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**College Scholars
Senior Project**

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The Development of Underdevelopment in Black North Carolina: 1870 – 1910

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Preface

In Nell Irvin Painter's 1976 work *Exodusters: Black Migration to Kansas After Reconstruction*, she identified the relationship between integrationist and separatist tendencies as the key intellectual elements in Black political thought during Reconstruction and immediately following the white-supremacist Redemption. These divergent and yet intimately connected – through history and biography – tendencies have served as the key variables to be considered in any Black political calculus since the first Africans arrived in the Virginia colony in 1619. They relate to one another as both conflicting schools of thought and joint elements of the same programs. They exist in a deft theoretical union of realist pragmatism and an unconquerable drive for freedom that only a people facing national oppression can possess.

And yet despite these deep roots and a plethora of historical evidence, the publishing of any new work by a white author that points to (and in some cases deepens our understanding of) the relationship between calls for full, equal rights and calls for self-determination is greeted as a major break-through in the study of U.S. race relations. The contributions of these scholars as individuals and (at times) as participants in theoretical movements (e.g. the historical revisionism of C. Vann Woodward, Kenneth Kusmer, Eric Foner, Steven Hahn, et al.) should be touted for their importance. However, underlining such praise is an aspect of American society, and by extension American intellectualism that scarcely receives coverage even in the face of massive evidence and hundreds of thousands of potential case study subjects: white supremacy grounded in the real material privileges enjoyed by white folks. If we are to engage in the theoretical work that must be done, we must systematically attack and deconstruct this cancer in our midst.

One key outgrowth of white supremacy's infestation of American life is that white folks, unlike people of color, are by and large able to decide when to and when not to acknowledge race's existence and the role it plays in our everyday lives. As a result, facts known by people of color with the kind of clearness daily lived reality can engender are treated as new information by many whites. The situation following Hurricane Katrina puts this in sharp relief. Black folks in New Orleans knew very well what economic racism, systematic illiteracy and lack of decent transportation meant, because they lived it every day. And yet, Tim Russert can throw around five year old Census data quickly approaching its shelf-life like it is breaking news. For this reason it is important that I am completely clear on the following point: *what follows is not new*. The arguments I will make are not even close to being "mine," nor are they revolutionary in the "fresh ideas" use of the term. They are, instead, simply an attempt by one melanin-deficient kid to situate the ideas and apply the analytical tools of many intellectuals (both classically trained and organic) I have had the privilege to learn from, and to do so in a semi-logical way to better understand a certain historical subject: Post-Reconstruction North Carolina. Moreover, my style and methodology are intentionally modeled after the work of one of the greatest theoretical minds of the last century to have grappled with the Black national question: Harry Haywood. In its best reading, I hope that what follows might be thought to preface or deepen Haywood's seminal work *Negro Liberation*, published in 1948.

As I mentioned before, all I am doing is choosing to recognize that race does and has existed as a foundational component of US capitalism, intersecting with class dictatorship and male supremacy, and to describe this phenomena in a historically defined circumstance in the hope of learning something more and helping to raise key questions that seldom receive the type of attention from academics that they deserve.

Introduction

In 1877 white reactionaries overthrew the last radical regimes in the South through a mixture of election fraud and good old fashion violence, effectively ending a period of economic, social and political revolution.¹ Yet despite the hopes and rhetoric of these would be “Redeemers,” the region had been permanently altered by emancipation. The Bourbonists may have restored political power to the old plantation elite, but as a class their *modus operandi* had been thoroughly disrupted.² Like the Opium Wars in China, the Civil War had effectively opened the doors of the South to a foreign, colonial ruling class. Reconstruction and its defeat further guaranteed the continued possibility of direct investment into the region by Northern capitalists.

In spite of these undeniable facts, Henry Grady and other New South boosters attempted to “convince” the white South otherwise. A new day had dawned; the south already possessed all she might need. The road to development, industrialization, and independence, paved with healthy doses of paternalism and self-reliance was all but assured. Unfortunately for the idealism of this new southern proto-bourgeoisie, Northern capitalists had thoroughly ensured that any avenue other than an export-oriented development strategy would be, historically speaking, a road not taken. Between 1870 and 1910, this process intensified as the Southern economy was more deeply integrated into the industrial Northeast’s sphere of influence within the growing capitalist world-system. Likewise, the 20 years after Redemption saw struggle on a massive scale between the restored ruling class, their former slaves and working whites to define what kind of

¹ C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South: 1877-1913* (Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1951, 1971), p. 110.

² Jonathan M. Wiener, *Social Origins of the New South: Alabama, 1860-1885* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978), p. 3-5.

dictatorship the re-empowered planters would enjoy within this new, more limited context imposed by Northern capitalists. Such analysis is nothing new; arguments which seek to describe the prostrate state of the southern economy and its corresponding inability to industrialize have been made by reactionaries and radicals alike since Appomattox Courthouse. Using North Carolina as an example, this paper will engage with this argument in a broad sense.

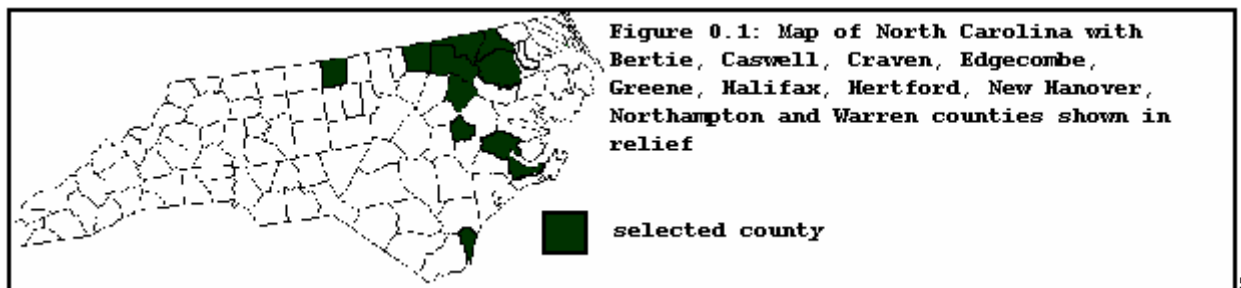
Within the capitalist world-system, any economy that is unable to engage in heavy industry is instead focused on the extractive export of raw materials, while lacking control of key indigenous industries, and maintaining productive relations and demographic patterns consistent with a semi-feudal mode of production is an underdeveloped economy.³ I will prove that the economic structure in many parts of post-Redemption North Carolina meets all of the aforementioned criteria often employed by development theorists to describe and define underdevelopment. However, in contrast to the dominant historical narrative that views the former Confederacy economically dependent on the industrial North East *in toto*, I will argue that instead of a general state-wide underdevelopment, North Carolina's history during this period was shaped primarily by Black national oppression. A nation is a historically constituted community of people, formed on the basis of a common territory, economic life, language, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture;⁴ a national people who are denied self-determination in any or all matters related to their definitive characteristics as described in the previous definition constitutes an oppressed nation.

One of the greatest dangers inherited from bourgeois philosophy is the tendency of treating historically defined phenomena as some reflection of the natural world. Real effort was taken throughout this paper to avoid this fallacy. However, due to the limits in depth and scale of this study, it is important to note

³ This definition, while not coming directly from any one author, is heavily informed by the theoretical work of Samir Amin, Andre Gunder Frank, Walter Rodney, Amilcar Cabral and Mao Tse Tung.

