

TRADE, MIGRATION AND URBAN NETWORKS IN PORT-CITIES (17TH-20TH CENTURIES)

Contrasting merchant communities in the early eighteenth century: Stockholm, Calabar and Charleston

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This paper examines the nature of merchant communities and the trade that they conducted in three eighteenth-century ports: one in the Baltic, one on the Bight of Biafra, and one in British North America. These are three apparently disparate ports, but in the early eighteenth century they were brought together in a trading network centred on a fourth: Bristol. The empirical foundation for what follows is the amply documented activity of a Bristol merchant named Graffin Prankard. In the 1720s and the 1730s Prankard began to put together an innovative web of commercial exchanges that brought together the Baltic and Atlantic worlds. Swedish bar iron was imported from Stockholm and then exported to west Africa and South Carolina, either in bar form or embodied in manufactured goods that had been wrought up in Bristol's hinterland. We will use the cat's cradle of commodity exchanges that Prankard orchestrated to illuminate mercantile enterprise in each of the ports concerned. Three particular aspects of port life will be highlighted: (i) the role of the state in regulating trade, (ii) the importance of ethnic affinity within the merchant class, and (iii) the relationship of urban merchants to production in the hinterlands of their respective ports.

Stockholm

Stockholm was by far the largest of the port-cities under our consideration. With 70,000 inhabitants in the mid-eighteenth century, it stood alone at the head of Sweden's urban hierarchy, with Karlskrona, the southern naval base, a distant second.ⁱ Set at the eastern end of Mälaren, the vast lake system that defined the ancient kingdom of the Svear, Stockholm was Sweden's premier port. It was also an

industrial city whose southern island, Södermalm, could boast the biggest concentration of textiles production in Sweden, and whose harbour was ringed by maritime industries. Moreover, Stockholm was an administrative centre and a national capital. It was the seat of royal government, home to palaces and the various governmental *collegia*.

The heart of the city was Stadsholmen, the Old Town of today. The eastern shore of this island was given over to a long quay (*Skeppsbron*), against which the salt water of the Baltic lapped. This was the point of departure for over 60 per cent of Sweden's iron and tar, the two major export commodities. Likewise, most of the grain shipped in from the southern Baltic came ashore on these wharves. The quay was lined with the tall, imposing houses of the great merchants: the Plomgren brothers, the Hebbes, the Bedoires, the Grill family, Samuel Worster, Samuel Wordsworth, and others.

The trade that was conducted from *Skeppsbron* was tightly regulated by the Swedish state. The territorial ambitions of Sweden's rulers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were at odds with the country's meagre agriculture and sparse population. Sweden could only assert itself as a major European power if its latent mineral wealth and forest resources were exploited effectively. Swedish iron had been sent south via Stockholm and Danzig since the middle ages, but a significant growth in Sweden's industrial output required a substantial injection of foreign capital. This came in the 1620s from a group of Dutch merchants who were alert to the advantages that preferential access to Swedish copper and iron could give them. The Dutchmen were awarded wide-ranging privileges by the state, allowing them to establish a network of processing plants. The greatly increased revenues that accrued to the state allowed Gustavus Adolphus to make his sensational entry into the Thirty Years' War. It was this twin industrial-military initiative that ushered in Sweden's 'Age of Greatness' (*Stormakstiden*).

Stockholm played a central role in all of this. The passage of iron, the fastest growing export commodity of *Stormakstiden*, onto the European market was entrusted to a class of international merchants based in Stockholm and Gothenberg. The export of iron, as of other commodities, could only take place via specified towns. Those towns through which bar iron passed were authorised – indeed, compelled – to have a *Jernvåg* ('iron weigh') at which the bars were weighed and their quality monitored. In

central *Bergslagen* iron was routed through inland ports such as Västerås or Arboga on the shores of Mälaren, and thence to Stockholm.

The Stockholm merchant community was highly cosmopolitan, reflecting the paucity of indigenous capital. The Dutch presence was enduring. Many of the Dutch families that had settled in Sweden in the mid seventeenth century were still active a century later. They were joined by Scots, ubiquitous in the seventeenth-century Baltic world, and, from the 1670s, by the English. Indeed, by 1700 the English were clearly dominant. In the 1730s, when bar iron accounted for over two-thirds of Sweden's exports, the leading exporters bore names of Dutch (such as Grill), English (Worster) or Irish (Jennings) provenance.

