

Charleston was settled in 1670, and rice production shaped the newly founded cities agricultural production. During the 1670's the planter class ruled the low country of South Carolina. On September 26, 1691, the General Assembly of South Carolina ratified the proposal in an act that allowed South Carolinians to pay their taxes in rice.<sup>1</sup> Rice proved to be a very productive crop in the Charleston lowlands, and the rice cultivators of the time needed a larger labor force to maintain the intensive cultivation.

From 1690-1730 the city of Charleston tried to regulate the internal affairs of its colony by establishing numerous Colonial Statutes. These statutes promoted a unified, controlled society that promoted social structure and dominance by the elite planter class. However, the Colonial Statutes recognized between the years of 1690-1739 encouraged the development of the Stono Rebellion in 1739. Charleston South Carolina became the epicenter for slavery from 1690-1739. The establishment of rice plantations and the institution of slavery led to the enforcement of the Colonial Statutes that culminates in the Stono Rebellion.

In the beginning, rice planters grew rice primarily in the swampy marshes of Charleston's rivers. In 1700, Charleston exported over 330 tons of rice to England and the West Indies.<sup>2</sup> Legend says that rice was brought to the United States in the late 1600's, when a ship from Madagascar, damaged by storms, took refuge in the Charleston South Carolina, harbor.<sup>3</sup> Before sailing, the ship's captain presented the governor of the colony with a sack of seed rice. For almost 200 years, South Carolina was the leading

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<sup>1</sup> Christopher C. Boyle. *Rise of the Georgetown Rice Culture*, 13 April 2000

<sup>2</sup> Christopher C. Boyle. *Rise of the Georgetown Rice Culture*, 13 April 2000

<sup>3</sup> Miller, Randall M. *Dictionary of Afro-American Slavery*. "Chronology of African-American Slavery" 1988. Westport Connecticut. Greenwood Press. p. 254-256

rice producer of the United States.<sup>4</sup> From the moment of initial contact, rice transformed Charleston's economy. Rice is a very intensive crop. Lowland rice consists mainly of controlling the water supply and weeding the rice fields.

Farmers grew lowland rice in fields divided by dirt walls. These dirt walls are called dykes or levees. An area surrounded by a dyke is called a paddy. Workers plow the paddies and turn the weeds under the soil. Charleston's rice culture proved to be extremely profitable, and problematic. The problems centered on a stable work force. Charleston quickly realized that more workers in the field would increase production, and free labor would increase profitability.<sup>5</sup>

South Carolina's rice fields have been described as channel houses for African American slaves. Malaria and enteric diseases killed off the low country slaves at such high rates, which are today mostly unbelievable. One out of every three slave children on the cotton plantations died before the age of 16. However, two out of every three children died on the rice plantations in Charleston before they reached their sixteenth birthday.<sup>6</sup> The death of so many African American slaves depleted the work force in the rice fields. The death on the rice plantations can be attributed to two distinct factors. Malaria, which is usually transmitted through mosquitoes, played a pivotal role due to rice plantations requirement of stagnant water. The other factor for death on the rice fields is attributed to the general exhaustion from rice cultivation.

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<sup>4</sup> The State of South Carolina [http://www.segenealogy.com/southcarolina/sc\\_state/history.htm](http://www.segenealogy.com/southcarolina/sc_state/history.htm)

<sup>5</sup> Judith A. Carney. *Black Rice: The African Origins of Rice Cultivation in the Americas*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 2001. Pp. xiv, 240.

<sup>6</sup> Judith A. Carney. *Black Rice: The African Origins of Rice Cultivation in the Americas*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 2001. Pp. xiv, 240.

The Charleston rice plantations were quite large. They resembled the ideas of a Southern Living plantation, where a large white house peered over the plantation. The number of slaves in Charleston was doubling each year, due to Charleston's sustainability of the rice culture. Sam Polite, a freed slave explained what slavery was like on the plantations.

Every slave have task to do, sometime one task, sometime two, and sometime three. You have for work till task through. When cotton done make, you have other task. Have to cut cord of marsh grass maybe. Task of marsh been eight feet long and four feet high. Then, sometime you have to roll cord of mud in cowpen. Woman have to rake leaf from wood into cowpen .... If slave don't do task, they get licking with lash on naked back.<sup>7</sup>

Historians in the last forty years have diligently worked to uncover the mysteries of Charleston South Carolinas history.<sup>8</sup> The city of Charleston since its founding in 1670, has went through numerous trials and tribulations concerning agricultural production, the institution of slavery, and numerous revolts. The Stono Rebellion of 1739 was one of the largest and costliest in the history of the United States. Although the Stono Rebellion was important in the history of South Carolina, it was not well documented.<sup>9</sup> Only one eye witness account of the Stono Rebellion exists, but historians have provided secondary sources to address the significance of the rebellion.

