

UNIVERSITY GRADUATE SCHOOL BULLETIN ANNOUNCEMENT

Florida International University
University Graduate School

Doctoral Dissertation Defense

Abstract

Twice Enslaved: African Slavery in the Colonial Florida Indian Trade

by Clinton Hough

This dissertation reveals how enslaved peoples were used by merchant companies in the Atlantic world to control proprietary information as a means to protect business from competitors and the risks posed by their own employees stealing that information. This principal-agent dilemma of trust and credit was usually resolved by employing family, incentive based contracts or through complex social relationships, so called gentlemanly capitalism. The Panton, Leslie, and Company operated the Florida Indian Trade in Spanish Florida from 1783 to 1819, during which time the company held a monopoly on all trade with Native tribes of Florida. This study found that instead of using the traditional methods to mitigate risk, the Panton, Leslie, and Company instead used enslaved labor as means to control information and prevent competition. Enslaved Africans worked in all aspects of the company's operation, including porters, river guides, messengers, and rare instances as company agents. The company and its competitors placed value on this special class of people for the knowledge they held as a result of their labor. Competitors routinely attempted to kidnap enslaved peoples to acquire and control the information they possessed. The use of enslaved peoples to control proprietary information and prevent competition is incredibly unique in the development of early Atlantic capitalism.

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Time: 10:00am.

Place: MMC, DM 370

Department: History

Major Professor: Dr. Kenneth Lipartito