



## Resisting Revisionism: Toward a Georgia Reconstruction Historiography

Richard Hogan<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Professor Emeritus of Sociology, Purdue University, USA

### Abstract

*Even my most recent published work on the Georgia project has neglected a thorough consideration of the work of living historians on Reconstruction, in Georgia and more generally, and has tended to downplay the revisionist strain of my work, both in my reading of Reconstruction historians and in my reading of Marxist theories of revolutions and modes of production. Here I attempt to rectify that oversight by responding directly to some of the comments of historians who have reviewed my work.*

**Keywords:** Reconstruction, Georgia, History, Marxist theory

**The self-sacrificing heroism with which [these] men, women, and children fought ... reflects as much the grandeur of their cause, as the infernal deeds of the soldiery reflect the innate spirit of that civilization of which they are the mercenary vindicators.**

[Karl Marx 1871, writing of the Paris Commune]<sup>1</sup>

In his 2001 analysis of local history and public memory, John Walton interrogates the popular notion that history is written by the winners. We know this is not true, because American history, for many years, was dominated by the Whig narrative of peaceful progress, but the Whig party disappeared from American soil after the Presidential election of 1860. Beyond this, history continues to change, as new generations of scholars attack old problems and traditional approaches, but this does not change the fact that people lived and died, elections were won and lost, parties and party systems rose and fell. Maybe now that we are making America great again and celebrating a conservative old Federalist, disguised as a Black rapper in a Broadway musical, we are finally able to say something intelligent about who writes history, how, and why.<sup>2</sup>

We need to find evidence to defend interpretations of the past that can be sustained in debates with academics, even across disciplinary lines, but which can also be shared with an interested public. We need to write books for people who hang out in public libraries and sustain local historical societies—not just for university or state and federal libraries and archives. Having lived in the ivory tower for most of my adult life it is difficult to walk this line between my interpretation of what happened during Reconstruction in Georgia between 1868 and 1880 and what academics, archivists, librarians, and local history buffs claim.

Take, for example, the claim that Dade County seceded not just from the union but from the State of Georgia in 1860, finally returning to the union in 1945. This story is widely reported by local history buffs and

<sup>1</sup> Karl Marx, “The Civil War in France,” in Karl Marx and V. I. Lenin, *The Civil War in France: The Paris Commune*, with an introduction by Frederick Engels (NY: International Publishers, 1940).

<sup>2</sup> Here and hereinafter I shall capitalize the B in Black and the F in Freedmen to honor the decision by W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1996 [1899], p. 1 n1, to capitalize the N in Negro (but not the W in white). Hopefully, this will neither annoy nor distract the reader. One reader thought I was confusing Whig ideology (or whatever) with Whig history. The divergence is, of course, the point in this example, which obviously has disturbed some who are more expert in both flavors of Whig discourse. John Walton, *Storied Land: Community and Memory in Monterey*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001). Trevor Colburn, *The Land of Experience: Whig History and the Intellectual Origins of the American Revolution*. (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 1998 [University of North Carolina Press, 1965]), especially Chapter IX; Ron Chernow, *Alexander Hamilton* (NY: Penguin Books, 2004). Perhaps, it is inaccurate to classify the Hamilton of the Broadway stage as Black. Now that I have seen the televised production, it seems that Washington was Black and Hamilton was Latino. Both were rappers. Lin-Manuel Miranda and Jeremy McCarter, *Hamilton: the revolution: being the complete libretto of the Broadway musical, with a true account of its creation, and concise remarks on hip-hop, the power of stories, and the new America*. (NY: Grand Central Publishing: Melcher Media, 2016). Hopefully, by the time you read these words, we will not longer be making America [sic] great again but will be attempting to bind our wounds and heal. Hopefully, this Reconstruction will not take one hundred thirty-five years.

captures a sense of the rugged independence of the Dade County people, who are closer to Chattanooga than to Atlanta, but still maintain their independence from both urban areas. The claim that Dade seceded is patently false, but the celebration of July 4, 1945, when the assembled masses voted viva-voce to rejoin Georgia and the U.S.A., did happen, much as the legend reports. This tells us a lot about Dade county, while also imposing the burden of distinguishing between what people say and what happened.<sup>3</sup>

There should be some relation between what happened and the stories that we tell, but they can't be the same, because the stories change over time, but that does not change the facts. What happened is preserved, in varying degrees, in archival evidence of people enumerated in the 1870 census, deeds done—as reported in the local papers and in legislative proceedings, crimes alleged if not solved—as reported by local, state, or federal authorities. We who embraced Social Science History in the 1970s harvested these archival data and subjected them to manipulation through the alchemy of turning words into numbers to test social science theories and offer evidence that it was time to rewrite history, particularly as it pertained to struggles for social justice and democracy.<sup>4</sup>

What I offer here is less ambitious, since I am not inclined to test hypotheses in the social science tradition or to break fundamentally with the current state of historical scholarship on Reconstruction and Redemption. Reconstruction has been viewed as a series of political plans for reuniting the North and South after the Civil War. Traditionally, historians referred to Presidential Reconstruction (1865-1866) as Lincoln's efforts toward rapid reconciliation, followed more-or-less faithfully by his successor, Andrew Johnson, who assumed the presidency after Lincoln was assassinated in April of 1865. Johnson's efforts were effectively opposed, however, by Radical Republicans in congress, who promoted Congressional or Radical Reconstruction (1867-1877). This Radical attempt to impose federal authority on a prostrate South was plagued by corruption and chaos. Southern white "scalawags" and Northern white "carpetbaggers" preyed on the fears and ignorance of the freed slaves, which inspired Southern whites to rise in opposition. Their campaign to defeat Reconstruction and the Republican party has been termed Redemption, which is how the Democrats viewed their triumph in 1877.<sup>5</sup>