⁴ Joseph Stalin, *Marxism and the National Question* (New York: International Publishers, 1942), p. 12.

that there is nothing “natural” about any of the criteria that will be used to describe economic dependency. Indeed, the concept of “underdevelopment” stands juxtaposed against the white supremacist notions of “undeveloped” or “developing” economies. Deconstruction of such terms and their blame the victim, white-man’s-burdenesque foundations are legion; this is not the place to reenact settled arguments. It is important, however, to remind readers of this fact, mainly but not entirely to protect against the author’s shortcomings found herein.



Methodologically I will focus on Census data for the state of North Carolina and ten specific Black Belt counties to see if the terms “underdevelopment,” “dependency” and “national oppression” are appropriate to the situation found in these counties. The counties in question are Bertie, Caswell, Craven, Edgecombe, Greene, Halifax, Hertford, New Hanover, Northampton and Warren. Figure 0.1 provides a visual representation of the counties focused on in this study. These counties were chosen because of their continuous existence from 1870 to 1910 and the perpetual presence of an Afro-American majority or near majority, as recorded in each decennial Census from 1870 to 1910. All percentages are rounded to two (2) decimal places; where a single decimal place appears one should assume that the 3rd decimal caused the 2nd to round to a zero (0).

⁵ All maps generated by the *Historical Census Browser*, Retrieved [October 31, 2005], from the University of Virginia, Geospatial and Statistical Data Center: <http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/collections/stats/histcensus/index.html>.

1. North Carolina's Black Community

As stated above, a nation is a historically constituted community of people, formed on the basis of a common territory, economic life, language, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture. This does not mean that all nations follow the same unidirectional development path passing through key phases in European development;⁶ the definition of what constitutes a nation for many people in the global south simply “cannot rest on an appraisal of national development in Europe.”⁷ Other definitions have been put forth which might be used, i.e. Du Bois’s claim that nations have “a common history, common laws and religion, similar habits of thought and a conscious striving together for certain ideals of life;”⁸ but for the sake of simplicity and straightforwardness, the previously articulated definition will be used.

Black “citizens” of North Carolina surely had a common territory other than the state’s borders. This territory is largely consistent between counties; however strict county-to-county consistency should not be used as a limiting factor when discussing the territorial integrity of Black North Carolina. Historical instances of gerrymandering meant to “perpetuate the political impotence of the oppressed majority” must be seen in the larger historical context of “state” boundaries in Africa, the Balkans, Southwest Asia, *ad nauseum* imposed by imperialist power.⁹ Figure 1.1 visually illustrates the territorial integrity of Black concentration in the state’s Black Belt from 1870 until 1910. It is equally important to point out not simply the consistency of the Black demographic in the state’s eastern half, but the

⁶ These views are deeply rooted in the arguments made by Samir Amin in his 1989 work *Eurocentrism*.

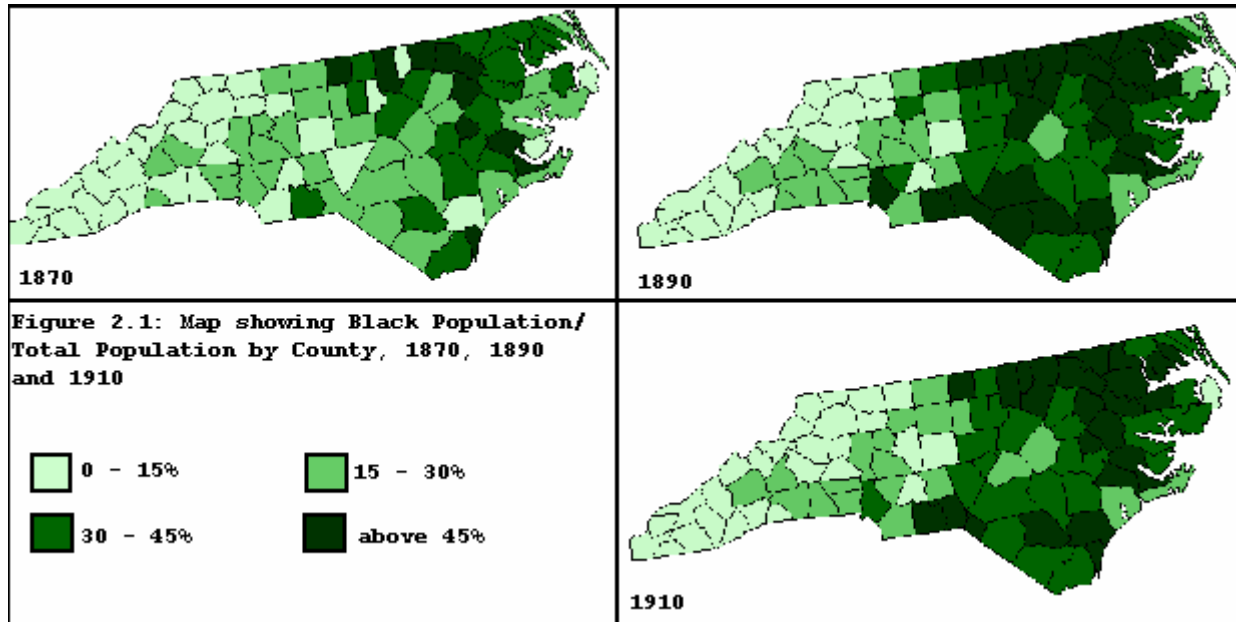
⁷ Freedom Road Socialist Organization, *Unity Statement on National Oppression, National Liberation and Socialist Revolution*, 1991.

⁸ W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Conservation of Races*.

⁹ For more discussion on the role played by the South’s county system, see Harry Haywood, *Negro Liberation* (New York: International Publishers, 1948), p. 13.

trend towards its increased concentration over time. In 1870 only 9 of the state's counties had a Black majority or near majority; by 1910 this number increased to over one-fourth of the total counties.

North Carolina's Black Belt must be understood in a multi-state context of the mostly unbroken chain of Black majority or near majority extending from southern Virginia, south to Florida, and west to the eastern portions of Texas and Arkansas.¹⁰ The demographic patterns of this multi-state region maintained were largely consistent with those found in North Carolina during this same time period, and county residents throughout the Black Belt experienced the same kinds of economic oppression discussed throughout much of this paper.



A nation enjoys a shared economic life. The nature of this shared economic life as experienced in Black Belt of the Tar Heel state will be the main subject of the next four sections. However, before we proceed, it is important to clarify that this “shared economic life” must be understood in the context of a world capitalist system. To divorce any national economy from this interdependent system is to misunderstand the very framework of dependency.

¹⁰ Harry Haywood, *Negro Liberation*, p. 11-12.

A nation processes a shared language and a common psychological make-up manifested in a common culture. The existence of Black culture has been well documented by scholars from multiple disciplines. Black culture was birthed as an expression of resistance through a process of forced resolution of African and European cultural influences.¹¹ Despite the severity of Black oppression under slavery, arguments that Afro-Americans suffered a sort of cultural genocide completely separating them from African cultural traditions have been thoroughly repudiated by anthropologists, historians and students of Cultural Studies since W.E.B. Du Bois's 1903 publication of *The Souls of Black Folk*. Melville Herskovits's study of Africanisms and their importance built on this foundation laid by Du Bois, Franz Boas and others;¹² since its publication nearly two generations of cultural anthropologists have demonstrated the viability of Black folklore, language, religious and family practices as distinct cultural expressions.

