

**Eliza Lucas Pinckney:  
Indigo in the Atlantic World**

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Eliza Lucas Pinckney's life embodies many significant world historical trends developing in part in the British American colonies in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. The story of her family is an example of the myriad of transferences, both cultural and material, which readily occurred between Europe, Africa, the Caribbean and the North American colonies at this time. Examining Pinckney's life puts women at the center of the world economy as producers as well as consumers, and places the Southern colonies of British North America within world historical trade systems.

Eliza Lucas Pinckney, born on Antigua, a West Indian Island, in approximately 1722 to English parents, attended school in England, and relocated to South Carolina with her mother, father and younger sister in 1738, at age 15.<sup>1</sup> The family departed from the Indies in response to the impending threat of war with Spain, and to provide a change of scenery to hopefully improve the health of Pinckney's invalid mother. As evident in her writings, Pinckney was a spunky young woman. In one of her early letters she rejected a suitor her father suggested, saying "the riches of Peru and Chili if he had them put together could not purchase a sufficient Esteem for him to make him my husband."<sup>2</sup> Yet Pinckney also embraced the identity of a properly raised, upper-class English lady-in-training, a renaissance woman who read philosophy, played music, spoke French, and cultivated her own garden.

Upon their arrival, Pinckney's family took control of three plantations her grandfather owned in South Carolina. The family lived on the smallest, a property encompassing 600 acres near the intersection of the Wappoo Creek and the Stono River; according to Pinckney, some "seventeen mile[s] by land and six by water from Charles Town' – modern Charleston.<sup>3</sup> At this time, Charleston was the most important English port in Atlantic North America south of Philadelphia. The ethnically and religiously diverse town housed a population of approximately 6800 in 1742, half of them African-descent slaves, and had its own weekly newspaper and an active social circuit including balls and musical and theatrical events.<sup>4</sup>

However, because Pinckney's father remained involved in the political and military affairs of Antigua, after only a year in Carolina, the British government recalled him to serve as a Lieutenant Colonel in the British Army during the War of Jenkins' Ear, a trade-motivated war between England and Spain.<sup>5</sup> Wars fought between colonial powers, such as Jenkins' Ear and the Seven Year's War, continuously effected life for those living in the colonies, and the Lucas family was no exception. With her father's departure and mother's continuing ill health, Pinckney assumed control of the plantations. Her father remained in Antigua to become Lieutenant Governor, and died in 1747 after being taken captive by the French while traveling to England.<sup>6</sup>

While separated, Pinckney and her father corresponded regularly regarding business and family matters. Significantly, along with the letters her father also sent her

plant seeds for potential cultivation. She was determined to find a cash crop to pull the plantation out of debt, pay for its upkeep, and support the family. In her letters, Pinckney describes her efforts to grow various crops, and specifically her hope that indigo might prove to be the resolution to the family's financial dilemma. Eliza writes of "the pains I had taken to bring the Indigo, Ginger, Cotton and Lucerne and Casada (sic) to perfection," and her "greater hopes from the Indigo (if I could have the seed earlier next year from the West India's) than any for the rest of the things I had tryd."<sup>7</sup>

This exchange of plants between British colonies earned Pinckney her place in history. Pinckney is notable not only as a cosmopolitan, educated, and quick-witted woman, an ardent patriot in her later years, but also as the first to successfully and profitably grow and process indigo in South Carolina. In doing so, she became known as the originator of one of South Carolina's most important early cash crops.<sup>8</sup> With her success, Pinckney passed indigo seeds along to her neighbors, essentially enabling and encouraging the establishment of a new trade commodity for the colony. Her actions had wide consequences, ultimately affecting markets on a global scale.

