesis, and criticized our work documenting their history. It is clear that Hill improperly merged the Turkish people among the Indians in order to label the dark-skinned population in this county, collectively, as a Native American tribe; and the research compiled in our book and this manuscript exposed and discredited his work. Unsurprisingly, his brief chapter on the “Sumter Cheraw” was included as documentation in the Cheraw petition for tribal status.
3. The Sumter Cheraw Indian application for tribal status—compiled mainly by Claudia Benenhaley Gainey—reflected the same appropriative purpose and biased research. While criticizing the Turkish traditional narrative, the Cheraw Indians disproportionately incorporated major elements of that narrative—key personalities (such as Joseph Benenhaley, an Ottoman), community institutions (such as the “Turk school” and the “Turk church”), cultural experiences (such as isolation, segregation, and discrimination against “the Turks”), and documents (such as census, genealogical, and photographic records of Turkish people)—to evidence a Cheraw tribal narrative. Our research exposed and discredited their appropriation of Turkish history.
4. Obviously, the South Carolina Commission for Minority Affairs did not have access to our book and this analysis in 2013; nor did it have staff or financial resources to conduct such

rigorous scholarship back then. Therefore, it apparently relied on appropriative documentation supplied by the Sumter Cheraw Indians in approving their application. Fortunately, the Commission agreed to consider our new evidence; and, in 2019, the agency rejected cultural appropriation by acknowledging the true history and heritage of the Turkish people and clarifying official state files regarding certification of the Cheraw Tribe.

5. The important result of our decade-long project is that this historical controversy is settled and the debate is over. The Sumter County Turkish people's traditional narrative has been confirmed; the appropriation of their cultural experience has been discredited; and the public record of local ethnohistory has been corrected. The Turkish people can now fully celebrate their history and proudly pass their heritage along to their children as they continue to assimilate into broader society. The Indians also have a long history in this area; however, they must address the troubling issue of appropriation if they hope to sustain the Sumter Cheraw Indian Tribe as their legacy.
6. Therefore, it seems advisable that the Sumter Cheraw Indians and the Turkish people should try to forget their grievances and enjoy their respective heritages. Too many individuals have been hurt and too many families have been split by this dispute over the past two decades; and it is time for the angry bickering to stop.

The key to such resolution is that certain leaders and activists on both sides must adopt the prudent balance of pride and tolerance as expressed by two elders earlier in the controversy. As Mandy Oxendine Chapman, then chief of the Sumter Band of Cheraw Indians, observed in a 2006 newspaper interview: "While the tribe members are very proud of their culture, no one disparaged those of Turkish descent who might be living in the area. If there was any Arabic blood, I'm not aware of it. But if there is, I'm not ashamed of that. Our Indian heritage is the main concern in this tribe" (*The Item*; Dec. 28, 2006). On the other hand, former Long Branch pastor Eleazer Benenhaley expressed his Turkish sentiments thusly in 2008: "If an Oxendine can prove that his family came from North Carolina and wants to be called a Lumbee Indian, that is his right ... But as for me, I trust the oral tradition of my grandmother and those before her" (*Neophytes and Would Be Historians*; 30, 36).

If enlightened Sumter Cheraw Indians and Turkish people would embrace the "better angels of their nature" (to borrow an idea and phrase from Abraham Lincoln), maybe one day these two communities—who clearly have different but shared ancestral histories—could realize their rightful destinies.

POSTSCRIPT #1:

It is likely that I have made some errors in my research; and there may be some mistakes in this analysis. However, I am confident in the overall effort, substance, and findings of the project. Unfortunately, I have never had an opportunity to meet with anyone from the Sumter Cheraw Indian Tribe to discuss differences between their claims and our findings. I will be happy to correct this manuscript if the Sumter Cheraw Indians can present reliable material answering the questions raised here and proving that my analysis is wrong.

