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Migration and Development in the Antebellum South 1790-1861

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Introduction

Since its conquest by European settlers, the American South has relied on rural activities, and its economy was based on agriculture and more specifically on cash crop and plantation systems. The main crops cultivated in this region were tobacco, indigo, and sugar. By the end of the American Revolutionary War, the progressive conquests of the West and the South enlarged the young Union, and by the late 1790s, the Deep South began to develop. With the invention of the cotton gin in 1793, in this new region the production of cotton followed an exponential growth rate, accompanied by a huge need for slave labor. “King Cotton”¹, as James Henry Hammond called it, was born. This name was perfectly appropriate to the situation, cotton soon became the most important element of American exports, and by 1860, American cotton supplied 75 percent of the world's demand. At the basis of this gigantic production, the slave population was sacrificed for the sake of a minority of plantation owners. Not only did they have to endure particularly harsh working and living conditions, they were also submitted to their masters' will regarding their transfer to another plantation, to another region. This gave free rein to traumatizing family separations, and their consequences in slaves' personal lives. Their answers to these inhumane conditions were most of the time both violent and very risky. The supreme rebellion was to run away from the plantation and never come back – if possible.

Successive phases of movements built up the Old South. As far as the settlers are concerned, two main phases can be observed, the first being the colonization of the region until the end of the 1810s, and the second, the apparition of a very still population, deeply settled, apart from the constantly moving population of the North, enduring endless waves of immigration from Europe. Regarding the slave population, various types of movements also shaped the region. The slave trade obviously

¹James Henry Hammond's speech “Cotton is King” before the Senate as a response to Kansas' entry in the Union under the Lecompton Constitution, on March 4, 1858. *Selections from the Letters and Speeches of the Hon. James H. Hammond, of South Carolina* (New York: John F. Trow & Co., 1866), 311–322.

determined greatly the economy of the region, as a “sensitive reflector of current and future business prospects”². Moreover, the shift from the Transatlantic Slave Trade to an internal slave trade is revealing of the growing controversy around slavery. Likewise, runaway slaves and the businesses they engendered cristalized the various ideologies of slavery.

The time limitation of this study runs from 1790 to 1861. The study of population movements requires census informations, data about the population of a particular place at a particular moment, in order to compare these informations and draw a pattern of these movements, their meanings, causes, consequences. As the first federal census of the United States occurred in 1790, this study begins in 1790, seven years after the end of the American Revolutionary War. The Civil War and the population movements that took place during that period, from 1861 to 1865, are very specific and would require a complete study, therefore the timeline of this study ends in 1861, with Lincoln's election as President of the United States.

Population movements shaped the American society. This study focuses on the way population movements shaped the society of the American South in particular, and defined its identity during the golden age of the plantation system, showing both its assets and weaknesses. Two specific types of population have to be distinguished, which had different – although intertwined – impacts on this society. On the one hand, the colonizing population, of European origins, who fought the wilderness and the Indians, swept away everything on its path, that is to say erased what existed in order to create something new, and rapidly became a powerful nation. In the Old South, a region that does not seem to have ever been young, the population pattern was a specific first ever on the New Continent. The settlers who arrived in the Deep South were American immigrants, as opposed to the rest of the country

² Robert Evans, Jr, “The Economics of American Negro Slavery,” *Aspects of Labor Economics*, ed. Universities-National Bureau (Pinceton University Press, 1962) 186

where mostly European immigrants arrived. These settlers were moving from one region to another within the same country, and were never to leave this new region. The society that developed in the Old South was economically based on the plantation system, a system that socially shaped the whole region. The most important aspect of this plantation system was probably that it relied on slave labor. As a result of this specific way of tackling work, the Black population, the slaves in particular, have been part of this society from the very beginning.

Considering these elements, coupled with the economic and political atmosphere of the period, by the 1820s onward the situation of the American South became more and more strained, and new issues emerged, questioning the institution of slavery itself. Those were burning issues that put this fragile system in a very difficult position, permanently on the verge of collapsing. Slave movements regroup major arguments concerning the possible ending of slavery, and more particularly slave trade and runaway slaves. These two types of movements illustrate a kind of almighty position adopted by Southerners, together with an endlessly growing sentiment that this position actually hides immense failures and weaknesses; the power they exposed was commensurate with the weaknesses it hid.

In the light of these aspects of the Old South, to what extent did population movements build the new region, and how did they make it evolve? The first part of this study aims to tackle the birth of the Deep South, from the early migrations of the 1790s' to the end of the 1810s' and the rise of Cotton Kingdom, which was marked by the strong settlement of the Southern population. The population migrations, mixing settlers and slaves, and the way they were influenced by laws and political arrangements, allow us to understand the construction of the identity of this very specific region. The second part of this study focuses on the Deep South as a stable society, from the early 1820s' and the end of the massive migrations, to 1861 and the outbreak of the Civil War. After several waves of immigration, the population of the Old South became more stable and developed around the plantation

system. Yet, in the light of slave movements, the failures and weaknesses of an Empire that seems at first sight so powerful and unshakeable are emphasized. A study of the Southern ideology about slavery reveals the ambivalence of the plantation owners, who both feared and despised their slaves. On the one hand, the evolution of slave trade shows the evolution of the Southern society, which became more and more stable, and the transformation of the slave society. On the other hand, slave resistance, and more particularly geographical movement as resistance used by the runaways, emphasize the growing discontentment that cast doubt on the power of the Kingdom. The third part is a comparative case study of two Southern states: Virginia and Alabama. These two states, although they both belong to the South, followed two different patterns of evolution. The study of the slave population, its distribution, trade and characteristics, emphasize the similarities but also the great differences in each of their developments. A focus on the different experiences that were transcribed by slaves of these states but also by a Northerner touring the South³, vouch for these similarities and differences, which reached their climax in the late 1850s, and the debates engendered by Lincoln's election.

³Frederick Law Olmsted travelled the South from 1853 to 1861 for the *New York Times* and took notes of his day-to-day observations of slavery and cotton. Frederick Law Olmsted, *The Cotton Kingdom, A Traveller's Observations On Cotton And Slavery In The American Slave States, 1853-1861*, 4th ed. (New York: First Da Capo Press, 1996)

I- Birth of Cotton Kingdom

The emergence of the Old South as a geographical, economical, and social entity is the result of long years of conquest and colonization of new territories. The rise of this economic power appeared two hundred years after the first colonists landed in Jamestown. These two centuries brought their political and social evolutions, the climax being the War of Independence that ended in 1783 with the creation of the United States of America, independent from the British Crown. From that moment on, the notion of the frontier, the limit between civilization and wilderness, grew in importance among the young American society. This frontier was constantly moving further West, encouraged by Jefferson's policy, based upon the extension of the country and on a pastoral myth. His strong desire to design his country was satisfied by the Louisiana Purchase, 1803, which doubled the size of the territory of the United States. Consequently to this purchase, federal policies encouraged people to settle on the frontier, in order to colonize the new territories. The Old South was born from this geographical disruption, and what makes it a great power is that it developed incredibly quickly and prosperously during the first half of the XIXth century. Economically based on cash crops and organized around the plantation system, the South created its own identity, which alienated the rest of the country.

A- Conquest of New Territories

From the very moment European immigrants landed on the American territory, the notion of conquest and discovery has been at the center of the development of a new nation. While the living conditions got better and better in the former colonies on the Atlantic coast, there were simultaneously masses of people trying to head West and discover virgin lands, the American Wilderness. Living on the edge of civilization, these people colonized new territories, regardless of the populations that had

been living there for ages. The frontier, this very place between civilization and the wilderness, progressed and moved forward, followed by loads of settlers who built towns, started cultivating the soil, built roads to reach further territories.

If the first two centuries of the American colonization had been mainly controlled and sometimes restrained by the British Empire, the Revolutionary War marked a turning point in the history of the freshly named United States. A strong and global desire to go further, to push the frontier always further West, arose in the New World, embodied by Jefferson's aspiration of an immense agricultural nation, his great pastoral idea. The more the United States expanded, the more inequalities appeared across the country, leaving some territories almost resourceless, while others saw a tremendous development. At the heart of these differences and inequalities, the question of slavery dug an even deeper gap between the Northern, industrialized regions, and the rural South.

1- Context

a- Early Frontier

In 1607, a group of British people founded Jamestown, Virginia, after a long trip on the James River which had begun in the 1580s. Twelve years later, Dutch settlers arrived with nineteen Africans on-board. These Africans were not slaves, but some sort of indentured servants. Yet, their arrival in the colony marked the beginning of farming on the New Continent, and the introduction of tobacco. English Pilgrims, but also Dutch and Swedish people arrived and settled on this new continent and created European colonies. In 1733, Georgia was created, harboring numerous plantations. Georgia was the last colony to be created in North America, part of the original thirteen colonies.

By 1750, the whole Atlantic coast was occupied by the British, the Scots, the Irish, the Dutch

but also the German people. From this moment on, the frontier went West, and the settlers discovered new mountains, valleys and forests. By the end of the eighteenth century, the frontier had reached the territories of Kentucky and Tennessee.

Life was very solitary on the frontier, still in contact with Indians, who taught them how to live on this new land, how to cultivate it. For instance, the Indians introduced the settlers to corn, a new crop which could be transformed into Bourbon, a very strong beverage. This Bourbon was then sold to the South, which marked the apparition of the first form of trade on the frontier.

Sharing the land was not easy, and the Pilgrims had troubles with the Indians, due to their different cultures. Indeed, the settlers could not understand how those people could be polytheists, live semi-nude and be used to an “unusual” sexual freedom. However, they did not reject them and even admired them on some points: the Indians were courageous, loyal, hardworking, and had lots of agricultural skills that they did not mind sharing.

Despite the colonist philosophy, some people such as Roger Williams thought that the Indians had rights, and that land should not be taken from them. Thus, while the Europeans were accustomed to permanent and unconditional properties, the Indians promoted the idea of the simple “use of the fruit”, in other words a limited use and right over the land. According to this principle, they thought the settlers would only stay for a short period of time. This occupation of hunting grounds led to tensions and conflicts.

In the Southern colonies, especially in Virginia and in the Carolinas, a tidewater plantation society appeared on the coastal plains. This society was very heterogeneous, planters were very different from one-another. There was no unity except in the development of slavery, which led the South to become openly racist, towards Blacks as well as Indians.

b- Politics and the Frontier Before the Independence

Before the American independence, the colonies were under the power of the British Crown, and in the mid-eighteenth century, the governors of the American colonies had no interest in the frontier, they were still faithful to the British Empire, and turned towards Europe. Indeed, Britain was the religious, economic, artistic, cultural and political center at that period. Moreover, the successive waves of immigration maintained strong emotional ties between the colonies and the British Empire.

This period was also marked by an important imperial rivalry between France and Britain. Therefore, as colonial America was still faithful to the British Crown, what's more majoritarily Protestant, France sided with the Indians during the Seven Years' War. In 1763, at the end of the war, the Treaty of Paris declared that France lost Canada to Britain and the Mississippi Valley to Spain. Although victorious, Britain had been weakened by the great financial cost of the war, thus on October 9, 1763, King George III issued the Royal Proclamation of 1763. This proclamation forbade any westward movement in the colonies, in order to save money but also to control and tax more easily the colonists, and to avoid conflict with Indians.

2- Post-Independence Frontier

a- Independence and the Opening of the Frontier

The heavy taxes imposed upon the American colonies after the Seven Years War, associated with crises such as the 1774 « Boston Tea Party », created growing tensions that exploded with the outbreak of the war in 1775. This war ended eight years later, with the Treaty of Paris signed in 1783 and ratified in 1784, which gave full independence to the thirteen colonies and resulted in the birth of

the United States of America.

After Independence, there were no more restrictions on the conquest of the wild west, hence within twenty years the population increased and spread rapidly across the territory. Indeed, the first census of the American population that took place in 1790 only recorded two states in the Appalachian Mountains : Kentucky and Tennessee. In 1820, the fourth census was made in five more states : Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas, Louisiana and Missouri, states where the population grew very rapidly. The conquest of the territory that was to become the Old South started with the Louisiana Purchase, 1803, and the great migrations to the Mississippi Territory, from 1798 to 1819.

b- Legal Encouragements

The Confederation Congress of the United States, which was the governing body from 1781 to 1789, enacted two major laws in favor of the conquest of new territories. Firstly, the 1785 Land Ordinance was a plan that defined the way the western land would be divided. Square townships - six miles wide and long, about 3600 acres - would be created, and then divided into 36 sections. Each of these sections was to be sold at cheap price - the equivalent of three days' work – and one section was kept for education. The terms of the Land Ordinance made the West very attractive for the American people.

Federal policies were set up in order to help the Southern farmers. As the Louisiana Purchase doubled the size of the territory, there was a huge need for transportation in order to cordon off the area. Therefore, many canals and roads were built in the beginning of the XIXth century. For example, the Lake Erie Canal linked the Hudson River to the Great Lakes, and the use of the Mississippi developed, allowing the settlers to go both upstream and downstream.

The second law was the 1787 Northwest Ordinance, which created the possibility of new states

in the West. Pioneers went west and created settlements, which were at first self-governed. When the population of the settlement reached 5000 inhabitants, the area gained a territory legislature, in other words a non-voting representative to the US Congress. When the population reached 60,000 inhabitants, the settlement was admitted as a new state of the union with the same rights and obligations as the original thirteen colonies

c- Thomas Jefferson and the Louisiana Purchase, 1803

Thomas Jefferson was the man at the origin of the 1776 Declaration of Independence, but he was also the heir to a great plantation from Virginia who became the third President of the United States. He was particularly interested in the frontier and viewed the United States through a pastoral filter. He wanted his country to develop around the figure of the “Gentleman Farmer”, but also to develop commerce and industry.

In 1803, he bought an immense territory from the French Emperor, Napoleon. This transaction of almost six million acres, known as the Louisiana Purchase, almost doubled the American territory and brought a lot of capitals (see Appendix 2). The new land indeed fitted both yeoman farmers, who were very hard-working and could find land in the West, and also large scale farming, which developed in the South. Still, this land was also subject to speculation, a lot of people became very rich with land titles and bribery was common and accepted.

The Port of New Orleans was part of the purchase and opened up commerce. With the development of traffic on the Mississippi River, this port became one of the trade centers of the United States, especially with the development of the Old South and the rise of Cotton Kingdom.

3- Migrations and the Growing Gap Between the North and the South

a- “Great Migrations” to the Mississippi Territory, 1798-1819

The Mississippi Territory was created by the American Congress in 1798, on the southern part of the present states of Alabama and Mississippi. The northern part was then annexed in 1804 and another annexion of the southern part occurred in 1812. In 1817, just before Mississippi was accepted as a state inside the Union, the territory of Alabama was created, divided from Mississippi. There were already some Americans gathered in the Natchez and Tombigbee settlements in 1798, yet the region was mainly populated by American Indians. Within the first twenty years of this territory, the population grew from 8,850 inhabitants to 203,349.⁴ This very rapid development was due to both the migrating and conquering spirit of the Americans; and to the attractiveness of the new territory, especially for farmers.

Two successive waves of migration were the reason for the tremendously rapid development of the region. The first one, from 1798 until the War of 1812, saw a stable, continuous flow of migrants. This first wave ended because of the war, and a second wave started in 1814, at the end of the war, and saw its peak in 1818-1819, just before the general economic crisis.⁵ Also known as the Panic of 1819, the crisis was the result of important land and money speculation, but also of the European agricultural recovery after the Napoleonic Wars. It particularly affected the Southern rural areas, and lasted until 1821.

b- Settling in Alabama

⁴See : table 1

⁵Charles Lowerly, “The Great Migrations to the Mississippi Territory, 1898-1819.”, *Mississippi History Now*. 2008. Mississippi Historical Society. 3 Apr. 2014 <<http://mshistory.k12.ms.us/index.php?id=169>>.

The territory of Alabama, composed of large prairies, was very attractive due to its very fertile soils and appropriate climate for cotton production, which could supply the large European demand for cotton. The opportunity of such an economic prosperity drew a large population to settle in Alabama, despite the very hard living condition of the uncivilized frontier. The only disadvantage of this region was the lack of consumable water, which made human settlements complicated. The first migrants settled on the river edges, as there was no flowing water within the large prairies. Yet, the soils of the prairies soon appeared to be perfectly fitted for cotton production as they retained, water thanks to their muddy composition. These areas, Montgomery County for example, attracted many planters and became « cotton planting centers.»⁶

c- Development of Two Parallel Regions

For the new states entering the Union, two thorny questions appeared: the issue of slavery raised stronger and stronger tensions, which led some states to wonder whether they should leave the Union or not. These issues became more and more complicated in the first decades of the 19th century. Indeed, although the international slave trade, hence the importation of new slaves, had been effectively forbidden in 1808, the number of slaves kept on increasing, due to natural reproduction.