The slave systems of the New World arose from a conjuncture of international and regional developments. The ideas of mercantilism rose with the establishment of western naval dominance. Western Europeans carved up the ocean seas in search of

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<sup>7</sup> Michael Trinkley. *The Brutal Work Regimen*. The Chicora Foundation  
<http://www.sciway.net/afam/slavery/work.html>

<sup>8</sup> John K. Thornton. African Dimensions of the Stono Rebellion. *American Historical Review*. Oct 1991. p. 1

<sup>9</sup> John K. Thornton. African Dimensions of the Stono Rebellion. *American Historical Review*. Oct 1991. p. 2

economic expansion. The founding of the New World created new economic markets, and the city of Charleston flourished to become the predominant exporter of rice while importing the largest number of slaves into the Colonies.

John K. Thornton from the Department of History and African American Studies Center at Boston University believes that observation of the origins of rebelling slaves would provide a sense of clarity to the vagueness behind the Stono Rebellion.<sup>10</sup> The origins of the rebellion slaves were most likely from the kingdom of Kongo.<sup>11</sup> During the Eighteenth Century the Kongolonese of Africa fought in numerous civil wars. The development of a military class showed that the slaves imported from the Kongo were more likely skilled in warfare, and militaristic strategies.<sup>12</sup> If John K. Thornton was correct then the slaves imported into Charleston were more militant, and thus would be more likely to rebel. This might be a valid statement, however there are no primary documents asserting that the participants of the Stono Rebellion all came from Angola. The only known Angolan in the Stono Rebellion was the leader Jemmy.

Daniel C. Littlefield from Louisiana State University concurs with John K. Thornton's views of the Stono Rebellion. The closest thing to an ethnic rebellion in South Carolina would appear to have been the Stono Rebellion.<sup>13</sup> The Stono Rebellion was led by the Angolan named Jemmy, but the rebellion itself was much larger than Angolan resistance. Littlefield believed that Angolans were prominent in the region.

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<sup>10</sup> John K. Thornton. African Dimensions of the Stono Rebellion. American Historical Review. Oct 1991. p. 2

<sup>11</sup> John K. Thornton. African Dimensions of the Stono Rebellion. American Historical Review. Oct 1991. p. 3

<sup>12</sup> John K. Thornton. African Dimensions of the Stono Rebellion. American Historical Review. Oct 1991. p. 3

<sup>13</sup> Daniel C. Littlefield. "Continuity and Change in Slave Culture: South Carolina and the West Indies" *Southern Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal of the South* Vol.: 26 Iss: 3 1987 p. 202-216

Littlefield also thinks the Stono Rebellion was a reaction to the presence of the Spanish at St. Augustine.<sup>14</sup>

There is no question that numerous Africans were enslaved in Charleston from 1690- 1739. But according to Michael P. Johnson, in the Dictionary of Afro-American Slavery. Charleston, was unlike any other city in that slaves comprised an absolute or near majority of the population.<sup>15</sup> Rebellion according to Donald D. Wax was always an issue. “As long as the black population exceeded the white, the potential for violence existed”.<sup>16</sup>

Eugene D. Genovese in his book entitled *From Rebellion to Revolution* explained that the revolts of black slaves in the modern world had a special character and historical significance, for they occurred within a worldwide capitalist mode of production.<sup>17</sup> The inequality of wealth in Charleston South Carolina is definitely a precursor in the development of the Stono Rebellion.

According to Mwatabu S. Okantah the Stono Rebellion was about an oppressed group achieving self-definition. In the article entitled, “The View From Stono,” Okantah justifies that the overwhelming oppression asserted by the white elites spurred the Stono Rebellion.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Daniel C. Littlefield. "Continuity and Change in Slave Culture: South Carolina and the West Indies" *Southern Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal of the South* Vol.: 26 Iss: 3 1987 p. 202-216

<sup>15</sup> Michael P. Johnson. *Dictionary of Afro-American Slavery*: Westport, Conn. Greenwood Press 1988 p. 96-98

<sup>16</sup> Darold D. Wax. "The Great Risque We Run": The Aftermath Of Slave Rebellion At Stono, South Carolina 1739-1745. *Journal of Negro History* 1982 67(2): 136-147.

<sup>17</sup> Eugene D. Genovese, *From Rebellion to Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1981): 1-50.