### Indigo: A Global Commodity

Indigo is one commodity that intersects with Pinckney's life and connects her and the American South to the Atlantic World, from Europe to the Caribbean to Africa. As far back as the third millennium BC people dyed materials with indigo; its use spread throughout Egypt and the Middle East, Asia, India and Europe. According to archeologists, a separate indigo culture also existed in Central and South America pre-dating European conquest.<sup>9</sup> As the Portuguese pushed their way into Indian Ocean trade networks in the late 1400s and early 1500s, they gained greater access to luxury goods such as indigo and could avoid paying traditional duties to middlemen. With this increased availability and decreased price, indigo imported from India soon began to rival woad, the blue dye traditionally used in Europe. By the middle of the seventeenth century, indigo had become a primary export commodity of the European colonies in the West Indies and the Americas.<sup>10</sup> Eliza Lucas Pinckney's introduction of indigo into the American colonies played an important role in this on-going biological transfer and change in markets.

According to scholars "indigo was the most important vat dye used by the British in the eighteenth century", and as such the British were naturally inclined to see their colonies producing it, paying subsidies to those who agreed to grow it and making the trade highly profitable.<sup>11</sup> Without this British bounty on indigo the crop would not have been nearly as lucrative in the Carolinas. Pinckney was not the first to plant *Indigofera Tinctoria*, the strain of indigo she imported from the Caribbean, in the North American colonies or in South Carolina, but American farmers abandoned early attempts to cultivate the plant because of the superior profitability of rice in the face of the difficulty of both growing an indigo crop and producing the dye.<sup>12</sup> Yet Pinckney's timing was fortunate. In the 1740s the price of rice began to fall on the world market, and the War of Jenkins' Ear severed British markets from indigo supplies in the French West Indies, the major supplier for the British textile industry. Meanwhile, settlers in Carolina sought a new cash crop, and according to Pinckney's *Letterbook*, by 1740 she was experimenting

with indigo seeds her father had sent her from Antigua.<sup>13</sup> Though indigo only held its prominence for about fifty years, it became Carolina's second most lucrative cash crop.<sup>14</sup>

Indigo production required capital investment, needing less start-up money than a sugar plantation, but still entailing a significant amount of infrastructure. The average indigo plantation in the 1760s called for five sets of indigo vats valued at £150, approximately the price of one young adult male slave. Each set could process approximately seven acres of indigo. The irrigation systems needed for the obligatory regular water supply and drying sheds also ranked among capital investments needed to grow and process indigo, not to mention the purchase of slaves to provide a labor force.<sup>15</sup> Though not a crop exclusively reserved for the wealthy, the uncapitalized and independently working yeoman farmer could not undertake extensive indigo cultivation.

The production of indigo dye in Pinckney's time was a labor intensive procedure. In order to produce the dye, farmers grew the indigo plants, then harvested the plants and submitted them to an intricate extraction process. Identifying the peak harvest time was vital to achieving a vivid color. Workers, usually slaves, threw the freshly cut plants into a large wooden vat, covered the plants with water, and pounded them until they began to ferment, a process taking approximately eight to twenty hours. The mixture had to be tended the entire time, day and night. Once the water began to turn blue, thicken, and bubble, workers, again usually slaves, moved the liquid to the next vat where it was continuously churned. When the dye particles began to separate from the water, workers allowed the mixture to settle and siphoned off the liquid. They transferred the residue to a third vat to sit for eight to ten hours, then strained the paste and hung it in cloth bags to drain. As the indigo hardened, laborers cut it into squares, and again left it to dry in the shade until completely hard and shippable. While drying, the squares needed to be turned three or four times a day and protected from flies and sun; if exposed to direct sunlight before drying, the indigo will lose its color and much of its value. Overall, the process was highly labor intensive at every step, requiring a great deal of oversight and physical toil, not to mention dealing with the nauseating smell of fermenting indigo. As slaves performed most of this labor, Pinckney tied herself into global networks not only through her role as an early innovator in the cultivation of indigo in South Carolina, but also through her utilization of slave labor.<sup>16</sup>

The indigo production process was not well known in South Carolina, so Eliza's father sent her an expert from the French colonial possession of Montserrat to teach her the procedure. Her new "expert", a man by the name of Cromwell, ended up being more of a hindrance than an asset; he attempted to sabotage the process by adding too much lime in the final stage, turning out a batch of indigo that was basically worthless.<sup>17</sup> Eliza, suspicious of the poor quality of her final product, caught Cromwell in the act and sent him packing. Legend has it he did not want Carolina indigo competing with the dye made in his home of Montserrat, a major exporter of indigo. His brother came next, and again Eliza fired this second agent for trying to ruin the batch. The Cromwell brothers are an example of the transnational movement of knowledge between the Caribbean and Carolinas going on in this period, or mis-knowledge as the case may be.