In theory, the merchant community was hedged about with restrictions. The Swedish state had ordained a new social division of labour for the iron industry in the hope of boosting the quality of the product and optimising the use of charcoal reserves in its manufacture. Iron making had traditionally been the province of peasant-miners (*bergsmän*) in *Bergslagen*, the mining district that extended north and west of Mälaren. From the early seventeenth century onwards, however, the *bergsmän* were restricted to the smelting of ore. The making of malleable bar iron – the high value-added part of the manufacturing process – was allotted to a class of more capitalised professional forgemasters (*brukspatroner*), operating in clearly defined production centres that were spatially separate from the smelting districts. But the *brukspatroner* were forbidden to export their output themselves; access to international markets was the prerogative of licensed traders in the staple ports, above all in Stockholm. By means of this specialisation, the officers of the *Bergskollegium* (the State Board of Mines) hoped to prevent the over-harvesting of fuel resources in *Bergslagen*, and (not least) to ensure that the maximum tax revenues were levied on exports.

The hoped-for division of labour broke down, however. The *brukspatroner*, although notables in their home districts, tended to be short of capital. They relied on financial advances from their customers. For production to take place, credit had to be advanced by the merchant class in Stockholm. This, in turn, was obtained from iron merchants in Britain, which by 1700 had supplanted the Dutch Republic as the most important destination for Swedish bar iron. This placed the *brukspatroner* in a position of some weakness. No sooner had they redeemed their debts through the delivery of iron at the *Jernvåg* in Stockholm than they were obliged to apply for fresh credit. Often, through mishap or mismanagement, ironmasters were unable to redeem

their debts fully, thereby setting in train a cycle of ever-deepening indebtedness to the merchant class. Over time, many *brukspatroner* were reduced to debt bondage, and for some the only means of liquidating their debt was to assign their ironworks (*bruk*) to their merchant creditor. It was in this way that many of the most prestigious *bruk* in Sweden became the property of Stockholm's merchant princes, in defiance of the Swedish state.

Francis Jennings (1692-1754), the Belfast-born trader who settled in Stockholm in 1719, was one of the beneficiaries of this process. By the time of his death he was not merely the port's most important iron exporter, he was the proprietor of several major *bruk* in the county of Uppland.

Calabar

In the 1720s and 1730s Francis Jennings' leading customer in Britain was the Bristol merchant Graffin Prankard. Together, Prankard and Jennings had opened up Bristol as an important centre for the trading of Swedish bar iron, which had hitherto found its most lucrative markets in eastern Britain. The arrival of Swedish iron on the Bristol quayside coincided with the port's unholy apotheosis as Britain's leading slave port. Hence it was that a good part of what was sold by Prankard was destined for the Guinea trade as 'voyage iron'. The commercial sequence was as follows. Prankard advanced credit to Jennings in Stockholm, who in turn advanced credit to the ironworks at Gammelbo, deep in *Bergslagen*. The forgers at Gammelbo would then begin drawing out bars to the very specific measurements requested by African traders. In the 1730s much of this was shipped to the Bight of Biafra, the new frontier of the Atlantic slave trade.

At the start of the eighteenth century the Bight of Biafra was of small consequence for English slavers. The Royal African Company had its headquarters at Cape Coast castle on the Gold Coast, hundreds of miles to the west. But in the 1730s the trading towns of the Niger and Cross River deltas assumed a major importance as Bristol merchants strengthened their links with Bonny and Calabar. Slave shipments from the Bight of Biafra rose fourfold between the 1730s and 1760s, from 34,100 in 1731-40 to nearly 152,100 in 1761-1770.ⁱⁱ Calabar, an important node in the trading

networks that snaked up and down the rivers and estuarial creeks of the region, now became more intimately involved in the wider Atlantic economy.ⁱⁱⁱ

The coastal areas, with their sandy spits and saltwater swamps, did not support an intensive agriculture. The Efik people of the coast obtained yams and other staple foods by trading salt and dried fish with the Ibo people of the interior. By supplying European goods they were also able to obtain slaves. Calabar's trade with the interior was controlled by a small group of African merchant dynasties, known to their English counterparts by anglicised versions of their local titles. It was they who made up the ruling elites of the different 'wards' into which Calabar was divided: the Robin family, for example, was active in Old Town, whilst the Duke clan was the dominant force in New (or Duke) Town. These powerful lineages developed a polyglot cosmopolitanism to ease their integration into the Atlantic economy. 'The Black Traders of Bonny and Calabar' were said to be 'very expert at reckoning and talking the different Languages of their own Country and those of the Europeans'.^{iv} English, or a pidgin thereof, became the language of commerce. Some Efik traders affected a European mode of dress: they 'Drisht whit men', as one of them put it.^v Others built two-story wooden houses in the European style, employing visiting ships carpenters for the purpose. Egbo Young of Duke Town called his 'Liverpool Hall' in honour of his trading partners from the Mersey. So strongly was Calabar's elite imbued with the spirit of circum-Atlantic enterprise that by the second half of the eighteenth century it was not uncommon for the sons of the most eminent families to be sent to England for their education. Robin John Otto Ephraim, the son of 'King George' of Old Town, was one such, sent to Liverpool in 1767.^{vi} He retained a vivid impression of his time there. Years afterward he added a postscript to a letter to Ambrose Lace, the Liverpool slave merchant: 'Remember me to your Wife and your son Joshua [and to] Ambrose[,] William and Polly'.^{vii}