<sup>18</sup> Mwatabu S. Okantah. The View From Stono. <<http://www.africaresource.com/voi/okantah4.htm>>

Peter H. Wood deciphered that the Stono Rebellion was part of a broader groundswell of resistance to English enslavement in the era of the Great Awakening.<sup>19</sup> Margaret Washington an Associate Professor of History at Cornell University believes, “The Stono Rebellion is important because it changed the face of slavery in Carolina, and had ramifications for other colonies as well. It solidified slavery in a way that it hadn't been before, and probably would have happened anyway.” The Stono Rebellion marked the beginning of the development of large-scale slavery in South Carolina and the concept that the black population had to be utterly controlled.<sup>20</sup>

South Carolina planters wanted slaves from the Gold Coast of Africa because most of them already knew how to grow rice. In fact, Boyle notes “rice growing had been a dominant part of coastal African culture since 1500 BC.”<sup>21</sup> The slave-based rice agriculture created a proud “aristocracy” that ruled over a majority of Charleston’s population.<sup>22</sup> The Gold Coast of Africa developed to be the dominant exporter of slaves from the African continent. The Gold Coast African Kings sold Africans to Europeans in return for iron and copper bars, brass pans and kettles, cowry shells, guns, gunpowder, cloth and alcohol.<sup>23</sup> The most common reasons for selling tribal members to the Europeans were for offenses against society, such as murder, theft, offenses against the king, or even personal or tribal misfortunes such as innateness or tribal famine.<sup>24</sup> The

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<sup>19</sup> Peter H. Wood. *Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 Through the Stono Rebellion*. W. Norton & Company April, 1996

<sup>20</sup> Margaret Washington. *Modern Voices On the Impact of the Stono Rebellion*.  
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part1/1i3079.html>

<sup>21</sup> Christopher C. Boyle. *Rise of the Georgetown Rice Culture*, 13 April 2000

<sup>22</sup> Donnan, Elizabeth. *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to America, Part IV, The Southern Colonies*. 1935. p. 237

<sup>23</sup> Donnan, Elizabeth. *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to America, Part IV, The Southern Colonies*. 1935. p. 237

<sup>24</sup> Donnan, Elizabeth. *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to America, Part IV, The Southern Colonies*. 1935. p. 237

kings of the Gold Coast indentured Africans from the Congo, Angola, Benin, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Gambia, and the Windward Coast.

Few blacks were imported from the West Indies because South Carolinians suspected them of being unwanted, ailing, and rebellious. South Carolinas first slaves came from Barbados because they were healthy, calm, and productive.<sup>25</sup> Charleston planters developed a vision of the ideal slave. The ideal slave was a tall healthy male between the ages of 14-18.<sup>26</sup> They were free from blemishes, and their color was as dark as possible. Many of these slaves were immediately put to work in Charleston South Carolinas rice fields. Writers of the period remarked that there was no harder or unhealthier work possible:

“Negroes, ankle and even mid-leg deep in water which floats an oozy mud, and exposed all the while to a burning sun which makes the very air they breathe hotter than the human blood; these poor wretches are then in the furnace of stinking putrid effluvia: a more horrible employment can hardly be imagined.”<sup>27</sup>

The first evidence of the presence of Negroes in the province is in a letter from Henry Brayne to Lord Ashley, Nov. 9, 1670:

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<sup>25</sup> Hammerton, William; Parris, A. Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to America. Negroes Imported into South Carolina, 1721-1726 January 18, 1727 p. 267-268

<sup>26</sup> Hammerton, William; Parris, A. Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to America. Negroes Imported into South Carolina, 1721-1726 January 18, 1727 p. 267-268

<sup>25</sup> South Carolina Information Highway. African American History Archives of Slavery <[tp://www.sciway.net/afam/slavery/](http://www.sciway.net/afam/slavery/)>

<sup>26</sup> S. C. Hist. Soc., *Collections*, V. 215. Since Locke's memorandum of "Proposals and Wants", 1670,(*ibid.*, p. 248).

<sup>27</sup> Hammerton, William; Parris, A. Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to America. Negroes Imported into South Carolina, 1721-1726 January 18, 1727 p. 267-268

"I have put on . . . provisions enough for my people which is one lusty negro man 3 cristian servants and a oversear I brought out of Virginia."<sup>28</sup> A proclamation issued in Barbados on Nov. 4, 1670, provided a Carolina "friggott" for those going to Carolina and transporting servants and negroes, and at least one purchase was made in the island for the new plantation.<sup>29</sup>

Charleston continued importing thousands of slaves while exporting rice to England and the West Indies. South Carolina had a clearly black majority from 1708 throughout most of the eighteenth century. By 1720, there were about 18,000 people living in South Carolina and 65% of these were enslaved Africans.<sup>30</sup> In St. James Goose Creek, a small town just north of Charleston, there were only 535 whites and 2,027 black slaves.<sup>31</sup> The massive investment in slavery and land led by the elite planters' class gave the low country plantations a special character.