In North Carolina many aspects of the cultural paradigm just described have existed in sharper relief. Desendants of Black slaves from low-lands along the eastern seaboard of the Carolinas, Georgia and northern Florida have long been known to process some of the most profound Africanisms among persons of African descent in America.¹³ While there is significant heterodoxy among North and South Carolina (and the existence of Gullah culture may complicate the ability to make direct comparisons), a significant difference can be found between the intensity of Black culture in the coast-plain region and the two states' Piedmont.¹⁴ This difference directly corresponds to the differences in Black-white demographic patterns; and provides more evidence of Black cultural viability in places of Black majority in North Carolina and throughout the larger Black Belt.

¹¹ Harry Haywood, *Negro Liberation*, p. 146-152.

¹² For basic reading of Herskovits, his 1941 work *The Myth of the Negro Past* is highly suggested.

¹³ Herskovits, *The Myth of the Negro Past* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1941), p. 117.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 117-118.

Redemption removed any obstacles that previously prevented the Bourbon elite from maintaining white-supremacy through unabashed violence. The Klan's bulldozing tactics were in many ways simply reapplications of former slave patrols, even including the same personnel in some locales.¹⁵ Institutions associated with Black political power or economic self sufficiency were key targets of the three, early, Klan-like formations in the state: the White Brotherhood, Constitutional Union Guard and the Invisible Empire.¹⁶ The organizations' early activities largely focused on robbery and property destruction; the stealing of horses and other animals, as well as the destruction of farm equipment were targets chosen precisely because Black farmers needed them for successful agricultural operations.¹⁷ But these acts, even during key election years, paled to the urban massacre in Wilmington 1898 and the state-wide reactionary coup d'état that accompanied it.¹⁸

As a result of the bulldozing, lynching and urban massacres *a la* Wilmington 1898, many Blacks sought peace through migration.¹⁹ Even in the face of this centrifugal force, many Black North Carolinians chose to stay on the land that they rightly viewed as their own. Others found migration too difficult or too costly. However, some found the prospect for migration not simply economically impractical or emotionally inconceivable, but, as with so many freedoms after the white-supremacist revolutions of the late 1890s, intentionally thwarted by white power in the best of situations and outright denied in others.²⁰

¹⁵ Allen W. Trelease, *White Terror* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1971), p. xlii.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 68.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 189.

¹⁸ For an extensive treatment of the Wilmington riot, the conditions that preceded it, and its aims see Cecelski and Tyson's 1998 *Democracy Betrayed: The Wilmington Race Riot of 1898 and Its Legacy*.

¹⁹ For more extensive discussion of this phenomena, Nell Irvin Painter's 1976 *Exodusters* provides an in-depth look at such tendencies in other parts of the Black Belt, particularly Louisiana and east Texas.

²⁰ Honey, "Class, Race, and Power," in *Democracy Betrayed*, ed. David S. Cecelski and Timothy B. Tyson, 163-184 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), p. 177.

2. Heavy Industry

Development scholars have traditionally described dependent or underdeveloped economies as lacking the ability to engage in heavy industry. “Heavy industry” in the form of steel manufacturing and the production of electrical power “must be present” in order to make the machinery needed for all other manufacturing as well as agricultural mechanization.²¹

Following the Civil War, economic indicators show that the intensity of industrial production in the South had fallen below the already minuscule antebellum levels. Steel production stagnated, while the region’s share of pig iron production in national markets was cut in half.²² As for North Carolina, the state was thoroughly lacking in the goods needed for the development of “heavy industry,” most notably iron, coal, and large amounts of capital.²³ In fact in 1880, “no other southern state was as deficient in cash and productive assets as North Carolina.”²⁴ Table 2.1 shows economic figures for North Carolina, New York, Pennsylvania, and national totals in 1870 and 1910. Figures for iron and steel are included because, as Walter Rodney so pointedly stated in his foundational work on the underdevelopment of Africa, “the amount of steel used in a country is an excellent indicator of the level of industrialization.”²⁵

Data contained in Table 2.1 paints a picture of North Carolina’s long term economic backwardness. In 1870 North Carolina processed just over 1 percent of national manufacturing establishments, less than .7 percent of workers engaged in

²¹ Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1982), p. 18.

²² C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South*, p. 302.

²³ Hugh T. Lefler, *History of North Carolina Vol. 2* (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1956), p. 607.

²⁴ Dwight Billings, *Planters and the Making of a “New South,”* p. 52.

²⁵ Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, p. 17.

HEAVY INDUSTRY

manufacturing, and less than .4 per cent of national capital.²⁶ In addition, when compared to the number of establishments in leading steel and iron producer Pennsylvania and thoroughly capitalist New York, North Carolina's relative backwardness is all too obvious. Compared with national totals in 1870, the amount of capital invested in the state's steel and iron-manufacturing establishments is two millionths of a percent.

Table 2.1: 1870 & 1910 Manufacturing, Iron and Steel Statistics

Area		Number of	Number of	Amount of
Industry		Establishments	Wage Earners	Capital
North Carolina	(1870)	3,642	13,662	\$8,140,473
<i>Iron and Steel</i>		10	45	\$15,700
	(1910)	4,931	121,473	\$217,185,588
<i>Iron and Steel</i>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
New York	(1870)	36,206	351,800	\$366,994,320
<i>Iron and Steel</i>		52	5,737	\$7,173,700
	(1910)	44,935	1,003,981	\$2,779,496,814
<i>Iron and Steel</i>		34	12,389	\$101,119,161
Pennsylvania	(1870)	37,200	319,487	\$406,831,845
<i>Iron and Steel</i>		153	23,673	\$32,321,790
	(1910)	27,563	877,543	\$2,749,005,975
<i>Iron and Steel</i>		255	141,432	\$717,606,086
United States	(1870)	252,148	2,053,996	\$2,118,208,769
<i>Iron and Steel</i>		426	50,328	\$65,464,494
	(1910)	270,082	6,639,631	\$18,490,749,206
<i>Iron and Steel</i>		654	278,505	\$1,492,315,770

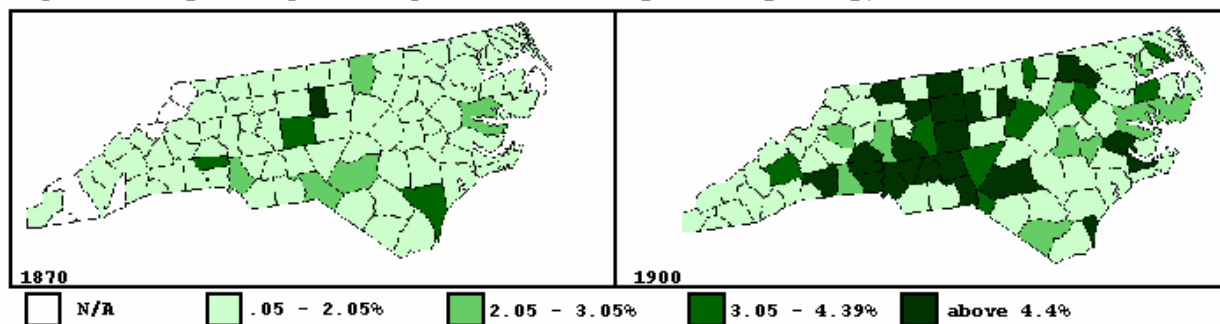
Source: 1870 Census of Wealth and Industry, 1890 Census of Manufactures, 1910 Census of Manufactures

²⁶ For figures on North Carolina's state totals for 1870, see 1890 United States Census of Manufactures, page 69. For national figures for 1870, see 1890 United States Census of Manufactures, page 67. Comparisons are my own secondary data analysis.