The arrival of European ships was a matter for celebration among the Efik trader chiefs. Guns would be fired in salute as slaving vessels nosed around Seven Fathom Point to drop anchor in the turbid, mangrove-fringed waters of the Cross River. Slave trading usually began in the late summer or early autumn. Spring was the yam planting season, when the movement of slaves was suspended, but once the harvest had been brought in shipments could begin in earnest, not least because yams were now available as provender for the human cargo during the Middle Passage.^{viii} To set

the trading cycle in motion, European articles were advanced to the merchant dynasts of Calabar. As a guarantee that the credit placed at their disposal would be repaid the merchants would hand over 'pawns' to the slave captains, usually personal slaves but sometimes family members. These human pledges would be kept on board ship until slaves equivalent to the value of the goods advanced had been supplied. If the Calabar merchant failed to fulfil his obligations, as sometimes happened, his unfortunate pawns would themselves be shipped to the Caribbean.

The European manufactures would be entrusted to lesser merchants in marketing centres in the interior. They would buy up captives at the monthly fairs at Bende or Uburu and send them down-river.

Twenty or Thirty Canoes, sometimes more and sometimes less, come down at a Time. In each Canoe may be Twenty or Thirty Slaves. The Arms of some of them are tied behind their Backs with Twigs, Canes, Grass Rope, or other Ligaments of the Country; and if they happen to be stronger than common, they are pinioned above the Knee also. In this situation they are thrown into the Bottom of the Canoe, where they lie in great Pain, and often almost covered with Water. On their landing they are oiled, fed, and made up for Sale.^{ix}

Slaves were sold in small parcels, sometimes individually. The 566 captives that were taken on board the *Dobson* of Liverpool between July 1769 and January 1770 arose from no fewer than 326 transactions. One supplier, Antera Duke, furnished the *Dobson* with 37 slaves over a six-month period. Duke's first sale, on 31 July 1769, was of two males for whom he received eight iron bars, fifteen copper rods, four kegs of gunpowder, two basins, two trade guns, four pounds of beads, and an assortment of cloths.^x

This basket of goods is worthy of note, for the goods traded for slaves on the Cross River differed from those used on the Gold Coast or in Senegambia. Each sector of the African coast had its distinctive pattern of demand, as one English commentator explained. 'Brass-mounted Cutlasses are peculiar to the Windward Coast', he wrote, 'as are brass Pans from Rio Sesthos to Apollonia.' At Whydah it was cowry shells that were most sought after, but at Calabar it was 'Copper and Iron Bars'.^{xi} These broad claims are borne out by the experience of Bristol and Liverpool slave ships that sailed south during or immediately after the Seven Years' War. Bar iron accounted for just 1.82 per cent of the cargoes shipped to the Windward Coast, but 11.7 per cent of

cargoes for Calabar, and 18.8 per cent of cargoes sent a little further east along the Bight of Biafra, to the Cameroons.^{xii} This thirst for metals did not arise from an absence of iron along the Bight of Biafra. Quite the contrary, there was a flourishing tradition of iron making in Africa. 'The basic smelting process diffused from the Middle East to West Africa (as it had to northwest Europe) during the last half-millennium before Christian era.'^{xiii} The savanna zone that extended between latitudes 10° and 15° north was rich in ore and dry woodland. From here iron was brought south to the forest belt. Iron was therefore a very familiar commodity in Calabar's hinterland, where it was worked up by the Awka, itinerant smiths who were a conspicuous feature of Ibo society.^{xiv} In fact, iron tokens were used as a currency. It was a demand for additional iron, not a lack of metallurgical knowledge in African society that drew down European imports.^{xv} It was this that brought the Ibo people into a relationship with forest communities in midland Sweden. The barracoons of Calabar also brought Ibo captives into a forcible relationship with the plantation economies of the New World. In the 1730s a crisis of over-production in the sugar trade slowed the flow of slaves to the Carribean, but a boom in rice cultivation in the Lower South drew dozens of slave vessels to Charleston, South Carolina.