In an article entitled *Negroes Imported into South Carolina* the Common House of Assembly of South Carolina documented the number of slaves entering South Carolina. In 1706 only 24 slaves were imported into the city of Georgetown, but by 1709 there were 107 introduced into the rice culture of the lowlands.<sup>32</sup> The city of Charleston quickly grew into the dominant destination for slave traders. In 1729, approximately 354 slave ships arrived in Charleston. Of these, 103 ships had 15,598 slaves on board at the departure from the last slaving port in Africa. These 103 ships represented only 29

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<sup>28</sup> Michael Trinkley. *Rice Culture*. The Chicora Foundation.

<<http://www.sciway.net/afam/slavery/rice.html>>

<sup>29</sup> Michael Trinkley. *South Carolina – African-Americans – Slave Population*. The Chicora Foundation.

<<http://www.sciway.net/afam/slavery/population.html>>

<sup>30</sup> South Carolina— South Carolina—An Act for the Better Ordering of Slaves. March 1, 1700-1.

<sup>31</sup> South Carolina—An Act for the Better Ordering of Slaves. Statues at Large of South Carolina, Volume 2., Chap. 188. March 1, 1700-1.

<sup>32</sup> McCrady. "Slavery in South Carolina", Am. Hist. Assn., *Annual Report*, 1895, p. 632

percent of the ships entering Charleston's harbor. The remaining 251 ships had no documentation.<sup>33</sup>

The city of Charleston imported thousands of slaves from the late 1600's to the mid 1700's. More than 80% of the slaves imported into Charleston came directly from Africa, giving African languages, customs, and traditions greater weight in Charleston than other areas of the South. Among South Carolina's 56,000 inhabitants, blacks outnumbered whites almost two to one by 1739, and the proportion of recently imported slaves was at an all-time high.<sup>34</sup>

As the population in Charleston grew it became necessary for the planter class to enforce dominance over the increasing number of Africans. The planter class developed a distinctive caste system that ruled over the majority of the population. The caste system embraced a social doctrine, which pertained not only to economics, but also to race relations.<sup>35</sup> African slaves proved to be the deciding factor for production and profit.

African slaves were considered the essential ingredient in the successful establishment of rice plantations in Charleston. Some historians believe in order to comprehend the character of this slave society individuals needed to understand that there is a connection between slavery and behavior.

Robert Olwell in his book entitled *Masters, Slaves, and Subjects: The Culture of Power in the South Carolina Low Country, 1740-1790* demonstrates that the South Carolina elite learned early on to assert its interests in a militant fashion with oppressive

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<sup>33</sup> Edward McCrady. "Slavery in South Carolina", Am. Hist. Assn., *Annual Report*, 1895, p. 631

<sup>34</sup> Edward McCrady. "Slavery in South Carolina", Am. Hist. Assn., *Annual Report*, 1895, p. 632

<sup>35</sup> Christopher C. Boyle. *Rise of the Georgetown Rice Culture*, 13 April 2000

laws and regulations.<sup>36</sup> Olwell believes, “slavery "changed the form of the state, the nature of property, the system of law. . . . [It] influenced . . . the politics, the literature, the morals of the entire group." The influence of slavery was complete. "Nothing escaped," "nothing and no one."<sup>37</sup>

In short, slave owners expected and thought they deserved obedience. They also expected to get their way in politics and on the national scene. I agree with Robert Olwell’s correlation between slavery and behavior. Slavery is behavior in captivity. The elite landowners learned as early as 1696 that establishing laws and regulations to control the influx of slaves to Charleston’s seaports is advantageous to their economic and political agendas.

Elite whites grew to be erratic in their exercise of authority; they passed laws to limit slave activity and then ignored their own laws in order to regulate the internal affairs of the city.<sup>38</sup> The ruling elite planter class was extremely small compared to the immense number of slaves living in the Charleston area. Humanitarianism was not a strong characteristic for the masters of the slaves. The elite slave auctioneers in Charleston spoke of their business as if they were selling hogs. This is evident in a letter from slave trader A.J. McElveen to Charleston slave merchant Z.B. Oakes.

“I offered Richardson 1350 for his two negroes. He refused to take it. The fellow is rather light. He weighs 121 lbs., but good teeth. He says they are worth about 850, and at that price they would not sell for cost, but I suppose the fellow would bring 9-950 and the little girl 500.”<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Olwell Robert. *Masters, Slaves, and Subjects: The Culture of Power in the South Carolina Low Country, 1740-1790*. 1998. Ithica, New York Cornell University Press, 1998 p. 52

<sup>37</sup> Olwell Robert. *Masters, Slaves, and Subjects: The Culture of Power in the South Carolina Low Country, 1740-1790*. 1998. Ithica, New York Cornell University Press, 1998 p. 52

<sup>38</sup> Olwell Robert. *Masters, Slaves, and Subjects: The Culture of Power in the South Carolina Low Country, 1740-1790*. 1998. Ithica, New York Cornell University Press, 1998 p. 53

<sup>39</sup> Edmund L. Drago. *Broke by the War: Letters of a Slave Trader*. University of South Carolina. 1991

Charleston elite slave owners quickly realized that a healthier slave was a more productive slave. Sullivan's Island spurred Charleston's rice agricultural growth by separating slaves that were more prone to disease, and those who were unfit for intense agricultural production. Slaves were examined carefully because an unhealthy slave is an unproductive slave.

