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formations discussed had already taken place. The historical validity of the interpretation presented is therefore rather limited.

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The Early Abbasid Caliphate: A Political History. By HUGH KENNEDY. Totowa, N. J.: Barnes and Noble, 1981. Pp. 238. Maps, glossary, index, bibliography. \$25.00.

Hugh Kennedy's *The Early Abbasid Caliphate* is a discussion of the political events of the period from the Abbasid Revolution to the end of the Caliphate of al-Ma'mun, 748-832 A.D. A study of this period is highly significant for the understanding of Islamic history not only because of its political events, succession crises, Alid rebellions, and civil wars — events which were not restricted to this period and largely resembled their counterparts in the preceding Umayyad period and those of the later Abbasid —but for the social and economic developments which became the basis for Islamic culture and civilization.

Kennedy restricts his generally lucid and readable account to political events. His discussion, however, with some notable exceptions such as the chapters on the geographical background and the patterns of provincial power, is mostly an account of personality conflicts, jealousies between important individuals, and an accounting of Shi'i and other rebellious groups rising up against the central government. Such a discussion would have been more meaningful had the author integrated it with other important issues such as land tenure problems, finances, and religious doctrinal developments, all of which were very much tied to the political struggle taking place during the period under study. This broader approach would have enhanced Kennedy's work considerably. At rare moments Kennedy does delve into that kind of analysis, especially when discussing the partition of the Caliphate by Harun al-Rashid and the Alid rebellions, but it does not go far enough.

The book ends with a brief but informative discussion of the primary sources used supplemented with a brief note on suggested readings from the secondary sources. In sum, this book although it does not break any new ground in discussing the politics of the period and skillfully skirts controversies regarding early Abbasid history (and this period is full of them), it has some use (if the

reader has proper supplementary literature), especially for those students who are beginning to study Islamic history.

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Rice and Slaves: Ethnicity and the Slave Trade in Colonial South Carolina. By DANIEL A. LITTLEFIELD. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981. Pp. xii+199. Illustrations, bibliography, index. \$17.50.

Daniel Littlefield's *Rice and Slaves* represents a continuation of Peter Wood's argument in *Black Majority* that ethnic and cultural origins of enslaved Africans were important in the development of colonial America. Littlefield, however, takes this insight in a different direction. His book about colonial South Carolina and the slave trade does *not* address blacks' perceptions, feelings, and activities except indirectly. It is instead about what rice planters thought of blacks. Thus it goes against the trend in contemporary social history.

The book focuses on the problem of "why colonial South Carolinians preferred certain African ethnic groups over others as slaves" (p. 6). Littlefield argues that planters early learned a great deal about Africans, formed an idea of their cultural characteristics, and purchased slaves accordingly. In eighteenth-century South Carolina this meant a preference for slaves from the Senegambia and the windward coast regions of West Africa, areas in which people had extensive experience with raising the first great crop of the British colony, rice. Planters in South Carolina did not necessarily receive the consignment of slaves they wanted, says Littlefield, due to the ethnic unpredictability of the supply. But the preference for slaves from specific geographical areas did influence managerial decisions. For example, Angolans quite often were assigned tasks as artisans, while Gambians usually were sent directly into the rice fields. This allocation of labor makes sense when one recognizes that Englishmen had little know-how in the complicated techniques of rice cultivation and little opportunity to learn except from their slaves. Since South Carolina was a major area for rice cultivation in North America during this period, planters generally were in a position to indulge their choice of African labor, especially if they were willing to accept a largely female labor force.

Littlefield here sets forth a plausible thesis, well supported by a variety of data. He spends a good portion of the book analyzing African