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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.

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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

agriculture, describing how a system of crop production common to the Senegambia region resembled colonial rice production. This form of rice cultivation strikingly paralleled plantation methods in major respects. The author demonstrates a command of the subject rare to historians of American slavery. He also deftly handles the literary sources on the slave trade and planter attitudes toward blacks.

The main problem with *Rice and Slaves* is the inductions it makes exceeding the legitimate limits of its quantitative data. This is particularly true of the discussions on the lives of Africans once they crossed the Atlantic. A single example will suffice. *Rice and Slaves* derives much of its material on blacks in South Carolina from a tabulation of advertisements for runaway slaves in the colony's newspapers. At one point Littlefield argues that it is possible to determine the respective skills at running away of various ethnic groupings. He does so by comparing the number of advertised runaways with the number of Africans of that same ethnicity apprehended and placed at the workhouse in Charleston (pp. 129-132). He then proceeds to speculate upon possible explanations for these differences. Such reasoning is clearly flawed. The workhouse was a place where runaways were quartered when authorities could not immediately discern their respective owners. Inmates of the workhouse were probably more rather than less successful runaways, for they at least managed to get some distance away from their master's neighborhood before they were captured. This type of analytical problem recurs throughout one section of the book, leaving the impression that runaway slave advertisements are pushed beyond their capacities as data.

Despite these difficulties, Littlefield's book illuminates the African origins of America's slave population. The author explores the impact of black ethnicity on colonial society with more knowledge than most American historians. *Rice and Slaves* makes a strong case for colonial rice planters who looked for Africans with experience to cultivate their crops. Littlefield's book overall constitutes a useful addition to the literature on colonial South Carolina. It is the best study available on colonial whites' reactions to African ethnicity. The author describes his work as "but one step in an ongoing endeavor, carrying forward ideas already suggested by other scholars and adducing new ideas for continuing discussion" (p. 7). In this it succeeds admirably.

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