Slave prices were extremely variable. Slave traders divided African slaves into eight distinct categories. Number one men consisted of African slaves that were 19-25 years old. They held a higher value because they could produce more. The average number one man would bring between 1200-1450 pounds at the auction.<sup>40</sup> The owners further divided the slaves into ordinary men, best boys (Age 15-18), best boys (Age 10-14), number one women, ordinary girls, best girls, and then families. The only slave classification that could rival the value of number one men was number one women. Slave owners thought that a viral slave woman would produce an offspring that was also viral. Number one women usually brought 1050-1225 pounds at the auction.<sup>41</sup>

Sylvia Cannon was a former slave and described slave auctions this way:

"I see 'em sell plenty colored peoples away in them days, 'cause that the way white folks made heap of their money. Course, they ain't never tell us how much they sell 'em for. Just stand 'em up on a block about three feet high and a spectator bid 'em off just like they were horses. Them what was bid off didn't never say nothing neither. Don't know who bought my brothers, George and Earl. I see 'em sell some slaves twice before I was sold, and I see the slaves when they be traveling like

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<sup>40</sup> Michael Trinkley. South Carolina Information Highway. *African American History Archives of Slavery*. Buying and Selling Human Beings. <<http://www.sciway.net/afam/slavery/flesh.html>>

<sup>41</sup> Michael Trinkley. South Carolina Information Highway. *African American History Archives of Slavery*. Buying and Selling Human Beings. <<http://www.sciway.net/afam/slavery/flesh.html>>

hogs to Darlington. Some of them be women folks looking like they going to get down, they so heavy.”<sup>42</sup>

The elite slave masters asserted dominance and control over the slaves. The masters lived in large houses surrounded by acres and acres of land, and their rule was fierce and overbearing. They controlled all the activities of the slaves. He told them when to wake up, when to eat, when to sleep, and when to be subservient, which was actually all of the time. The master of the fields made all of the money while the slaves did all of the work. The master’s experience was positive, while the slave experiences where all marked by hardships and negativity.

The elite planter class oppressed African slaves through stern rules and regulations. The elite planters promoted the intense supervision of slaves to squelch possibility of rebellion and general disobedience. African slaves outnumbered their elite counterparts 2 to 1.

The Colonial Statutes established between 1690-1739 were an essential tool to the institution of slavery in Charleston South Carolina. As the population of slaves grew in the region controlling them became a serious problem. In 1696, the city of Charleston established laws to regulate the slaves’ actions. These small acts lead to the passing of thirteen Colonial Statutes.

In 1696, William Earl of Craven Pallentine and other proprietors of Charleston created guidelines in the regulation of slaves. Under the new law code, slaves that left their masters plantations without a ticket or permission from the master was to be

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<sup>42</sup> Michael Trinkley. South Carolina Information Highway. *African American History Archives of Slavery*. Buying and Selling Human Beings. <<http://www.sciway.net/afam/slavery/flesh.html>>

severely whipped. If a slave was convicted of crimes of burglary, burning of houses, or stealing they were sent to prison.<sup>43</sup> Slaves under the 1696 law could not carry any type of weapon. If any slave was suspected of carrying a weapon they could be searched at will by their master, or any other slave owner. The 1696 law provided a framework for controlling slaves in and around the city of Charleston South Carolina. The 1696 law code for slaves also tried to hinder rebellious activities by slaves.<sup>44</sup>

The 1696 law Code is the first major movement in regulating slave activities in Charleston's history. The law code exemplified the numerous injustices regulating the daily lives of the slave. The 1696 law concentrates on the issues of slave rebellion, runaway slaves, and the context to which these laws were to be carried out.