HEAVY INDUSTRY

The 1910 Census of Manufactures does not even list figures of North Carolina iron and steel manufacturing in the state industry breakdown of “other industries,” leaving one to assume that for all intents and purposes no iron or steel manufacturing was taking place in 1910. Attempts to establish Southern firms engaged in heavy manufacturing met low levels of success. Typifying the norm, the Southern Aluminum Company, a French-backed “independent” firm, lasted only two years before selling out to the Mellon aluminum trust.²⁷

Figure 2.1: Map showing Total Wage Earners/Total Population by County, 1870 and 1900



Residents of many Black Belt counties faced a scenario somehow even grimmer than state-wide conditions. The data found in Table 2.2 show the extent of this backwardness. Of the Black Belt counties included in the study only two, Craven (historically known for manufacturing and birthplace of Pepsi) and New Hanover (home of Wilmington, at the time North Carolina’s largest city and most active port²⁸), had an industrial workforce larger than the state average in either 1870 or 1900. Moreover, in both Censuses four of the ten counties had a proletariat that was less than 1 percent of the population. The maps of Figure 2.1 further illustrate this disconnect and easily show the hyper-concentration of manufacturing in the majority white Piedmont.

²⁷ C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South*, p. 305.

²⁸ Honey, “Class, Race, and Power,” p. 171.

Table 2.2: Manufacturing Establishments 1870, 1900 and 1910: State and Select County Totals

Area	Number of Wage Earners	Percent of Population	Area	Number of Wage Earners	Percent of Population
(1870)					
North Carolina	13,622	1.27%			
Bertie	42	0.32%	Halifax	62	0.30%
Caswell	166	1.03%	Hertford	65	0.70%
Craven	276	1.35%	New Hanover	869	3.11%
Edgecombe	27	1.02%	Northampton	135	0.92%
Greene	48	0.55%	warren	220	1.24%
(1900)					
North Carolina	70,570	3.73%			
Bertie	133	0.65%	Halifax	1,478	4.80%
Caswell	46	0.31%	Hertford	94	0.66%
Craven	1,653	6.84%	New Hanover	1,869	7.25%
Edgecombe	965	3.63%	Northampton	324	1.53%
Greene	65	0.54%	warren	133	0.69%

Source: 1870 Census of Wealth and Industry, 1890 Census of Manufactures, 1910 Census of Manufactures.

Blacks who lived outside of the state's Black Belt did not enjoy the fruits of industrialization in any widespread way either. The Constitutional Union Guard had instituted maximum wages for Blacks in several counties, including Warren and the Klan stronghold of neighboring Alamance, as early as 1869.²⁹ Such decrees often included provisions that Black and white laborers could not work side-by-side. As both an outgrowth of such directives as well as the ideological positions upon which they were based, many Afro-Americans were denied jobs in Tar Heel industry outright, including some of the least skilled jobs most available to recent rural-urban migrants.³⁰ The phenomena parallels employment discriminations in areas traditionally categorized as "colonial" holdings, such as Portugal's African colonies.³¹ Those who did find their ways into the mills and factories found themselves targets of the same kind of bulldozing faced by their sisters and brothers in the more rural settings as a direct result.

In addition to the amount of capital invested and the available manufacturing infrastructure, a lack of technical advancement is another key component of the underdevelopment of industry.³² Applications for patents related to mechanical cotton harvesting in the South were well below levels established for corn and wheat related patents in regions where these crops replaced cotton as the key cash crop.³³

By 1910, the state's manufacturing sector in much of the Piedmont was experiencing many of the key processes associated with capitalist development. Between 1890 and 1900 the number of establishments engaged in manufacturing state-wide nearly doubled (increasing by 97.05 percent). Comparatively, the data

²⁹ Allen W. Trelease, *White Terror*, p. 189-190.

³⁰ Dwight B Billings, *Planters and the Making of a "New South,"* p. 117-120.

³¹ Amilcar Cabral, "The Facts About Portugal's African Colonies," in *Unity and Struggle*, Amilcar Cabral, 17-27 (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1979), p. 17.

³² Thentio Dos Santos, "Structure of Dependence," in *The American Economic Review*, vol. 60 (1970), p. 234-235.

³³ Gavin Wright, *The Political Economy of the Cotton South*, p. 107-108.

for the ten Black Belt counties as an aggregate only saw the number of manufacturing establishments increase by 78.5 percent.³⁴ Nevertheless, any prosperity the common woman or man experienced as a result of this growth was to be short-lived. The first decade of the twentieth century saw the total number of manufacturing establishments in the state diminish by nearly 32 percent. A determinative factor here was the concentration occurring in key industries; for example, the tobacco industry saw a decline in the number of firms of just over 57 percent from 1900 to 1910.³⁵ This constriction was certainly felt in many Black Belt counties; especially in their large towns and cities, such as New Hanover's Wilmington.³⁶ Yet, alongside the decline in the total number of establishments, those establishments that remained increased rapidly in their size and productivity, which in turn further consolidated capital into fewer and fewer hands.³⁷

³⁴ Figures extrapolated from the *Historical Census Browser*, Retrieved [October 8-9, 2005], from the University of Virginia, Geospatial and Statistical Data Center.

³⁵ For 1900 tobacco figures, see page 495, 1900 United States Census of Manufactures; for 1910 figures, see page 914, 1910 United States Census of Manufactures.

³⁶ Honey, "Class, Race, and Power," p. 177.

³⁷ C Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South*, p. 309.

3. Export Orientation

In place of heavy industry, peripheral economies specialize in the production and export of extractive raw materials, e.g. minerals and agricultural produce. The emphasis on extractive exports coupled with a lack of heavy industry is not the result of internal inadequacy of peripheral economies; rather, superior levels of productivity in core areas compel peripheral economies to confine production to those industries where they possess a natural advantage.³⁸ The results - monocultural farming, deforestation, and non-sustainable mining to name a few - come at the expense of local markets and the local environment. For these reasons, the questions to be asked must not focus solely on levels of industrial production as explored in the previous section, but also on what industries in effect existed.

After Reconstruction, the South maintained its traditional role as the producer of ores, fuels and raw materials.³⁹ Any industrialization the South did experience gave rise to the establishment of “light industries.”⁴⁰ These “complementary economic activities” are often “established alongside...export sectors” in dependent economies.⁴¹ Table 3.1 contains information on key manufacturing industries in North Carolina. These industries, primarily engaged in “the first rough processing of [North Carolina’s] chief crops and resources,”⁴² are what neo-liberal economists might term the state’s “comparative advantage” (if labeling them as such would serve their interests at that given moment).⁴³ These

³⁸ Samir Amin, *Unequal Development* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1976), p. 200.

³⁹ C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South*, p. 302.

⁴⁰ Hugh T. Lefler, *History of North Carolina*, p. 607.

⁴¹ Theotio Dos Santos, “Structure of Dependence,” p. 232.

⁴² C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South*, p. 309.