This traditional approach to Reconstruction and Redemption has been subject to criticism on all fronts—empirically, theoretically, and philosophically. My inclination is to follow this revisionist path, blazed by W. E. B. Du Bois, who challenged the assumption that Freedmen (women and children) were racially inferior and thereby incapable of self-government. Eric Foner further developed this approach in recognizing that racism was a critical component but not a determining factor in explaining the failure of Reconstruction and the triumph of Redemption. In short, Reconstruction fundamentally changed both the North and the South. It began a long struggle toward racial justice and civil rights that continued into the Civil Rights Movement and the social upheavals that we associate with the (nineteen) Sixties. It continues, in January of 2021, in opposition to White Nationalism and Donald Trump's efforts to overturn the popular election that he lost in November of 2020. Thus, Foner asserts that Reconstruction was an unfinished revolution.<sup>6</sup>

Du Bois claimed that Radical Reconstruction was, essentially, a local affair, led by Blacks—Freedmen, who were, admittedly, "ignorant and deceived," but were also remarkably effective and might have effected a revolution in defense of their economic, political and civil rights, were it not for the fact that they were abandoned by the national Republicans and the federal government, who conspired in replacing slavery with contract and convict labor—which worked in tandem. For Du Bois, Redemption triumphed in a pitched battle between well organized and fairly-well matched partisans—Black Republicans and white Democrats, who contested elections

<sup>3</sup> *History of Dade County, Georgia*, compiled and edited by the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (Summerville, GA: Espy Publishing Company, Incorporated, 1981), pp. 19-20. This myth is de-bunked by E. Merton Coulter, "The Myth of Dade County's Seceding From Georgia in 1860." *The Georgia Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 41, No. 4 (December 1957), pp. 349-364 (quote on p. 364).

<sup>4</sup> Exemplary work includes Charles Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1978). More recent contributions include Marco G. Giugni, Doug McAdam, and Charles Tilly (editors), *From Contention to Democracy* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 1998); Javier Auyero, *Contentious Lives: Two Argentine Women, Two Protests, and the Quest for Recognition* (Duke University Press, 2003); Charles Tilly and Leslie J. Wood, *Social Movements, 1768-2012*. (Paradigm Publishers. 2012); Sidney G. Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics, Revised and Updated Third Edition* (NY: Cambridge University Press, 2011). On the alchemy of turning words into numbers—updated, see Roberto Franzosi, *From Words to Numbers: Narrative, Data, and Social Science* (NY: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

<sup>5</sup> Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877, Updated Edition* (NY: Harper Collins, 2014), pp. xvii-xviii; Nicholas Lemann, *Redemption: The Last Battle of the Civil War* (NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006). Here I am attempting to reproduce as public discourse the writings of the Dunning School. The revisionists, among whom I might presume to include myself, come next.

<sup>6</sup> W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America: 1860-1880* (NY: Free Press, 1998 [1935]); Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution*. We should include Black Lives Matter as part of this ongoing struggle, along with the Democratic Party surge in Georgia, in November of 2020 and January of 2021..

between 1868 and the “Evil results of the revolution of 1876.”<sup>7</sup>

More recent contributions to this revisionist tradition are less inflammatory in characterizing the canonical works, as Du Bois did, as “The Propaganda of History,” specified in his bibliography, as “Standard—Anti-Negro.” Du Bois also included white historians who were indifferent or even sympathetic, some who were attempting to be objective, along with more partisan accounts, government documents, and the work of Black scholars.<sup>8</sup>

Forty years later, Eric Foner was asked to write a volume on Reconstruction, which allowed him to revisit his revisionist history—based primarily on Du Bois, first offered to his high school American history class, as an alternative to what was still being taught—the “Standard—Anti-Negro.” Foner defends the position that Du Bois established, including his critique of the federal government. Foner asserts that the army, immediately after the war, “seemed to have only one object in view—to compel freedmen to return to work on the plantations.” Even after the Freedmen’s Bureau took responsibility for protecting its charges from “cruelty on the part of the employer[,] the Bureau, like the army, seemed to consider Black reluctance to labor the greater threat to its economic charge.” At the same time, Foner documents Black efforts to achieve economic, political, and civil rights, efforts clearly facilitated by the Freedmen’s Bureau, in opposition to the “counterrevolutionary terror that swept over large parts of the South between 1868 and 1871.”<sup>9</sup>

Steven Hahn extends this revisionist account by tracing Black Reconstruction politics backwards and forward. He finds roots in slave networks and effects in the Great Migration of the 1920s. His analysis combines family, religion, and class relations in exploring the construction and transformation of the rural Black community. As Hahn explains, “The slaves’ rebellion drew, as servile rebellions normally do, on well-established practices of everyday resistance to their master’s power [and] on resources they had accumulated [as slaves].” Similarly, the Great Migration of the Twentieth Century and the “sweeping internationalist, remarkably bold vision of racial solidarity and identity” was nurtured at the grassroots of Black Reconstruction in the rural South, by “the black ministers who met with [General] William T. Sherman in Savannah, Georgia, in 1865, by Tunis G. Campbell[, Sr.] and Henry McNeal Turner [and others].”<sup>10</sup>

My contribution here is to follow this revisionist tradition, using social movement theory and methods to make sense of the ongoing struggles for and against Redemption, in Georgia, 1868-1880. Elsewhere, I use an array of archival data to show that yeomen and Freedmen (and their wives and families) allied, to some degree, in defense of Reconstruction in April of 1868 and that in the years following they allied, to some degree, in opposition to Redemption. Redemption was effectively perpetrated by planters (and their lawyers and politicians, friends and family), between the November 1868 Presidential election and the 1880 gubernatorial election.<sup>11</sup> Those who resisted Redemption supported various types of Independent or Moderate Democrats, in the Up-Country, and Radical Republicans or Greenbackers, in the rice-belt of the Atlantic coast—extending up the Savannah River, North to the Terrible Tenth of Populist fame, and the city of Augusta, at the edge of the cotton belt.<sup>12</sup>

This essay uses major works in this revisionist tradition as a guide to a new argument rather than as established common wisdom. I have traveled considerable distance over the past few decades in my thinking about Radical Republicans and their potential for revolutionary struggle—no less victory. Reading Foner, the first time, I was convinced that there were truly radical Republicans who were leading a revolutionary effort to establish civil rights—in much the same way that Martin Luther King, Jr., and his fellow travelers were, in the South in the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>13</sup> Over the course of my study, I have moved away from my early faith in the revisionist vision of the

<sup>7</sup> W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America*, pp. vii-xvii (Lewis on Du Bois in historiography), 506 (convict leasing), 509 (well matched partisans), 703 (Evil revolution of 1876).