This dramatic increase of the number of slaves was linked with Eli Whitney's invention of the Cotton Gin in 1793. With this invention, the cotton production developed greatly in the South, giving its nickname to this region, the “Cotton Kingdom”. Concurrently, industrial productions developed in the northern part of the country.

These two opposite economies were based upon two different work forces : while slavery grew in importance in the Southern plantations, the industrialized North saw the development of a new social

⁶Thomas Perkins Abernethy, *The Formative Period in Alabama, 1815-1828*, 6th ed. (Montgomery: The Borwn Printing Company, 1922) 22.

class : the working class. These opposed societies created an ideological gap between the two regions, built around the question of slavery: the rural South, with its important productions of tobacco and cotton, wanted the new states entering the Union to be slave states, whereas the industrialized North wanted those new states to be “free states”, that is to say in which slavery would be forbidden. The question was temporarily solved with the Missouri Compromis of 1820, which imposed a balance between slave and free states.

B- Aging Plantations and the Emergence of a New Empire

The abusive exploitation of soils that took place until the late 1800s' resulted in an exhaustion of the soils in the Upper South, hence to an economic crisis of the tobacco industry. It is as a response to this situation that the Deep South emerged, born from the exodus away from an agonizing land. This new wave of migration, from the Upper South to the Lower South, was the last great wave of migration the new region was to experience before the Civil War. By 1820, the region was almost fully settled, and developed around cotton plantations, which soon became the most important facet of the American economy, with slavery at its heart. The stability of the new empire was yet to be questioned. Firstly, this stability was also synonymous with immobility, and tore the South apart from the industrial and economic development of the rest of the country. Secondly, the power of the cotton industry enslaved the South into the system of bondage, which created growing tensions within the United States, ultimately leading to the Civil War. The evolution of slave trade is interestingly linked with the development of the Deep South, and it is also revealing of a more global aspect : slave movements in general and their meaning.

1- The Upper South

The region of the Upper South is composed of the states of Delaware, Maryland, Missouri, Arkansas, Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee and North Carolina. Some of those such as Virginia and the Carolinas were part of the thirteen first colonies, and their population was mainly composed of British immigrants of the upper middle class and of the gentry, who imposed their « standards of living »⁷. The other states composed the early frontier, explored by men of German and Scotch-Irish origins. The term “Upper South” defines this southern slave region that appeared in the early XIXth century, in contrast with the Deep South, which developed at that period around cotton, rice and sugar plantations. Indeed, in the Upper South, there were very few towns or cities, and people were scattered on the vast territory, developing small-scale farming, stock raising and hunting.

a- Exhausted Soils

Despite the small-scale farming organization in the Upper South, the plantation monoculture exhausted the soils. Organized around the tobacco production, the agricultural structure of the Upper South soon appeared to be inappropriate to the soils of the region. Indeed, the soil of the Deep South fitted large-scale farming around cash crops (cotton, sugar, rice), but the soil of the Upper South did not: “the Upper South lacked the fertile soil and long growing season necessary for the commercial production of cotton, rice, or sugar”⁸. The agricultural productions of sugar and tobacco also got less profitable for international reasons. As Europe was recovering from the Napoleonic Wars and starting to cultivate again, the European demand in American agricultural goods fell, and as a result the price of these products fell, which led to an economic crisis. There were then too many workers and not enough

⁷Thomas Perkins Abernethy, *From Frontier to Plantation in Tennessee, a Study in Frontier Democracy*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1932) 164.

⁸Abernethy 56.

work, which led many Upper South planters to head south-west, leaving their plantation behind.

This exodus emptied the region, which had either to find solution to the exhaustion of soils or to head towards reversion. Edmund Ruffin⁹, a Virginia planter, tried to resolve the problem with technical improvements. He promoted the use of marl to compensate the acidity of the soils, but also and particularly the systematic rotation of crops. Such improvements brought both a better agricultural production and an economic diversification which would prove to be inevitable by the mid-XIXth century. Indeed, the economic adjustment drew the region to depend less on the plantation system and on slave labor.

b- Consequences

As an intertwined result of both the economic diversification of the Upper South and the constantly growing need for slave labor in the Deep South, a specific pattern of slave trade developed between the upper and lower south. Indeed, by 1820, the Upper South could see ten percent (about 200,000) of its slave population transferred to the Old South every ten years. There is no doubt that this new trade was a bargain for the aging plantations, yet the interpretations of this new income of wealth differ among historians. Michael Tadman considers that, as agriculture was no longer profitable in this region, slave trade appeared as the only way to make profit, and that “the planters of the Upper South were seen as becoming economically dependent upon selling a substantial proportion of their bondsmen to the new and expanding cotton regions of the Lower South”¹⁰. Yet, one could figure out that the upper-lower trade allowed the planters to shift out of tobacco production, and to invest into

⁹Edmund Ruffin. “Voices of the Civil War.” The Library of Congress. 25 Mar. 2014 <<http://blogs.loc.gov/civil-war-voices/about/edmund-ruffin/>>.

¹⁰Michael Tadman tackles the question of the internal slave trade in the U.S. After the abolition of the Transatlantic trade, and questions its economic but also social and psychological implications, on both the slave and the slave holding populations. Michael Tadman, *Speculators and Slaves, Masters, Traders and Slaves in the Old South*, 2nd ed. (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1996) 4.

economic diversification.

c- Tensions

Although the interpretations of the reversion of the Upper South differ, the facts remain: by the middle of the XIXth century, the economy of the Upper South was flourishing again, and moving aside slavery. In a context of antislavery movements, this meant a loss of support for the Lower South. Moreover, it proved that cotton production was not that profitable, as it required a massive workforce and a permanent human attention. As a consequence, it proved the Deep South to be completely dependent on African slavery. The distancing of the Upper South from slavery and from the Lower South continued until the beginning of the Civil War, and this ambivalence of the Upper South concerning its belonging to either the South or the North, is embodied by the split of the state of Virginia, when, in 1861, West Virginia, a part of the state of Virginia, seceded from the Confederacy to join the Union.

2- Development of a Strong Regional Identity

a- Southern Distinctiveness

The success of the Deep South appeared as a response to the declining economy of the Upper South in the early nineteenth century. This region is characterized by a Southern distinctiveness. From the similarity of geography and climate derived a similar economy around plantations, thus racial slavery from which appeared a strong racial identity. The population of this region was indeed characterized by a proportional quantity of Americans and African Americans. Moreover, very few

immigrants came to the Deep South, which was mainly peopled by native-born Americans. These people were mainly Protestants, either Baptist or Methodist.

b- White Society in the South

As a consequence of racial slavery, two parallel societies appeared, the White society on the one hand and the Black society on the other. The White society gathered most of the wealth of the South, mainly in the hands of the planter elite (plantation owners with at least twenty slaves), who, by 1860, represented less than 30 percent of the White population. Indeed, at that time, most people were part of the small-farm class. In the first half of the 19th century, the Southern middle class was composed of plantation overseers and yeoman farm families who hardly if ever owned slaves. These middle class people were very mobile, did not mind going West in search of a better life, the exact opposite of the planters who were very attached to their land. Most of these yeoman farmers lived in the back country, where the land was less suitable for plantation. They did not own slaves, but respected slaveholders and wished to own slaves one day, as a sign of wealth. These farmers worked for themselves, and had an exceptionally high birth rate, encouraged by the extra-labor it provided. Some of the small planters managed to buy a few slaves. Unlike the large plantation owners, they worked in the fields with their slaves and did not use them as housemaids. The relationships with the slaves were complicated on these small plantations; the living conditions of slaves were harsher but the creation of kin ties was easier and common.

The planters economically and politically ruled the South, and had a great influence on the life of the region, displaying their aristocratic way of life. The stability of the economic rulers characterizes the region, deeply rooted in its land. Southern planters had a very specific behaviour toward their bondsmen, characterized by paternalism and racism. They were supposed to take care of their slaves –

to feed them and provide them with clothes – and some of them even considered slaves as an extension of the family, organizing marriages and all sorts of arrangements. Yet this paternalism relied upon fear and violence. The increasing racist sentiment that developed by the 1830s' encouraged masters to be even more violent with their slaves, in order to protect the established society.

c- Black Society in the South

The Black society in the South was in itself divided into two categories: the “free” Blacks, and the slaves. The free Blacks, or “free persons of color”¹¹, were Black people who were not owned by anybody. They were a small minority of the southern population, with only 150.000 free black persons in the South in 1830. Some of them became in turn slaveholders, yet, very few took advantage of the system, as it appears that most of the Black slaveholders actually owned their own family, hoping to free them. Still, most of the “free persons of color” were either skilled artisans or farmers. This type of population was very marginal, and the great part of the Black population of the South lived under bondage.

The living conditions under slavery were globally very harsh, although different depending on the plantation and the owner. Still, it is generally admitted that, even if seldom in some plantations, whipping was a common place of slavery. Violence in general was part of life, which inevitably led to – at least attempts of – rebellions. The most famous slave rebellion is Nat Turner's raid at Harper's Ferry in 1832, which will be developed later in this study. To understand how hard life was under slavery, it is important to take into account the child mortality rates, which were incredibly high. Besides, slave women endured particularly hard living conditions, made of sexual violence but also of an inappropriate equality with men concerning work, as they were made to work as hard as men regardless of their motherhood, and had, on top of that, to assume the household.

¹¹George Brown Tindall and David Emory Shi, *America, a Narrative History* (New York: Norton Edition, 2010) 417.

3- Development of a Large Scale Farming System: King Cotton

a- Settling South

During the late 1810s', the economic situation in the Upper South was so disastrous that many farmers decided to move even more South, and a new pattern appeared from “the relatively worn-out land” to “the richer virgin soil”¹². They indeed reached a region that is known nowadays as the Old South. This region, also known as the Deep South, became a sort of link between the Western frontier and the Upper South, and its soils and climate happened to be perfectly fitted for cotton and sugar plantations. The long growing seasons and the virgin soils brought a providential renewal to these pioneer farmers.

During the early years of the colonization of the Old South, men outnumbered women, who feared to go and settle in the wild regions, the frontier being firstly place a man's place. Meeting the wilderness, new life styles appeared and immoral behaviours -alcoholism, robbery, lawlessness- developed. After a few years, women joined their husbands and brought civilization with them. The culture of the Old South hence became a mix of old customs brought from the Upper South and of new customs created to fit the new region.

b- Rise of a Kingdom

The first cotton cultures in North America appeared in 1736, between the Chesapeake and Delaware Bays. The first records of exports to Great Britain began in 1770, with three bales of

¹²Evans 186.

American cotton arriving in Liverpool from New York, and four from Virginia and Maryland. American exports remained very small until the 19th century. This production was so insignificant that in 1784, when eight bags arrived in Liverpool, they were suspected not to be from American production because the quantity was too important. Still, by 1785, regular exports from Charleston began and were marked by a stable increase from that year on.¹³

The British market was very interesting for cotton producers, since main technical improvements concerning the manufacturing of cotton appeared in Great Britain. The Spinning Jenny was invented in 1764, followed by the development of Water Frames and Power Looms. From these improvements derived an increasing demand for raw cotton. Firstly imported from the West Indies, raw cotton soon experienced a huge boom in the United States thanks to the creation of the Cotton Gin, allowing the new country to meet the European demand.

c- Mechanical Revolution and its Impact on Slavery

Eli Whitney (1765-1825) was the son of a Massachusetts farmer who graduated from Yale University in 1792. He met the widow of a Revolutionary hero general Nathaniel Greene on a journey to the South. She invited him to her plantation in Georgia, which gave him the inspiration for his engine. He created a machine that removed the sticky seeds from the cotton, a meticulous task that required plenty of hand work. His invention revolutionized cotton production, shifting from a ten-hours work to produce a pound of cotton to a thousand pounds per day. The impact of this new machine on the cotton exports was dramatic: in 1792, the year of the creation of the gin, 138,000 pounds of cotton were exported; two years later, the amount had risen to 1,600,000 pounds.¹⁴

Although the cotton gin required less hand work, paradoxically more and more slaves were

¹³Evans 126.

¹⁴Evans 200.

needed. Indeed, the growing demand for raw cotton in Britain but also in China forced planters to produce more and more. As a result, by 1820, cotton represented about 39 percent of American exports, and reached over 50 percent by the mid-1830s¹⁵. This increasing production was inevitably followed by an increasing number of slaves.

C- Aspects of the New Region

1- Slaves: the Sacrificed Population

The interesting point when comparing masters' and slaves' views on slavery, is to contrast the different conceptions those two groups had on slavery itself: what was mainly considered as rights by slaves was most of the time considered as privileges by masters, and as a consequence of these opposite conceptions, tensions appeared. Slavery was very controversial, and slave movements in particular raised questions about the nature but also the potential abolition of slavery.

a- Living Conditions

Regarding living conditions, at the beginning owners did not legally owe anything to their slaves. Through time, some improvements were imposed by law and the quality of slaves' everyday life increased slightly. While some masters were strictly following the legal obligations, some others went further though. They gave them some kind of protection which was not legally required, that is to say “protection of family, moderate rather than excessive physical discipline, certain break from work,

¹⁵Tindall and Shi 321.

reasonable food”¹⁶. Masters considered these “human” behaviours toward their bondsmen as some sort of privilege, as something slaves should be thankful for. Slaves, on the other hand, did not consider those as privileges but rather as improvements, as, so to say, less bad conditions.

b- Property

Slave work can be divided into two main domains: a slave could work either as a household, or on the fields. Slaves who worked in the house – cooks, cleaners, helps... - had to be sufficiently good looking and smart. The others worked outside, on the cotton fields as pickers, or any other agricultural tasks. Those slaves produced goods and as a result they created wealth. The cooks and bouchers produced food, the field workers produced cotton which was to be sold at good price... Here again, masters and slaves did not consider these goods in the same way. It was majoritarily accepted – in the white Southern society - and legally recognized that anything produced by a slave was his master's property, as the slave himself was his master's property. However, slaves saw this system as deeply unfair: they brought wealth to their masters and did not get anything in return, except the minimum that kept them alive and efficient enough at work. As a matter of fact, slaves who rebelled, those who ran away for example, did not hesitate to take some food in their master's larder, indeed because they considered it as their production¹⁷.

c- Tensions

These two different conceptions of the fruit of slave labors were one of the causes of the

¹⁶Tadman xxii.

¹⁷ John Hope Franklin and Loren Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves, Rebels on the Plantation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) 455.

apparition of tensions between the masters and their slaves. The unfair nature of this system was resented by the slaves, who were deeply disgusted to see their work enrich their masters and endure such a life without any hope of escaping. They revolted at various levels, not always as a resistance to slavery but at least to show their lassitude.

These tensions show that the economy of the antebellum South, despite its strength and prosperity, was fragilized by its reliance on slavery. Indeed, this system was obviously contested from the inside, but also from the outside, and saw the development of antislavery movements in the North. The controvertial nature of the plantation society made of the antebellum South a system constantly on the verge of collapsing.

2- Hardships and Negative Impact

a- Economic and Social Crisis

After two decades of progressive growth, the War of 1812 marked the beginning of a complicated period for the cotton industry. Indeed, as a result of the endless wars with the French Empire, Great Britain imposed trade restrictions. One of the consequences of this policy was an extraordinary raise of the price of cotton cloth. The close of this war, coupled with a general operation of the tariff in 1816, created a general depression in the cotton industry. Several economic crisis will follow in the 1830s and 1840s, together with growing movements for the abolition of slavery in the North and slave rebellions on the plantations. Famous cases such as the Dred Scott Case weakened the Deep South, falling slowly toward the Civil War.

b- A Region Apart from the National Development

While the South was developing around a plantation system, the North became more and more industrialized. Indeed, the North had settled and developed faster, was hence ready for the Industrial Revolution and the shift from a hand-made production to machinery, which was an open door to the rise of big business but also to a perpetual evolution and advancement. A new working class appeared as the North transformed into a more and more urban region. On the other hand, the plantation life of the Deep South did not allow nor require an urban development. The region remained very aristocratic, and left little space for the emergence of a middle class.

As a symbol of the remoteness of the South regarding the economic and social transformations of the XIXth century, transportation did not reach the deep southern regions. In the era of the rise of the railroad, “transportation improvements helped spur the development of a national market for good and services”¹⁸. While routes opened to wagon and stagecoach traffic transported people further and further West, the Deep South did not take advantage of this development, cutting itself off the industrialized North.