POSTSCRIPT #2:

My original research documenting the Turkish people's history and problems with the Cheraw Indian story has been donated to the South Caroliniana Library at the University of South Carolina in Columbia, SC. These files are being processed and will be available for public review

SELECTED REFERENCES OF SIGNIFICANCE FOR THIS ANALYSIS:

(Most of the sources listed here and others cited in this analysis can be found, along with notes, in Browder's Research Files currently being processed at the South Caroliniana Library.)

Alani, Hannah. "Hidden for Centuries, SC Descendants of Ottoman Turks Come Forward with Stories of Racism," *Post and Courier* (Nov. 17, 2018).

Allen, James Paul, and Eugene J. Turner. *We The People: Atlas of American Ethnic Diversity* (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1998).

Bass, Robert. *Gamecock: The Life and Campaigns of General Thomas Sumter* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1961).

Benenhaley, Eleazer. *Moulded Clay* (Orlando, FL: Daniels Printing Co., 1983; Revised edition, Lexington, KY; Independently published, 2019).

_____. *An Analysis of Neophytes and Would Be Historians* (Belvedere, SC: Quality Printing, 2008).

Berry, Brewton. "The Mestizos of South Carolina." *American Journal of Sociology* (1945).

_____. *Almost White* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1963).

Browder, Glen. Research Files on *South Carolina's Turkish People*, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC.

Browder, Glen, and Terri Ann Ognibene. "Who Was Joseph Benenhaley? Exploring the 200-Year-Old Mystery of Sumter County's Turkish Patriarch and His People," *Carologue* (Fall-Winter, 2017).

_____. "Solving the Two-Hundred-Year-Old Mystery of South Carolina's Turkish People," paper presented at the South Carolina Historical Association conference, Columbia, SC (Mar. 10, 2018).

_____. "Why the Enigmatic Turks of South Carolina Still Struggle To Belong in America," *Zocalo – Public Square* (Sept. 24, 2018).

_____. "Tracing the Mysterious 'Turks' of South Carolina Back to the Revolutionary War." *Smithsonian.com* (Sept. 24, 2018).

Buchanan, John. *The Road to Guilford Courthouse: The American Revolution in the Carolinas* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1997).

Bull, F. Kinloch. *Random Recollections of a Long Life, 1896–1986* (Unknown Binding, estimated 1986; located at South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina).

Fausset, Richard. "Tracing the Roots of South Carolina's 'Turks,' Before They Melt Away," *New York Times* (July 5, 2018).

Federal Works Progress Administration. Survey of State and Local Historical Records. (1936). Digital Collection housed at the South Caroliniana Library of the University of South Carolina.

Federal Writer's Project. "Pockets in America: The Turks in Sumter County, South Carolina." Ca. late 1930s; Southern Historical Collection, The Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Flood, Charles Bracelen. *Rise and Fight Again* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1976).

"Furman Papers." Documents of Charles James McDonald Furman, at South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina.

Gregorie, Anne King. *Thomas Sumter* (Columbia, SC: R. L. Bryan Company, 1931).

_____. *History of Sumter County, South Carolina* (Sumter, SC: Library Board of Sumter County, 1954).

Griswold, Rufus Wilmot, William Gilmore Simms, and Edward Duncan Ingraham. *Washington and the Generals of the American Revolution*, 2 vols (Philadelphia: Cary and Hart, 1847).

Gross, Ariela J. *What Blood Won't Tell: A History of Race on Trial in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008).

Heitzler, Michael James. *Goose Creek, a Definitive History: Rebellion, Reconstruction and Beyond*, (Charleston, SC: History Press, 2006).

High Hills Baptist Church Annual Report, 1887 (Thompson Collection and Interviews).

Hill, S. Pony. *Strangers in Their Own Land: South Carolina's State Indian Tribes* (Palm Coast, FL: Backintyme, 2010 and 2013).