<sup>8</sup> Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America*, pp. 711-737 (historiography and references). I shall attempt to avoid name calling or accusing authors of racism, sexism, or whatever—even when it seems that the name fits.

<sup>9</sup> Foner, pp. xxix (high school), 153 (army), 157 (Bureau), 281 (Black mobilization), 425 (terrorism). As will become evident, I believe that the Bureau, even without adequate military support, had a moment of radical land redistribution efforts and potentially revolutionary goals, briefly, before Saxton, Campbell, and Bryant were fired, after Lincoln was assassinated and Johnson took charge.

<sup>10</sup> Steven Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South from Slavery to the Great Migration* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), pp. 68-69 (roots in slavery), 470 (roots of Great migration).

<sup>11</sup> Richard Hogan, “Outrages: Contention, Vigilantism, or Lynching? Accounting for Racial Violence in Biased Sources.” *International Journal of Contemporary Sociology* 54, 2 (October 2018), pp. 87-114; Richard Hogan, “Resisting Redemption: The Republican Vote in Georgia in 1876.” *Social Science History* 35:2 (Summer 2011): 133-166.

<sup>12</sup> On Whigs and other partisans, see Joseph P. Reidy, *From Slavery to Agrarian Capitalism in the Cotton Plantation South: Central Georgia, 1800-1880* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), pp. 88-89, 162; see p. 188, on the Augusta ring. Jonathan M. Bryant, *How Curious a Land: Conflict and Change in Greene County, Georgia, 1850-1885* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1996), identifies white moderate Republican Robert McWhorter as a Whig who later joined the American and then, in 1860, the Constitutional Union party (p. 40), before becoming a moderate Republican (pp. 122-123) and, in 1877, an Independent Democrat (p. 181). See Barton C. Shaw, *The Wool-Hat Boys: Georgia’s Populist Party* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1984), p. 2, on the “terrible tenth.”

<sup>13</sup> Aldon Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change*. (NY: Free Press, 1984).

revolutionary potential of Black Reconstruction. There is no question that was an unfinished revolution, but it is less clear that there was potential for further revolutionary change in the struggle for racial justice, once slavery had been abolished by force of arms. Perhaps it was not inevitable that the struggle should be so prolonged, but it seems unlikely that some sort of democratic solution was possible in 1865, or even in 1880.

Charles Tilly convinced me that the path to democracy was more torturous than we might like to believe. Michael Burawoy convinced me that coercive (or despotic) modes of production—including peonage, contract/convict labor and debt peonage, as well as slavery, could not sustain democracy—no less civil rights, which require a hegemonic mode of production—where people freely choose to work rather than starving to death or becoming wards of the state. As Tilly reminds us, democracy always requires a strong state. Not all strong states are democratic but only strong states can endure democracy. Simply stated, the postbellum South lacked both a hegemonic capitalist regime and a strong state, so the prospects for democracy were dim at best.<sup>14</sup>

Why civil rights could not be federally guaranteed and sustained in 1866 or even in 1880 is not the focal concern in this analysis. We will not speculate about what might have been but will focus on what happened, how, and why, and then attempt to understand the implications of this failed revolution. Recognizing that there was a revolutionary situation, even if the revolutionary outcome was not possible in 1876, should suffice. It is the revolutionary and counter-revolutionary struggle that is our primary consideration in this story of resisting Redemption. Just because a democratic revolution was not possible in 1868, or even in 1880, does not diminish the heroic revolutionary struggle that Freedmen and women, and their free-born Black leaders and allies were waging.<sup>15</sup>

Thus, we will depart from conventional wisdom in focusing on persons who might not be considered the key players in Georgia Reconstruction. Tunis G. Campbell, Sr., is celebrated here for his efforts as a leader of Georgia Freedmen, who faced prison and death threats in his struggle for racial justice. Du Bois, relying on secondary sources, was not so kind in describing Campbell, explaining that he was “an agent of the Freedmen’s Bureau [who] established his own government, and armed force was necessary to remove him.” Campbell does not even appear in the index of *Black Reconstruction*, which does list H. M. Turner as a “Negro leader,” who figures much more prominently in this account.<sup>16</sup>

Similarly, Governor Joseph E. Brown, who attempted to lead the yeomen and women toward a more practical, moderate path toward Redemption, is presented here consistently defending Constitutional and Jacksonian Democratic political principles. This is quite different from how Brown is presented, even by his most sympathetic biographer. Joseph H. Parks claims that Brown was “upset” with Jefferson Davis and, later, “heavily influenced by irritation” in declaring opposition to Confederate conscription. Park then devotes an entire chapter to Brown’s support of Congressional (or Radical) Reconstruction, another to the claim that Brown became a “Full-Fledged Republican,” and a third to Brown eventually becoming a “Democrat Again.” Brown’s partisanship is certainly worth revisiting. His efforts were misrepresented and often unappreciated, between 1868 and 1880, and even his most ardent fans do not seem to appreciate his commitment to principles, despite the legal and practical constraints that he faced, as governor and then state supreme court justice.<sup>17</sup>

In a similar vein, standard accounts of Redemption highlight the efforts of General John B. Gordon, the Confederate war hero and alleged leader of the Georgia Klan, who opposed Radical Republican Rufus Brown Bullock in the gubernatorial election of April 1868 and was later appointed Senator, after Georgia was Redeemed. Here I resurrect the more obscure legal and military efforts of Captain John C. Reid, of Oglethorpe County, who combined his legal and terrorist tactics to Redeem Georgia by ensuring that Freedmen would vote Democratic or not vote at all.<sup>18</sup> In 1868, Reid represented the interest of planters, an interest that was dominant if not hegemonic

<sup>14</sup> Charles Tilly, *Democracy* (NY: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Michael Burawoy, *The Politics of Production: Factory Regimes under Capitalism and Socialism* (NY: Verso, 1985), pp. 5-20. Richard Hogan, “Resisting Redemption: The Republican Vote in Georgia in 1876.” *Social Science History* 35:2 (Summer 2011): 133-166. My point is that plantation slavery and the contract labor/convict labor system that followed were oppressive rather than hegemonic regimes. These required the coercive power of government to sustain the regime. Otherwise, the workers would run away. Alternatively, if the workers were granted political rights, they would outlaw slavery or contract labor and establish debt relief and social services.