This « slavocracy »¹⁹, despite its great economic situation, also remained apart from the social and economic transition that took place in the Upper South. For example, Nashville, Tennessee, developed into an economic center based upon banks, which also made of the city the centre of a great system of overland communication. Thanks to these kind of reconversions, the economy of the Upper South was no longer dependent upon slavery, whereas the Deep South completely relied on its slaves, and was ruled by this system, for instance « the servile population of Tennessee was not sufficiently large to enable the question of slavery to dominate its politics as it tended to do in the Lower South »²⁰.

¹⁸Tindall and Shi 324

¹⁹A system ruled by slaveholders and advocates of slavery. Abernethy 264.

²⁰Abernethy 349

II- Slavery: Controversy within the Union

Behind the great stability cast by the new empire, hid the slave system and all of its intricacies. On the one hand supported by plantation owners and the mercantile system in general, slavery was considered as a “necessary evil”²¹, something that put individuals in very harsh situations, but which was beneficial and necessary for the sake of the system. We will first study the way the masters saw and considered their slaves, and on the global view of the Southern White population upon the question. We will then focus on the Southern ideology regarding slavery, and more specifically regarding slave movements.

On the other hand, slavery was a very contested Institution, against which many people were opposed. Slaves were on the front line and resisted to bondage through numerous techniques, yet the most influential and probably that also showed the most the failures of this apparently stable system, was to run away from the plantation. The runaway slaves crystalized the tensions on both sides of the debate, supported by abolitionists and despised by pro-slavery movements.

The isolation of the Old South from the rest of the country is emphasized by these slave movements, desperately trying to breathe the free air of the North.

²¹A term used by John C. Calhoun in his speech at the Senate, on February 6, 1837.

A- Slavery in the Old South

1- Global Conception: the Image of the Slave in the Southern White Community

a- Status of Slaves

In the Old South, slaves were considered as a propriety. However, human ties must be taken into consideration. Did they actually exist or was the slave-master relationship as empty as if it were a farmer-cattle relationship? Southern 19th century studies tended to show that masters were very much concerned about their slaves, and that slaves were grateful to their masters for that. The idea of a paternalistic system was broadly accepted, at least as long as the psychological and social qualities of the blacks were considered inferior. Then, masters were some kind of generous men, taking care of people who were not developed, bringing them to civilization.

More modern studies²² have showed that the pattern was far more complex than what had been said before. Indeed, it is obvious that many masters did not care about their slaves as under-developed humans, but rather as a sort of livestock. Their position towards slave trade actually illustrates this position very well.

b- Violent Treatments

In the Southern white community, the image of the slave was principally negative. They were considered both dangerous and not very intelligent. Slaves were also feared because they would violent

²²Michael Tadman questions the position of masters regarding slave trade. Tadman xiii

from time to time, they were depicted as very brutal people. In fact, those violent behaviours may be explained by the situation of the slaves. As explained earlier, slaves were submitted to the will of their masters. They had to undergo family separations, migrations, but also sexual abuses, mutilations, violence under various forms. To rebel against these harsh treatments, as will be explained later, various forms of resistance were possible, among which violence but also silence, which partly explains the image whites had of them.

c- Racism and Fear

Of course, these situations have to be associated with the fact that the Old South was deeply racist at that period. Considering the slave community as under-developed, as an inferior people, does not prevent the whites from fearing them. This image of a brutal, animalistic slave, actually brought fear in the white community. The greatest, underlying fear, was that of a slave rebellion, because white Southerners were actually aware of the relativity of their power. They were greatly outnumbered by slaves, and they knew that they would not be able to face a well-organized slave rebellion. This means that the power of the masters, of the ruling class, was constantly in danger, it was permanently on the edge of a disparition; this overwhelming power of ruling over such an important quantity of people, almost in the position of God, was actually very fragile.

Thus, the way white Southerners considered their slaves reveals both their racism and their fear of a rebellion, their conscience of the potential power of such a population. This consciousness did not prevent them, though, from mistreating them, and rather incited racial hatred. There and in the following point, it will be made clear that most masters considered their slaves as mere merchandises. Indeed, most masters privileged money over slave social life and well-being. It is now acknowledged that slaves suffered greatly of family separations, in the eighteenth century though, people considered it

as a minor experience in slaves' lives. Hence, masters did not hesitate, when a slave had to be sold for economic reasons, he was sold, regardless of his family situation. This situation was actually considered by Michael Tadman as the most pardonable sale, as it was somehow justified when the financial situation of the plantation required it. But some masters had no qualm in selling slaves in order to make profit, which was quite easy. Traders went from one plantation to another, in search of special types of slaves (12-15 years old teen girls and 15-25 years old boys). This made it very easy as well as very tempting for the masters to sell a couple of slaves. The specific ages researched correspond to the period in which a slave was the most productive, hence making it even more interesting to break a family up. They did not consider slave family life as important as their own family life.

2- Southern Ideology About Slavery in the First Half of the 19th Century

a- Global Conception

In the debate on the abolition of slavery, plantation owners have been very active and productive. They take into account and understand the arguments of the abolitionists, which they do not consider as unjustified. Indeed, they rather consider those arguments as fairly right and pertinent. Most of them agree with the fact that slavery is morally contradictory, and the idea is for them to justify the fact that, though slavery may be considered as a morally questionable matter, there is no way it can be abolished. The arguments are various but the point is the same: slavery is “a necessary evil”, as John Caldwell Calhoun called it.

b- Arguments

Proslavery arguments aroused as a consequence of the rise of the proslavery sentiment, with religious, sociological and scientific arguments. The religious argument affirmed that nothing in the Bible was against slavery. Slavery could thus be accepted and even encouraged, as it allowed to christianize a heathen tribes. The sociological argument featured that slavery was a sort of welfare state. This idea derived from a comparison between the situation of free workers in the North and slaves in the South.

c- Place of Slave Trade in the Debate

Slave trade is actually a central matter in the question of the abolition of slavery. It is dealt with in various ways, both showing one of the most terrible aspects of the institution and making it an inherent characteristic of it, but also of its abolition. The way slave trade was justified through the Whites' perception of their slaves led them to the conclusion that slave movements in general were one of the major impediments to its abolition. Moreover, slave trade was a particularly cruel part of slaves' lives, and at the same time, during the public sales, it was the part of slavery accessible to any citizen. Thus, the internal slave trade adopted a predominant position within the debate over slavery, as it was the visible part of it, the moment when the enclosed slave-holding plantations met with the rest of the world, touched outsiders and could alert the general public.

3- Justifying the Slave Trade

a- Negligible Properties

To begin with, it is important to understand how slave owners conceived and defined slavery.

Thornton Stringfellow's, a Southerner, created his own definition: "this state [being enslaved], condition, or relation, is that in which one human being is held without his consent by another, as property, to be bought, sold and transferred, together with the increase, as property, forever"²³. There are two important aspects to be taken into account in this definition. Firstly, slaves could be considered as human beings according to Stringfellow, hence to a certain extent masters and slaves were equal on that point. This was not always the case, constitutionally for example, slaves were not considered as "important" as free people. The 1787 Three-Fifths Compromise stated that, when counting the population to know how many Representatives a state would get, the slave (or non-free) population would be counted as only three-fifths of its actual number. This compromise reveals that, though they are somehow considered as human beings, slaves are not equal to free – white in particular – men. William Harper incidentally stated "that the African negro is an inferior variety of the human race, is, I think, now generally admitted".

The second important aspect, is the direct implication of the fact of considering slaves as a property: "as property, [they can be] bought, sold and transferred". That is to say, one of the characteristics of a slave is that he or she can be transferred the way it suits his or her master, regardless his opinion and the personal consequences it may have: "Here is power given to the master, to separate man and wife, parent and child"²⁴. This conception of the slave population participates to the horror of the institution, but the point of Stringfellow's paper is precisely to justify this conception. Here, he examines the position of slaves in the Holy Scriptures, and emphasizes the fact that slaves are indeed described as property in the Bible, from Abraham's circumcized slaves to Joseph's voluntary slaves in Egypt, who sold themselves to Joseph because they could not make a living of their work.

Plantation owners' attempts to justify this inhuman system reveals the fact that most of them

²³ Thornton Stringfellow, "A brief Examination of Scripture Testimony on the Institution of Slavery," *The Ideology of Slavery, Proslavery Thought in the Antebellum South, 1830-1860*, ed. Drew Gilpin Faust (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 1981) 139.

²⁴ Thornton 153.

were aware of this lack of humanity. For example, William Harper defines “the essential character of slavery” as “what no human being would do without some sort of compulsion”. However, Harper compares the slave system to the condition of free industrial workers in the North, which he says far worse than that of Southern slaves. His argument lies on examples: for instance, to him, when a slave is being sold, it is as if he were dismissed by his master. The only difference with the free worker is that the slave is sold to a new master, hence to a new employer, whereas when the free worker is being dismissed, he has to struggle on his own to find a new employer. That is to say the situation of slaves is not very desirable, but at least it is better than that of Northern free workers.²⁵

b- Slave Transfers as an Impediment to Abolition

In the debate on the abolition of slavery, one of the major question was: how are the slaves going to be freed? That is to say, are they to be taken from their masters without any financial counterpart? Since slaves were considered as properties, this option was not easy to consider, it would mean an immense financial loss for plantation owners. In his response to the abolitionist movement following the Nat Turner Rebellion in Virginia²⁶, Thomas Roderick Dew indeed stated that these abolitionists were not aware of the “inevitable and ruinous consequences” of the abolition of slavery, it has therefore to be planned and requires time.

According to Roderick Dew, the only way to force the owner to emancipate his slaves would be for the states to buy the slaves. He gives very detailed prices to show that it would be economically impossible. In fact, to him, each solution to the question of abolition would infer transactions and transfers. As just said, the states could buy the slaves and then free them, but it is proven that it would

²⁵ William Harper, “Memoir on Slavery,” *The Ideology of Slavery, Proslavery Thought in the Antebellum South, 1830-1860*, ed. Drew Gilpin Faust (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 1981) 110-112.

²⁶ Thomas Roderick Dew, “Abolition of Negro Slavery”, *The Ideology of Slavery, Proslavery Thought in the Antebellum South, 1830-1860*, ed. Drew Gilpin Faust (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 1981) 26-30.

be ruinous for the states. Furthermore, one of the great fears around the abolition was the behaviour of newly freed blacks: they could be violent and dangerous. Thus it would be better if they could be sent back to Africa, or to any other place, but this would actually be even more ruinous to the states (still very precisely calculated by Dew). What's more, any kind of state intervention in slave trade would create economic and legal troubles, since it would remove a property and deprive a man of his right to enjoy it.

The conception of slavery, and more specifically of slave transfers, expressed by slaveholders not only show their racism but also their fear of a potential reversal of orders. The cyclic pattern of the masters-slaves relationship explain the escalate of violence and suspicion that took place in the Antebellum South. The hard treatments led the slaves to dream of rebellions, and the slaves who rebelled led the masters to be more and more suspicious, hence more and more violent. The fragility and vulnerability of the system of bondage in the Deep South was due to the numerical importance of the slave population in the region. Indeed, the rise of the Antislavery movement forced the plantation owners to face reality : in case of a successful slave rebellion, the southern Whites would be outflanked, a straw would be enough to draw the respective positions of Blacks and Whites up side down. In the development of the slave population, and, as a result, of its power, slave trade has had a great impact.

B- From the Transatlantic Slave Trade to the Internal Slave Trade

Slavery appeared in America when the first colonists arrived on the New Continent; when, in 1617, Dutch colonists landed in North America with nineteen black indentured servants onboard. From this moment on, the development of the American Power has been deeply linked with the institution of slavery. By the end of the XVIth century, the Atlantic Slave Trade became a major commercial and economic institution, with Europeans taking African people from their land to America. Regarding this

institution, the turning point occurred in 1808, when international slave trade was forbidden, and importation of African people became illegal. But this was actually the beginning of a brand new era for slave trade, and brought a new start to slave owners. Indeed, if the two first centuries of American colonization had been tumultuous and unstable, the beginning of the XVIIIth century was marked by a new form of development: large scale farming and plantation systems appeared, with at its center slaves themselves: with the development of this system, slaves became the major workforce of Southern America.

1- Toward the Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade

a- Dependence of the Cotton Market Upon Slavery

Slavery was necessary for an affordable cotton production. Indeed, although the cotton gin reduced the number of workers necessary to the transformation of cotton, a huge amount of hand work was still necessary in the fields. This is why, without slavery, cotton would have been a very expensive product, as people would have had to pay the labor in addition to the price of production and importation. Thanks to slavery, luxurious products such as sugar, cotton and coffee, became affordable by Europeans. Thus, prior to 1850, Europeans could afford those products only if they derived from slave labor.

Cotton Kingdom thus depended on slavery as it was the only way to satisfy the European demand for cotton at cheap prices. As a consequence, when abolitionist movements appeared in Great Britain in the 1780s', calling for the ending of the Transatlantic Slave Trade, not only planters but also cotton speculators were afraid of a dramatic rise of cotton prices, which would have compromised the exponential development of King Cotton.

Table 1: Cotton Exports per Plantation Worker in the United States, 1801-50²⁷

	Labor Force (millions)	Millions of Pounds	Exports per Worker
1801	0.1	23.6	236
1811	0.14	50.8	355
1821	0.33	132	396
1831	0.75	297.4	396
1835	1	393	393
1840	1.2	573.8	478
1850	1.82	899.2	495

b- Necessary Importations

Considering the slave “consumption” that took place during the XVIIIth century, slave importations were necessary (see Appendix 3). Indeed, slave owners did not take great care of their bondsmen and allowed themselves a certain amount of “loss”, as it was more profitable for them to import new slaves than to give them access to medical care.

Slaves arrived in British America, after the Middle Passage, in very bad health conditions. Those who had survived the voyage (eighty to ninety percent) experienced very hard working conditions on the fields from morning to night, with very little food, and most of the time separated from their family and friends. Physical exhaustion and moral depression lowered the surviving rate to

²⁷Eltis 287.

three years after the arrival in the colonies. As a result, a constant supply of new slaves was necessary.

c- “Act to Prohibit the Importation of Slaves”

The prohibition of slave importations was quite popular among the antislavery Congressmen. Yet, according to Article 1, Section 9 of the Constitution of the United States, these importations “shall not be prohibited by the Congress prior to the Year one thousand eight hundred and eight”²⁸. In the early XIXth century, anti-Transatlantic trade bills emerged. Due to this article, the “Act to Prohibit the Importation of Slaves”, was passed by Congress on March 2, 1807 and signed by President Jefferson the next day, but it had to wait until January 1, 1808 to go into effect.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That from and after the first day of January, one thousand eight hundred and eight, it shall not be lawful to import or bring into the United States or the territories thereof from any foreign kingdom, place, or country, any negro, mulatto, or person of colour, with intent to hold, sell, or dispose of such negro, mulatto, or person of colour, as a slave, or to be held to service or labour.²⁹

2- Transformation of the Slave Society

The necessary importations of slaves from Africa resulting from the dependence of the cotton economy upon slavery hence became officially illegal by 1808. This new legislation deeply disrupted the plantation system, and solutions had to be found in order to respect the new law while keeping the cost of cotton production as low as possible. Three main solutions appeared: the outlaw imports of slaves, the encouragement of slave natural reproduction, and the transition to a system organized

²⁸ Constitution of the United states, Section 9 <https://www.senate.gov/civics/constitution_item/constitution.htm#a1_sec9>.

²⁹ Act To Prohibit the Importation of Slaves (U.S. Congress, 1807)
<<http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/act-to-prohibit-the-importation-of-slaves/>>.

around indentured servants. Law strictly punished any people implied in an outlaw import, the indentured servant system did not allow the same demands to workers. The most profitable solution was to begin a transition toward natural reproduction.

