



**Huw T. David.** *Trade, Politics, and Revolution: South Carolina and Britain's Atlantic Commerce, 1730-1790.* Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2018. 280 pp. \$59.99, cloth, ISBN 978-1-61117-894-4.

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David Huw's *Trade, Politics, and Revolution: South Carolina and Britain's Atlantic Commerce, 1730-1790* highlights the critical relationship between London's "Carolina merchants" and the South Carolina merchants in America for whom they petitioned, lobbied, and advocated in the eighteenth century. This relationship evolved before, during, and after the American Revolution as their political and commercial interests disentangled. David argues that by exploring the nuanced commercial and economic interests of London's Carolina merchants, we may better understand "how economic and political forces were interrelated in the growing disenchantment of South Carolinians with their metropolitan trading partners and the system they represented" (p. 2). Thus, David's Atlantic approach adds another layer of complexity to the American Revolution: though the relationship between London Carolina merchants and South Carolinians was lucrative, their economic interests could only remain intact so long as their political interests were aligned. Furthermore, the tensions that developed between British merchants and their counterparts in South Carolina "reflected in microcosm with geopolitical shifts of the time and show at an individual level how disenchantment with and then resistance to imperial authority developed" (p. 6).

David identifies the complex aspects of the London merchants' lives that made them so invested in South Carolina's well-being, both politically and commercially. London merchants were tied to South Carolina because many of them had lived there for an extended period of time, perhaps working as ship captains or serving as commercial apprentices before entering the trading business (chapter 1). Thus, they had family, property (absentee landholding is the subject of chapter 3), and social connections across the Atlantic. These personal factors compounded the commercial and economic interests that drove London merchants to work in the interests of the colony. This was unique for the mainland colonies and provided the foundation for "the particular activism" of South Carolina's London merchants (p. 72).

One of the first major successes of the London merchants focused on South Carolina's staple cash crop: the 1730 Rice Act. The act was the result of twenty years of petitioning and lobbying, which resulted in the liberalization of the trade of thousands of barrels of rice to the Iberian Peninsula while still fitting into the mercantilist paradigm. Direct export would benefit South Carolina but would also benefit Britain in South Carolina's demand for boats and timber. Britain's 1748 Indigo

Bounty encouraging the production of indigo in South Carolina with a sixpence-per-pound bounty on imports of indigo further demonstrated how Carolina merchants aspired to fulfill both South Carolina and London interests. Though they were not always successful (for example, in their fight against the impressment of traders in the Royal Navy during the War of Jenkins' Ear [1739-48] and King George's War [1744-48]), merchants in London fighting on South Carolinians' behalf solidified confidence in their relationship and assured mutual interests. Petitions to the royal government "articulated a familiar rhetoric of economic patriotism, carefully attuned to prevailing political-economic discourse" that sought to help both Britain and South Carolina (p. 64).

David identifies a shift in the relationship between South Carolina and London merchants in the 1760s in chapter 4. This evolution was not due solely to the political ideologies of the merchant-planter elites, as has been argued by Robert Weir. Here is the crux of David's argument: as commercial aspects of their relationship began to devolve (in the wake of growing condemnation of British mercantilism, growing commercial disagreements, and generational shifts), so too did the political aspects of their relationship. This growing distrust between Charles Town's merchants and their London counterparts was impacted by, and was indicative of, growing colonial objections to British subjugation. It was both acutely personal and symbolic of the growing misalignment between colonies and mother country. Furthermore, Charles Town merchants increasingly interpreted London merchants' political actions—lobbying against the Mutiny and Stamp Acts—as evidence of economic greed rather than altruistic defense of justice and the constitution. Though commercial interests had always been a factor in the lobbying and petitioning by London merchants on South Carolina's behalf, changes in their business practices suggested that the former were working with London's interest in mind rather than Charles Town's. The new generation of London

Carolina traders required bonds and stronger contracts, did not have the background of living in South Carolina to tie them personally to the colony, and devalued indigo (the colony's second most valuable export).

South Carolinians drew a parallel with British efforts to gain greater control over the colonies as the London merchants basked in affluence and sought to gain more power in an increasingly imbalanced relationship. By extension, London merchants' failure to petition or lobby on contentious political matters of the 1760s and 1770s (coastal shipping, the Townshend Duties, etc.) demonstrated that Britain's merchants "were not willing to risk their role and influence as commercial interlocutors on matters of political principle, especially where these matters seemed to have little bearing on their trade" (p. 122). This would have a profound impact on the resumption of trade after the Revolutionary War. David concludes *Trade, Politics, and Revolution* with the aftermath of the war, arguing that although there were "structural continuities" in trade after the war, South Carolina merchants' selection of pro-American sympathizers with whom to trade is evidence of a more nuanced reality (p. 132).

*Trade, Politics, and Revolution* is a thorough exploration of the merchant relationships between South Carolina and London that draws upon an impressive archival base, including correspondence, petitions, newspapers, and merchants' logs. Though David explores the historiographical debates in terms of South Carolina's commercial and political role in the eighteenth century, there is a presumption of historiographical knowledge regarding the American Revolution, the role of South Carolina in the Revolution as compared to other colonies, and the larger debate regarding the causes of the war. Therefore, David's book is likely to find its audience among scholars, graduate students, and upper-level courses on Atlantic history, the American Revolution, and South Carolina.

David's work is an important contribution to the history of South Carolina and the American Revolution, as he explores how and why South Carolina's merchant-planter elite distanced themselves from the mutually beneficial relationship with their London correspondents. More broadly, his work challenges previous interpretations of the hostility between South Carolina and London merchants, and how this reflected, by extension, antagonism between North America and Britain. David demonstrates that the dissolution of these commercial and political relationships was not brought about by economic or political tensions, but that rather the picture is more nuanced, as economics and politics were inextricably entwined.

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