Pinckney does not dwell on the less advantageous effects of indigo processing, such as the horrific smell. According to indigo scholar Kenneth Beeson,

"the stench of the work vats, where the indigo plants were putrefied, was so offensive and deleterious, that the 'work' was usually located at least

one-quarter of a mile away from human dwellings. The odor from the rotting weeds drew flies and other insects by the thousands, greatly increasing the chances of the spread of diseases. Animals and poultry . . . likewise suffered, and it was all but impossible to keep livestock on, or near, the indigo manufacturing site.”<sup>18</sup>

Yet for all this, the price on the world market and the subsequent British subsidies for indigo production made the growth and processing of indigo a worthwhile endeavor for colonial planters. Indigo sold in England for three to twenty shillings a pound, with over a million pounds of it being shipped out per year by 1755, turning a handy profit for plantation owners.<sup>19</sup>

After her successful crop in 1744, Pinckney distributed indigo seeds to her neighbors, initiating an indigo revolution in South Carolina. Indigo became the highland staple of the state, the niche rice filled for the lowlands. Planters found indigo to be an ideal crop for the area as it grew in opposing seasons to rice, the other most commonly grown cash crop, hence keeping slave populations employed in commodity production year round. The demand was such, that planters produced indigo for the domestic as well as foreign market. Pinckney wrote prophetically in June, 1741, “I make no doubt Indigo will prove a very valuable Commodity in time.”<sup>20</sup> Little did she appreciate the prescience of her words. By October of that year she had harvested “20 w[eight] of Indigo and expected 10 more” for an approximate total of 3360 pounds of indigo; a successful crop indeed.<sup>21</sup>

South Carolina’s indigo production declined towards the end of the century. The 1776 United States War of Independence disrupted trade between the colonies and Britain, leading to a waning of indigo production. With the war also came the end of British subsidies for indigo, making the crop less attractive for plantation owners.<sup>22</sup> According to Beeson, Britain returned to India as a main source of indigo. In 1786 the British East India Company dumped more than 250,000 pounds of Asian indigo onto the London market, essentially ruining the North American trade in the commodity. By 1810, the Company imported 5,500,000 pounds yearly, and large-scale North American indigo production had almost completely ceased due to global market forces and British mercantilism.<sup>23</sup>

### Slavery: Transferring Labor and Knowledge Systems

Not only was Pinckney a vital member of the world market through her role as an early innovator in the cultivation of indigo in South Carolina, but because she took advantage of slave labor Pinckney involved herself in the global networks of the slave trade as well. The production of indigo is a highly labor-intensive process, and could not have been undertaken without the utilization of slave labor. Indigo requires the construction of an extensive system of dikes and ditches for irrigation, preparation and fertilization of the soil – as the plant quickly exhausts soil nutrient value – attention during its growth including weeding and insect eradication, and a long, complicated preparation process to turn the plant into the valuable powder dye.<sup>24</sup> In order to produce indigo Pinckney would need a labor force, and the most common form of help in South Carolina at this time, especially for physically demanding, dirty and menial tasks, was

slave labor. According to indigo scholar Jenny Balfour-Paul, South Carolina's "insatiable demand for plantation labour led to high prices for slaves." In 1754 the Governor of South Carolina explicitly tied together slave labor, indigo, and the world market, reporting that "negroes are sold at higher prices here than in any part of the King's dominions. . . a proof that this province is in a flourishing condition . . . I presume 'tis indigo that puts all in such high spirits."<sup>25</sup>