Stopping the international slave trade brought problems, together with an evolution of slavery, and particularly of slaves' life. The major problem was to find a new way to supply planters' demand for slaves, which had gotten more and more important since Eli Whitney's 1793 invention of the cotton gin. This invention dramatically increased the production of cotton, but also required many slaves. Those slaves indeed, who used to be available at any time, directly imported from Africa. But with the ending of the Transatlantic Trade, planters had to find a new “reservoir”, which was actually very easy to find: slave natural reproduction had to be encouraged. Yet things were not so simple, at that time child mortality and miscarriages were very common, due to the very hard working and living conditions slaves were submitted to, which pregnant slave women could not escape. Moreover, encounters between male and female slaves were not very frequent. As native African slaves came from different African regions and tribes, they did not have the same culture and language. It was thus very difficult for them to create relationships. With the end of the importation of slaves from Africa, the situation of American slaves became more stable. They stayed longer at the same place, and began to develop their own common language, based upon English, which made it easier to communicate and create links. This was the beginning of a new Afro-American culture, in which religion, marriage, music and literature developed. And of course this also marked the development of a - relatively – easier reproduction within the slave society.

a- A Very Heterogeneous population

Although the slave population of the United States was relatively proportional between males

and females by the beginning of the XIXth century, slave families hardly ever existed. Indeed, several factors made it complicated for affinities to develop. Firstly, on a same plantation, African-born slaves rarely came from the same African region. As a result they did not have the same languages and cultures. Besides, the context of westward and southward expansion made it hard to create any relationships in a very mobile society. According to Michael Tadman, it is not before 1820 that the nature of slave movements in the South shifted from migration to trade.³⁰

b- Development of Marriage

If family relations are not preserved and protected we cannot look for any considerable degree of moral and religious improvement.³¹

The stabilization of the Southern society and the ending of the permanent arrival of foreign slaves saw the progressive development of a Black culture, in which music and religion developed. Marriage was also more common, and represented a social improvement for slaves, as, under bondage, social ties meant survival. Marriage was also encouraged by masters as it represented a double advantage. It was a way of social control, but also of ensuring the natural reproduction; without giving any concrete security to slaves.

Table 2: Natural growth rate of whole slave population (%)³²

1790-99	1800-09	1810-19	1820-29	1830-39	1840-49	1850-59
27	27	30.5	31.2	23.8	27.8	23.4

³⁰Tadman 22 .

³¹ Frederick Law Olmsted, *The Cotton Kingdom, A Traveller's Observations On Cotton And Slavery In The American Slave States, 1853-1861*, 4th ed. (New York: First Da Capo Press, 1996) 305.

³²Tadman 22.

According to table 2, a rising natural growth rate can be observed. This increase of natural growth appeared just after the abolition of the international slave trade. The phase ended in the early 1830s', a period when the interregional slave grew in importance. The natural growth of the slave population was thus very much linked with the economic circumstances, which suggests that natural reproduction was encouraged by masters in times of economic hardships.

c- Beginning of the Internal Slave Trade

The definitive implantation of settlers in the late 1810s' provided more stable conditions and allowed the development of more profound relationships. This coincided with the decline of the Upper South, which became a slave-exporting region. It is at that period that the internal slave trade actually developed, as “for the years after 1820 the dominance of trading over planter migration”³³ can be observed with certainty, and an Upper-lower South slave movement appeared. This movement emptied the declining Upper South from its slave population, which provided the region with a profitable market but also orientated the economic reversion to rely less on slavery (see Appendices 4 and 5).

3- A Journey Through the Market

The Transatlantic Slave Trade, also called Middle Passage, was the triangular trade that started with the development of the plantation system in the Americas, as early as the 16th century, and operated between Europe, Africa, and the New Continent (see Appendix 3). European merchants went to Africa on boats loaded with cheap goods and firearms, with which they could then buy enslaved Africans. These merchants then boarded a huge numbers of slaves, in over-crowded holds, and took

³³Tadman 22.

them to the Americas. There, the Africans were sold as slaves; with their profits, the merchants bought exotic goods which they sold back in Europe.

With the abolition of the Middle Passage and the emergence of a more and more important Afro-American slave population, an internal slave trade developed. Indeed, masters still often had to buy new slaves either to replace the dead or unproductive ones, or simply to have more workers; and they also sold the ones they did not need. This new organization of society increased an already traumatizing aspect of slaves' lives. The parallel development of slave family life and internal slave trade dramatically extended the number of family separations. These separations could be of various nature: one or several members of a family could be sold within the same state or to another state. Parents were separated from their children (sometimes not older than age ten), husbands and wives were torn apart, and most of the time they were not to see each other ever again. This aspect of slavery is often considered by historians as one of the most horrible treatment imposed on slaves by their masters.

a- Separation of Families

To understand the scheme of slave trade, one must take into account the division of slaves into categories. There are obviously categories between sexes and ages, but also between figure, “race” (of African descent only, or mulattos of interbreeding descent) and skills. These different categories were more or less attractive for the traders, according to their age, figure and sex. As a result of these categorizations and strong financial interests, forced family separations were not rare. Sojourner Truth, the famous Black abolitionist woman, said “I have borne thirteen chilern and seen em mos'all sold off into slavery, and when I cried out with a mother's grief, none but Jesus heard – and ar'n't I a woman?”³⁴

³⁴Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household, Black and White Women in the Old South, Gender and*

Parents were separated from their children and vice versa, regardless of the emotional consequences of such a trauma (see Appendix 6). Very young children (under six years old) were usually sold with their mother. This was firstly because they were not valuable enough to be sold alone, nor to remain in their masters' plantation alone, as long as they were not old enough to work. Yet they also represented the future of the slave workforce, and could be bred according to the master's demands, in order for them to fit with the system.

The second reason why young children were sold together with their mother was to have them raised properly. Indeed, it was interesting for masters to buy very young children, as they would be used to the plantation, hence more docile than a fifteen year-old slave freshly bought. As they grew up, slave children became more and more interesting for traders. Young teenage girls were the first ones to catch attention. Their growth began earlier than boys', which made them ready to work earlier than boys. Soon though, around fifteen years old, boys got the upper hand.

b- Stages of the Trade

Being taken into the slave trade machinery meant for a slave a more or less long and painful journey. This journey started either when a master wanted to sell a slave or when a trader (speculator) came and offered the master money for a slave. Then the slaves were taken to some market place, where they were fed and relatively taken care of, so that they would look good enough to be sold. They were from time to time asked to sing, or dance, or play with a ball. The trade was so widespread that most of the slaves were supposed to experience it at least once in their lives. "The cumulative chance of an Upper South slave being traded away was, over the first forty years or so of his life, as high as about 30 percent."³⁵ After these first forty years, the chance grew smaller, as a slave became less attractive

American Culture (The University of North Carolina Press, 1988) 50

³⁵Tadman 112.

when aging.

c- Image of the Trade

For the slaves, being traded was a real trauma in their lives. Though whites considered their sorrow as superficial and short in time, though they knew the threat and risk of being separated from their family was real, slaves greatly suffered from this situation. Nonetheless, their eagerness in creating and protecting their own family shows their deep human nature. Despite the risks, and the probability of having their family life ruined, they needed this human contact, this emotional link. Moreover this link also represented hope, with the idea that maybe, their children would have a better future. And of course the need to be together to get some sense of strength, getting stronger together. Thus slaves remained positive and never gave up against the system of bondage which they were the victims of.

Masters were not proud of slave trade. They considered it necessary, but did not want to be too much involved in this process. Michael Tadman quotes 1845 N.L. Rice declaration: “the slave trader was looked upon... with disgust' by all descent men in the slaveholding states, for 'none but a monster could inflict anguish upon unoffending men for the sake of accumulating wealth’”³⁶. This negative image of the trader actually reveals how planters did not want to look too close to the horror of the system. Rice here tries to clear his name from the terrible treatments he imposed on his slaves: of course traders were speculators and made money from an inhuman business, but masters participated in this business too, they agreed to sell their slaves. Slave trade was controversial for both slaves and masters. The way slaves kept on constituting families, despite its very unsafe nature, sounds like a challenge to both life and humanity, but also to their masters. Founding a family against all odds was also a message, a way for them to claim that they were still human, that bondage had not destroyed

³⁶Tadman 5.

their human nature.

On the other hand, slave trade was also somehow taboo among planters. They knew it was an act of tyranny, but tried to forget about it by rejecting the fault on traders, or by summoning economic reasons.

These points of view highlight how slave trade – and by extension, slavery – was very controversial even among the slave society.

C- Resistance to Slavery

Contradictory with what most proslavery arguments used to claim, slaves were seldom passive toward their situation, and resistance was very common. Various forms of resistance could be observed, from violence to theft; but the most important, and which also reveals how eager to recover freedom slaves were, was probably to runaway. Runaway slaves escaped from their plantations on their own, in couples, in small groups, aiming to recover – or rather to discover – some kind of liberty. Running away was, needless to say, forbidden, so that it was very complicated for slaves to do so. Yet, while racism was very common at that time, some white people still helped slaves on their way to freedom, offering them shelter and protection for a moment. These people were taking immense risks, and though were actually quite numerous. Most of them were part of the Underground Railroad, a sort of secret network of houses held by people who wanted to protect slaves on their attempt to escape bondage.

1- Pacific Resistance

a- Slave Religion

Black churches were to deal with a very ambiguous situation due to their position toward slavery, especially in border states. Indeed, churches wanted to remain neutral regarding slavery, they wanted to be independent from any particular ideology. Therefore, both slaves and free Blacks were allowed in those churches.

In the deep South, masters thought religion would bring more morality to their slaves, but also that it would be a form of control of the social life of slaves.

b- Rebelling Aspect: Hidden Practices and Music

This “white control” was actually very limited, and hidden religious practices developed. Sabbath schools appeared, secret night ceremonies, with methods developed to catch sounds, in order not to be heard by the whites. Slaves expressed their deep sufferings and prayed for relief through music. In this way, music represented a crucial form of spiritual expression in the slave society, in both secular and religious aspects. These prayers and songs were often based on themes extracted from the Bible, such as the theme of a chosen people waiting to be delivered, and often had a double meaning, for example the theme of freedom both dealt with afterlife and runaways. Nevertheless, despite these heavy subjects, music also expressed joy and justice, it was actually always present, in happy and sad moments.

Not only did music deal with forbidden topics, the very fact of creating their own music was an act of rebellion in itself. Indeed, although masters treated their slaves as if they were not humane, the

fact of creating their own form of art denied this thesis, for art is a proper human human characteristic.

2- Runaways

a- The Run

Running away was one of the responses slaves could give to their masters as a consequence of the violences and humiliations they had to endure. It was an important and extreme decision for slaves, and it had a double meaning: the escape from the plantation and from bondage was the entry into an unsafe world, where every danger was amplified. From an enclosed world of violence, dependence, and servitude, they experienced the unstable life of the wilderness, constantly on their guard, struggling for life while trying to remain undiscovered. If a runaway slave was to be captured, it meant harsh punishment, if not death.

Although slaves were considered as inferior people by the Whites, they were greatly feared. The image of the monstrous Black man raping a White woman was widespread, “the fear among slaveholders concerning the Black man's libidinous character seemed always near the surface”³⁷. Besides, a possible rebellion was always in the minds of the masters, making them anxious about a potential reversal of the system, where slaves would take control. Indeed, during the 1840s and 1850s, the number of violent acts of resistance dramatically increased. Yet, the more slaveholders tried to control violence, most of the time through harsh treatments, the more violent slaves became. A sort of

³⁷ John Hope Franklin and Loren Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves, Rebels on the Plantation*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) 98.

escalation of violence appeared at that period, and what slaveholders feared the most was “neither from the abolitionist attack nor the rise of 'Black Republicans' in the North”³⁸, but a successful slave rebellion. As a result, the atmosphere in the Old South grew in tension and fear.

Slaves ran away from the plantations in various compositions. Some left on their own, either because they were alone further to a sale, or hoping to come back later and free their family. Others left in small groups, often strong men who could help each other. Very rare were entire families. In any case, running away was synonymous with sacrifice. The idea was indeed to have the best chance to succeed, which was only possible for small groups. Runaways then hid in the woods, very often near the plantation in order to find food more easily, but the risk was to be discovered by overseers and taken back to the plantation, after a violent punishment. Others went further, which made it even harder for them to survive, although not safer, as they were hunted by slave catchers. A small number of them were taken care of by the Underground Railroad.

b- A Capital Offense: Major Act of Rebellion

This pattern, moving out of the plantation world, was unique. As said before, the Old South was a very stable society: while very few people arrived in the region, very few left as well. In this context of a very still society, running away could be seen as a capital offense, a major act of rebellion, completely contradicting the system. Moreover, slaves were considered as properties, therefore running away could be considered as a theft.

³⁸Franklin and Schweninger 108.

c- A Struggle Against the American Constitution: Questioning the Property Right

Theft was actually the main crime connected with runaway slaves, as a consequence of their outlaw status. They had to steal in order to feed themselves, often using their masters' food storage. Yet, the status of the products stored was ambiguous, and slaves had a specific view on their masters' property. These goods had been made by slaves, as a consequence slaves had a kind of right to take them back. Yet, slaves were properties themselves, hence they had no right of property, which enforced the power of their masters over them. Indeed, “every measure that may lessen the dependence of a slave on his master ought to be opposed as tending toward dangerous consequences”³⁹. Indeed, according to the Fifth Amendment of the American Constitution, property rights are to be protected above all: “No person shall be [...] deprived of life, property or liberty”

3- Organization of a Parallel Business: the Hunt

a- The Hunt

The entire system of slavery was predicated on the ability of Whites to control their 'property'.⁴⁰

Slave catchers and slave owners were very determined to get back runaway slaves, each of them having their own reasons and motivations. Slave owners had of course immense interests in a slave hunt. Economically, the loss of several slaves was sometimes disastrous to them, therefore a perpetual attention was given to runaways. Still, the most important aspect raised by runaway slaves was their

³⁹Franklin and Schweninger 120-127.

⁴⁰Franklin and Schweninger 150.

questioning of the institution of slavery itself. They broke the subordination and complete devotion presupposed by the system, which endangered it. Moreover, the act of running away from a plantation also revealed how slaves, even those who seemed to accept their condition, actually rejected the institution. Thus, slaves who had managed to gain their masters' confidence sometimes happened to run away, which offended their masters.

b- Economic Aspect: Rewards and Remunerations

Many laws were passed in order to determine how exactly money would be distributed to the hunters, who would pay, who would decide. This legal capping reveals the struggle at the heart of slavery, which got more and more important through the years, that is to say keeping the system as it is despite opposition and rebellions with the help of the law, but also counting with the contribution of greedy characters. Slave hunters, slave catchers, and others were part of an important business, and were often more interested in money rather than the protection of the institution.

c- Organisation of the Hunt

In order to maintain surveillance, patrols toured day and night around the counties, composed of thousands of White southerners. Some of them were propertied men defending their interests, but many were no planters, they simply joined the hunt for pleasure. These patrols usually had no definite mission, they were not sent to find a specific runaway, but rather to walk around and make sure no bondsman was messing around without authorization. Despite their great efforts, these patrols were not really effective.

A second category of hunters, much more effective, was that of the slave catchers. Most of them

were “illiterate, non-slaveholding whites”⁴¹, sort of bounty hunters specialized in runaway slaves. They were hired by planters and their job was to find a specific slave and to bring him or her back to his or her master's plantation. If the slave opposed resistance, the catcher was usually allowed to kill him, because an escaped slave was considered very dangerous for (and by) the White southerners. “Negro dogs” were also trained to track slaves, hunting them as if they were animals.

Some even went to the North, which made the hunt very expensive for the planter, but also much harder for the catcher to find the slave because those who reached that part of the country were usually helped by free Blacks or White abolitionists.

Runaway slaves and the hunt they engendered show both the attempts to contradict the system and the power of this system. Despite the tremendous amount of slaves attempting to escape, the Old South always manage to answer the problems and prove stronger. However, the balance was fragile and the growing siding of the North with the slaves progressively broke the balance.

⁴¹Franklin and Schweninger 304.

III- A Comparative Case Study of the States of Virginia and Alabama

The states of Virginia and Alabama present two different developments of the slave system, hence of society. Chronologically, in Virginia, slavery developed in the late XVIth century and saw the tremendous impact of the Transatlantic trade. The end of this trade, in 1808, matches with the beginning of the development of the Deep South and the rise of great cotton plantations, and Alabama was part of this new system. While Virginia and the whole Upper South experienced an economic decline because of the exhaustion of the soils, the states of the Deep South appeared as a promised land with very fertile soils, particularly appropriate to cotton cultures. The simultaneous boom of the cotton market with Great Britain made of cotton production a very lucrative activity. The aim of this part is to show the different development patterns that occurred in each of these two states, and to understand, through the evolution of slavery, how on the one hand Virginia turned toward an economic diversification, whereas Alabama got more and more enslaved to cotton production and its dependence upon slavery. A study of the slave population and of the slave trade emphasize the similarities and difference between the two states, and a comparative study of the rebelling aspects allows us to confront the controversial conceptions of slavery.