Charleston

The ship that Graffin Prankard despatched to Charleston from Bristol in 1735 carried 70 casks of nails, containing more than two million nails of various sorts. Nearly 500 bars of Swedish iron had also been lowered into her hold, together with bars of German steel and faggots of English steel. Whip saws, saw files, ploughshare moulds, hoes and gunpowder completed the cargo.^{xvi} This was an extraordinarily utilitarian consignment. There was nothing modish or ornamental: no ceramic wares, no fine furniture, no glassware, no millinery, and no fabrics; none, in fact, of the consumer goods that were routinely despatched to the Chesapeake or the Delaware. The goods listed on the *Baltick Merchant's* manifest marked Charleston out as a place apart.

Charleston in the early 1730s was a town of some 4,500 inhabitants. Situated on a spur of land at the confluence of the Cooper and Ashley rivers, it was the commercial centre of South Carolina. It was British North America's fifth largest city, some way behind Boston (13,000 inhabitants), Philadelphia (11,500) and New York (8,600), but neck-and-neck with Newport, Rhode Island. The picture that the colony's propagandists painted of Charleston was one of order, godliness and prosperity: 'There are between 5 and 600 Houses in *Charles Town*, the most of which are very costly; besides 5 handsome Churches, viz. one for those of the Church of *England*, one for the Presbyterians, one for the Anabaptists, one for the Quakers, and one for the *French*.'^{xvii} 'The Inhabitants', another booster trumpeted, 'by their wise Management and Industry, have much improv'd the Country, which is in as thriving Circumstances at this Time, as any Colony on the Continent of *English America*'.^{xviii} Wealth there was, but it had been born of violence and ruthless expropriation, not order.

The years following the foundation of South Carolina in 1670 were years of carnage. The earliest English settlers had come to the area from Barbados. Conscious of the spread of a sugar monoculture in the West Indies and the demand that it generated for labour, the English were soon encouraging the Native Americans with whom they traded to raid neighbouring communities for slaves. This triggered a long series of Indian wars that furnished a steady supply of captives for the plantations of

the Caribbean and resulted in a massive depletion of the indigenous population.^{xix} Intertwined with these bloody developments was a growing trade in deerskins, supplied by Native American hunters and eagerly awaited by European leather workers. The process reached its savage apogee in the Yamasee War of 1715-16 that left thousands of acres denuded of human inhabitants.^{xx}

As the coastal lowcountry was emptied of its native residents it was re-populated with a new ethnic group and dedicated to the production of a new commodity for international markets. The commodity was rice, cultivated by African slaves. The province that had once been an exporter of unfree labour now bought in slaves on a massive scale. Experiments in the growing of rice had begun in the 1690s, and by the 1710s the crop was a critical element in South Carolina's economy.^{xxi} Its cultivation was highly labour intensive. Tidal marshes and inland swamps had to be converted into rice fields through the construction of embankments, dikes, canals, and sluices. The spread of this infrastructure along the tidal floodplains of the Atlantic coast could only be accomplished through an injection of African labour.^{xxii} At first, Africans were obtained through Caribbean slave marts, but by 1714 a direct trade with the Guinea coast was underway. Imports remained modest until the mid-1720s, but then an upward surge began, culminating in 1738 when 3,658 slaves were disembarked in the Carolinas in a single year.^{xxiii}

Rice brought about an 'Africanization' of South Carolina.^{xxiv} Blacks had formed a minor part of the province's non-indigenous population in its early days, just 200 individuals out of 1200 in 1680. Yet by 1700, as rice exports began to climb, blacks made up 43 per cent of South Carolina's inhabitants. By 1720 the figure was 70 percent. Carolina, as a Swiss migrant remarked in 1737, 'looks more like a negro country than a country settled by white people'.^{xxv} In the rice-growing lowcountry the dominant language was a pidgin that drew on the linguistic heritage of West Africa as much as it did on English. The Europeans clustered in and around Charleston. In part, this was a legacy from the Indian wars, one dictated by a basic need for security during the many periods of mayhem. It was also a response to the conditions of rice cultivation. Planters were fearful of the numbers and the disturbingly alien culture of their chattel labourers. Such fears were amply borne out by the disclosure of planned slave insurrections: 'a very wicked and barbarous plott', was uncovered in 1720, for example, 'of the Negroes rising with a designe to destroy all the white people in the

country'.^{xxvi} The nature of the rice trade also explains why it was Charleston, and Charleston alone, that became the marketing centre for the Lower South as a whole. Rice was a crop that was marketed in a wide variety of European markets – unlike tobacco, which was funnelled through just a few British ports. Carolina's planters therefore found it too taxing to deal with a large number of commission agents in Europe, preferring to cooperate with specialist agents in a single centre. Rice's low value relative to its shipment cost exacerbated the trend toward centralisation in Charleston. It called for specialist shippers who could exploit a detailed knowledge of freight rates. For the producers of more valuable crops, such as tobacco, freight costs were of lower importance and planters were prepared to handle the shipping arrangements themselves in their different localities around the Chesapeake.^{xxvii}