<sup>15</sup> My role model, in celebrating those who demanded the impossible, is Karl Marx, *The Civil War in France*, p. 75.

<sup>16</sup> Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, pp. 498-511, 499 (quote), 745 (Turner indexed). Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet*, pp. 239-241, gives Campbell more respect and shares my assertion that Campbell and the Black community of McIntosh County were the heart of Black Radical Republican partisanship.

<sup>17</sup> Joseph H. Parks, *Joseph E. Brown of Georgia* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977), pp. 198 (“upset”), 220 (“irritation”), chapters XVIII, XIX and XXI. My goal here is not to praise Brown. It will become clear that he was a racist and a white supremacist, but, more important, he was a lawyer and a judge, as well as a politician. As President Donald Trump has just learned, as his Supreme Court justices rejected his plea to overthrow the presidential election results of November 2020, judges think like lawyers—not like businessmen or politicians. At the same time, I think that Brown and the yeomen who had supported him as governor, remained a Jacksonian Democrat, even after the party abandoned the Jacksonian principles that the yeomen embraced.

<sup>18</sup> Even Foner, *Reconstruction*, p. 433, refers to Gordon as a Klansman, and virtually all Reconstruction histories focus on Gordon as a Redeemer. My friend and colleague, Robert E. May, *Yuletide in Dixie: Slavery, Christmas, and Southern Memory*

in antebellum and, ultimately, in postbellum Lexington, seat of Oglethorpe County.<sup>19</sup>

William Robert Gignilliat defended the planter interest in Darien, seat of McIntosh County, on the Atlantic coast, between Savannah and the Florida border. There, in April of 1868, he challenged Campbell directly in the election for state senator. In standard accounts, the battle between Freedman and planter might focus on the competition between these two partisans, who confronted each other directly, and might be cast as winners and losers in the battle to Reconstruct or Redeem Georgia. In Darien, however, the planter was no longer (if ever he had been) dominant. In fact, even during slavery, it appears that Darien shopkeepers were undermining plantation discipline in McIntosh County—long before Campbell arrived.<sup>20</sup>

Reid was the voice of the planter in a cotton-belt community dominated by planters. Similarly, Campbell was the voice of the intractable Darien Freedmen and women. Governor, later Judge and then Senator, Joseph E. Brown was the voice of the yeomen (and women) of Cherokee Country and the Northern hill and mountain region.<sup>21</sup> The fact that Brown and Reid were lawyers and Campbell a freeborn Northern Black is not as important as standard stories suggest. In any case, here we are telling the story of three towns—not three men. Although men might vote, towns and counties and ultimately states elect candidates.<sup>22</sup> Thus, it is the organization of the community, rather than the attitudes and behaviors of the men (and women) that determine the results of the elections.

Before we conclude that the ultimate test of any theory lies in our ability to explain or interpret empirical evidence, we should consider two additional works that make important contributions to this revisionist history. Mart A. Stewart offers an ecological history, which contrasts what he calls “political” (imposed) and “vernacular” (indigenous) landscapes. Paul A. Cimbala defends the Freedmen’s Bureau, particularly Tillson, whom the Du Bois et al. revisionists view as an apologist for President Johnson, who simply wanted to get the Freed people back to work on the plantations. Unfortunately, Cimbala is wedded to an ideological focus, arguing that the ideology of nineteenth century Yankees eschewed the modern welfare state and the idea that the federal government should meddle in the affairs of civil authorities.<sup>23</sup> Stewart’s ecological approach is more materialist and essentially political, but it fails to appreciate the difference between conflict rooted in competing interests, claims to land, or land-use choices, and contradictions, such as the contradictory interests of Freed people, who wanted to escape economic and political dependence, and planters, who wanted to establish their hegemony.<sup>24</sup>

Hegemony is a term that Marxists use to distinguish between predominant and dominant modes of production. Predominant modes, such as familial production systems—characteristic of the yeomen, are general, even more-or-less universal, but rarely dominant—economically or politically.<sup>25</sup> Dominant modes of production—such as slavery or tenancy, essentially define the terms of economic life for those who operate in the interstitial spaces, as, for example, small family farmers in the antebellum cotton belt. The need for this term comes from the

(Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2019), p. 239, refers to Gordon as a “onetime leading Georgia Klansman.” Jonathan M. Bryant, *How Curious a Land*, pp. 120-121 (on John Reed [Reid]); Daniel R. Weinfeld, *The Jackson County War: Reconstruction and Resistance in Post-Civil War Florida* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2012) offers an account of the less successful efforts of Jackson County, Florida, lawyers, which might illuminate the incredible efforts of Mr. Reid in Oglethorpe County, Georgia.

<sup>19</sup> Here again, my goal is not to praise or defend Reid, who was less scrupulous than Brown, as a lawyer who never became a judge. Like Brown, he was a white supremacist and a Democrat, but he was the son of a planter and continued to defend the planter, as a lawyer and as the leader of the Lexington Klan. He later defends the necessity of the Klan, thereby faithfully represented the planter’s interest in Redemption.

<sup>20</sup> Russell Duncan, *Freedom’s Shore: Tunis G. Campbell and the Georgia Freedmen* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1986), pp. 51-52 (Campbell vs. Gignilliat in 1868); Mart A. Stewart, “*What Nature Suffers to Groe*”: *Life, Labor, and Landscape on the Georgia Coast, 1680-1920* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996), p. 98 (Gignilliat); pp. 131-135 (Darien merchants vs. planters).