A- The Slave Populations

The territory of Alabama was created after the Mississippi territory was divided into two, and Mississippi entered the Union in 1817. Two years later, Alabama also entered the Union. The population of Alabama grew rapidly, nourished by the successive migrations from the Upper South. In this new state, the nature of slavery and its development was very different from what could be

observed in Virginia. Firstly, the slave population in Alabama was essentially composed of slaves born on the American continent, as opposed to the slaves in Virginia who mainly originated from Africa until 1808.⁴²

1- Slave Population in Virginia and Alabama

a- Progressive Development in Virginia

The very first Africans who landed on the North American territory arrived in Virginia, in Jamestown in 1619. Slavery then progressively developed, and the Transatlantic slave trade took the extent we know, providing Virginia and the other cultivating states with a constant slave supply. The White population in Virginia was composed of European immigrants and their descendants. According to the first census of the American population that took place in 1790, the state of Virginia was by far the most populated state of the Union, with a total of 691,737 inhabitants. According to that same census, there were 293,427 slaves in Virginia in 1790, which represented about a third of the Black American population of the time. In 1830, this population had risen to 469,757, that is to say the Black population had less than doubled within these forty years. In fact the 1830s' and 1840s' even saw a decline in the slave population due to the tremendous development of cotton plantations in the Deep South, which absorbed the slaves of the Upper South. In 1831, it was estimated that about 6,000 slaves were sent South every year. The 1840 census reports that the slave population had fallen to 448,987.

⁴²James Curtis Ballagh, *A History of Slavery in Virginia* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press, 1902) 5-7.

b- Rapid Growth in Alabama

Alabama became a state of the Union in 1819, more than thirty years after the end of the American Revolutionary War. Although the region was slightly peopled by colonists who shared the land with Indians by the 1790s', the population started to grow tremendously in the 1810s', shifting from 9,046 according to the 1810 census to 127,901 in 1820, and this exponential growth continued until the Civil War.⁴³ In 1819, the slaves represented 30 percent of the population of the state (128,000), a number that doubled in the 1820s' and again in the 1830s'. By 1840, the slave population – in Alabama as well as in rest rest of the Deep South – represented almost half of the Southern population. Compared with the progressive development of Virginia, Alabama's exponential development is representative of the great attractiveness of the Deep South in the late Antebellum period.

c- Slave Distributions

By the end of the 1830s', Alabama could compete with Virginia in terms of number of slaves. In 1860, just before the Civil War, the slave population in Virginia had reached a number of 490,825, which makes it the state the most populated with slaves. Yet the slave population in Alabama the same year was almost equal. The exponential increase of the number of slaves in Alabama is the consequence of two different flows of slave importations, mainly from the Upper South. The first flow followed the planters' migrations to the Deep South. It is for example the case of famous Dred Scott, who was born in 1799, in Southampton County, Virginia, as property of the Blow family. The Blows then settled in Huntsville, Alabama, to start a plantation business. Indeed, until the 1820s' and the stabilization of the Alabama settlers, slave importations were mainly a consequence of their masters'

⁴³ See: Population of the United States

migrations. They followed their masters in their Southward movement, not necessarily submitted to slave trade. By the 1820s', slave trade grew in importance and became the basis of slave migrations. An Upper-Lower South movement developed, Upper South slaves (mainly from Virginia) were taken to the Deep South and sold to great plantations.

2- Slave Trade in Virginia and Alabama

It is interesting to question the origin of the slaves in each states though. In Virginia, the slaves were admittedly numerous, but they were concentrated in the eastern and southern parts of the state. Moreover, these slaves were greatly submitted to slave trade and had great chances of being sold South. Alabama represented a heavy market for slave traders and speculators, who were in charge of the transfer and sale of the Upper South slaves to the plantations of the Deep South. Indeed, “most enslaved individuals in Alabama were born into enslavement in other states”⁴⁴.

a- Virginia Before 1808

Slave trade in Virginia mainly followed an exporting movement, at least as early as 1790. In the 1790s, while the Carolinas, Georgia, Tennessee and Kentucky were still developing and in need of slaves, Virginia distributed them to the rest of the Upper South. Indeed, from 1790 to 1799, Virginia and Maryland were the two main exporting states, with over 22,000 slaves each exported. The singularity of Virginia is that, while these exportations stagnated or decreased in Maryland, they almost doubled the following decade in Virginia, with 41,097 exported from 1800 to 1809. Thus, even before

⁴⁴S. Hébert, Keith. “Slavery.” *Encyclopedia of Alabama*. 2012. University of West Georgia. 18 May 2014
<<http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/face/Article.jsp?id=h-2369>>.

the abolition of the Transatlantic Trade, Virginia was the major exporting state in terms of slaves.

b- Virginia After 1808

After the abolition was effectively applied, a boom in slave exportations can be observed in Virginia. Between 1810 and 1819, their number rose to 75.562 and kept on increasing exponentially, with a pike in the 1830s at 118.474. During the two following decades the number of slave exportations slowly decreased, yet still remained very high, with 82.575 slaves exported in the 1850s.

In this exporting pattern, Virginia had a leading role, as it was both the first and the most important exporting state. Although the other states of the Upper South progressively turned into exportating states, Virginia remained by far the most important one regarding the number of slaves exported (see Appendices 4 and 5). Indeed, despite the permanent slave exports, Virginia's slave population remained the most numerous one of the South. This was the result of the tremendous birth rate in the slave society of the state, but might also have been encouraged – as abolitionists stated it⁴⁵ – by “stud farms”, or “breeding farms”. That is to say places where slaves were encouraged to reproduce and baby slaves were raised.

c- Alabama

Alabama was one of the most important importing states, as “the importing section from 1820 to 1860 was dominated by Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Florida, and, eventually, Texas.”⁴⁶ Indeed, from 1810 to 1829, Alabama was the leading importing state, with 35,500 slaves

⁴⁵Tadman 122.

⁴⁶Tadman 12.

imported in the 1810s' and 24,156 in the 1820s'. The rise of Mississippi in the 1830s' and 1840s' and then of Texas in the 1850s' put Alabama in the shade, although it remained a major importing state.

Alabama actually saw its net slave importations decline because some counties in the state had turned into exporting regions, and by the 1850s', "had come to contain substantial exporting enclaves"⁴⁷ (see Appendix 5). This shows that the differences between exporting and importing states evolved rapidly and shows a change in the economy of the region. The shift from an importing to an exporting activity accounts for an economic change: either did the activity of the plantation decrease, so that less slaves were needed, or the birth rate among the slave population increased, and an exporting activity had to be developed. Both of these reasons have the same consequence: Alabama's economy was no longer exclusively based upon plantation, with slave imports depending upon the needs of the planters; new states (Texas, Arkansas) now depended of Alabama for their slave importations. Slave trade was no longer a simple matter of supplying the need of the Alabamian plantation, but of regulating the slave population and make profits from it.

3- Characteristics of the Importing and Exporting Regions

a- Virginia

In Virginia, the tobacco plantations rapidly exhausted the soils, and the production did not meet the demand. As a consequence, as seen earlier in this study, the economy progressively diversified and relied less and less on slavery. In fact, the nature of slavery itself took a very particular form in Virginia,

⁴⁷Tadman 12.

and was to a certain extent already on the road to emancipation long before the 13th Amendment was signed. The “emergence of a group of virtually free slaves”⁴⁸, that is to say Black people who were considered as slaves by the law but actually lived autonomous lives, shows the way slavery was considered in certain parts of the state.

With the growing development of industrial slavery, the evolution of the legal status of free Blacks and the appearance of free Black slave owners, many slaves could enjoy a new form of freedom, not official and secret. Indeed, this laxity was not very much advertised, neither by the masters nor by the slaves, who both had their interests in keeping this new system confidential. On the one hand the masters did not make much profit from this system but it was also less trouble for them. On the other hand the slaves could live their own lives in this semi-freedom and had no interest in spreading the information.

b- Alabama

In Alabama, the cotton economy represented a tremendous opportunity of economic development, as the production could easily supply the demand. The huge cotton market required a massive workforce, which was to be found in slavery. As table 1 shows, the cotton production per worker increased regularly from 1801 to 1850, and we know that the slave population was also regularly increasing due to constant imports. This draws us to the conclusion that the cotton production in Alabama increased throughout the first half of the 19th century, until the Civil War. Indeed, by the 1830s, cotton represented the major production and source of income in Alabama.

⁴⁸Loren Schweninger, “The Underside of Slavery: the Internal Economy, Self-Hire, and Quasi Freedom in Virginia, 1780-1865”, *Slavery and Abolition, A Journal of Slave and Post-Slave Studies* Jun. 13 1999: 1-22.

This dependence upon slavery drew many Alabama planters to harshen the treatment of their slaves, the surveillance and the punishments. They had become more and more precious and more and more work was expected from them.

B- Different Experiences of Slavery: Contemporary Accounts

It is interesting to compare and contrast the evolution of slavery in its deepest intricacies, described by slaves but also by Northerners (Frederick Olmsted Law). Obviously the slaves narratives that were recorded before the abolition in 1864 are not as reliable as those recorded after, due to the potential threat of repreasals, even when out of slavery. The slave narratives recorded for the Federal Writers' Project in 1936 and 1937 also have to be contrasted. Indeed, although the threat of represal was smaller than it used to be, segregation was still very present in the Southern society. Moreover, the advanced age of the witnesses, approaching a century, allow us to question their entire reliability. Still, these are precious documents that allow us to picture plantations' lifestyle, and to apprehend its evolution.

1- A Northerner's Observation: Frederick Law Olmsted

Frederick Law Olmsted (April 26, 1822 – August 28, 1903) was a Northern architect, journalist and social critic. He is, for example, the creator of natural parks, such as Central Park in New York City. He also had a predominant career as a journalist and travelled a lot. He was particularly interested in slavery and the slave system, and was commissioned by the New York Times from 1852 to 1858 to transcribe his observations, which were then published in the journal, and later in *Journeys and Explorations in the Cotton Kingdom*. His observations, made from an external point of view, display a unique depiction of the Deep South, interviewing and observing White planters and small farmers, but

also slaves and free Blacks. Moreover, these observations led him to the conclusion that slavery was inefficient, and had a negative impact on the Southern economy, “an impression that the cotton monopoly in some way did [the Southerners] more harm than good”, an idea largely conveyed by antislavery movements.

a- Virginia

Virginia was one of the first Southern states Frederick Law Olmsted visited, and this can be felt in the way he describes the ways of life: “I am struck with the close cohabitation and association of black and white”; and the slaves:

the great mass, as they are seen at work, under overseers, in the fields, appear very dull, idiotic, and brute-like; and it requires an effort to appreciate that they are, very much more than the beasts they drive, our brethren – a part of ourselves. They are very ragged, and the women especially, who work in the field with the men, with no apparent distinction in their labour, disgustingly dirty. They seem to move very awkwardly, slowly, and undecidedly, and almost invariably stop their work while the train is passing.⁴⁹

The very specific and singular character of slavery in Virginia was also witnessed by Olmsted: “I observe, in the newspapers, complaints of growing insolence and insubordination among the negroes, arising, it is thought, from too many priviledges being permitted them by their masters, and from too merciful administration of the police laws with regard to them.”⁵⁰ According to him, the institution of slavery had indeed turned into a more liberal, freer system, which was the cause of the growing accounts of slave violence and rebellious behaviours. Contradictory with what Schweninger states in his study – that the slave system was loosening

⁴⁹Olmsted 40

⁵⁰Olmsted 47

and that slaves were living autonomous lives – Olmsted rather links the loosening with a lack of authority leading to rebellions. Yet, considering the great debates that took place in Virginia about slavery⁵¹, it is obvious that the slaveholding people of Virginia was deeply afraid of a slave rebellion and of a possible abolition of slavery, as show the numerous laws that were passed after the Nat Turner Uprising to reduce the rights of slaves. Thus, the rebelling character of some Virginian slaves might have been the result of a loosening of the slave codes in some plantations⁵². Yet, these rebellions had frightened so many people that the situation was very ambiguous, and led to a determinative question: was it the loosening of the slave system that had encouraged the slaves to rebel, or was it the reduction of their liberties? It is an eternal question: which came first, the chicken or the egg?

b- Alabama

Frederick Law Olmsted, in his journey through the Antebellum South, went from Georgia to Alabama. As he crossed Alabama in order to reach Montgomery, the capital of the state, he witnessed the various aspects of plantation life. While in Montgomery, he noticed that the town was “prosperous”, “with pleasant suburbs, and a remarkably enterprising population”ⁿ whereas the Alabama countryside was made of small farms, in which both Blacks and Whites lived in “isolated”, “comfortless habitations”. The very specific identity of the Deep South is also depicted by Olmsted, he calls it “the Anglo-Saxon development of the South West”:

They were, generally, cotton-planters, going to Mobile on business [...]. They were

⁵¹The 1832 Virginia debate and the 1861 debate about secession were fiercely argued on both sides.

⁵²Nat Turner was taught to read and write by his master.

usually well dressed, but were a rough, coarse style of people, drinking a great deal, and most of the time under a little alcoholic excitement. Not sociable, except when the topics of cotton, land, and negroes, were started; interested, however, in talk about theatres and the turf; very profane, often showing the handles of concealed weapons about their persons, but not quarrelsome, avoiding disputes and altercations, and respectful to one another in forms of words; very ill-informed, except on plantation business; their language ungrammatical, idiomatic, and extravagant.⁵³

Yet, this depiction ought to be contrasted, as it only displays a part of the population: the small planters. Of course, the slaves represented a large amount of the Alabamian population, and the last category was that of the plantation owners. Olmsted emphasizes the great cultural gaps between the different populations, with on the one hand the small, uneducated planters, and on the other the aristocratic plantation system.

The way slaveowners considered their slaves at that period seems slightly different from that of Virginia. While in Virginia, planters and slaveowners in general seemed to care more about White control over Blacks, and the fear of a potential slave rebellion was in everybody's mind; in Alabama, the value of slaves was recognized, and they were taken care of, at least in order to keep them fit to work: "The niggers are worth too much to be risked here; if the Paddies are knocked overboard, or get their backs broke, nobody loses anything!"⁵⁴ This assertion, recorded from a planter on a steamboat, shows firstly the importance of the slaves, and that the masters would not make them do anything, make them risk anything. Secondly, this illustrates the Southern pro-slavery argument that slavery is no worse than capitalism in the North, where nobody cares about the workers, mostly composed of Irish migrants.

⁵³Olmsted 277.

⁵⁴Olmsted 276.

2- Narratives Recorded after the Abolition of Slavery: the Federal Writers' Project, 1936-1937

The Federal Writers' Project was part of Roosevelt's New Deal, established in 1935, aimed to protect and help writers during the Great Depression. A specific commission was created in 1936 in order to save the memories of the last ex-slaves in America, 41 years after the 13th Amendment was passed and slavery was abolished. It is composed of more than 2.300 first person narratives, which describe what life was like for slaves in the late Antebellum South, recorded by journalists who travelled the country in search of those ex-slaves. I have selected a few narratives from the records of Alabama and Virginia, as they are respectively composed of 139 and 15 narratives.

a- Virginia

Testimonies from Virginian slaves tend to show that slavery was harsh in Virginia, and of a very particular nature. Indeed, contradictory with the great plantations of the Deep South, the economy that relied on slavery in Virginia was more diversified. Thus, Candis Goodwin was born in a Virginian plantation, while Fanny Berry was “hired out” by her mistress, and all the work Charles Crowley did “wuz to play an' drive cows, being only a boy worked around as chillun; doin' dis, an' dat, little things de white folks would call me to do”. Interestingly enough, there are many accounts of the kindness of the masters, as testifies for example Richard Slaughter: “I don't know much about the meanness of slavery. There was so many degrees in slavery,

and I belonged to a very nice man.”⁵⁵

b- Alabama

Uncle Charlie (Charlie Aarons) was born under slavery and estimates that he was about twenty years old when slavery was abolished. His experience of life as a slave is representative of the usual experiences. He was separated from his parents in a transaction when he was ten and never them again. He then was made to work very hard and got no education nor holiday. He states that “those nigger dogs would track you and all you got was a beating”⁵⁶, when asked about running away. There were two overseers, a Whiter man and a “Negro”.