From the records available, a description of Pinckney's family's slave-owning life is rather foggy. According to the introduction of her *Letterbook*, the Wappoo plantation where Pinckney and her family lived was also home to "20 able-bodied slaves."<sup>26</sup> Biographer Constance Schulz puts the number at eighty-six slaves for all three of the Lucas plantations, and by the time of her death historian Ted Morgan estimates that Pinckney kept two to three hundred slaves total.<sup>27</sup> In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the majority of slaves in the North American colonies lived on holdings of fewer than fifty laborers, with most slave holders owning five to ten slaves. The average South Carolina plantation was in reality a large farm; if the farm had enough bound servants and produced one or more cash crops contemporaries considered it a plantation. The majority of the South Carolina backcountry population, 77%, did not own slaves at all.<sup>28</sup> When Pinckney's land and slave holdings are taken into consideration, her family can be marked as part of the wealthy elite of the colony.

There are no documents that I have access to reporting the origin of the Lucas or Pinckney family's slaves, nor records regarding the slaves' ages, genders, or family structures, though historian Peter Wood finds that 2,415 slaves are imported to South Carolina straight from Africa in 1738; 1,702 in 1739.<sup>29</sup> The intensification in rice cultivation and the growth of the plantation labor system at this time, as well as the failure of slaves to replace their own population, caused these large importation numbers.<sup>30</sup> Wood estimates that between 1735 and 1740, 70% of the slaves imported to Charleston came from Angola. Over 80% of imported slaves were over age ten. These statistics speak to the profiles of slaves Pinckney may have employed. By 1740, Wood estimates that the enslaved population outnumbered free whites in the territory by two to one.<sup>31</sup> Other sources estimate that in the decade of 1710, 38% of South Carolina's population was black; however, in 1720 the slave population rose to approximately 12,000, or 70% of the total population of 17,048. After 1720, the percentage of enslaved workers leveled at approximately 66% of the total population.<sup>32</sup>

## Labor and Skill

Pinckney does not talk specifically about the kinds of labor in which she employed her slaves, though it can be assumed they would be engaged in tending to various cash crops growing on the plantation, such as rice, cotton and indigo. South Carolina's slaves typically worked under the task system where each was in charge of completing a certain amount of labor, a specified "task", each day.<sup>33</sup> Pinckney also speaks of slaves taking items down the river to market and running errands – she hears from "our man Togo" that a friend in the city is unwell.<sup>34</sup> This speaks to a limited amount of autonomy her slaves held. Pinckney's laborers moved between plantations; in October of 1741 Pinckney wrote to her overseer about "sending the Negroes down from Wacammaw", another of the Lucas family's plantations, possibly to assist with the indigo

harvest at Wappoo.<sup>35</sup> She does not mention any situations where the slaves served as domestics, but it is likely that slaves also undertook duties such as cleaning and cooking in the house. While Pinckney does not mention slaves performing these tasks, neither does she say that she herself is performing this labor, and she does not list cooking or cleaning in her list of daily activities. Even in the sources left by a woman, domestic labor remains invisible.

Another tempting hint concerning African labor comes in a section of Harriott Ravenel's biography of Pinckney. Let us return to the episode where the dye masters Pinckney's father sent to Carolina, Cromwell and his brother, intentionally attempted to ruin the dye batches in order to discourage indigo production in the Carolinas and hold on to the indigo monopoly for their native land. In response to this, "Governor Lucas (Pinckney's father) then sent out a *negro* from one of the French islands, and soon the battle was won."<sup>36</sup> It is not known from the sources if this "negro" was slave or free, how he learned to process indigo, or what happened to him after he processed the plantation's crop, whether he stayed on the plantation in South Carolina or traveled back to the Indies. Yet this is an intriguing glimpse into the importance African labor and knowledge played in indigo production world-wide and the kind of expertise the African descent population possessed.

