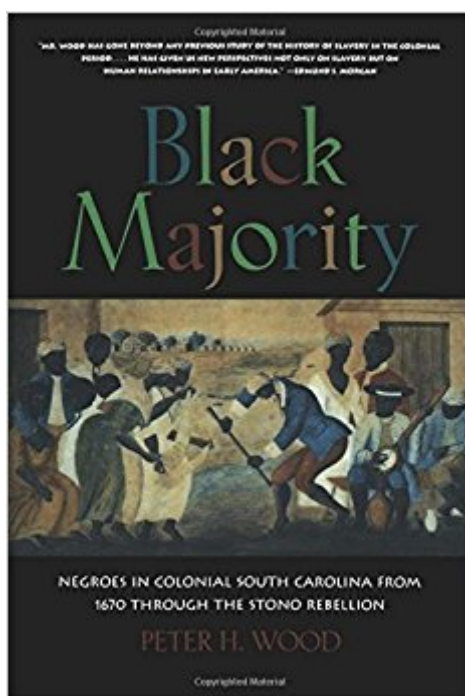


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# Black Majority: Negroes In Colonial South Carolina From 1670 Through The Stono Rebellion (Norton Library)



## Synopsis

A groundbreaking study of two cultures in early America. *Black Majority* won the Albert J. Beveridge Award of the American Historical Association.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“Mr. Wood has gone beyond any previous study of the history of slavery in the colonial period. . . . He has given us new perspectives not only on slavery but on human relationships in early America.” - Edmund S. Morgan, author of *American Slavery / American Freedom* “Easily the most thorough and the most penetrating case study yet written of the Afro-American population during the slave period. . . . Fascinating and instructive.” - Jack P. Greene

Peter H. Wood is professor of American history at Duke University.

Great history book with a treasure trove of new information from primary sources. One of my top 4 history books of all times. My ancestry is rooted in Carolina and the relationships between my black, white and Indian ancestors. Reading this expanded my understanding of my family's history. Thanks Peter Wood! Great work that I will read again and again and never be without.

We keep wondering why we continue to make the same mistakes and operate in ways that don't serve us as a country. Well this book helps to enlighten us as to why that is. The lessons learned in

the early days by White men or Europeans and those values have stayed with us as a country as we continued to push further and further away from the coasts into lands that belonged to Native Tribes. It also speaks about the introduction of Africans into America and the fear that Europeans had for those same peoples brought here to cultivate the land and increase the bank books of the slave holders. Again, I loved this book and learned a lot from it.

I ordered this book while taking a recent class from the retired author Peter Wood. This book was responsible for the way we are taught about slavery now. Before Peter's book the schools still presented slavery as a necessary good and the slave was happy and loved the life he/she led. Peter's research is still very relevant and a wonderfully insightful read. If you are interested in history at all this is a must read!

I could not put this book down, I learned so much about my people that I never learned in any history class in all my years of schooling in America. That is another story altogether. Peter Wood did an excellent job in examining numerous sources. His ability to identify and understand the diversity of the African backgrounds of the slaves was refreshing. He's helping to undermine the prevalent thought among scholars that the slaves had no technology and were blank slates for Europeans to paint in their own images. He identified the fact that some "Planters" requested slaves from certain areas such as the rice coast, (modern day Sierra Leone belongs to this coast.) Which in itself shows that Planters were well aware of their slaves' origin and the differences between them. I can't say much more without giving away too much of the book. But it's highly recommended.

In *Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 through the Stono Rebellion*, historian Peter H. Wood examines the rise of a distinct slave culture in South Carolina during the colonial period. Wood's argument stems from the assertion that South Carolina was, in effect, a colony of a colony, having been settled by Barbadians looking for greater land opportunities. He argues, "Those who traveled to [the Carolina] coast from Barbados—both blacks and whites—were to make of a significant segment of the first permanent colony in that region and the activities of a group of Barbadian Adventurers helped lay out the terms under which the Carolina coast would eventually be colonized." Wood structures his argument chronologically as he traces the evolution of colonial South Carolina, only occasionally skipping ahead or backwards to illustrate a point. Wood's evidence includes county records, the wills of deceased slave owners, and, in some cases, accounts of slaves themselves. While

Wood's argument is well founded and would have been revolutionary in 1974, it is tainted with holdovers from the pre-Civil Rights era and Wood himself is hesitant at times to give agency to the black population of South Carolina. Wood begins his argument by describing how South Carolina began as a colony of Barbados, itself a colony. He writes of the proprietors of the colony, "For these men in London, a slave colony in Carolina might dovetail nicely with their interests." The wording in the original headright system led to an increase in the number of Negroes who would be transported involuntarily to Carolina during the early years since their presence secured more land for their masters. Wood attributes the early ability of South Carolina farmers to cultivate rice to Negroes from the West Coast of Africa who were widely familiar with rice planting. Wood states that the ability of the black population to grow faster than the white was due to two factors: the first was accelerated population growth from the import of more slaves every year, and the second was the black population's immunity to certain tropical diseases for which the white population had no natural defenses. Wood's chronicle continues through the expanding black population, eventually leading him to use a quote describing the colony as "a Negro country." He concludes his account with black resistance to increasing restrictions and the Stono Rebellion, which effectively ended the freedoms that slaves had available to them. When Wood writes of the trade skills of slaves, he does so from the perspective of the master and speaks little, if at all, about what these trades meant to the black population itself. One example of this is the offhand reference to a master's will which listed "a Negro silversmith named Limus appraised at the exceptional value of £300." He primarily discusses the profits a trained slave could bring to his master if resold. Even Gullah, a language created by the slaves themselves, is cast less as something done to preserve elements of culture and more as a natural pidginizing process, at times encouraged by whites who adopted elements of African languages including some names. Even with this hesitancy to grant agency to the black population, Wood clearly defines which generation he belongs to through his consistent use of the term Negro. It is his primary term for the slave population and helps to explain why he is hesitant at points to give agency. Overall, Wood's argument for a black majority, not only in population but in culture, is sound, but, had more effort been made to getting the black side of the story instead of relying so heavily on white sources, the book have a more balanced tone.

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