These factors – the growing dependence of the colony upon rice exports, and the dependence of rice exports upon slave imports – determined South Carolina's articulation with the wider Atlantic economy. Rice had to be carried to European markets, yet there was a restricted local market for European manufactured goods. The white farmer-settlers who spread up the Delaware and Hudson valleys, thereby populating the hinterlands of Philadelphia and New York, had no counterparts on the banks of the Cooper or Santee rivers.^{xxviii} The appetite for European consumer goods was therefore far lower among Carolinians. African slaves, after all, exercised little in the way of consumer choice. It is significant, in this respect, that Charleston was slow to develop an autonomous merchant class of the sort found in more rounded *entrepôts* like Philadelphia or Boston. Before 1750 her merchant houses were essentially offshoots of London or Bristol-based partnerships that were concerned with rice exports and with little else.^{xxix}

The relative weakness of the merchant class was a reflection of the political power of the planters, entrenched in the colony's assembly. The planters were able to pursue their sectional interests very successfully. Nowhere was this more evident than in the assembly's willingness to issue large volumes of a colonial paper currency. The steady expansion of local currency led to its progressive depreciation against sterling, which was very much to the advantage of planters whose debts were thereby diminished in real terms. Charleston's merchants, on the other hand, compelled to accept payment in a deteriorating currency, were severely disadvantaged.

Carolina was not a market that merchants could disregard, however. Quite apart from anything else, its population grew from 5,704 in 1700 to 45,000 in 1740. The Indian trade flourished, despite the devastations of the Yamasee War, not least because bovine epidemics in Europe cut the supply of cowhides and drove up the demand for deerskins. Above all, the extension of rice cultivation along the coast and into inland swamps called for a wholesale reshaping of the landscape. This, in turn, rested upon an infusion of European-made *matériel*: axes, hoes, spades, ploughshares, ox chains and the like. It was this requirement that attracted the attention of metalware manufacturers in Britain.

John Crowley, Britain's largest hardware manufacturer, was exporting sizeable quantities of iron goods to South Carolina in the 1720s. This was understandable. At his factories in the North East of England an array of goods designed expressly for plantation agriculture were turned out. The inventory made after Crowley's death in 1727 revealed that both 'Barbados' and 'Virginia' hoes were manufactured at Swalwell, each in eight different gauges.^{xxx} That Charleston provided a ready market for these sorts of metalware is evident from the scale of the debts incurred by the town's merchants. Several of them owed John Crowley sums in excess of £1,000 at the time of his death.^{xxxi}

John Crowley's ships would sail for Carolina with a cargo of ironwares, occasionally swinging south to Madeira to pick up some pipes of the local wine. On their return they would carry rice, deerskins, and timber products. Graffin Prankard pursued the same course. The *Parham*, launched in 1722, sailed for Charleston every winter. Her cargo would include metalwares such as hoes and chains, Swedish bar iron, English steel, and nails by the hundred thousand. The return cargo was of course rice, augmented by dyestuffs such as indigo and logwood. This was a flourishing trade, for Prankard soon built a new, far larger ship to join the 100-ton *Parham*. The 226-ton *Baltick Merchant*, registered at Bristol in 1732, was capable of carrying over 1300 barrels of rice.

There was no paradox in a ship named the *Baltick Merchant* engaging in transatlantic trade, for Graffin Prankard was seeking to capitalise on a potential symmetry between Baltic commerce and the passage of goods to and from Charleston. There was a complementarity between Swedish iron and Carolinian rice that would allow Prankard to employ his shipping in a year-round circuit. In May, just

as Prankard's ships were entering the Baltic, thousands of Africans were spreading out across the rice fields of Carolina to plant the new crop. During the summer, as the *Baltick Merchant* made her way back across the North Sea, African field hands were occupied with irrigating, hoeing and weeding. The rice harvest, which began in late August and lasted through to October, coincided with the fitting out of Prankard's ships for the transatlantic phase of their circuit. During November and December, as the *Baltick Merchant* struggled across a stormy Atlantic, slaves were engaged in laboriously 'pounding out' the rice in order to separate the husk from the grain. At the year's end, when the *Baltick Merchant* tied up at Charleston, hundreds of barrels of rice were ready to be stowed on board. This rice would be delivered to Hamburg or Amsterdam in April or May. Then the *Baltick Merchant* would pass eastward through the Sound once more, ready for another loading of Swedish bar iron.