Similar to patterns found in rice cultivation, indigo production offered skilled slaves a modicum of bargaining power in South Carolina, and probably in other sites of indigo manufacture as well.<sup>37</sup> As discussed, the indigo production process was complex and required constant vigilance, thus allowing certain slaves to attain specific skills. Indigo production involved finesse and an intimate knowledge of the different stages of the process that can only be gained with time, such as when to start beating the mixture, for how long, etc. Sometimes managers consulted slaves as indigo experts; according to one contemporary observer, "the headmen in this sort of work are commonly Negroes." One planter noted, if slaves "thoroughly understand the management of the indigo, a great value is set upon them." One master set a slave free because of his skill with indigo.<sup>38</sup> The utilization of slave knowledge is also demonstrated in rice cultivation.

While this study has largely focused on indigo production, slaves on Pinckney's plantations also produced rice, the chief cash crop in South Carolina. An indication of this can be gleaned from a letter to her father, where Pinckney laments losing twenty barrels of the grain to the river.<sup>39</sup> In her book *Black Rice*, Judith Carney explores the transfer of rice cultivation from West Africa to colonial South Carolina, arguing that African American slaves brought rice seeds and cultivation techniques with them to the Americas. Thus, like indigo and the slave laborers themselves, rice cultivation offers a direct connection across the Atlantic between Africa and the New World. Carney discusses the gendered division of rice cultivation by task, with each sex possessing specific knowledge of separate parts of the rice growing cycle. Using sources as diverse as archeological and anthropological data, accounts of early European explorers, and botanist's studies, Carney not only urges the reader to consider African technological contributions to the American agricultural system, but argues against the colonial perception of Africa as a land of "savages" whose people were incapable of any technological innovation, saying that Africans have historically been discredited for their agricultural contributions because of prejudices embedded in past colonial views.<sup>40</sup>

With her book, Carney makes a paradigm shift from the way scholars have traditionally viewed the “Columbia Exchange,” making the claim that knowledge as well as plants traveled across the Middle Passage. The example of the Cromwells and the nameless “negro” sent from the Indies are other examples in Pinckney’s life of knowledge crossing oceans. Bodies were not the only commodities of the slave trade; Africans’ cultural systems and accumulated knowledge, including rice cultivation techniques, were transported with them during their forced immigration. While Europeans have long garnered credit for the success of rice in the New World, Carney effectively uses the evidence of the transfer of African farming systems, including floodplain agriculture, and rice strains to South Carolina to suggest that, indeed, it was the Africans who accomplished this transfer of rice culture to the Americas. Pinckney leaves no clue about how her slaves learned to cultivate rice, nor does she explicitly discuss the cultivation process used on her plantations, thus we cannot prove Carney’s hypothesis specifically through Eliza’s situation, yet Carney’s idea is a pertinent and persuasive one.

A section of Carney’s text that needs further elaboration regards the question of why slaves imparted their rice knowledge to plantation owners in the first place. Carney suggests that slaves used their knowledge as leverage to instate a task labor system, a notion that historian Philip Morgan also addresses, but Carney admits that there is no hard evidence to that effect. She returns to this theme of negotiation in bondage in various places, yet the question is never satisfactorily answered. Carney’s work presents a unique glimpse into the spread of African culture to the Americas in the form of rice knowledge, from land use and cultivation, to harvesting and processing, and finally cooking. Just as importantly, she provides us with tools to look past the intellectual legacies of prejudice and the slave trade to give Africans credit for their agricultural accomplishments.

### Slave Culture and Resistance

Another way of looking at transfers, exchanges, and interconnections throughout the Atlantic world is to consider slave culture. Both historians John Thornton and Michael Gomez recognize slave agency in the creation of the Atlantic world, especially in regards to the transmission of slave culture. While Pinckney does not provide us with enough information on her slaves to hypothesize about cultural persistence amongst them, some generalizations can be made. If her slaves came from similar places of origin in Africa, and had the opportunity to create families in their new homes, there would be increased opportunity to pass on cultural practices acquired in Africa. While it does not appear that slaves were generally cultural purists, desperately clinging to their intact cultural forms in the face of new surroundings, it seems that some links to their African roots did persist amongst slave populations.<sup>41</sup>