_____. Comment, *South Carolina's Turkish People*; *Amazon.com* website (Apr. 15, 2018). https://www.amazon.com/dp/1611178584/ref=nav_timeline_asin?_encoding=UTF8&psc=1

_____. Comment, *South Carolina's Turkish People*; *Smithsonian.com* website (Sept. 24, 2018). <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/tracing-mysterious-turks-of-south-carolina-back-revolutionary-war-180970383/>

_____. "Historical Documentation of the Scott Family of Sumter, South Carolina" (2006). <https://sciway3.net/clark/freemoors/scott.html>

_____. "Indianancestry 101" (2014). <https://indianancestry101.wordpress.com>

_____. "Patriot Chiefs and Loyal Braves" (2005). <https://sciway3.net/clark/freemoors/CHAPTER1colonial.htm>

_____. "Sumter's Turks" (2015). <https://sciway3.net/clark/freemoors/SumtersTurksb.htm>

_____. "The Cheraw Indians of Sumter County South Carolina and Florida" (2013, 2014, 2016). <https://www.facebook.com/groups/212032345267/>

_____. "The 'Turks' of Sumter County Are Descendants of American Indians" (2005). <https://sciway3.net/clark/freemoors/TheTurksareIndianshb.htm>

_____. "Various American Indian Records" (2004, 2005). <https://sciway3.net/clark/freemoors/Indian.htm>

Hodge, Frederick Webb, ed. *Handbook of American Indians North of Mexico*. *Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 30* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, fourth impression, Sept., 1912).

“Hood v. Board of Trustees of Sumter County School District No. 2, Sumter County, South Carolina.” (1953, 1956, 1961, and 1961).

“How To Write a Critical Analysis” (Teaching and Learning Center, University of Washington, Tacoma; undated).

Huggins, J. D. Letter to the Editor, *Manning Times* (Mar. 31, 1909).

Long Branch Baptist Church, Visitors Package (2018).

(Maley, Patrick, SC Office of the Inspector General. “Performance Review of the Commission for Minority Affairs; June, 2015)

McCrary, Edward. *The History of South Carolina in the Revolution, 1780–1783* (London: MacMillan, 1902).

McPherson, O. M. “Report on Condition and Tribal Rights of the Indians of Robeson and Adjoining Counties of North Carolina,” in *Indians of North Carolina: Letter from the Secretary of the Interior, Transmitting in Response to a Senate Resolution of June 30, 1914, a Report on the Condition and Tribal Rights of the Indians of Robeson and Adjoining Counties of North Carolina*. (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1915).

Mills, Chad. “Lawmakers Reprimand ‘Failed’ State Agency, Ask Governor To Fire Its Board”; WIS-TV, Jul. 2, 2018.

Mitchell, J.H. “Long Branch Church in the Santee,” *Baptist Courier*. (Apr. 1, 1943).

New, Sue. “Joseph Being Called Yusef Ben Ali Was First recorded by Thomas Sumter’s Grandson” (2005) <http://sciway3.net/clark/freemoors/JosephBenenhaley.html>.

_____. “Benenhaley, or a Story of the ‘Turks’ of Sumter County” (2002–2010) <http://sciway3.net/clark/freemoors/benenhaley.html>.

Nicholes, Cassie. “County’s ‘Turk’ Community Unique,” *Sumter News* (Mar. 26, 1970).

_____. *Historical Sketches of Sumter County: Its Birth and Growth* (Sumter, SC: Sumter County Historical Commission, 1975).

Ognibene, Terri Ann. “Discovering the Voices of the Segregated: An Oral History of the Educational Experiences of the Turkish People of Sumter County, South Carolina.” PhD diss., Georgia State University (2008).

Ognibene, Terri Ann, and Glen Browder. *South Carolina’s Turkish People: A History and Ethnology* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2018).

Oxendine, Charles L. *Oxendine Census Records, 1790–1920* (Madison, FL: Jimbob Printing, 1997).

Sider, Gerald. *Living Indian Histories: Lumbee and Tuscarora People in North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

Singleton Family Genealogical Website.