Aunt Molly (Molly Ammond) describes her life as a slave as tough, though not unbearable. What she said must yet be contrasted as she was only thirteen years old when slavery was abolished. According to her, it was not because they feared the “nigger dogs” that slaves did not run away, but because there was nothing to complain about, except the hard word expected from them:

No-suh, I ain't never seed no slave run away. Us was treated fine. Our folks was quality. We had plenty som'n t'eat, but dem slaves hadda work powerful hard though. Atter dey come home fum de fiel's dey was so tired dat dey go raght to sleep, except when de massa had barbecues. Christmas was de big time; dere was several days to res' an' make merryin' an' lots of dem no count niggers got drunk.⁵⁷

⁵⁵Narratives of Fanny Berry, Charles Crowley and Richard Slaughter, in “Volume 12, Virginia Narratives”, *Slave Narratives: a Folk History of Slavery in the United States from Interviews with Former Slaves*, 2011 ed.

⁵⁶Narrative of Charlie Aarons in “Volume 1, Alabama Narratives”, *Slave Narratives: a Folk History of Slavery in the United States from Interviews with Former Slaves*, 2011 ed.

⁵⁷Narrative of Molly Ammond in “Volume 1: Alabama Narratives”, *Slave Narratives: a Folk History of Slavery in the United States from Interviews with Former Slaves*, 2011 ed.

C- Fragmentation of the South

1- Virginia: the State of Rebellions

The rebellious spirit of the Virginian slaves was in part due to the particular conception and characteristics of slavery in that state. Indeed, an important number of slave rebellions occurred in Virginia, which marked the institution, and it is important to question the meaning of these insurrections. On the one hand, one could argue that the importance of the Virginian slave rebellions were the consequence of the loosening of the institution of slavery in Virginia. Yet, the rebellious character of these particular slaves question this loosening: why would they rebel if they were getting freer and more autonomous? Moreover, as John Henrick Clarke asks in his introduction to the responses of ten black writers to William Styron's *Nat Turner*⁵⁸, considering that Virginian slaveholders needed the help of federal troops to support their state militia, “if, as William Styron asserts, the state of Virginia was on the verge of freeing its slaves, why did it assemble so much military might to keep them in bondage?”

a- Rebellions in Virginia

The first important slave rebellion in Virginia took place in 1800, in Henrico county. The literate slave Gabriel Prosser tried to escape his plantation with twenty five other fellow slaves from his plantation, but he was betrayed by another slave and the rebellion was quickly suppressed, the rebellious slaves were all hanged. In 1805, a minor slave rebellion took place at Chatham Manor, when

⁵⁸Lerone Bennett, Jr et al., *William Styron's Nat Turner: Ten Black Writers Respond* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968) viii.

a small group of slaves whipped their overseers and tried to escape from the plantation. The rebels were soon under control, and three of them died in the fight. Ten years later, George Boxley, a White former plantation owner, planned a slave rebellion with slaves from Orange, Spotsylvania and Louisa Counties, after having heard a divine appeal. He was also betrayed by a slave and caught by the police, then put in jail, from where he managed to escape. Despite the reward offered for his capture, he never was to be found and settled in Indiana.

John Brown's Raid on Harpers' Ferry was the last slave uprising that took place in the United States before the Civil war, on October 16, 1859. John Brown was an abolitionist who intended to free the slaves of Harpers Ferry. In the night of October 16, he marched to the city with a group of volunteers, captured some prominent figures, and invaded the federal arsenal. He actually hoped that the slaves of the region would join the movement and take the stolen arms, which did not happen. General Robert E. Lee suppressed the insurrection, many raiders were killed and Brown was captured, tried and sentenced to death.

Old John Brown came to Harpers Ferry Town,
 Purpose to raise an insurrection;
 Old Governor Wise put the specks upon his eyes
 An' showed him the happy land of Canaan
 Song about John Brown, recalled by ex-slave Fanny Berry

b- Focus on the Nat Turner Rebellion

Back 'fore the sixties, I can 'member my Mistress, Miss Sara Ann, comin' to de window an' hollerin', "De niggers is arisin'! De niggers is arisin'! De niggers is killin' all de white folks, killin' all de babies in de cradle!" It must have been Nat Turner's Insurrection; which wuz sometime 'fo de breakin' of de Civil War.⁵⁹

The Nat Turner Rebellion (or Southampton Insurrection) took place in August 1831, in

⁵⁹Ex-slave Fanny Berry, Virginia, "Volume 12, Virginia Narratives", *Slave Narratives: a Folk History of Slavery in the United States from Interviews with Former Slaves*, 2011 ed.

Southampton County, Virginia. This insurrection is known as the most murderous slave uprising in the American South, with between fifty and sixty five White victims. Nat Turner, in his confessions to Thomas R. Gray⁶⁰, reveals that this rebellion takes root in his childhood, and that he has heard several Holly Appeals. He was a particularly smart boy, and somehow managed to learn to read and write, but also tried to recreate gun powder and all sorts of weapons such as a sword, which he used during the uprising. In 1831, he started to gather potential slave partners he could trust for his rising, who were then joined by a large amount of both slaves and free Blacks, a total of over seventy people. During the summer, he saw a sign in the Sun, and decided that the time had come. On August 21, the Black rebels gathered and attacked White houses, under Turner's order not to spare any White life, and aiming to create terror. Indeed, the stunning violence of the rising must have created panic: the rebels killed over seventy White men, women and children, using knives, axes, blade and various blunt instruments, which participated to the great horror of the scene:

Henry, Austin, and Sam, went to the still, where, finding Mr. Peebles, Austin shot him, and the rest of us went to the house; as we approached, the family discovered us, and shut the door. Vain hope! Will, with one stroke of his axe, opened it, and we entered and found Mrs. Turner and Mrs. Newsome in the middle of the room, almost frightened to death. Will immediately killed Mrs. Turner, with one blow of his axe. I took Mrs Newsome by the hand, and with the sword I had when I was apprehended, I struck her several blows over the head, but not being able to kill her, as the sword was dull. Will turning around and discovering it, despatched her also.⁶¹

c- Aftermath of the Southampton Insurrection

The rebellion was eventually suppressed two days after its beginning, on August 23, and required twice as much White men to control the rebels. Nat Turner managed to hide for two months, but he was ultimately captured, tried and sentenced to death. The great fear provoked by the horror of

⁶⁰Thomas R. Gray, "The Confessions of Nat Turner," *Slave narratives*, ed. William L. Andrew and Henry Louis Gates (The Library of America: New York, 2000) 143.

⁶¹Thomas R. Gray 257.

this insurrection, but also the tremendous influence of the sometimes biased descriptions of it, created a revival of violence toward slaves all over the South, with between 100 and 200 slaves beaten to death in mobs or by militias. In the North, this violence revived the abolitionist movement. Thomas Roderick Dew's response to this abolitionist movement stated that the insurrection was “too young”⁶², and that the consequences of such a rebellion were not yet evaluable, so that a strong legal response was necessary. Meanwhile, in the South, new laws were passed to lessen slave rights in order to reassure people who were afraid of a potential spread of the movement. Thus, the list of things forbidden to slaves dramatically grew longer: they were no longer allowed to learn to read, write, gather in groups or own a gun.

2- Division Within Virginia

The history of Antebellum Virginia embodies the conflict that rose around slavery all over the United States by the early XIXth century. Its geographical position coupled with the fragmented distribution of land led to the growth of a gap between the western and the eastern parts of the state. The western region, mainly concentrated around the Valley and Trans-Allegheny areas, had stopped relying on slavery and turned toward a more liberal, “Northern”, economy, and thus the global sentiment was turned toward the North. On the other hand, the eastern region, on the Tidewater and Piedmont regions, still relied very much upon slavery, with great plantations, and especially an important slave trade that represented an “abundant source of wealth”⁶³.

⁶²Roderick Dew 26.

⁶³Roderick Dew 31.

a- Virginia Debate of 1832

A debate about how to whiten Virginia. Nobody argues in that legislature about whether slavery is right or wrong. The whole argument is: how are we going to get rid of the Blacks? The whole assumption is: you cannot abolish slavery unless you rid Virginia of Blacks.⁶⁴

The Virginia Debate was held in 1832, in the House of Delegates in Richmond, Virginia, in response to Nat Turner's uprising. The subject put into question was the abolition of slavery. Thomas Jefferson Randolph, grandson of the famous president, proposed a bill for the abolition of slavery. In the state of Virginia, the great issue around the abolition was, as William Freehling states, what would happen to the slaves if they were freed? Randolph thought masters should sell their slaves out of the state before their emancipating birthday. His opponents saw it as an inhuman way of solving the problem: separating families, friends, and sell them down South to Georgia, Alabama and Mississippi. Another popular argument was actually to send the Blacks back to Africa. Yet, the main problem was not money but whether the slaves agreed to go? Will they accept to leave America? No answer was given to this question and the issue was postponed when the popular vote decided not to abolish slavery.

There was a debate within this debate between the different regions of Virginia. In the eastern part of the state, people thought the debate was an invitation for more Blacks to rebel, as the institution was put into question in a society where the population was composed of 50 percent Blacks and 50 percent Whites. Going westward, in Middle Virginia, the slave population lowered to 20 percent, and in Western Virginia it was between 0 and 10 percent, an “utterly different society”⁶⁵. The great problem in this debate was the under-representation of the Western population. Indeed, the male proportion legislature that was in use in Virginia was to the great advantage of Eastern Virginia, and reinforced the argument of the West that White democracy and West Virginia were being enslaved by the East.

This debate in fact shows the great power of the Blacks over the White society: although they had no power in politics, they influenced greatly the decisions of their masters. Ultimately, at the end of

⁶⁴Freehling, William. “Pre-Civil War Virginia Showdowns Conference.” 2010. National Cable Satellite Corporation. 25 May 2014 <<http://www.c-span.org/video/?295815-1/precivil-war-virginia-showdowns>>.

⁶⁵Freehling.

the debate, the decision was taken to give the opportunity to free Blacks to go back to Africa, and if it worked, then slavery would have to be abolished. This is what Freehlong calls “procrastination”, one of Man's main default, and which puts here the ultimate decision in the hands of the Blacks, who decided not to go.

b- 1861 Secession Debate

William Freehling's analysis states that the debate has been “forced on Virginia”. When Lincoln was elected on November 6, 1860, North Carolina and other lower states were threatening to leave the Union. But Virginia did not do anything. When the debate became unavoidable, Virginia decided to set a convention on January 12, 1861. The issue about this debate, at the beginning, was: can that convention by itself break up the Union or should the people decide in a popular referendum? A popular ratification eventually took place on February 4 to decide whether there would be a referendum, and the convention was finally held on February 12. Embassadors from the Lower South came to the convention to try to tell the Upper South what to do. At that point only one third of the Southern pop had voted to secede, so that the Confederacy had very little power, and needed as much support as possible. The argument was that slavery was endangered, meaning that Black control was endangered.

Many questions were at stake during the debate, and the main issue was actually the Union itself: was slavery that much in danger, and to a certain extent White control over the Blacks, or was it more important to preserve the Union? For weeks, the main question the convention tried to answer was: how to save the Union? On top of that, West Virginia wanted to talk about the huge and unfair taxations imposed on them, and there was also a debate on how to control Blacks all over again if they ran away to the North after the secession. This last question shows that slavery, and more particularly slave movements were still at the heart of the debate a few months before the Civil War, as it represents

a form of protest but also a threat of violence and chaos, which justifies the way the Confederacy fought so fiercely during the War.

Nine days before the beginning of the Civil War, on April 4, the decision not to secede came out of the new vote. When Lincoln reinforced Fort Sumter, he forced the decision and hurried the beginning war. Yet, Virginia was still debating on the best way to save the Union. To hurry the negotiations, Henry Wise, who was the governor of Virginia during John Brown's raid, and still very popular, decided to take the things in his own hands. He sent illegally federal troops to start a Civil War in North Carolina. Finally, the decision to secede was taken. However, West Virginia did not agree, because the region had had no fair chance to express its opinion.

In Mississippi, Georgia, Alabama, the question of Black slavery was at the heart of the secessionist movement. In Virginia the question was whether Virginia would accept to be ruled by Lincoln, to be invaded by Northerners, to be enslaved by them and fight against South Carolina. After having discussed taxation and representation, East Virginia had decided to force the West out of the State. As a consequence to these long-lasting tensions, a double secession took place: Virginia seceded from the Union and joined the Confederacy, West Virginia seceded from Virginia and joined the Union. During the War, four border states did not secede, which were composed of one third of the Southern population, hence one third of the slaves, and two thirds of the Southern industry. 500,000 slaves ran away from the confederacy during the war, 150,000 of them joined the Union army.

c- Secession in Alabama

Alabama represents clearly the position of the states of the Deep South regarding secession. Contradictory with the great debate over the preservation of the Union that was going on in Virginia, in Alabama as well as in most of the Deep Souther states, the decision to secede was based upon slavery

and its preservation. In the secession convention of January 1861, on the 11th, the voters decided by 61 percent to secede from the Union, being the fourth state to do so. After the secession, Alabama joined the Confederate States of America.

The Virginian debate over the preservation of the Union showed the ambivalent position of the border states, whose identity was not clearly defined and settled, mixing the Northern and the Southern culture. Here, the issue did not have to be discussed for a long time, and the decision was taken at a large majority. This makes us realize that the different patterns of movement and of settlement that successively took place during the first half of the XIXth century created a strong regional identity in the Deep South, based upon slavery and the plantation system. The border states, and Virginia in particular as one of the former Thirteen Colonies, adopted a more complex situation, torn between the plantation economy of the South and the capitalist, liberal development of the North. The different waves of development have created different identities within the same country, which reached their climax with Lincoln's election in 1860, a climax that led to the explosion of the Union and to the Civil War.

Conclusion

The economic and social development of the Deep South into Cotton Kingdom was directly linked with population movements. After several phases of migration, settlement and trade, the strong identity of this new region drew it apart from the North. The economic but also social and ideological aspects of the South became fundamentally different from those of the North, which ultimately led to the Civil War and all of its consequences. One of those consequences was the abolition of slavery - which was also one of the main causes of the War - with the 13th Amendment, passed by Congress on January 31, 1865, and ratified on December 6, 1865: “Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.”⁶⁶

After the American Revolutionary War and the birth of the United States of America, the deep conquerant spirit that had given rise to the Colonies could then fully express itself. Indeed, a very rapid conquest can be observed right after the War, which pushed the Frontier forward. These conquests were encouraged by law and by prominent characters such as Thomas Jefferson. While the conquest of the West attracted European migrants in search of a new start on the New Continent, the conquest of the South appeared as a response of the Virginian and Carolinian planters who could not make a living of their work. As they moved South, the virgin soil happened to be perfectly fitted for cotton plantations, and a great development of this cash crop resulted from it. This development was actually so tremendous that it competed with the Industrial Revolution of the North. Not only did these parallel developments create economic tensions, they also gave rise to social and ideological tensions. The North was getting more and more industrialized and saw the emergence of a new social class: the

⁶⁶“Transcript of 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution: Abolition of Slavery, 1865.” *13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution: Abolition of Slavery, 1865*. Our Documents. 23 Mar. 2014
<<http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=true&doc=40&page=transcript>>

working class; while in the South the plantation system relied upon slavery. These two opposed systems were too different to collaborate, therefore the gap between the two regions kept on increasing, each of the protagonists thinking his system was the best, and the other decadent for the Southerners, aristocratic for the Northerners.

The division of the country between the North and the South also raged within the South itself. The exponential rise of the cotton production in the Lower South did not take place in the Upper South, where the economy was not so much focused on a single economy. The economic diversification of the Upper South is actually revealing of its ambivalent position regarding the two regions, with on the one hand a still representative proportion of planters, and on the other hand the development of industrial production and services. The new population migrations that took place by the 1790s, and the pattern of the internal slave trade by 1808, show that, although the Upper South kept on trading with the Lower South, the movement of this trade was nonreciprocal: the Upper South turned into a slave exporting region which, not denying its need of economic exchanges, did not import slaves from the Deep South – the very symbol of Cotton Kingdom –, but still was the region where the cotton production was shipped to Europe. The Upper South clearly did not reject the Deep South, and was even at the beginning and at the end of the process of cotton production; yet, its open mind allowed the region to remain in contact with the North. This lasting contact turned out to be both an asset and a drawback with the outbreak of the Civil War: it allowed the Upper South not to suffer too much from the abolition of slavery, but it also created tensions that resulted, for example, in the split of the state of Virginia.