With the recognition of slave agency comes the possibility of resistance. The ever present and world-wide fear of slave revolt appears subtly in Pinckney’s letters. In 1742 she writes of Hugh Bryan, a disciple of revivalist George Whitefield who had been kidnapped as a child and raised by Indians.<sup>42</sup> Bryan was somewhat notorious because he gathered groups of slaves to teach them Christian principles, and also publicly prophesied that South Carolina’s slaves would rise up and claim their freedom. When authorities set

out to arrest him, Bryan took to the woods. He retracted his statement in a letter to the speaker of the assembly after the predicted uprising did not occur, admitting, as Pinckney says, that “he was not guided by the infallible spirit but that of delusion” yet this incident was notable, as the large number of slaves in the area kept the planters in constant fear of rebellion.<sup>43</sup> Pinckney writes that the “whole community. . . dreaded the consequence (sic) of his prophecys (sic) coming to the ears of the African Hosts.”<sup>44</sup>

Planters in the area had experienced organized slave rebellion in the recent past such as the Insurrection of 1720 and the Stono Rebellion in 1739, an uprising based about five miles from the Lucas’s Wappoo plantation. In the first case, the Carolinians detected and quickly squelched the plot, executing most of the conspirators. In the second event, a group of South Carolina slaves, mostly newly arrived soldiers from the Kongo, seized a store of weapons and marched southwards towards Spanish Florida, burning structures and killing whites along the way. As this rebellion occurred during the War of Jenkins’ Ear, the war between Spain and England that called away Pinckney’s father, these slaves may have thought that in light of international events, Spanish Florida would offer them their liberty for rebelling against the English. The group grew to one hundred slaves before being dispersed by the militia. The militia killed forty, though some managed to escape and make it to their destination. The rebellion led to a tightening of the South Carolina slave codes and a temporary sky-high tariff on importing foreign slaves, perhaps briefly affecting the slave market world-wide and contributing to a preference for slaves from the Caribbean instead of Africa.<sup>45</sup>

Planters were fully aware that slaves were not willing captives. South Carolina was not the only place constantly on alert for revolt; the Caribbean islands and other locales with slave majorities also worried incessantly about uprisings and rebellions, and rightfully so, as insurrections did occur. Jamaica is one example of rebellion in the West Indies. Outright warfare between maroon communities and the British broke out in the 1730s, culminating in a 1739 treaty recognizing their freedom in exchange for the return of future runaways.<sup>46</sup> And these latent fears only increased following the Haitian revolution beginning in 1791. Through these incidents and the very fact that she owned slaves, Pinckney’s life can again be tied in to larger world-historical systems and contexts.

Yet even while aware of these instances of rebellion, from incidents that Pinckney records she seems to have been a rather liberal slave holder when compared to those who came after her. She notes in a letter from 1741, after the Stono Rebellion, “I have a Sister to instruct (her younger sister Polly) and a parcel of little Negroes whom I have undertaken to teach to read”<sup>47</sup> and later on she writes of “two little black girls who I teach to read. . . I intend [them] for school mistres’s for the rest of the Negroe children.”<sup>48</sup> According to historian Eugene Genovese, in terms of slave literacy South Carolina “pioneered in repressive legislation during the middle of the eighteenth century”, and politicians made teaching slaves to read illegal in the state by the 1830s, as slave holders feared slaves would read abolitionist literature and rebel.<sup>49</sup> Literacy can be seen as subversive, providing another means for slaves to communicate and plan secretly, and possibly adding to feelings of unrest. There is no hint of what others in the area at the time thought about Pinkney’s education project, or if she was successful, although her parents did allow her to proceed. Yet Pinckney, as a woman of her time, also seemed to view slaves as an economic asset, and she did not call for abolition. She wrote her father



about “the loss of a Negroe man” and in the same sentence laments the loss of 20 barrels of rice tipped overboard forty miles down the coast from Charleston.<sup>50</sup> It is unclear whether the man was also lost with the overturned boat, but she writes of both as economic blows for the plantation, not as a tragic loss of life.