Slave rebellion was by far the most feared content in the Law to Regulate Slaves of 1696. In section 4 of the 1696 Law to Regulate Slaves there is an intense opposition to the ideals of insurrection and rebellion.<sup>45</sup> If any slave was accused of raising mutiny or rebellion, they were to be tried by two justices of the peace and three land- owners. Any slave convicted of rebellion was sentenced to death.<sup>46</sup>

The Law to Regulate Slaves of 1696 set a precedent for master slave relation in the late 1600's. However, the 1696 law also spurred the growth of other laws and regulations, which regulated this peculiar institution between masters and slaves. On March 1, 1700, *an Act for the Prevention of Runaways Deserting this Government* was

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<sup>43</sup> South Carolina—An Act for the Better Ordering of Slaves. Statues at Large of South Carolina, Volume 2., Chap. 188. March 1, 1700-1.

<sup>44</sup>South Carolina—An Act for the Better Ordering of Slaves. Statues at Large of South Carolina, Volume 2., Chap. 188. March 1, 1700-1.

<sup>45</sup> South Carolina—An Act for the Better Ordering of Slaves. Statues at Large of South Carolina, Volume 2., Chap. 188. March 1, 1700-1.

<sup>46</sup>South Carolina—An Act for the Better Ordering of Slaves. Statues at Large of South Carolina, Volume 2., Chap. 188. March 1, 1700-1.

established. Under this law, any runaway that was apprehended shall spend six months in prison, and the master should forfeit 50 pounds.<sup>47</sup> This act also permitted that anyone who apprehended a runaway slave would be rewarded by the treasury. The treasury department of Charleston South Carolina would award up to 5 pounds for the capture of the runaway.<sup>48</sup>

The government of South Carolina was taken in awe by the sheer numbers of whites that would help slaves escape from plantations, and then cash in on their reward for their capture. South Carolina addressed this problem by fining any whites accused of helping slaves escape the Charleston province. The fine was 50 pounds, but the stigma of being a Negro lover was worse than the fine itself.<sup>49</sup>

On November 4, 1704, the city of Charleston under John Lord Granville established *An Act to Settle a Patrol*.<sup>50</sup> This act established military patrols to guard against slave insurrections and mischief. As the slave population grew Charleston officials decided to take a more active role in the control of slave insurrections. Each patrolling officer was equipped with horses, pistols, knives, and swords.<sup>51</sup> Officers patrolled plantation after plantation in search of slaves without tickets. Once a slave was

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<sup>47</sup> South Carolina—An Act for the Prevention of Runaways Diserting this Government. Statues at Large of South Carolina, Volume 2., Chap. 189. March 1, 1700-1.

<sup>48</sup> South Carolina—An Act for the Prevention of Runaways Diserting this Government. Statues at Large of South Carolina, Volume 2., Chap. 189. March 1, 1700-1.

<sup>49</sup> South Carolina—An Act for the Prevention of Runaways Diserting this Government. Statues at Large of South Carolina, Volume 2., Chap. 189. March 1, 1700-1.

<sup>50</sup> South Carolina— *An Act to Settle a Patrol*. Statues at Large of South Carolina, Volume 2., Chap. 233. November 4, 1704

<sup>51</sup> South Carolina— *An Act to Settle a Patrol*. Statues at Large of South Carolina, Volume 2., Chap. 233. November 4, 1704

captured they were either executed, or sent to jail. The masters of the captured slaves were fined, and sometimes sent to jail for insubordination.<sup>52</sup>

The act of 1704 entitled *An Act to Settle a Patrol* used the military to help preserve the institution of slavery. In 1713, the Charleston government established *An Act for Appointing two Scout Canoes, and Providing Necessaries for the same*.<sup>53</sup> This act allowed military personnel access to canoes to patrol the numerous rivers in the Charleston region.<sup>54</sup> In 1726, the city of Charleston took a step further to dismantle slave insurrections by appointing whites on plantations.

The idea is simple. Put a white man in the fields to obstruct future rebellions. The 1726 act *for the better securing this Province from Negro Insurrections, and for encouraging of poor people by employing them in Plantations* helped secure the system of slavery in Charleston until 1739.<sup>55</sup> From 1686-1726 thirteen Colonial Statutes became law, and all of these thirteen statues dealt with the regulation of African slaves. The first law established in 1686 named *An Act inhibiting the Trading with Servants and Slaves* prohibited the bargaining or trading without the consent of slave owners.<sup>56</sup> The last of the thirteen statues in 1726 employed poor whites to watch over the affairs of the plantation. It is truly hard to believe that in 30 years Charleston's population demographic would change at such an incredible rate. The statutes that became law

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<sup>52</sup> South Carolina— *An Act to Settle a Patrol*. Statues at Large of South Carolina, Volume 2., Chap. 233. November 4, 1704

<sup>53</sup> South Carolina— *An Act for Appointing two Scout Canoes, and Providing Necessaries for the same*. Statues at Large of South Carolina, Volume 2., Chap. 274. November 28, 1707.

<sup>54</sup> South Carolina— *An Act for Appointing two Scout Canoes, and Providing Necessaries for the same*. Statues at Large of South Carolina, Volume 2., Chap. 274. November 28, 1707.