<sup>21</sup> One reader doubted whether the yeomen supported Brown. Even in Cherokee County, in the election of April 1868, only 35% voted for Governor Bullock, and it is not clear how many supported the new constitution. That is, however, much more support than Bullock received in Dade County, although, even there, support for the constitution was considerably greater. Even in Dade, which was loyal to the Democrats, there was some support (28%) for the constitution if not much (19%) for the Republican governor. As we shall see, Brown had more support from the yeoman region when he was running for governor as a Democrat, facing Whig opponents.

<sup>22</sup> At the 2012 Social Science History meetings, in Vancouver, I was finally impelled to blurt out the fact that towns (or rural communities) lynched Freedmen (and, less often, Freed women and Anglos). It is the communities, including the “local authorities,” who deserve attention, lest we fall prey to standard stories of the exploits of great men.

<sup>23</sup> Stewart, “*What Nature Suffers to Groe*.” Paul A. Cimbala, *Under the Guardianship of the Nation: The Freedmen’s Bureau and the Reconstruction of Georgia, 1865-1870* (Athens: University of Georgia, 1997).

<sup>24</sup> Competing claims may be “zero-sum” or not, but even if we are examining non-divisible collective goods, one claim does not negate the other. In classical pluralist politics, or game theory, you win some and lose some but can always come back to play another day—see Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965). Planter hegemony (in theory and practice) negates the possibility of independent Freed people, so these interests are not competing but contradictory.

<sup>25</sup> We will return to this point in considering Reidy, *From Slavery to Agrarian Capitalism*, chapter 1.

often-ignored difference between predominant and dominant.

There are always multiple modes of production and exchange—including barter. Family-based production is less typical in modern capitalism, but family-based consumption or exchange still predominates. Also, familial production (exploiting unpaid spouses, in particular) still exists in petit-bourgeois artisanal, professional, or commercial enterprises. These enterprises also use barter, frequently extending even beyond familial ties, to avoid taxes or regulation. The exploitation of friends and family as unpaid workers or invisible clients is part of the essentially marginal status of the petit-bourgeois in a corporate capitalist political economy.<sup>26</sup>

There is a tendency for Non-Marxists to blur these distinctions in a caricature of Marxist political economy, particularly since Marx had little background or interest in pre-capitalist economies, particularly in non-Western societies, and relied on crude anthropology and social science of the late nineteenth century. He was, of course, a philosopher well trained in the classics of the Greco-Roman era, but his theory of the transition from slave to feudal modes of production was never very well developed and his writings on India, for example, were plagued by his certainty that global capitalism would ultimately create a seamless global political economy with a tiny capitalist class and a teeming population of proletarians.<sup>27</sup>

Today, Marxist social scientists and anthropologists recognize that plantation slavery, tenancy, indenture, and family farms could and did coexist, particularly when the dominant, capitalist mode of production was not yet hegemonic.<sup>28</sup> In any case, capitalist British manufacturers and merchants were happy to exchange commodities produced and consumed by slaves, tenants, planters, or yeoman farmers. The daughters and wives of the yeoman farmers were critical actors, as producers and consumers, in facilitating the penetration of capital into family subsistence economies.<sup>29</sup>

Stewart and Cimbala inform my analysis, but I remain critical of ecology and ideology as bases for exploring Reconstruction and Redemption. The general thrust of Stewart is that the Georgia Plan (proposed by the Trustees in early colonial Georgia) was imposed and then, ultimately, opposed by the yeomen efforts of slaves and Freed people, who were, particularly in the McIntosh County region, able to sustain their household subsistence in the interstitial spaces of the capitalist plantation. Darien was a base for the familial production system that relied on the merchants and shopkeepers, and sometimes even the planters themselves, who purchased products from their slaves.<sup>30</sup>

Later, Tunis G. Campbell, acting under the authority of the Freedmen's Bureau, established a self-sufficient agricultural community of Freed persons, on Saint Catherines Island, defended by a militia of 275 Freedmen.<sup>31</sup> As evident in the case of Darien, Campbell's success provides a good example of how Reconstruction might have worked in other places, given the material base in small proprietorships, the leadership and organization, including church, school, farm, and paramilitary organization of Freed people, defended by the Republican party and the threat of federal troops.<sup>32</sup>

Viewed from this indigenous or community perspective, the military and political problems that plagued the Bureau were important both in Reconstruction and in Redemption to the extent that they facilitated or

<sup>26</sup> Richard Hogan, Carolyn C. Perrucci, and Autumn Behringer, "Enduring Inequality: Gender and Employment Income in Late Career," *Sociological Spectrum* 2005 Vol. 25, No. 1:53-77. A more theoretical, historical analysis is offered by Richard Hogan, "Class, Race and Gender Inequality," *Race, Gender & Class*, 8, 2 (2001), pp. 61-93.

<sup>27</sup> Karl Marx, *Pre-capitalist Economic Formations*, edited by Eric J. Hobsbawm (NY: International Publishers, 1965) is probably the best source to refute the interpretation of Marx offered here, but see pp. 20-27 of Hobsbawm's introduction, where he concedes my point. Marx outlines pre-capitalist history in his "Theses on Feuerbach," in Karl Marx & Frederick Engels, *The German Ideology*, edited by C. J. Arthur (New York: International Publishers, 1970), pp. 43-46. Karl Marx, "Essays on India and China," are included in David Fernbach (editor), *Karl Marx: Surveys from Exile, Political Writings, Volume II* (NY: Vintage Books, 1974), pp. 301-333.

<sup>28</sup> Hegemonic implies both dominance and institutionalization—enduring, in the medium run, until the next revolutionary situation.