In the Deep South, there seems to have been a greater unity, represented by the population itself, and yet this unity was completely fragmented, which makes the very specificity of the region. Indeed, the population was divided between the Blacks and the Whites, the last being themselves divided into

classes, ownership and economic power, but united around the same question: slavery, and its necessary preservation. The Black population was divided between freedmen and slaves, yet although very few organizations and societies could develop, they were all united around their sentiment of injustice and their will for freedom. The unity of each of these people was concentrated around their position toward slavery, and within this Southern society, tensions emerged. In fact, the Southward movement that led to more and more slavery also led to increasingly burning tensions. As if there was a funnel orientated southward, tensions got more and more personal, and the slaveholding societies were at the very heart of the clashes: there were tensions within the United States between the North and South, tensions within the South between the Upper and the Lower South, tensions within the Lower South between Blacks and Whites. This highlights a key aspect of slavery and racism: the question of slavery that led to the Civil War was not a matter of skin color and of opposition between two different “races”, but an ideological conflict within the White society; an issue that was at stake during the Virginia Debates.

The Southward movement was accompanied by the development of the plantation system, of the cash crop industry, and of the institution of slavery. It is the perpetual need for conquest and progress that led to the emergence of this very controversial society. The population migrations to the southern territories were encouraged by their own overconsumption of the environment, of land and of nature. It is as a response to this endless need for progress that the cotton industry experienced such a tremendous and prosperous growth. In the midst and at the heart of all this, the slave population was sacrificed, as a simple tool that helped building the empire.

Indeed, slaves were both the victims and the actors of movement in the Deep South. The internal slave trade that developed after the abolition of the Transatlantic trade in 1808 resulted in important changes in slaves' lives. From a very mobile society, that could not really create kin ties,

slaves' everyday lives became more stable. This was the result of the end of the Transatlantic trade but also of the development of the Southern society, which was becoming more stable. Yet the development of marriage, family and culture in the slave society also engendered new hardships for the Blacks: family separations, consequences of the new internal slave trade, became a major risk in their lives.

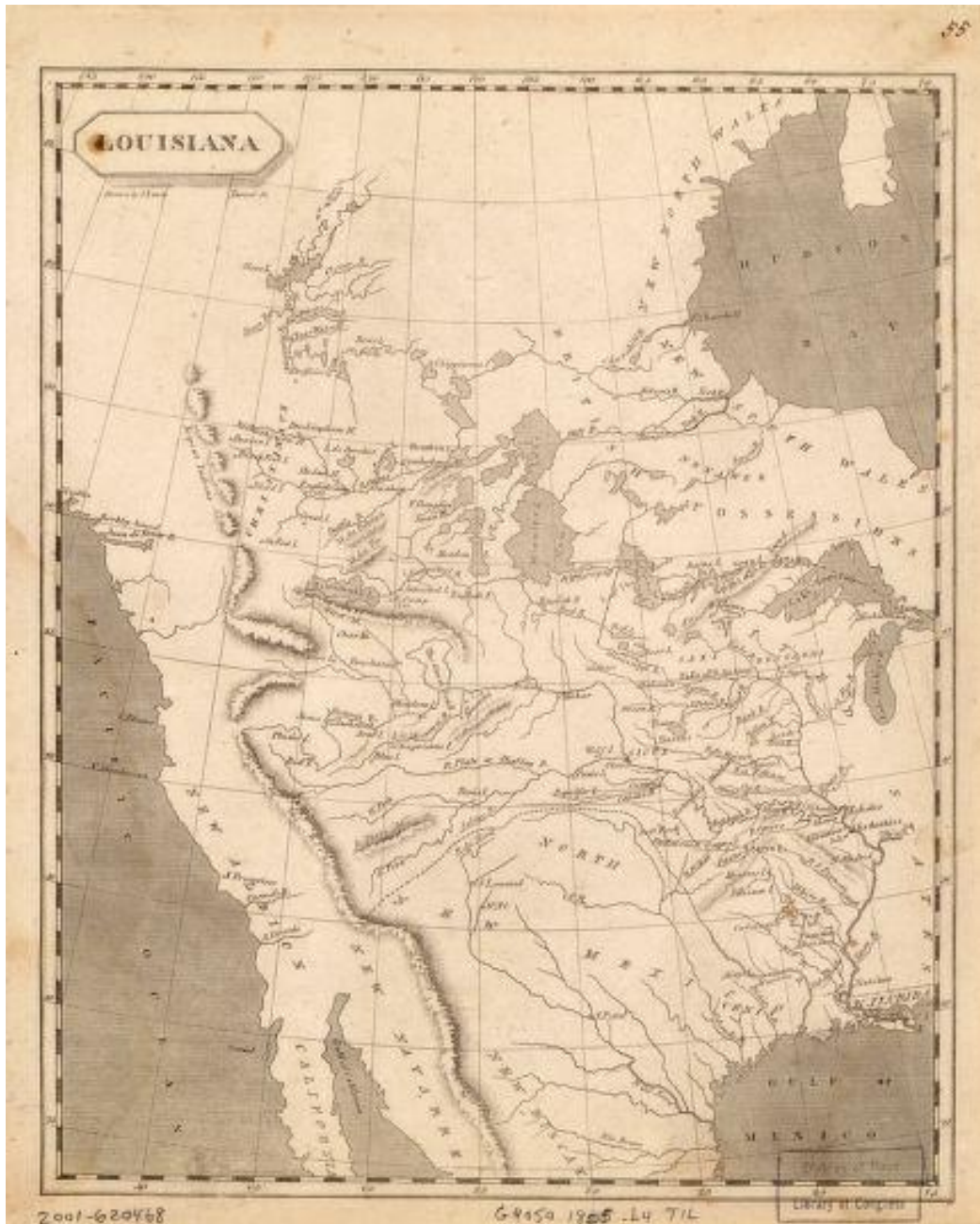
These movements of colonization, of settlement, of imports, and of exports, show the immense power of civilization over nature, but also its profound weaknesses. Protest was also at the heart of this system, and aroused from both the North and the South. Despite the important means put in action by Southern slaveholders to protect their society, before and during the Civil War, they were forced to resign. Yet, although slavery was officially abolished at the end of the Civil War, the Southern society and its culture, its identity, did not disappear. Amongst other things, slavery gave way to segregation.

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Appendix 1: Chronology

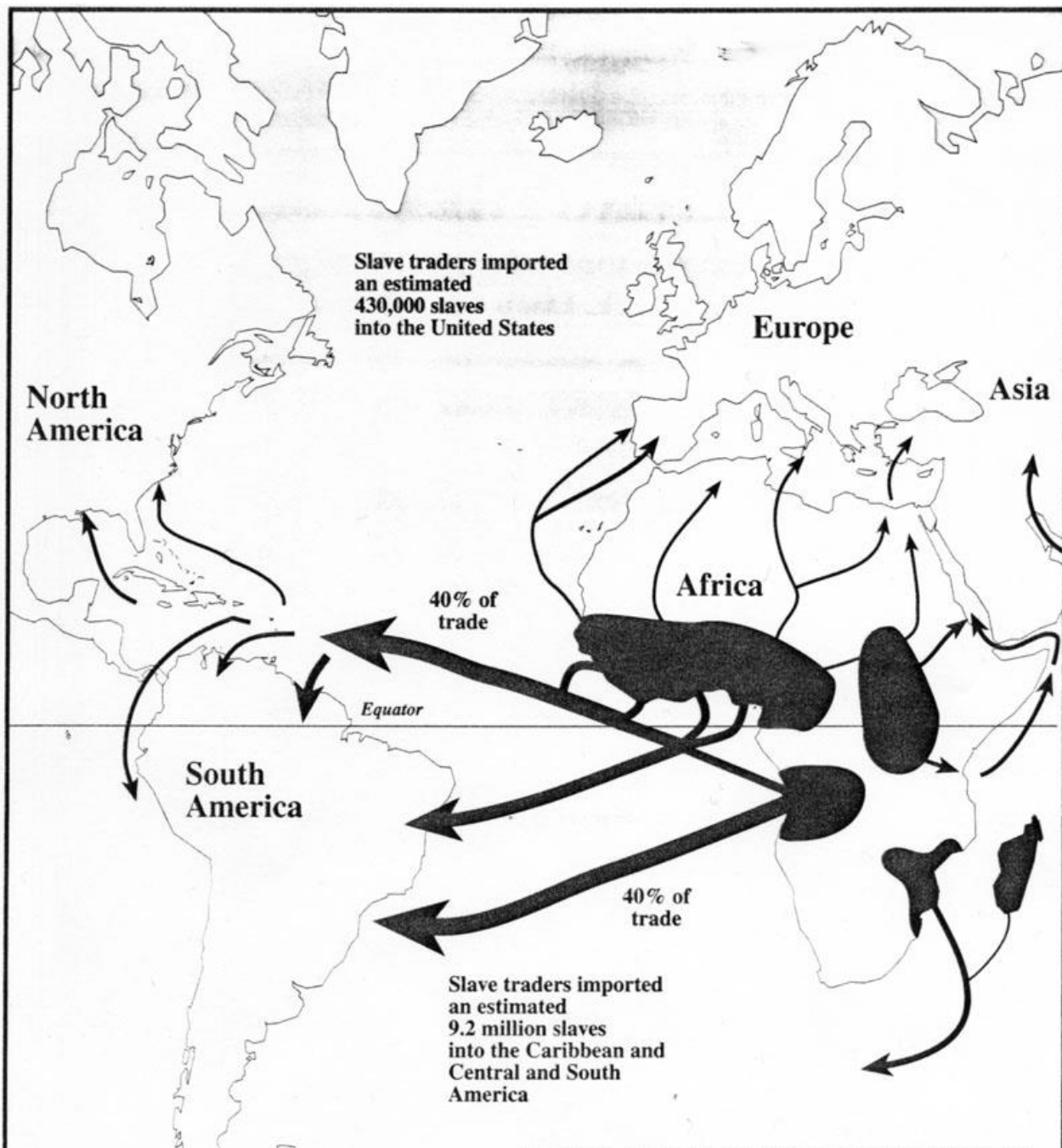
July, 1776	Adoption of the Declaration of Independence
July, 1787	Congress passes the Northwest Ordinance
1790	First national census
February, 1793	Congress passes the first Fugitive Slave Act
March, 1793	Eli Whitney invents the Cotton Gin
August, 1800	Slave rebellion in Virginia: Gabriel Prosser leads the uprising
1803	Thomas Jefferson purchases the Louisiana Territory
1805	Rebellion at Chatham Manor, Virginia
March, 1807	Congress passes the Act to Prohibit the Importation of Slaves, enforced on January 1, 1808
March, 1820	The Missouri Compromise is negotiated in Congress
August, 1831	Nat Turner Rebellion in Southampton County, Virginia
1832	The Virginia Debate
September, 1850	The Compromise of 1850 is enforced by Congress
1852	Harriet Beecher Stowe publishes Uncle Tom's Cabin
1854	The Kansas-Nebraska Act is enforced by Congress
March, 1857	The Dred Scott Decision
October, 1859	John Brown raids on Harpers Ferry
November, 1860	Abraham Lincoln is elected president
January, 1861	Alabama is the fourth state to secede from the Union
February, 1861	A provisional Constitution of the Confederacy is adopted in Montgomery, Alabama, and creation of the Confederate States of America, with Jefferson Davis as president
April, 1861	Confederate General Beauregard fires upon Fort Sumter, beginning of the Civil War
April, 1861	Virginia secedes from the Union after the Secession Debate



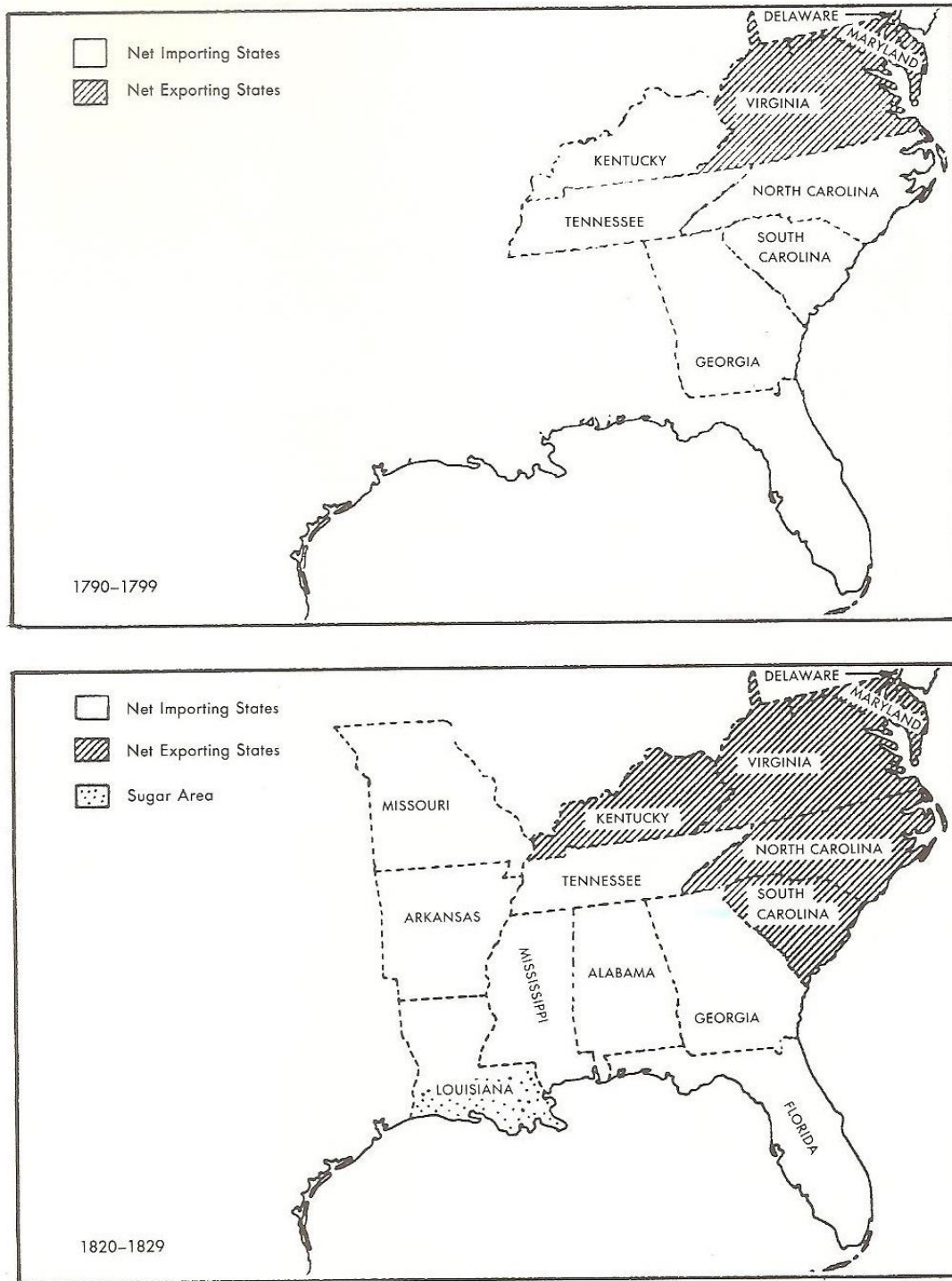
the Louisiana Territory, 1804.

Appendix 2: Map of

Source: Samuel Lewis. "Louisiana" in Aaron Arrowsmith, New and Elegant General Atlas. Philadelphia: 1804.