<sup>55</sup> South Carolina—*An act for the better securing this Province from Negro Insurrections, and for encouraging of poor people by employing them in Plantations*. Statues at Large of South Carolina, Volume 3, Chap. 523. March 11, 1726.

<sup>56</sup> South Carolina—*An Act inhibiting the Trading with Servants or Slaves*. Statues at Large of South Carolina, Volume 2, Chap. 34. February 28, 1686.

promoted elite visions while eliminating slave rights. The main issues of the Colonial Statutes tried to prevent the occurrences of runaway slaves, and the possibility of rebellion.

Runaway slaves quickly became the biggest nuisance for slave owners under the new statutes. Runaway slaves became a burden to slave owners because it showed a weakness in rule and control. Fleeing slaves forced masters to oversee the daily affairs of their slaves closer with more scrutiny. The punishments for runaway slaves were severe and demeaning. Often times, elite slave masters used mutilation as a way to illustrate the prosecution of runaway slaves.

Slave mutilation was different according to gender. If a male slave was missing for over fourteen days and then later returned they were branded with an “R” on their right cheek.<sup>57</sup> The women slaves who were missing for fourteen days lost an ear.<sup>58</sup> The mutilation of slaves by their masters was commonplace in Charleston during the slave era. Mutilation was a way masters could identify slaves who were troublesome. Mutilation struck fear in slaves, and set forth a precedent for those slaves contemplating leaving the plantation.<sup>59</sup>

Monetary rewards and losses also shaped the issues associated with runaway slaves. Masters lost money for runaways when they were captured, while others were rewarded for the capturing of runaways. Slaves used the rivers of Charleston as an escape

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<sup>57</sup> South Carolina—An Act for the Better Ordering of Slaves. Statues at Large of South Carolina, Volume 2., Chap. 188. March 1, 1700-1.

<sup>58</sup> South Carolina—An Act for the Better Ordering of Slaves. Statues at Large of South Carolina, Volume 7, Chap. 57. February 7, 1690.

<sup>59</sup> South Carolina—An Act for the Better Ordering of Slaves. Statues at Large of South Carolina, Volume 7, Chap. 57. February 7, 1690.

route. River valleys allowed slaves an alley to escape because they provided much needed camouflage, because the plantation low country allowed slaves to be easier spotted because there was nowhere to hide.

Rebellion and insurrection could not and would not be tolerated, because it devalued the current social and political structure of the elite planter aristocracy. Masters became more and more responsible for the actions of their slaves after 1696. To obstruct rebellions masters had to keep their guns locked up and out of sight of the slaves.<sup>60</sup> As African slaves worked in the hot sun of the plantation fields, they sang songs, and united against their oppressors. The elite planter class realized that placing poor whites in the fields would squelch the camaraderie that was previously exhibited during fieldwork. The slave's discontent grew as the oppression of the Colonial Statutes increased in nature. The Stono Rebellion of 1739 is a direct reaction to the oppression of the Colonial Statutes that were established from 1690-1739.

The Stono Rebellion transformed the institution of slavery. On September 9, 1739, a band of slaves march down the road, carrying banners that proclaim "Liberty!" They shout out the same word. Led by an Angolan named Jemmy, the men and women continue to walk south, recruiting more slaves along the way.<sup>61</sup> The slave uprising at Stono, near Charleston, South Carolina, on September 9, 1739 represented a significant escalation in black resistance to slavery. Over 20 whites and 40 slaves were killed.

The slaves went to a shop that sold firearms and ammunition, armed themselves,

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<sup>60</sup> South Carolina—An Act for the Better Ordering of Slaves. Statues at Large of South Carolina, Volume 7, Chap. 57. February 7, 1690.

<sup>61</sup> Miller, Randall M. *Dictionary of Afro-American Slavery*. "Chronology of African-American Slavery" 1988. Westport Connecticut. Greenwood Press. p. 819-825

and then killed the two shopkeepers who were manning the shop.<sup>62</sup> The slaves first went to the ammunitions store because the slaves understood the intimidation of guns. White plantation owners always had advanced weaponry compared to the slaves. Thus, with the slaves acquiring guns it leveled the playing field for social and political dominance.