<sup>29</sup> My favorite anthropological treatment of modes of production is Eric R. Wolf, *Europe and the People without History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), pp. 73-100. Sociological contributions would include Barrington Moore, Jr., *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1967). Among the American Historians who have treated the rise of capitalism are Christopher Clark, *The Roots of Rural Capitalism: Western Massachusetts, 1780-1860* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990) and Paul E. Johnson, *A Shopkeeper's Millennium: Society and Revivals in Rochester, New York, 1815-1837* (NY: Hill and Wang, 1978). Particularly useful in this discussion is Allan Kulikoff, "The Transition to Capitalism in Rural America." *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, Vol. XLVI (January 1989): 120-144, and Thomas Dublin, "Women and Outwork in a Nineteenth-Century New England Town," in Steven Hahn and Jonathan Prude (editors), *The Countryside in the Age of Capitalist Transformation: Essays in the Social History of Rural America* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1988). Reidy, *From Slavery to Agrarian Capitalism*, reviews this literature in his concluding chapter.

<sup>30</sup> Stewart, pp. 131-134

<sup>31</sup> Cimbala, *Under the Guardianship of the Nation*, pp. 167-171.

<sup>32</sup> Richard Hogan, "Fostering Versus Imposing Democracy: Lessons from One Case Where Reconstruction Actually Worked," *International Journal of the Humanities* 2007, 5, 3:123-130.

undermined Campbell's efforts to make Freedmen into yeomen. Land was essential, so the decision to return the plantations to the planters undermined Reconstruction and provided a base for Redemption. Also, the Bureau's refusal to support the Republican party or to encourage partisanship was similarly disastrous. The determination to rely on charitable or civil society for education and public assistance was the final nail in the coffin.

Reconstruction required that federal troops occupy the South as a conquering army. It is ironic that it was militarily justifiable to destroy private property in General Sherman's March to the Sea but politically impractical to redistribute property in efforts to construct a local economy based on free land, free labor and free men.<sup>33</sup> To think that it might have been possible to re-establish plantations with remunerative wage labor, rather than an oppressive system that impoverished Blacks and white sharecroppers or tenants is incredible.<sup>34</sup>

The Port Royal experiment, in South Carolina, suggests that a less oppressive system was possible, at least temporarily, on a limited scale. Willie Lee Rose argues that at least some of the Freed people on the Port Royal Islands were able to maintain their lands and sustain their political independence until Ben Tillman foreclosed the possibility of Black suffrage in 1895.<sup>35</sup> In this regard, they offer another case of how Reconstruction could work, at least temporarily.

These exceptional cases notwithstanding, labor relations in the South, whether they were slave, contractual wage, or tenant/share/peonage relations of production, were oppressive and relied upon coercion and racist appeals to unite yeomen and planters against Freed men and women. Without military and political, as well as legal and moral, support, the ability of Redeemers to terrorize Freed people and frighten yeomen into race-based (as opposed to class or party based) coalitions ensured that the path to democracy was the path not chosen. The conquering army needed to redistribute land and make credit available through federal finance and banking institutions, but the Republicans would not tolerate the attack on private property and the Democrats, harking back to the days of Jacksonian Democracy on the frontier, would not tolerate banks. They would, of course, join the Redeemers in attacking the federal efforts to protect the Freed people, particularly when that entailed political and civil rights.

One last revisionist account is worthy of mention here. J. William Harris, in his analysis of the Augusta hinterland, provides an indigenous perspective, including both Georgia and South Carolina counties in the heart of the cotton belt.<sup>36</sup> Most useful here is the detail on conflicts between planters, slaves and yeomen and the extent to which there were intra-class as well as inter-class conflicts. Harris is part of the old social science history community, combining social science theory and methods to analyze census data, tax records and whatever else can be used to sustain his characterization of planter hegemony in the Augusta region.

Harris offers much that can be incorporated into my critical historiography. Still, Harris's excellent analysis falls prey to the liberal functionalist perspective of Robert Merton and confuses what might be considered a liberal or conflict functionalist perspective with a critical or dialectical theory of interests and actions, both of which tend to be masked in ideological justification or criticism, rationalization, or simply "fake news."<sup>37</sup> We need to be careful in attributing motives from expressed attitudes. Material condition is always a better empirical base for predicting action, especially collective action, in the long run, although expressed interests can be useful in determining why a specific action occurred at a specified time and place.<sup>38</sup>

Before leaving Harris, we should return to his use of the term "hegemony."<sup>39</sup> We agree that the large-scale plantation slave system was the dominant mode of Southern cotton production in 1860.<sup>40</sup> Planters dominated the religious, educational and political organizations of cotton belt communities. Harris provides all the data needed to illustrate this fact. What this means, however, is that yeomen using slaves or using friends and family to provide the plus in subsistence-plus were operating in the interstitial spaces of plantation slave cotton production. They were at the mercy of the plantation system in that their efforts were constrained but not determined by the planter and the plantation system. If their collective action were determined by their class circumstance, there would be no class conflict, ergo, no engine of history.

<sup>33</sup> Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1970). One reader protested that emancipation was a redistribution (actually an appropriation) of wealth. This is why Lincoln did not wish to impose unrecompensed emancipation until it was necessary to so in order to win the war.

<sup>34</sup> Wage labor was attempted in Houston County, where "old-line Democratic planters ... preferred to operate their plantations under modified versions of the antebellum gang system supervised by resident managers." See Reidy, *From Slavery to Agrarian Capitalism*, p. 216

<sup>35</sup> Willie Lee Rose, *Rehearsal for Reconstruction: The Port Royal Experiment* (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1964), pp. 385, 395-408.

<sup>36</sup> J. William Harris, *Plain Folk and Gentry in a Slave Society: White Liberty and Black Slavery in Augusta's Hinterlands* (Middletown, CN: Wesleyan University Press, 1985).

<sup>37</sup> Robert K. Merton, "Latent and Manifest Function," Chapter I, and "The Self-Fulfilling Prophecy," Chapter XI, in *Social Theory and Social Structure* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1957 [revised from 1949 edition]).

<sup>38</sup> This is the position that Tilly takes in *From Mobilization to Revolution*, p. 61.

<sup>39</sup> Harris, p. 2.