⁴³ See Gavin Wright, *Political Economy of the Cotton South*, p. 111 on the misuse of this term.

industries are what Amin meant by “exotic agricultural produce and minerals” of which the state possesses a “natural advantage” in production.⁴⁴ North Carolina’s cheap labor, agreeable tax structure, and relatively new machinery augmented its closeness to raw materials such as cotton, tobacco and lumber.⁴⁵ The result was heavy Northern investment, comparable to English investment in Indian production of cotton goods at the time.⁴⁶

By employing such substantial shares of the state’s capital and proletariat and commanding close to 66 percent of aggregate values assigned to state products, these industries had major effects on North Carolina’s agricultural production. The racial divide inherent in this process must be acknowledged. As explained in Section 2, Afro-American Tar Heels were excluded from many manufacturing jobs as a matter of course. Tobacco was the first industry to break the state’s white united front in manufacturing, but these jobs were few and mostly located in cities and counties where the vast majority of Afro-Americans did not live.⁴⁷ Likewise there were many more Black farmers planting and harvesting tobacco and cotton than there were working in mills processing these crops.

The tobacco crop rose drastically between 1870 and 1890 in order to effectively supply both local and distant factories. Output in pounds increased a solid 142 percent between 1870 and 1880, and rose another 35 percent between 1880 and 1890; while national rates were only 79.9 and 3.3 percent, respectively. When translated into percent share of the national market, North Carolinian tobacco made up 4.2 percent of all tobacco grown in the United States in 1870 and 7.5 percent in 1890.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Amin, *Unequal Development*, p. 200.

⁴⁵ C Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South*, p. 306.

⁴⁶ See Edwin L. Godkin, quoted in C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South*, p. 306-307.

⁴⁷ For a discussion of the general openness of tobacco firms to the employment of Afro-Americans, see Dwight B Billings, *Planters and the making of a “New South,”* p. 117-121.

⁴⁸ For 1870 figures, see 1870 Census of Wealth and Industry, p. 216. For 1880, see 1880 Census of Agriculture, p. 250; and for 1890 figures, see 1890 Statistics of Agriculture, p. 421.

Table 3.1: Key Manufacturing Industries in North Carolina 1870 and 1910

<i>Industry</i>	<i>Percentage of Establishments</i>	<i>Percentage of Wage Earners</i>	<i>Percentage of Available Capital</i>	<i>Total Value of Industry Goods</i>
Tobacco	3.0%	10.7%	4.6%	\$718,765
	0.9%	7.5%	10.7%	\$718,765
Cotton	0.8%	9.9%	11.9%	\$1,280,035
	5.7%	38.9%	44.7%	\$72,680,385
Lumber	14.6%	17.7%	15.1%	\$2,107,313
	51.6%	34.4%	13.7%	\$33,524,653
Total (1870)	18.4%	38.3%	31.6%	\$4,106,133
(1910)	58.2%	80.8%	69.1%	\$142,191,677

Source: 1870 Census of Wealth and Industry, 1910 Census of Manufactures.

Table 3.2: Grain Production versus Population Growth in North Carolina

	<i>Indian Corn</i>	<i>Rice</i>	<i>Wheat</i>	<i>Population</i>
1870	18,454,215 bushels	2,059,281 lbs	2,859,879 bushels	1,071,361
1890	25,783,623 bushels	5,846,404 lbs	4,292,035 bushels	2,206,287

Source: 1870 Census of Wealth and Industry, 1890 Census of Agriculture, Historical Census Browser, Retrieved [November, 12, 2005], from the University of Virginia, Geospatial and Statistical Data Center: <http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/collections/stats/histcensus/index.html>.

Despite tobacco's importance in North Carolinian agriculture, cotton certainly remained "king." The amount of land devoted to cotton production in the state rose from 893,153 acres in 1880 to 1,007,020 acres in 1900. In other words, over 12 percent of the total improved acres in the state were devoted to cotton production in 1900. In 1870 Tar Heel farms produced 144,935 bales of cotton, only 4.8 per cent of the county's 3,011,996 bales. By 1900 the number of bales had risen to 438,622 round bales and 67 square bales, nearly a 203 percent increase in production. While this 1900 number represented only 4.6 of national bales produced, a decline in market share from 1880, the number of bales of Tar Heel cotton per Tar Heel acre had improved significantly compared to national ratios. State wide, it was .29 bales per acre in 1890 while the national ratio was closer to .37 bales per acre; by 1900 it was .44 bales per acre statewide while the national figure was .39 bales per acre.⁴⁹

This rising trend is more than a simple case of supply and demand. In many areas of the South, in order to receive any collateral, farmers were forced to devote large portions of their land to cotton production. This practice, known as the cotton lien, effectively trapped many farmers, especially Black farmers, in a cycle of perpetual debt peonage. This debt provided the legal cover for the continuation of Black forced labor throughout much of the south; this phenomenon often involved former slave owners and their former slaves. This dynamic is central to the semi-feudal nature of the region's economy (to be discussed further in Section 5). The southern merchant processed the ability to create debt at the end of a growing season simply because he processed the ledger books, while denying the mostly Black tenants any forum to demand redress of grievances.⁵⁰ The legal system allowed for forced labor and perpetual tethering of tenants to certain land plots as punishment for debt accrual. This is not simply economic oppression of

⁴⁹ For 1870 figures, see 1870 Census of Wealth and Industry, p. 216; for 1880 figures, 1880 Census of Agriculture, p. 236-237; for 1890, see 1890 Statistics of Agriculture, p. 395-396; and for 1900 figures, 1900 Census of Agriculture, p. 422-423, 425.

⁵⁰ For discussion of Southern crop lien and the role played by merchants, see Jonathan M. Wiener, *Social Origins of the New South: Alabama, 1860-1885*, p. 77-83.

post-Emancipation farmers, it is one historical form of what Rosa Luxemburg meant by constant inputs of capital into the capitalist world-system via primitive accumulation and super-exploitation.⁵¹ This is also a key source of the “unequal exchange” between peripheral goods and core capital Samir Amin, Andre Gunder Frank and others have described extensively in their published works in the region.⁵²

Forced cultivation through a credit lien system has been well documented as an aspect of national oppression economic face in Africa. Under Portuguese colonialism, Africans in Mozambique and Angola were forced to grow massive amounts of cotton, and by the early 1960s over 60,000 peasant families in Guinea were being made to grow peanuts in order to secure land and credit.⁵³ The increased reliance on a single crop coupled with the debt lien allows little room for even usual fluctuation in farm output. In such conditions, ever present aspects of agricultural production such as the threats of weather and pests are magnified into the building blocks widespread human catastrophe. While increases in production may have continued, the boll weevil outbreak of the 1890s devastated the crops, and as such the complete livelihoods of thousands of small farmers in North Carolina and through the entire cotton-producing region. While the effects of monocultural farming compounded by the boll weevil outbreak were felt throughout the state, the thoroughly rural eastern region of the state felt the crunch of these developments with a degree of intensity not felt by farmers in the Piedmont and Appalachian regions.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Rosa Luxemburg takes this phenomena as her main subject in her 1913 opus, *The Accumulation of Capital*. See especially Section Three, Chapters 27, 29 and 30.

⁵² See Amin *Unequal Development*, especially p. 135-143, 163-182 and 180-214; Andre Gunder Frank, *Dependent Accumulation and Underdevelopment* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1978), Chapter 2 p. 13-24, 103-123 and 172-174.

⁵³ Amilcar Cabral, “The Facts About Portugal’s African Colonies,” p. 21.

⁵⁴ Honey, “Class, Race, and Power,” p. 168.

In addition to issues of credit and rent, another serious result of the hyper-concentration on cotton was an agricultural economy unable to produce food at a rate to match population increases. Some historians blame the destruction caused by General Sherman and other Union armies as the cause of this trend. Historians Rodger Ransom and Richard Sutch argue that as the South's economy was re-integrated into national markets during Reconstruction and following Redemption, the value of cotton and the existence of the lien pushed many farmers towards more concentration in crops other than traditional foodstuffs.⁵⁵ Table 3.2 above shows trends in grain production juxtaposed with rates of population growth.