### Eliza’s Life Beyond Indigo

In 1744, after her triumph with indigo, Eliza Lucas Pinckney left her father’s plantation to marry Charles Pinckney, an influential colonist, close friend since her arrival in the colonies, and a recent widower twice her age. She gave birth to her first child in 1746, and in 1753 relocated to England with her husband where he served as colonial agent for South Carolina. They returned to the colonies in 1758 to facilitate some business, and within six weeks of their arrival Charles died of malaria, leaving Eliza Pinckney again facing the familiar challenges of running a plantation alone. She deeply mourned her husband and never remarried.

During the era of the United States Revolutionary War, Pinckney became intimately involved in the movement for independence, loaning money to the new state of South Carolina, rejecting her allegiances to England in favor of the revolutionary cause, and eventually losing her plantation to the war. Her children developed into ardent patriots as well; her eldest son acted as a delegate at the Constitutional Convention, and her youngest son became Governor of the state after independence. Pinckney died in 1793 and George Washington served as one of her pallbearers, a fitting honor for a woman of such international impact.<sup>51</sup> Pinckney’s life demonstrates that Atlantic World ties were not just ephemeral systems functioning on a large scale, but played out in peoples’ lives on a day-to-day basis, linking physically distant areas through ties of trade and culture.

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> Following the lead of other historians, throughout this paper I refer to Eliza Lucas Pinckney by her married name, Pinckney, though she did not marry until 1744.

<sup>2</sup> Elise Pinckney (ed.), *The Letterbook of Eliza Lucas Pinckney, 1739-1762* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1972) p. 6. Throughout this paper I have preserved the spelling used in Eliza's letters.

<sup>3</sup> *Letterbook*, p. 7.

<sup>4</sup> The Stono Rebellion of 1739 broke out approximately five miles from the Lucas's Wappoo Plantation, though Pinckney makes no mention of it in her letters. A group of mostly recently arrived slaves, soldiers from Africa's Kongo region, seized a store of weapons and began marching South towards Spanish Florida, burning structures and killing Anglo colonists along the way. In light of current events, Spain and England were at war at the time, the slaves may have thought the Spanish would offer them liberty for rebelling against the English. The group grew to one hundred slaves before being dispersed by the militia, who killed forty. The rebellion led to a tightening of the South Carolina slave codes, a temporary sky-high tariff on importation of foreign slaves, and a preference for Caribbean slaves over slaves straight from Africa.

See Herbert Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts* (New York: International Publishers, 1974) p. 174-175, 184. Also John L. Martin, "South Carolina's Response to the Spanish Menace, 1713-1739" (Masters Thesis, San Diego State University, 1973).

<sup>5</sup> The War of Jenkins' Ear (1739-1748) was a trade-motivated war between England and Spain which merged into the larger European War of Austrian Succession. The war was fought mainly in the colonies, including battles in Panama and the Caribbean and an unsuccessful British attempt to capture Spanish Florida. The war's odd name comes from Robert Jenkins, a British sea captain whose ear was cut off by the Spanish Coast Guard, sparking the conflict.

<sup>6</sup> Biographical information in this section comes from Constance B. Schulz, "Eliza Lucas Pinckney" in G. J. Barker-Benfield and Catherine Clinton, *Portraits of American Women from Settlement to the Present* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991).

<sup>7</sup> *Letterbook*, p. 8. By Casada, historians believe Eliza is referring to Cassava, a staple crop in the tropics. Lucerne is a type of alfalfa.

<sup>8</sup> The other significant cash crops at that time in South Carolina were rice and cotton.

<sup>9</sup> Jenny Balfour-Paul, *Indigo* (London: British Museum Press, 1998) p. 12, 19-22.

<sup>10</sup> Balfour-Paul, p. 42.

<sup>11</sup> Kenneth H. Beeson, Jr., "Indigo Production in the Eighteenth Century", *Hispanic American Historical Review* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1964) Vol. 44, No. 2, p. 214.

<sup>12</sup> For a discussion of rice cultivation in the American South see Judith A. Carney, *Black Rice: The African Origins of Rice Cultivation in the Americas* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2001).