This pattern of trade throve through the 1730s. But the headlong development of South Carolina's rice economy was about to undergo a sharp deceleration. The outbreak of war between Britain and Spain in 1739 brought a general disruption to Atlantic traffic, whilst the slave rebellion at Stono, near Charleston, delivered an abrupt check to Carolinian trade in particular. The Stono uprising was, in fact, facilitated by Anglo-Spanish antagonism. The armed slaves who gathered at Stono on 9 September 1739 had heard of an edict issued by the Spanish governor of Florida promising freedom to refugee English slaves.^{xxxii} Those who marched south, killing many of the Europeans they encountered *en route*, were intent on reaching the Spanish stronghold at St Augustine. The rebels were surrounded by militia forces before the day was out and subjected to merciless reprisals, but the brevity of the rebellion could not disguise its seriousness. Nearly two dozen whites had died in an enterprise that spoke of concerted planning among its participants. The colony's rulers were seized by panic.

South Carolina's General Assembly devoted the winter of 1739-1740 to upgrading the repressive mechanisms needed to counter future outbreaks. The legislators met in an atmosphere of dread. The 1730s was a time of mounting slave resistance in the Caribbean islands with which Carolina had so marked a typological affinity. The British authorities in Jamaica were engaged in a bitter war of suppression against the 'Maroons', the runaway slaves who defied their erstwhile masters from mountain fastnesses in the interior of the island, whilst a major revolt was only just thwarted in Antigua in 1736. Rebellious outbreaks sprouted across the Caribbean whether the

islands were claimed by the English, the Spanish, the French, the Dutch, or the Danish.^{xxxiii} Amid such tensions South Carolina's rulers were inescapably drawn to the question of the province's racial imbalance. Steps were needed, it was decided, to curb the continuing inflow of African labour. Unless this was done, blacks would reach such a numerical preponderance that the Europeans would lose the coercive critical mass upon which their security rested. Moreover, it was felt necessary to reduce the ratio of African-born slaves in the unfree population. Africans, it was thought, were intransigently wedded to memories of their former freedom, whereas American-born blacks, knowing nothing but servitude, were more biddable. Accordingly, the 'Negro duty bill', enacted in April 1740, placed a prohibitively high tax on the importation of slaves.^{xxxiv} The effect was instantaneous. Slave sales collapsed: 22,215 slaves had been landed in the Carolinas in the 1730s, but just 2,841 were disembarked in the 1740s.^{xxxv} Once again the subordination of Charleston's merchants-importers to the planters of the Lowcountry – the latter being able at least to maintain production with their existing stock of slaves – was made plain.

Discussion

The merchant communities we have considered were all diverse. That of Stockholm, the largest and richest, was the most ethnically diverse. Stockholm was an old city, founded in 1252, and had been a major port since the middle ages. It had been home to a variety of mercantile diasporas over the centuries – German, Dutch, Scottish and English – and foreign merchants continued to be disproportionately prominent in the city in the eighteenth century. Charleston, founded only in 1670, housed a rather less motley merchant community. The English and Huguenots dominated. Calabar, which does not feature on European charts before the mid seventeenth century, was the most ethnically uniform. Efik traders controlled the town. However, the Efik community was politically fractured by divisions between different merchant lineages.

Each merchant community had to contend with a different form of state power. The Swedish state was robust and centralised. The state had featured prominently in the industrial development of the country, and its agencies operated with a strongly held sense of mercantilist purpose. Stockholm's merchants had a clearly defined place

in a wider social division of labour. That place was a privileged one: they held monopoly rights over foreign trade. Authority in Calabar was more diffuse, splintered between the rival wards of the town. Yet it was to a large extent coterminous with the merchant community, for each of the merchant lineages exercised political power of their own. Charleston's merchants were confronted by the most unstable conditions. Carolina's frontiers were indistinct and Charleston's hinterland was racked by endemic violence. Political power was disputed between an increasingly powerful planter class and the absentee proprietors of the colony.

In each location a different institutional framework prevailed, affecting in different ways the conduct of business. The difficulties were greatest at Calabar, where the cultural distance between indigenous merchants and their European trading partners was considerable. Trust was established between the two by a process of acculturation: Calabari merchants adopted European mores and bearing, whilst English slave captains made obeisance to local sensibilities. However, political authority in the Cross River delta was somewhat amorphous. The more centralised royal jurisdictions that were to be found further west along the African coast, with relatively developed structures of government and standing armies, were absent. Hence, at bottom, it was the institution of 'pawnship', the offering up of human pledges, that underwrote the extension of credit to slave merchants operating in Calabar's hinterland.

In Stockholm, although many members of the merchant community were foreigners, they shared a basic understanding of legality and property rights with those with whom they traded. More importantly, the Swedish state was present to enforce its code of commercial law. The relationship between Stockholm's merchants and their suppliers in the hinterland was not an equal one, however. Upcountry *brukspatroner* were often reduced to dependence on the so-called 'quayside nobility' of the capital. Indeed, sometimes they were obliged to relinquish their estates to their merchant-creditors. The hinterland was subservient to the port.