These figures do point to an increase in the amount of grain produced in North Carolina. Rice saw an increase of 180 percent, corn was up by 40 percent of its 1870 level and wheat production increase by slightly over 50 percent. However, in this same period the total state population jumped nearly 106 percent. In the area of livestock, the available pork per capita was cut in half following the Civil War, and stocks of cattle and sheep showed "roughly the same proportional decline."⁵⁶ As a fundamental consequence of this shift, North Carolina began importing meat from the newly industrialized slaughter houses and canning factories of the Midwest and grains from the expanding homesteads and corporate owned farms in the Great Plains. All the while the South's small farmers and tenants accrued increasingly larger amounts of debt as they had to increasingly borrow against future crops for food in addition to their farming needs.

The role played by cotton during this period, and especially in areas of Black predominance, is a text-book example of what Ernesto Guevara labeled as the main hallmark of dependency in the modern age: "dependence of a given country on a single primary commodity, which sells only in a specific market in quantities

⁵⁵ See generally Ransom and Richard Sutch, *One Kind of Freedom* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1977, 2001), p. 154-156, 158.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, p. 151.

EXPORT ORIENTATION

restricted to the needs of that market.”⁵⁷ That is to say that the economy in areas of Afro-American majority lacked heavy industry and was instead focused on the extractive export of raw materials.

⁵⁷ Ernesto “Che” Guevara, *On Development*, Speech delivered March 25, 1964 at the plenary session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

4. Foreign Control of Domestic Industry

Underdeveloped economies are dominated by a lack of control over key domestic industries. This is often a result of a two-fold process of first destroying whatever indigenous production and industry exists and secondly replacing those industries with foreign owned plants through direct foreign investment.

In the post-war period several Black owned businesses were created. Of these, the vast majority were established in the state's coastal plain east of Raleigh (87.3 percent); a greater concentration of Black owned shops were present in counties of overwhelming Black predominance, including Edgecombe, Warren, Halifax and other counties in this study.⁵⁸ Even despite the presence of an Afro-America consumer base, Black owned businesses in North Carolina were increasingly forced into states of dependency on white power in the state after Reconstruction's defeat. Some owners chose to down-play or intentionally conceal their race, while others openly played the role of compradors to Conservative power in the state.⁵⁹ However, with Democratic control restored in Raleigh, the white ruling class and its agents quickly began to usurp local power which had facilitated Black autonomy in some sectors. Among these sectors were establishments engaged in liquor sales. Two years following the passage of a law meant to restrict access to liquor licenses, nearly one half of Black firms engaged in the selling of liquor had closed shop. This represents somewhere close to 10 percent of Black firms state-wide.

To be sure, the industrialization described in Section 3 did have some positive impacts on parts of North Carolina's business community, especially in

⁵⁸ Robert C. Kenzer, "The Black Businessman in the Postwar South: North Carolina, 1865-1880," *The Business History Review* 63, no. 1 (1989), p. 66.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, p. 71-74.

central and western portions of the state. Northern investments increased state tax revenues, and the concentration of cotton mills and other industry in the Piedmont gave rise to retail trade in the newly formed and expanding towns.⁶⁰ However, the state's "mines, farms, and forests" continued to produce largely for export and further processing in the North and abroad,⁶¹ often times to be sold back to the South in a pattern of triangular trade.⁶² Even firms devoted to cotton goods, North Carolina's great industrial hope, were unable to "escape the general pattern of colonialism," instead specializing in yarn and coarse cloth for final processing in the Northeast.⁶³ Given the fact that North Carolina's goods were valuable only after being shipped to the Northeast or overseas to England,⁶⁴ and that the best that could be hoped by way of industry that produced finished consumer goods was North Carolina's furniture manufacturing, it is clear that any development possibilities enjoyed by Tar Heels was thoroughly dependent on white metropolis centered in London and New York.⁶⁵

C. Vann Woodward argued that the exploitative fares farmers were forced to pay in order to move their goods on Northern monopolist J. P. Morgan's railroad lines, rails that virtually surrounded the reliant Piedmont "cotton-mill country" and the state's tobacco growing regions, did little to help the predicament.⁶⁶ Although Billings disagrees with Woodward on several points concerning the extent of Yankee control of Southern industries, he too acknowledges that dependence upon Northern capital for railroad construction, resulting in Northern ownership of the

⁶⁰ C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South*, p. 318.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 311.

⁶² Dwight B. Billings, *Planters and the making of a "New South,"* p. 25.

⁶³ C Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South*, p. 308.

⁶⁴ Dwight B Billings, *Planters and the making of a "New South,"* p. 95.

⁶⁵ C Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South*, p. 310; Hugh T. Lefler, *History of North Carolina*, p. 619-620.

⁶⁶ C Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South*, p. 293.

shipping lines, “compromised the extent of regional independence that [local elites] envisioned in 1868.”⁶⁷ Of those industries that were able to overcome this initial weak footing, most fell into the hands of “Eastern bankers.”⁶⁸ The fact that the local agents of these Northern firms were often former slave holders and big-name Confederates, like Edgecombe county’s Robert Rufus Bridges, further illustrates the degree of exploitation Black Tar Heels experienced.⁶⁹ Even when men like Bridges were able to maintain ownership of some Southern industries, like many of the cotton mills, they were still dependent on infusions of Northern capital, and their profits were based upon the continuation of Northern or English demand.⁷⁰ Moreover, the Southern Rockefellers and Chases often left the South, as was the case with tobacco tycoon Buck Duke.⁷¹

With regards to agricultural production, the “cotton lien” system discussed above added to the lessening of local control. To be sure, local merchants and planters were the main agents in this practice; however, their dependence upon Northern financiers for capital and markets caused a double penetration by these Northern capitalists into the Southern market. By controlling the purse strings of local credit providers and demanding that they adopt an export oriented development strategy, Northern bankers and mill owners are partially responsible for the actions of these local elites *vis-à-vis* their tenants and local yeomen. For this reason, the tactics employed by peripheral elites, be it cheating a tenant, eviction, bulldozing, or the sort of violence seen in Wilmington *circa* 1898, cannot be separated – systematically speaking – from this “hidden Klan” in the Northern metropolis. The economy created through collusion these former slave-holders and new “absentee owners” under the direction of Northern capitalists was

⁶⁷ Dwight B Billings, *Planters and the Making of a “New South,”* p. 95.

⁶⁸ C Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South,* p. 302.

⁶⁹ Dwight B Billings, *Planters and the Making of a “New South,”* p. 75, 77.

⁷⁰ C Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South,* p. 308.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 308.

increasingly unable to respond to the underdevelopment the South faced, a crisis borne mostly by freedmen and women due to Reconstruction's failure.⁷²

⁷² C. Vann Woodward, *The Origins the New South*, p. 311.

5. Semi-Feudal Mode of Production

Peripheral states maintain semi-feudal modes of production. Industrialized economies, economies where the “greater part of [the] working population is engaged in industry rather than agriculture,”⁷³ requires the concentration of labor for heavy industry and capital-intensive production. Production in underdeveloped economies does not require high level of population density, the concentration of workers into large city centers, or the development of a large proletariat; in fact, such economic systems require nearly the diametrical opposite in terms of productive relations. As discussed in Section 2, such regions tend to “specialise [sic] in a single crop, especially in periods of rising prices, and to engage in extensive agriculture that [is] none the less exhaustive of the soil and the lives of the laborers.”⁷⁴ For this reason, according to Dwight Billings, the tendency of plantation societies is towards underdevelopment; whereas some “backwater regions” have been able to overcome weak starting points, plantation systems tend not to.⁷⁵ Part of the reason for this persistent disadvantage stems from the fact that in economies where a semi-feudal or servile labor mode of production exists, the primary means of production are not mills devoted to steel smelting or the production of advanced consumer goods. By intention the primary means of production are the land, agricultural implements, and livestock.