Source: Paul Finkelman and Joseph Miller, eds., *Macmillan Encyclopedia of World Slavery* (New York, 1998), vol. 1, p. xlvii

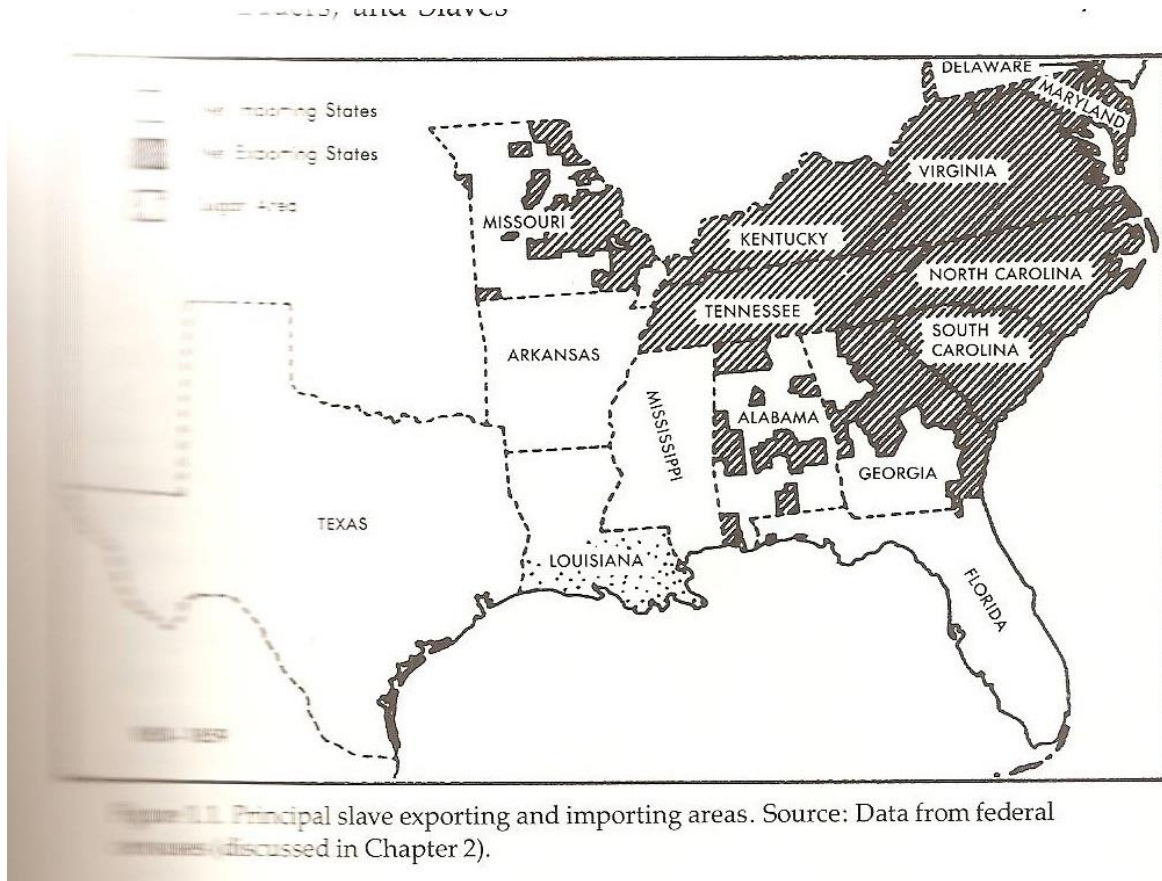


Appendix 4:

Map of the Principle Slave Exporting and Importing Areas, 1790-99 and 1820-29.

Source: Tadman, Michael. *Speculators and Slaves, Masters, Traders, and Slaves in the Old South*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1996. 6-7

Appendix 5: Principle slave exporting and importing areas, 1850-59.



Source: Tadman, Michael. *Speculators and Slaves, Masters, Traders, and Slaves in the Old South*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1996. 6-7

Appendix 6: Estimates of net interregional slave movements according to state, 1790-1859.

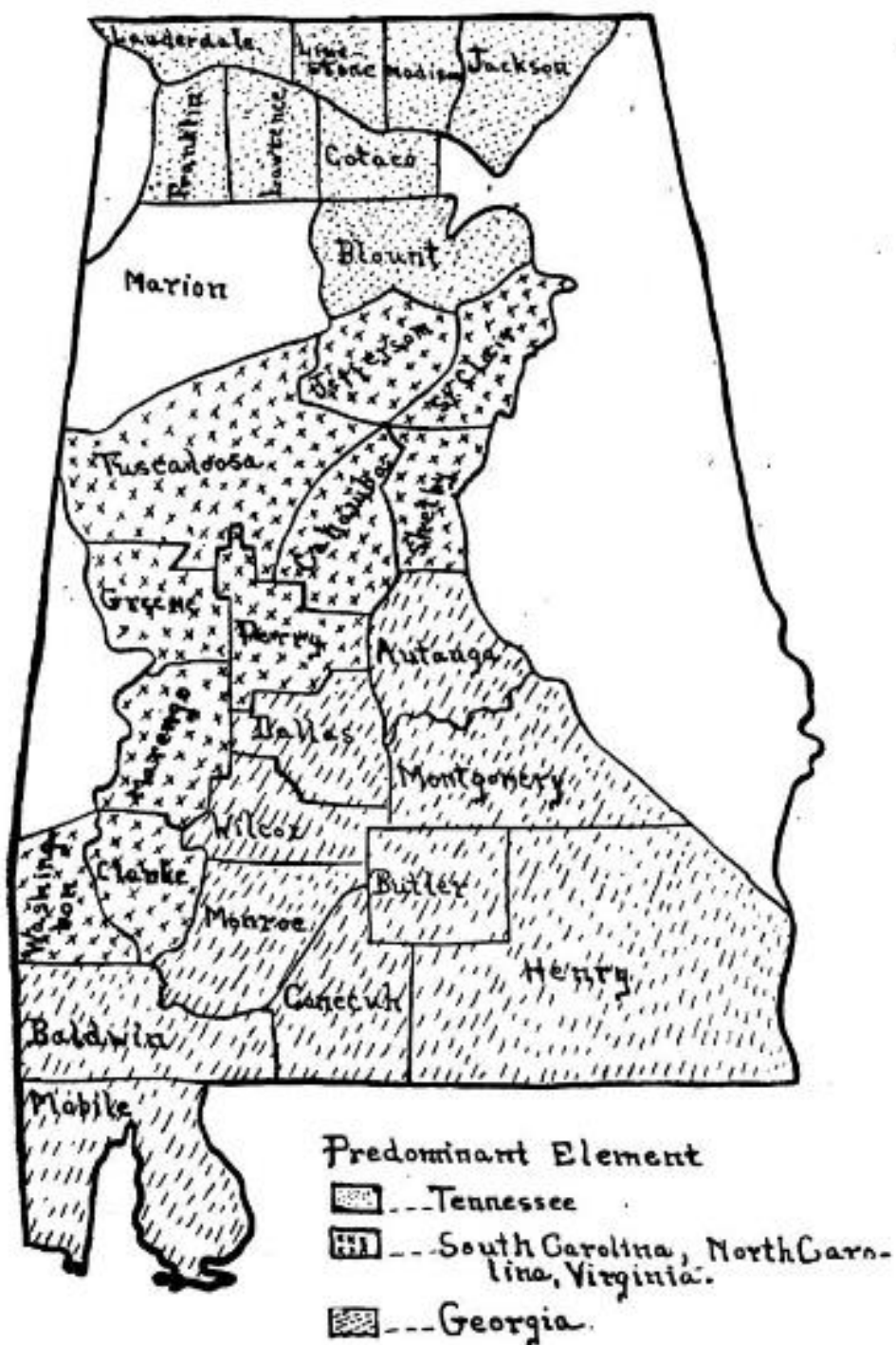
Table 2.1. Estimates of net interregional slave movements according to state, 1790-1859

	1790-99	1800-09	1810-19	1820-29	1830-39	1840-49	1850-59
Natural growth rate of whole slave population (%)	27.0	27.0	30.5	31.2	23.8	27.8	23.4
Alabama			+35,500	+54,156	+96,520	+16,532	+10,752
Arkansas			+1,000	+2,123	+12,752	+18,984	+47,443
Delaware	-4,523	-3,204	-817	-2,270	-1,314	-912	-920
Dist. of Columbia		-1,123	-576	-1,944	-2,575	-2,030	-1,222
Florida			+1,000	+2,627	+5,833	+5,657	+11,850
Georgia	+6,095	+11,231	+10,713	+18,324	+10,403	+19,873	-7,876
Kentucky	+21,636	+25,837	+18,742	-916	-19,907	-19,266	-31,215
Louisiana		+1,159	+20,679	+16,415	+29,296	+29,924	+26,528
Maryland	-22,221	-19,960	-33,070	-32,795	-33,753	-21,348	-21,777
Mississippi		+2,152	+9,123	+19,556	+101,810	+53,028	+48,560
Missouri			+5,460	+10,104	+24,287	+11,406	+6,314
North Carolina	+3,671	-407	-13,361	-20,113	-52,044	-22,481	-22,390
South Carolina	+4,435	+6,474	+1,925	-20,517	-56,683	-28,947	-65,053
Tennessee	+6,645	+21,788	+19,079	+31,577	+6,930	+4,837	-17,702
Texas						+28,622	+99,190
Virginia	-22,767	-41,097	-75,562	-76,157	-118,474	-88,918	-82,573
Total est. exportations	49,511	65,791	123,386	154,712	284,750	183,902	250,728
Total est. importations	42,482	68,641	123,221	154,882	287,831	188,863	250,637

Note: Basic population evidence is derived from federal censuses. The method used is the comparison of decennial growth rates. For an explanation of procedures involved and for comparison of net importations from the African slave trade, 1790-1809, see

Source: Tadman, Michael. *Speculators and Slaves, Masters, Traders, and Slaves in the Old South*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1996.

Chap. III.—Plate 4. Origin of Population (approximate).



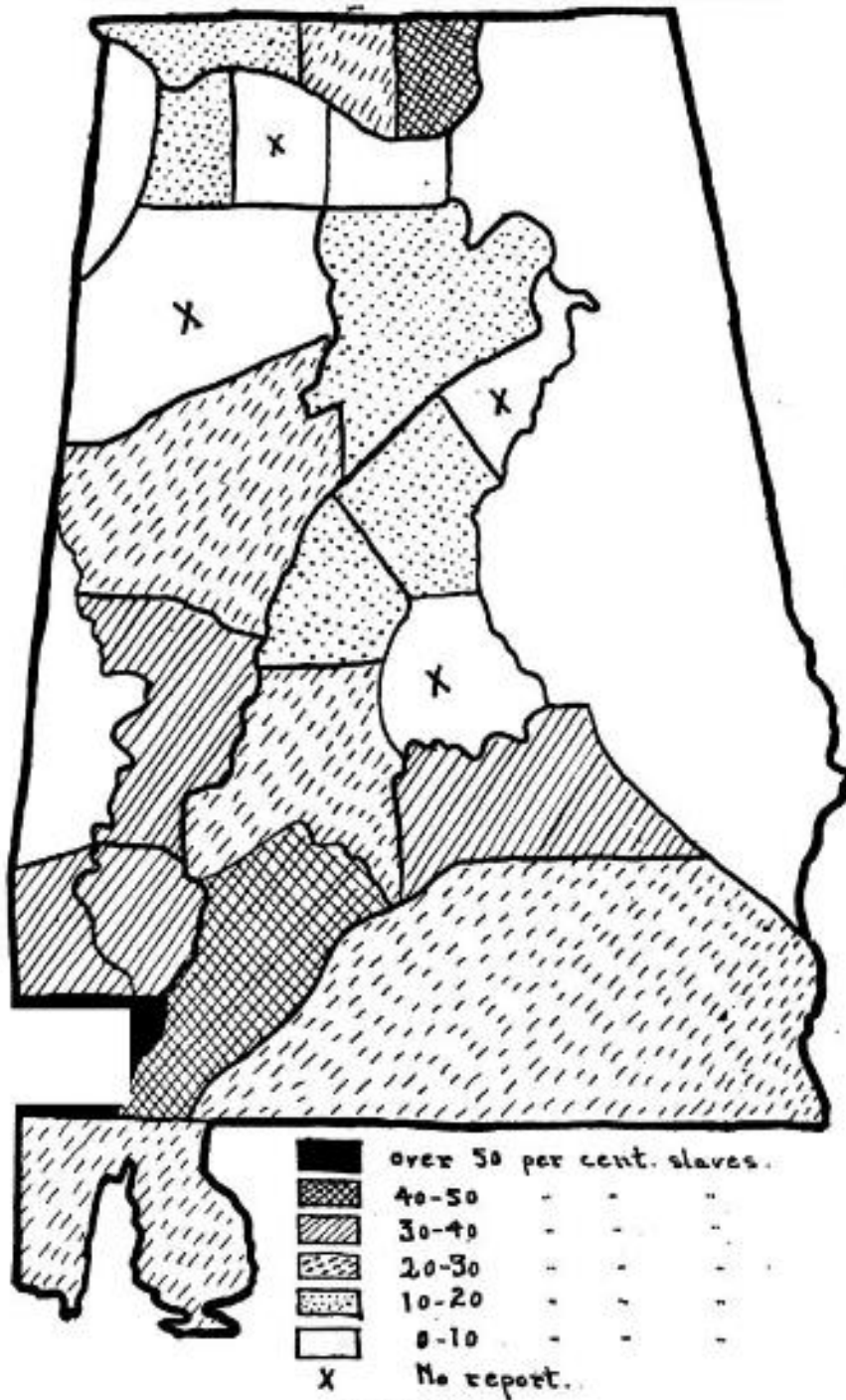
Appendix 7:

Origin of population in Alabama.

Source: Thomas Perkins Abernethy, *The formative period in Alabama, 1815-1828*, 6th ed. (Montgomery: The Borwn Printing Company, 1922)

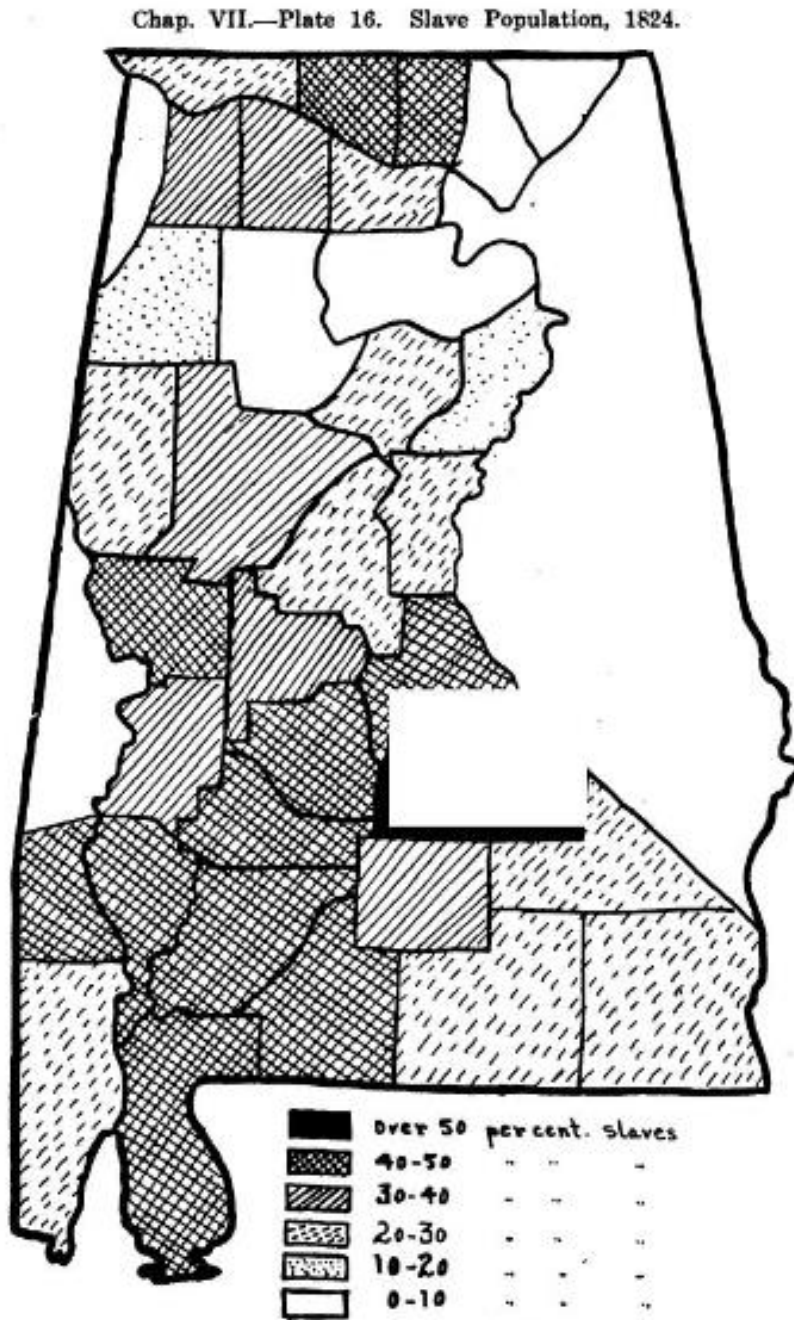
Appendix 8: Slave population census, Alabama, 1818.

Chap. VII.—Plate 15. Slave Population. Census, 1818



Source: Thomas Perkins Abernethy, *The formative period in Alabama, 1815-1828*, 6th ed. (Montgomery: The Borwn Printing Company, 1922)

Appendix 9: Slave population, Alabama, 1824.



Source: Thomas Perkins Abernethy, *The formative period in Alabama, 1815-1828*, 6th ed. (Montgomery: The Borwn Printing Company, 1922)

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