<sup>13</sup> *Letterbook*, p. xvii.

<sup>14</sup> Rice was the crop in the number one spot.

<sup>15</sup> Philip D. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint: Black Culture in the Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake & Lowcountry* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press) p. 37.

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- <sup>16</sup> Information on indigo processing from Beeson, pp. 214-218.
- <sup>17</sup> Harriott Horry Ravenel, *Women of Colonial and Revolutionary Times: Eliza Pinckney*. South Carolina Heritage Series No. 10 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1896) pp. 102-3. Ted Morgan, *Wilderness at Dawn: The Settling of the North American Continent* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993) p. 259.
- <sup>18</sup> Beeson, p. 215.
- <sup>19</sup> Ted Morgan, p. 260.
- <sup>20</sup> *Letterbook*, p.16.
- <sup>21</sup> *Letterbook*, p. 22. By "weight", Eliza is probably referring to a hundredweight, or a bundle of approximately 112 modern lbs, a common unit of measurement in England and America at this time. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century Americans dropped the size of a hundredweight to an actual 100 modern lbs. <http://www.unc.edu/~rowlett/units/custom.html>
- <sup>22</sup> Balfour-Paul, p. 69.
- <sup>23</sup> Beeson, p. 218.
- <sup>24</sup> Ravenel, pp. 102-7.
- <sup>25</sup> As quoted in Balfour-Paul, p. 70.
- <sup>26</sup> *Letterbook*, xvi.
- <sup>27</sup> Schulz, p. 70. and T. Morgan, p.262.
- <sup>28</sup> Peter Kolchin, *American Slavery, 1619-1877* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993) p. 32, 30, 33.
- <sup>29</sup> This decrease may be attributed to a temporary ban on slave imports from Africa following the 1739 Stono Rebellion.
- <sup>30</sup> Peter H. Wood, *Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 through the Stono Rebellion* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1974) chart p. 151.
- <sup>31</sup> Wood, Appendix C and chart p. 152.
- <sup>32</sup> See BR Carroll, *Historical Collections of South Carolina*, 2 Vols. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1836) Vol. II., p. 218, 261. Also United States Bureau of the Census, *The Statistical History of the United States from Colonial Times to the Present* (Stamford, Connecticut: Fairchild Publishers, Inc., 1965) p. 756.
- <sup>33</sup> P. Morgan, p. 178, 180.
- <sup>34</sup> *Letterbook*, p. 34.
- <sup>35</sup> *Letterbook*, p. 23.
- <sup>36</sup> Ravenel, p. 105. Emphasis mine.
- <sup>37</sup> For a discussion of slaves and indigo, see P. Morgan, pp. 159-164.
- <sup>38</sup> All quotes from P. Morgan, p. 164.
- <sup>39</sup> *Letterbook*, p. 13.
- <sup>40</sup> Judith A. Carney, *Black Rice: The African Origins of Rice Cultivation in the Americas* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2001).
- <sup>41</sup> For discussions of slave cultural persistence, see John Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1800*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). Michael Gomez, *Exchanging our Country Marks: The transformation of African identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).
- <sup>42</sup> *Letterbook*, pp. 27-30.
- <sup>43</sup> *Letterbook*, p. 28.

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<sup>44</sup> *Letterbook*, p. 29.

<sup>45</sup> Herbert Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts* (New York: International Publishers, 1974) pp. 174-175, 184. Also John L. Martin, "South Carolina's Response to the Spanish Menace, 1713-1739" (Masters Thesis, San Diego State University, 1973).

<sup>46</sup> Information on slave rebellions from Eric Foner, *Give me Liberty: An American History*, Vol. 1 (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2005) pp. 132-133.

<sup>47</sup> *Letterbook*, p. 12.

<sup>48</sup> *Letterbook*, p. 34.

<sup>49</sup> Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll Jordan Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Vintage Books, 1972) p. 562.

<sup>50</sup> *Letterbook*, p. 13.

<sup>51</sup> Schulz, pp. 65-81.

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