<sup>40</sup> Reidy is very clear on this point in chapter 2, but he is less clear on when and where, if ever, yeomen were the dominant class. He seems to imply that they were both predominant and dominant, 1800-1835, in the Macon region of Central Georgia—see chapter 1.

The relations between planters, yeomen, and slaves were important both in production and in reproduction. Yeomen and slaves, in their off-hours, were sometimes contributing to and, at other times, threatening the dominance of the planter. The charity, educational, or religious life of the community was important for this reason. The fact that planters tended to facilitate yeoman and slave family and community efforts, within clearly defined limits, is important. The ways in which slaves and non-slaves used their community and family organization to challenge planters, in markets or in electoral contests, is also important. Most important is that we recognize that hegemonic does not mean all-powerful or unchanging or not subject to the contradictions and conflicts that plague all systems that rest on the exploitation of labor, including the yeoman family farm.

Ultimately, my assertion is that plantation slavery, contract/convict labor, and tenancy/debt peonage were all coercive regimes, sustained by force of arms, requiring the mobilization of all white men, including the federal power of the state, to sustain these modes of production. The yeoman mode of production (the subsistence-plus family farm) was able to survive without the direct application of the coercive force of the state, even within the uncertain environment of Civil War, so long as family labor was not subject to conscription or impressment and its products were not subject to seizure by armed troops.<sup>41</sup>

This does not mean that family-based modes of production were not rooted in exploitation, simply that the intensity of exploitation was limited by the range of kinship obligations. Also, these obligations to produce, according to ability, were balanced by obligations to extend subsistence, according to need, even to kin who were too young or old to exploit. In this regard, the familial system resembled primitive communalism if not utopian communism.<sup>42</sup>

Joseph P. Reidy offers a useful corrective to those inclined toward ecological or ideological history by recognizing that there were different modes of production coexisting in the Macon region of Central Georgia, 1800-1880. The danger here is that one might conclude that yeomen were succeeded by planters in an evolutionary process, as capitalism displaced mercantilism (or patrimonialism) in the global economy. To Reidy's credit, he recognizes that the yeomen and the Freedmen did not go passively into the night and that the ongoing struggle between classes was the engine of history. It was not some global modernization process that determined the path that Macon would follow.

There are serious problems in this type of analysis, however, where we pick some contiguous counties and try to explain how they represent variations on the theme of Democratic or Whig (or Republican) partisanship. In the Macon region there seems to be more variance within the region, although Central Georgia was different from the Augusta region, the coast, the Cumberland plateau, or the Appalachian upcountry. Macon was more like Atlanta in being a transportation, commercial and industrial center in the New South, but it still had hints of the upcountry yeoman frontier and the Black belt. It short, it had such a mix of interests and actions that it is difficult to generalize, even across counties in the region. Here, as in the Augusta region, it might be more enlightening to compare the core and the periphery—as we might compare Savannah and Darien. That said, there is much here that will be useful in attempts to generalize our tale of three counties and to offer something of a master narrative or history of Georgia.<sup>43</sup>

The rest of the relevant readings are not about Georgia but cover racial violence elsewhere in the South during Reconstruction. We have already considered two of these books in passing, but here we should spend some more time on the entire genre of historical, social science, or journalistic accounts of racial violence.

We can simplify the literature by focusing attention on an actor or an epoch—a time or a place. We can look at the Ku Klux Klan, from its roots in Pulaski, Tennessee, in December 1865, to its enduring legacy.<sup>44</sup> If we are less ambitious, we can focus on a more limited time and place, like Indiana, 1921-1928, or a national sample of Klan events, reported in the *Night Hawk* in 1923-1924, or we can focus on the urban Klan, 1915-1930.<sup>45</sup> Each of these contributions was offered to move us beyond the established history of the Klan—originally presented as a rural Southern or border-state phenomenon, in reaction to the emancipation of the slaves and the fears of white men, who envisioned a rag-tag army of Freedmen, raping, pillaging and plundering their homelands, in much the same way that ghetto residents burned their homes in the 1960s.<sup>46</sup> Much of the debate in the literature focuses on

<sup>41</sup> Burawoy, *The Politics of Production*, chapter one, Kulikoff, "The Transition to Capitalism in Rural America."

<sup>42</sup> See Karl Marx, "Critique of the Gotha Program" and "The German Ideology" excerpted in Robert C. Tucker (editor), *The Marx-Engel Reader*, Second Edition (NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 1978), pp. 531 ("From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs") and 150-163 (modes of production). Eric R. Wolf, *Europe and the People without History*, pp. 73-100, offers a more useful typology of modes of production.

<sup>43</sup> There is still the hope of a book manuscript that will offer this history, 1868-1880.

<sup>44</sup> David M. Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism: The History of the Ku Klux Klan*, Third Edition (Durham: Duke University Press, 1987), p. 8 (origins) and chapter 53, "The Enduring Klan."

<sup>45</sup> Leonard J. Moore, *Citizen Klansmen: The Ku Klux Klan in Indiana, 1921-1928* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991); Rory McVeigh, *The Rise of the Ku Klux Klan: Right-Wing Movements and National Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009)—for the national sample of reported events in 1923-1924; Kenneth T. Jackson, *The Ku Klux Klan and the City, 1915-1930* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1967).

<sup>46</sup> *Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders* (NY: Bantam Books, 1968).

when and where and why the Klan arose and then declined.

Now we know that the Klan was only one organization representing white supremacy, now promoted as white nationalism. A more comprehensive treatment of racial violence should move beyond the Klan and view racial violence in the larger context of the ongoing struggle for/against racial justice. Toward this end, it becomes necessary to adopt a theoretical orientation to the struggle. Much of the earliest work has focused on emotions, particularly fear and ignorance, and social disorganization—particularly the break-down of social control or the inability of authorities to maintain order. These works have also tended to see violence as distinctly different from politics as usual—voting or even more orderly protests.<sup>47</sup>

Beginning with Bill Gamson's pioneering study of political protest, the idea that violence was irrational and defied the logic of interest group theories of collective action has been rejected by mainstream social science.<sup>48</sup> Violence is a tactic that is used rationally as an alternative to or in conjunction with nonviolent tactics. Clearly, that was the case with Redemption (or opposition to Reconstruction).