With a 1910 population of 2.2 million, North Carolina had seen a 106 percent increase in total population in the four decades since 1870. Yet, the state had not seen the massive shifts in population that Illinois had seen with Chicago or

⁷³ Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, p. 16.

⁷⁴ Andre Gunder Frank, *Dependent Accumulation and Underdevelopment*, p. 54.

⁷⁵ See Dwight Billings, *Planters and the making of a “New South,”* Chapter 2, especially p. 15.

even Georgia's Atlanta.⁷⁶ In 1910 only 5.5 percent of North Carolinians worked for wages in manufacturing enterprises. The region had long standing difficulties in attracting immigrants to settle sparsely populated areas, develop untapped resources, and augment its workforce.⁷⁷ The fact that the state's foreign born population, which had grown by nearly 50 percent between 1870 and 1910, was still at an infinitesimal .27 percent of the total population in 1910 is a testament to this.⁷⁸

Table 5.1: Population Trends, North Carolina 1870 and 1910

	<i>Total Population</i>	<i>Total Number of Farms</i>	<i>Percentage of Farms Cultivated by Owners</i>	<i>Percentage of Farms Rented for Share of Crop</i>
1880	1,399,750	157,609	66.55%	27.97%
1900	1,893,810	224,637	50.54%	32.54%
1910	2,206,287	253,725	57.3%	32.42%

Source: 1880 Census of Agriculture, 1900 Census of Agriculture, 1910 Census of Agriculture and the Historical Census Browser. Retrieved from the University of Virginia, Geospatial and Statistical Data Center: <http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/collections/stats/histcensus/index.html>.

In 1880 North Carolina was one of the least urbanized states; only Arkansas and Mississippi were more rural.⁷⁹ This rural "predominance" continued in full force until as late as 1900.⁸⁰ Population density, while up from its 1870 level of 22.1 persons per square mile, was only 39.0 persons per square mile in 1900. In 1910 the total urban population was a tiny 318,474 or just above 14 percent of total state population. Even as late as 1900, no North Carolinian towns appear in the

⁷⁶ This phenomena is alluded to above, see note 12 and Gavin Wrights discussion on the mechanization of Southern agriculture.

⁷⁷ C Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South*, p. 297.

⁷⁸ *United States Historical Census Browser*, Retrieved [October 8-9, 2005], from the University of Virginia, Geospatial and Statistical Data Center.

⁷⁹ Dwight Billings, *Planters and the Making of a "New South,"* p. 53.

⁸⁰ Hugh T. Lefler, *History of North Carolina*, p. 620.

census of Populations tables for cities with at least 25,000 inhabitants.⁸¹ The data in Table 5.1 illustrate trends for farming in North Carolina between 1880 and 1910.

Between 1870 and 1910, the total number of farms grew by 171 percent, 65 percentage points higher than population growth for the same period. Between 1870 and 1890 the number rose from 93,565 to 178,359. By 1910 the Census of Agriculture reported 253,725 farms in operation.⁸² In 1880 close to 67 percent of farms in the state were worked by their owners, 5.5 percent were rented by tenants making monthly payments, and nearly 28 percent were worked for shares of crop produced on the land. By 1910 the number of farms worked by their owners had fallen to 57 percent, those farms rented for a share of the crop had increased to over 31 percent, and the remaining 12 percent of farms were rented for monthly or annual cash payments.⁸³ This net loss in the ratio of farms to people and the increase in the number of farmers living under precarious tenant relations resulted in increased urbanization as “bankrupt croppers and tenants” abandoned or were evicted from their homes. Many who could headed for the mill towns and cities.⁸⁴

The situation faced by many in areas of Black predominance was much starker. Table 5.2 illustrates the disconnect between state level figures and aggregate figures from the ten Black Belt counties focused on in this study. While the percentage of farms worked for a share of the crop produced varies for the two decades in question (once higher than the state average by 1.58 percent and once lower by 0.99 percent), the divergence in land and farm ownership – the primary means of production in most of these counties – is representative of many of the other aspects of capitalist underdevelopment explored in the previous sections.

⁸¹ C Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South*, p. 293.

⁸² For 1870 figures, see 1870 Census of Wealth and Industry, p. 359-360; for 1890 figures, see 1890 Statistics of Agriculture, p. 74-75; and for 1910 figures, see 1910 Census of Agriculture, p. 222-223.

⁸³ *Historical Census Browser*, Retrieved [October 8-9, 2005], from the University of Virginia, Geospatial and Statistical Data Center: <http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/collections/stats/histcensus/index.html>.

⁸⁴ C Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South*, p. 305.

Table 5.2: Farming Statistics, 1880 and 1900: State and Select County Totals

Area	Farms Worked by Owners	Farms Worked by Sharecroppers	Area	Farms Worked by Owners	Farms Worked by Sharecroppers
1880					
North Carolina	66.55%	27.97%			
County Aggregate	55.32%	29.55%			
Bertie	68.90%	26.96%	Halifax	44.17%	25.75%
Caswell	60.35%	34.12%	Hertford	75.80%	16.04%
Craven	55.41%	27.04%	New Hanover	58.17%	27.89%
Edgecombe	44.43%	47.37%	Northampton	68.48%	20.36%
Greene	62.19%	31.97%	Warren	37.90%	33.70%
1900					
North Carolina	50.54%	32.54%			
County Aggregate	36.60%	31.55%			
Bertie	48.07%	23.28%	Halifax	29.58%	21.18%
Caswell	34.73%	55.01%	Hertford	47.04%	29.31%
Craven	51.30%	21.04%	New Hanover	41.69%	26.91%
Edgecombe	26.01%	54.56%	Northampton	40.08%	22.95%
Greene	28.73%	56.88%	Warren	29.66%	16.16%

Source: Historical Census Browser, Retrieved [October 16, 2005], the University of Virginia, Geospatial and Statistical Data Center: <http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/collections/stats/histcensus/index.html>.

Freedpeople identified land ownership as the key victory that must be won if Emancipation and Reconstruction were to successfully alter the living conditions of small time farmers, Black and white both, throughout the former Confederacy. The picture painted in Table 5.2 represents that statistical outcome of this demand and the defeat of the intense Black-led struggle to win it. The defeat of this demand is abundantly clear when comparing county and state averages in 1880 and 1900, as shown in Table 5.2. In 1880 the county-state deficits were over 10 percentage points; by 1900 the county-state discrepancy in farm ownership had risen to nearly 15 percentage points. These land relationships are very similar to those described by Amilcar Cabral in his 1960 indictment of Portuguese colonialism, *The Facts About Portugal's African Colonies*.⁸⁵

Yet, in the initial years after Reconstruction mass movements demanding land reform saw major victories, especially with regards to the fracturing of the latifundia's personal holdings. Table 5.3 shows the massive decrease in the number of plantations, farms with over 500 acres, in the period between 1860 and 1880. The counties in this study contained roughly 9 percent of the state's farms in 1860, yet represented over 30 percent of the state's plantations! A full 7 percent of the farms in the 10 counties were larger than 500 acres. Still, by 1807 the number of plantations in these Black Belt counties had been reduced by nearly a half, and the ratio of plantation to total farms reduced by nearly 65 percent as a result of struggle! State-wide results conform to this trend, albeit with milder figures. Tar heels saw the number of plantations state-wide down by a third, with the ratio of plantations to total farms down by more than 50 percent.