(<http://www.singletonfamily.org/getperson.php?personID=I70992&tree=1>)

South Carolina Code. “State Recognition of Native American Indian Entities,” Sec. 1-31-40.

South Carolina Commission for Minority Affairs. Certification Meeting for Sumter Tribe of Cheraw Indians (2013); taped and posted on Facebook by Claudia Benenhaley Gainey (“The Real Sumter Tribe of Cheraw Indians,” Mar. 26, 2018).

<https://www.facebook.com/RealSumterCherawIndians/>

_____ Memorandum/Annotation sent from Executive Director Delores Dacosta on Behalf of the Commission for Minority Affairs to Dr. Browder and Members of the Turkish Community; Nov. 26, 2019.

_____ “Request for State Recognition: Native American Indian Tribe” (2012); filed by Sumter Band of Cheraw Indians.

_____ “State Recognition Site Visit Report” (2013); posted on Facebook by Claudia Benenhaley Gainey (“The Sumter Tribe of Cheraw Indians,” Nov. 25, 2014).

<https://www.facebook.com/The-Sumter-Tribe-of-Cheraw-Indians-543933135638875/>

_____ Subcommittee Budget Presentation, Fiscal year 19-20; Jan. 15, 2019.

_____ Transcription of Recognition Committee Meeting (2012); taped, transcribed, and posted on Facebook by Claudia Benenhaley Gainey (“The Real Sumter Tribe of Cheraw Indians,” Jul. 17, 2015 and Apr. 27, 2017).

<https://www.facebook.com/RealSumterCherawIndians/>

South Carolina Legislative Oversight Committee. Study of the Commission for Minority Affairs; July 13, 2018.

Southern Campaigns American Revolution Pension Statements & Rosters, Pension Application of James Scott S39064 fl6SC [sic, NC] Transcribed by Will graves, 6/25/11.

Southern Campaigns of the American Revolution. “Thomas Sumter Symposium and Battlefield Tours” (Apr. 2005). <http://southerncampaign.org/newsletter/v2n4.pdf>

Sumter, Thomas Sebastian. “An Interesting People: Origin of the Bennanhaly and Scott Families,” *Watchman and Southron* (Sept. 15, 1917).

_____. *Stateburg and Its People* (N.p.; probably published ca. 1920 in Stateburg or Sumter, SC).

“Sumter County Colony Locally Called Turks,” *The State* (Mar. 18, 1928).

Sumter Tribe of Cheraw Indians, various websites:

“Sumter Band of Cheraw Indians” – Home | Facebook (2013).
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/sboci/>

“The Sumter Tribe of Cheraw Indians” – Home | Facebook (2013).
<https://www.facebook.com/The-Sumter-Tribe-of-Cheraw-Indians-543933135638875/> and
<http://www.sumtercherawindians.com> (no longer online)

“The Official Website for the Sumter Tribe of Cheraw Indians” (2014).
<http://www.thesumtertribeofcherawindians.org> and <https://www.facebook.com/The-Sumter-Tribe-Of-Cheraw-Indians-672762226154180/>

“The Real Sumter Tribe of Cheraw Indians” – Home | Facebook (2015).
<https://www.facebook.com/RealSumterCherawIndians/>

Taukchiray, Wesley DuRant, and Alice Bee Kasakoff. “Contemporary Native Americans” (1992).

Thompson Collection and Interviews. Extensive material (documents, photographs, conversations) shared by Greg Thompson with the authors during the writing of this book.

Trillin, Calvin. “Sumter County, SC. Turks,” *New Yorker* (Mar. 8, 1969).

White, Wesley, Jr. *A History of the Turks Who Live in Sumter County, South Carolina, from 1805 to 1972* (Unpublished manuscript, 1975, located at Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC).

Wilson, Alan. South Carolina Attorney General Opinion; Sept. 9, 2011.

“Yesteryear,” *Sumter Item* (July 5, 1992).

Young, James O. and Conrad G. Brunk. *The Ethics of Cultural Appropriation* (Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012).