Take, for example, the South Carolina Democratic party, which combined terror, fraud, economic incentives, and more standard electioneering and negotiating efforts to defeat Reconstruction and South Carolina Republicans in the gubernatorial election of 1876. Wade Hampton called for "bloodless coercion," which rested on the clear and present danger of violent terrorist attacks that he might unleash. Military-like discipline allowed Hampton and the Democrats to maintain public order and even raise revenues, which the Republican incumbent was not able to do. Thus, it became clear that Hayes and the national Republican party had to make a deal with the devil or humbly submit to defeat by the Southern Democrats—at which point, it would have seemed that the war had been fought in vain.<sup>49</sup>

Here we can see how violence was part of a repertoire of political tactics that could be used to terrorize the opposition, within the limits of the opportunities to terrorize opponents without suffering the repressive power of the federal or state government, or the overwhelming force of an equally well armed and disciplined antagonist. The leadership, organization, and resources at the disposal of Democratic Redeemers, versus Republicans supporting Reconstruction, can be compared in campaigns (electoral and paramilitary) waged within the constraints of state capacity and federal inclination to repress, facilitate or tolerate the actions of the claimants.<sup>50</sup>

Beyond the details of the strategic interactions between contenders, authorities, and interested third-parties, the larger social, economic, and political context is important in determining the extent of political opportunities—powerful allies, divided elites, and the ability or inclination of authorities to respond with facilitation, tolerance or repression.<sup>51</sup>

Both in South Carolina and in Louisiana, there was a revolutionary situation—where two contenders claimed governing authority after contested elections in 1876 (South Carolina) and 1872 (Louisiana).<sup>52</sup> These were among the last bastions of unredeemed or unreconstructed political struggle in the South, where, first, established authorities were effectively challenged at the ballot box (or, more accurately, in the struggle to control the balloting and the results of the election) and, second, federal authorities were unwilling or unable to support them.

In one case, an ill-fated attempt by the Black militia to hold the courthouse in Colfax, Louisiana, inspired a massacre, effected by the white militia. In the other case, it was the decision by President-elect Hayes to accept the de-facto control claimed by the South Carolina Democrats. In both cases, the relative opportunities and threats were critical in determining whether violent or peaceful means might be used to defend the claims of the Redeemers.

The same can be said for the Memphis Massacre of 1866, although neither the Blacks nor the whites were as well organized in this case. In fact, this was a more typical police riot, where undisciplined and untrained Irish police brutalized the Black majority while federal troops and the city fathers watched in feigned shock and horror.<sup>53</sup> The bloodshed and terror was truly horrible, but the incident was mostly a political stunt that Republicans and Democrats used as a mobilizing frame (or an injustice frame) for promoting their flavor of Reconstruction or

---

<sup>47</sup> Richard Maxwell Brown, *Strain of Violence: Historical Studies of American Violence and Vigilantism* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1975). This book is still widely cited—see, for example, Richard Zuczek, *State of Rebellion: Reconstruction in South Carolina* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996).

<sup>48</sup> William Gamson, *The Strategy of Social Protest*, Second Edition (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1990 [1975]), chapter 6; Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution*; see footnote 4 (above) for more on this tradition.

<sup>49</sup> Zuczek, *State of Rebellion*, pp. 171 ("bloodless coercion"), 197-200.

<sup>50</sup> This is, essentially, the analysis that Zuczek offers. W. Scott Poole, *Never Surrender: Confederate Memory and Conservatism in the South Carolina Upcountry* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2004), offers a more ideologically rooted, intellectual history of the conservative ideology of South Carolina Democrats.

<sup>51</sup> Tarrow, *Power in Movement*, pp. 160-161; 165-166.

<sup>52</sup> Zuczek, chapter nine; Lee Anna Keith, *The Colfax Massacre: The Untold Story of Black Power, White Terror, and the Death of Reconstruction* (NY: Oxford University Press, 2008), chapter six.

<sup>53</sup> Stephen Ash's *A Massacre in Memphis: The Race Riot that Shook the Nation One year after the Civil War* (NY: Hill and Wang, 2013).

Redemption.<sup>54</sup>

More challenging, perhaps, is the story of Greensboro, Alabama, where, according to G. Ward Hubbs, the Greensboro Guard provided the base for constructing a “loyalist” community that excluded Freed persons, Yankees, and Republicans.<sup>55</sup> This was not peculiar to this little town in Alabama, but it is difficult to generalize from this case and even harder to compare Greensboro to Lexington, Georgia, where legal and extra-legal efforts to ensure that Blacks would vote Democratic or not vote at all were more rapidly rewarded with electoral victory—as early as November 1868. How and why Greensboro “loyalists” were unable to steal the 1868 November election is an interesting question that we lack the data to adequately address. Once again, we are struggling with the limitation of stories and the problem of validity and reliability.<sup>56</sup>

### Acknowledgement

Comments and suggestions from my good friend and colleague, Bob May, was essential in this enterprise.

---

<sup>54</sup> David Snow is the sociological guru on framing. A particularly relevant recent piece of his published work is David A. Snow and Dana M. Moss, “Social Movements Protest on the Fly: Toward a Theory of Spontaneity in the Dynamics of Protest and Social Movements.” *American Sociological Review* 79 (2014): 1122-1143.

<sup>55</sup> G. Ward Hubbs, *Guarding Greensboro: A Confederate Company in the Making of a Southern Community* (Athens, University Georgia Press, 2003).  
p. 229.

<sup>56</sup> See footnote 18, above, on the remarkable success in Lexington, seat of Oglethorpe County. The Georgia story, the issues of reliability and validity, and the role of violence in disenfranchising Freedmen and Republicans are covered, in detail, in Hogan, “Resisting Redemption,” and in Richard Hogan, “Outrages: Contention, Vigilantism, or Lynching? Accounting for Racial Violence in Biased Sources.” *International Journal of Contemporary Sociology* 54, 2 (October 2018), pp. 87-114.