Thousands of farmers, both Black and white spent a good part of their lives engaged in struggle to produce these amazing victories. Given the even weaker starting point they faced, the work of Black farmers in areas of Black predominance is a true testament to that nation's lasting sprit of resistance; and their hard work and sacrifice must not be forgotten. Redemption saw this work, this early promise of what might have been thoroughly destroyed. Sharecropping

⁸⁵Amilcar Cabral , "The Facts About Portugal's African Colonies," p. 19-21.

was not the Bourbon elite's first choice; instead it was the outcome of certain concessions (most notably the end of gang labor farming) and the massive campaigns of violent repression led by the Klan. Only in this context can one understand the rapid rise of the sharecropping phenomena from practically non-existent in 1870, to a growing force in 1880, to its consolidated form in 1900 (See Table 5.2). The latifundia had to make up for the early losses shown in Table 5.3 before they could concentrate on the re-establishment of their racial/national dictatorship. Share-cropping, like lynching and credit lien, was a means to this end.

Table 5.3: Plantation Statistics 1860 and 1870

Area	Number of Plantations	Plantations as % of Farms	Area	Number of Plantations	Plantations as % of Farms
1860					
North Carolina	1,495	2.23%	County Aggregate	462	6.99%
Bertie	63	8.58%	Halifax	68	9.15%
Caswell	74	10.69%	Hertford	29	6.36%
Craven	19	2.75%	New Hanover	14	2.12%
Edgecombe	63	7.94%	Northampton	51	6.05%
Greene	16	3.67%	Warren	65	11.34%
1870					
North Carolina	1,005	1.07%	County Aggregate	228	2.51%
Bertie	31	3.85%	Halifax	46	3.6%
Caswell	9	1.06%	Hertford	5	0.62%
Craven	5	0.40%	New Hanover	5	0.75%
Edgecombe	41	6.20%	Northampton	37	3.98%
Greene	13	2.35%	Warren	36	2.83%

Source: Historical Census Browser, Retrieved [October 16, 2005], the University of Virginia, Geospatial and Statistical Data Center: <http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/collections/stats/histcensus/index.html>.

These trends brought consistent growth to North Carolina's urban areas as many small farmers were swallowed up by the reemergence of plantations and the increased reliance on sharecropping. The steady growth seen in the cotton mills of the Piedmont region, home to approximately 90 percent of the cotton manufacturing in 1900,⁸⁶ seems to support the existence of migration to cotton mill towns by former small time farmers throughout the state.

This migration was shaped by the American equivalent to the French Restoration throughout much of the south. And yet, migration must be seen through the lenses of privilege and means, prerequisites that many Blacks, especially those living in the most underdeveloped parts of the state lacked. For this reason the majority of these early migrants came from the predominantly white Piedmont. The jobs these migrants found did not provide real hope for intergenerational upward mobility. As explained above, light industries had been attracted initially in part due to low wages and long work hours. Furthermore, the majority of wage earners in key industries such as tobacco were women and children,⁸⁷ groups working for "pin money" as far as both bosses and labor unions were concerned.

Many Black Tar Heels resisted the gravitational pull towards the state's center. Prior to the waves of Great Migration that followed the first decade of the new century, areas of Black concentration remained heavily Black, even in the face of growing Black minorities (and some majorities) in several mill towns. The new urban and industrial centers of the white Piedmont incorporated displaced whites from the surrounding farms, thus remaining predominately white. As explained above, the cotton mills, furniture factories and many other industries continued to exist largely outside of the Black lived-experience during this period.

⁸⁶ Hugh T. Lefler, *History of North Carolina*, p. 614.

⁸⁷ C Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South*, p. 309.

6. Conclusion

Henry Grady's vision of a New South offered the chimera of development in all its mythical glory. The South would move forward to grow and prosper like the states that had previously so fully defeated it. Yet, "as the old century drew to a close and the new century progressed through the first decade, the penetration of the South by Northeastern capital continued at an accelerated pace."⁸⁸ As Southern industry took root it remained tied to agricultural production and engaged in the manufacture and export of raw materials and cheap goods. As Populism rose to challenge the new bourgeois world-view, pro-capitalist Democrats smashed it much the same as they had smashed any hope at a racially just society a generation before. The defeat of Fusionist Populism in North Carolina was fundamentally about the defeat of a strategic alliance between poor whites and oppressed Blacks from multiple classes, a defeat largely rooted in white desertion. As part of the larger South the state had been brought into the fold. Although Marx and Engles's proclamation of the death of a feudal agricultural system in the U.S. South was premature, integration into the capitalist world-system, a very real but sometimes poorly articulated concept for Marx and Engles, had most certainly taken place. The mantra of capitalist development could not be destroyed and the sweeping bourgeois push could not be turned back in the cotton south.

But this underdevelopment was not monolithic; instead, as with all aspects of capitalist political economy, it was thoroughly varied. That said, historical evidence and the lived experience of tens of millions of Black folks throughout the South point to a clearly observable phenomena that is absent all to often from the

⁸⁸ C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South*, p. 293.

CONCLUSION

analytical framework of many Southern historians, present day leftists and radical academics. Black Tar Heels possessed many of the characteristics used by students of history to define national community. Certain criteria may have been stronger at some points than others, but this does not negate the fundamental fact that these people, with their sisters and brothers throughout the Black Belt were a national people. Likewise, Black communities in the North Carolina faced underdevelopment in ways not experienced, in either quantitative degree or qualitative reality, in areas of white predominance throughout the state. They faced a historically defined oppression felt by people of color around the world, and this oppression has a name: national oppression. Imperialism, first through outright colonialism and later by means of structural dependence has defined this phenomenon in a world-wide context. We must reject notions of American exceptionalism and call this oppression for what it is.

When we treat Black national oppression as one instance of a known historical phenomenon, key questions about the history of Black freedom struggles are forced onto the scholarly agenda. The treatment of Garveyism and other forms of Black Nationalism following the Great Migration by some self-purported radical academics as some sort of mental illness with the unintentional effect of undermining working class solidarity in America is further bankrupted. Similarly, connection between the last great wave of Black-led struggle for national liberation, the Civil Rights and later Black Power movements and other movements across the globe demanding decolonialization is put in much sharper relief. We must recognize these revolutionary movements and their nationalist currents for what they were: natural responses to the collective grievances of the Black masses. Garveyism has gone, but Black Nationalism remains. This key light-bulb for Harry Haywood remains as true today as it did seventy-five years ago. Haywood and his comrades were right to demand that the ComIntern and the US Communist Party take up the Black Nation Thesis. Current events in the Gulf Coast as well as the daily lived experiences of Black folks throughout the U.S. must remind us all that such questions are not ones of “emphasis” or “theoretical”

CONCLUSION

difference. They are key questions of line that the U.S. left, and by extension left-historians and scholars, must incorporate into all aspects of our work. This is not moralistic non-sense. Rather, as the history of underdevelopment and struggle in the Tar Heel state so clearly shows, they are questions of strategy. If we are to learn from history in a truly dialectic nature, then we must truly engage with this thesis, and attempt to answer the historical questions it raises.

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