In South Carolina the opposite was true. The rice planters of the Low Country prevailed over Charleston's merchants. The political influence of the planter-gentry, expressed through the colonial assembly, enabled them to manipulate the system of transatlantic credit in their favour. The local state, for all the colonial regulation to which it was theoretically subject, was vulnerable to the machinations of the planter

class. The Swedish state, with its aloof absolutist ethos, could not be bent to the will of the provincial ironmasters, still less the peasant-miners of *Bergslagen*.

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- ⁱ For information on Swedish urbanisation see Sven Lilja, *Tjuvehål och stolta städer. Urbaniseringens kronologi och geografi i Sverige (med Finland) ca 1570-tal till 1810-tal* (Stockholm, 2000).
- ⁱⁱ Eltis *et al.*, *The transatlantic slave trade*.
- ⁱⁱⁱ See A.J.H. Latham, *Old Calabar, 1600-1891: the impact of the international economy upon a traditional society* (Oxford, 1973); David Northrup, *Trade without rulers: pre-colonial economic development in south-eastern Nigeria* (Oxford, 1978); and Lorena S. Walsh, *From Calabar to Carter's Grove: the history of a Virginia slave community* (Charlottesville, 2001), pp. 67-76.
- ^{iv} *Report of the Lords of the Committee of the Privy Council* (1789), quoted in Elizabeth Donnan (ed.), *Documents illustrative of the slave trade to America* (4 vols, New York, 1965), II, p. 598.
- ^v 'The diary of Antera Duke', in Daryll Forde (ed.), *Efik traders of Old Calabar* (1956), p.84.
- ^{vi} Paul E. Lovejoy and David Richardson, 'Trust, pawnship, and Atlantic history: the institutional foundations of the Old Calabar slave trade', *American Historical Review*, CIV, 2 (1999), 342. See also Randy J. Sparks, 'Two princes of Calabar: an Atlantic odyssey from slavery to freedom', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser. LIX, 3 (2002), 555-84.
- ^{vii} Quoted in Gomer Williams, *History of the Liverpool privateers* (1897), p. 549.
- ^{viii} For the seasonality of slaving in the Bight of Biafra see Stephen D. Behrendt, 'Markets, transaction cycles, and profits: merchant decision making in the British slave trade', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser. LVIII, 1 (2001), 184-85.
- ^{ix} *Report of the Lords of the Committee of the Privy Council* (1789), quoted in Donnan, *Documents illustrative of the slave trade*, II, p. 598.
- ^x P.E.H. Hair, 'Antera Duke of Old Calabar – a little more about an African entrepreneur', *History in Africa*, XVII (1990), p. 361.
- ^{xi} John Atkins, *A voyage to Guinea, Brasil, and the West-Indies* (1735), quoted in Donnan, *Documents illustrative of the slave trade*, II, p. 274.
- ^{xii} Data for the Windward Coast (five observations 1760-1771), Calabar (six observations 1757-1770) and the Cameroons (eight observations 1758-1769) taken from Richardson, 'West African consumption patterns', table 12.2, pp. 312-14.
- ^{xiii} Philip D. Curtin, *Economic change in precolonial Africa: Senegambia in the era of the slave trade* (Madison WI, 1975), p. 208.
- ^{xiv} Lars Sundström, *The exchange economy of pre-colonial tropical Africa* (1974), p. 188.
- ^{xv} But note that it has been suggested that climatic change and desertification, by raising fuel costs, raised the price of indigenously made iron, opening the way for European imports. See Candice Goucher, 'Iron is iron 'til it rust: trade and ecology in the decline of West African iron-smelting', *Journal of African History*, XXII (1981), 179-89.
- ^{xvi} Somerset Archives, DD/DN 448.
- ^{xvii} 'A description of the Province of South Carolina, drawn up at Charles-Town in Sept. 1731', *The Gentleman's Magazine*, XX (August 1732), p. 896.
- ^{xviii} John Lawson, *A new voyage to Carolina* (1709), p. 2.
- ^{xix} Alan Gallay, *The Indian slave trade: the rise of the English empire in the American south, 1670-1717* (New Haven and London, 2003).
- ^{xx} Daniel K. Richter, 'Native peoples of North America and the eighteenth-century British empire', in P.J. Marshall (ed.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire. Vol. II: The eighteenth century* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 352, 360.
- ^{xxi} Peter H. Wood, *Black majority: negroes in colonial South Carolina from 1670 through the Stono Rebellion* (New York, 1975); Daniel C. Littlefield, *Rice and slaves: ethnicity and the slave trade in colonial South Carolina* (Baton Rouge, 1981); Judith A. Carney, *Black rice: the African origins of rice cultivation in the Americas* (Cambridge MA, 2001).
- ^{xxii} White servants were in short supply and could not be persuaded to submit to the gruelling labour in sufficient numbers. Additionally, Africans had a greater immunity to the malarial disorders that were endemic in the lowcountry. See Wood, *Black majority*, chaps 2 and 3. It should also be stressed that many Africans were experienced farmers of rice, which was a staple food in West Africa. The crop was not grown in northern Europe. See Carney, *Black rice, passim*.
- ^{xxiii} David Richardson, 'The British slave trade to colonial South Carolina', *Slavery and Abolition*, XII, 3 (1991), 125-72; Kenneth Morgan, 'Slave sales in colonial Charleston', *English Historical Review*, CXIII (1998), 905-27; David Eltis, Stephen D. Behrendt, David Richardson, and Herbert S. Klein (eds), *The transatlantic slave trade: a database on CD-ROM* (Cambridge, 1999). The influx of slaves gained extra momentum from 1731 when rice was removed from the list of enumerated articles that had to be routed through a British port before re-export to European markets. Carolinian rice could now be sent direct to Iberian and Mediterranean consumers.