From the ammunition store the rebellion headed south. The band walked to the house of a Mr. Godfrey, where they burned the house and killed Godfrey and his son and daughter.<sup>63</sup> It was not yet dawn when they reached Wallace's Tavern. Because the innkeeper at the tavern was kind to his slaves, his life was spared. Other slaves willingly joined the rebellion. By eleven in the morning, the group was 50 strong. The few whites they encountered were chased and killed, though one individual, Lieutenant Governor Bull, eluded the rebels and rode to spread the alarm.<sup>64</sup>

The slaves stopped in a large field late that afternoon, just before reaching the Edisto River. They had marched over ten miles and killed between twenty and twenty-five whites. By four o'clock in the afternoon, somewhere between twenty and 100 whites had set out in armed pursuit. When they approached the rebels, the slaves fired two shots. The whites returned fire, bringing down fourteen of the slaves. By dusk, about thirty slaves were dead and at least thirty had escaped. Most were captured and executed in the next three months.<sup>62</sup>

After the violence of the Stono Rebellion and its suppression, the South Carolina House of Commons commented on the fear people lived with; "every Breast was filled with Concern," certainly a legitimate enough description. But then it went on in a

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<sup>62</sup> The Stono Rebellion. A Documentary by PBS. <<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part1/1p284.html?>

<sup>63</sup> The Stono Rebellion. A Documentary by PBS. <<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part1/1p284.html>>

<sup>64</sup> Report from William Bull re. Stono Rebellion. <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part1/1h311t.html>  
Library of Congress. Today in History. *The Stono Rebellion*.  
<<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/today/sep09.html>>

staggeringly aggrieved fashion to "[bewail] our peculiar Case, that we could not enjoy the Benefits of Peace like the rest of Mankind," that our slaves had taken from us "all the Sweets of Life" and rendered us "liable to the Loss of our Lives and Fortunes"<sup>65</sup> The Stono Rebellion shook the faith of the elite planter class, and the institution that was central to their livelihood.

The Stono Rebellion was what all the elite planters had feared. The worst had happened; the long feared rebellion resulted in the deaths of at least twenty-five whites, and over sixty slaves. This rebellion, which was the biggest rebellion in Colonial History, was most likely triggered by the soon to be enacted Security Act. The Security Act was the last of thirteen Colonial Statutes that were established between 1690-1739.

In Mid-August of 1739, a Charlestown newspaper announced the Security Act.<sup>66</sup> The Security Act was a response to the white's fears of insurrection. The Security Act required that all white men carry firearms to church on Sundays, a time when whites usually didn't carry weapons and slaves were allowed to work for themselves. Anyone who didn't comply with the new law by September 29 would be subjected to a fine.<sup>66</sup> On Sunday September 9, 1739 the Stono Rebellion erupted. The Stono Rebellion for one day avenged the oppressive elite society and their Colonial Statutes. Sundays above any other day in the week became the most beneficial to slaves because it promoted self-autonomy. As the planter class went to church African slaves had time to plot, and communicate with each other without the presence of whites and their oppressive laws.

The Stono Rebellion had consequences not only limited to the deaths of all those involved, but it also led to the Negro Act which was passed immediately after the revolt.

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<sup>65</sup> Olwell Robert. *Masters, Slaves, and Subjects: The Culture of Power in the South Carolina Low Country, 1740-1790*. p. 25

<sup>66</sup> The Stono Rebellion. A Documentary by PBS. <<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part1/1p284.html>>

The Negro Act stated that no slaves were allowed to grow their own food, assemble in groups, earn their own money or learn how to read.<sup>67</sup> A few of these restrictions were in effect before the Negro Act but they were not strictly enforced. The Stono Rebellion is a direct reaction to oppression under the Colonial Statutes. Many slaves knew that small groups of runaways had made their way from South Carolina to Florida, where they had been given freedom and land. With nothing to lose due to their involvement in the peculiar institution of slavery, slaves rebelled which was the ultimate fear of the elite planters in Charleston South Carolina.

The end of the Stono Rebellion proved to be devastating for future African slaves living in Charleston South Carolina. The Stono Rebellion developed due to Charleston's sustainability of the rice culture, and due to the institution of slavery, which prompted the elite planter class to reassure dominance of the majority of the population through Colonial Statutes. These Colonial Statutes increased in their oppressive nature from 1690-1739. The establishment of rice plantations and the institution of slavery led to the enforcement of the Colonial Statutes that culminated in the Stono Rebellion of 1739.

The Stono Rebellion is unique due to the inadequacy of primary documentation associated with the rebellion. The lack of documentation has made historians make conclusions of why the rebellion developed. Historians have placed the history of the Stono Rebellion into distinct categories. These categories include the Angolan descent as precursor for rebellion. Another category deals with the numerous injustices and social inequality associated with the rice culture, while others point to discontent felt by the Africans in the peculiar institution of slavery. The Stono Rebellion of 1739 was a direct

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<sup>67</sup> The Stono Rebellion. A Documentary by PBS. <<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part1/1p284.html>>

reaction to the oppression of African Slaves through the rice culture plantations, the institution of slavery and the Colonial Statutes instituted between the years of 1690-1739.

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