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- ^{xxiv} For an exploration of this see Leland Ferguson, *Uncommon ground: archaeology and early African America* (Washington DC, 1992). See also Philip D. Morgan, *Slave counterpoint: black culture in the eighteenth-century Chesapeake and Lowcountry* (Chapel Hill NC, 1998).
- ^{xxv} Quoted in Wood, *Black majority*, p. 132.
- ^{xxvi} Quoted in D.D. Wax, "'The great risque we run': the aftermath of the slave rebellion at Stono, South Carolina, 1739-1745", *The Journal of Negro History*, LXVII, 2 (1982), p.137.
- ^{xxvii} R.C. Nash, 'The organization of trade and finance in the Atlantic economy: Britain and South Carolina, 1670-1775', in Jack P. Greene, Rosemary Brana-Shute and Randy J. Sparks (eds), *Money, trade and power: the evolution of South Carolina's plantation society* (2001), 77-78.
- ^{xxviii} T.H. Breen, 'An empire of goods: the anglicization of colonial America, 1690-1776', *Journal of British Studies*, XXV (1986), 467-99; Nuala Zahedieh, 'London and the colonial consumer in the late seventeenth century', *Economic History Review*, XLVII, 2 (1994), 239-61.
- ^{xxix} Jacob M. Price, 'Economic function and the growth of American port towns in the eighteenth century', in *idem*, *The Atlantic frontier of the Thirteen Colonies and States: essays in eighteenth-century commercial and social history* (1996), pp. 162-63 (first published in 1974), stresses the under-development of Charleston's merchant class. R.C. Nash, 'Urbanization in the colonial South: Charleston, South Carolina, as a case study', *Journal of Urban History*, XIX, 1 (1992), 3-29, and Peter A. Coclanis, 'The hydra head of merchant capital: markets and merchants in early South Carolina', in David R. Chesnut and Clyde N. Wilson (eds), *The meaning of South Carolina history: essays in honor of George C. Rogers, Jr.* (Columbia SC, 1991), pp. 1-18, emphasise the wealth and diversity of the port's merchant class.
- ^{xxx} Suffolk Record Office (Ipswich), HAI/GD/5/15, 'Goods in Robt Armstrongs hands'. The Crowleys also specialised in producing the hatchets that were an important commodity in South Carolina's Indian trade: see Angerstein, p. 264.
- ^{xxxi} Suffolk Record Office (Ipswich), HAI/GD/5/2, 'Credit Ledger A'.
- ^{xxxii} The rebels, it was suggested at the time, originated in Angola where 'Thousands of the Negroes profess the Roman Catholic Religion' and where Portuguese, which was 'as near Spanish as Scotch is to English', was widely spoken. 'An Account of the Negroe Insurrection in South Carolina', (c. 1740), quoted in John K. Thornton, 'African dimensions of the Stono Rebellion', *American Historical Review*, XCVI (1991), 1102. See also Edward A. Pearson, "'A Countryside Full of Flames": a reconsideration of the Stono Rebellion and slave rebelliousness in the early eighteenth-century South Carolina Lowcountry', *Slavery and Abolition*, XVII (1996), 22-50.
- ^{xxxiii} See Richard B. Sheridan, 'The formation of Caribbean plantation society, 1689-1748', in Marshall, *British Empire*, p. 406.
- ^{xxxiv} Wax, "'The great risque we run'"; Wood, *Black majority*, pp. 323-26.
- ^{xxxv} Eltis *et al*, *The transatlantic slave trade*.