

The Southern Colonies in the 17th and 18th Centuries

- I. Southern plantation colonies: general characteristics
 - A. Dominated to a degree by a plantation economy: tobacco and rice
 - B. Slavery in all colonies (even Georgia after 1750); mostly indentured servants until the late-17th century in Virginia and Maryland; increasingly black slavery thereafter
 - C. Large land holdings owned by aristocrats; aristocratic atmosphere (except North Carolina and parts of Georgia in the 18th century).
 - D. Sparsely populated: churches and schools were too expensive to build for very small towns.
 - E. Religious toleration: the **Church of England** (Anglican Church) was the most prominent
 - F. Expansionary attitudes resulted from the need for new land to compensate for the degradation of existing lands from soil-depleting tobacco farming; this expansion led to conflicts with Amerindians.

- II. The **Chesapeake** (Virginia and Maryland)
 - A. **Virginia** (founded in 1607 by the Virginia Company)
 1. Jamestown, 1607: 1st permanent British colony in New World
 - a. Virginia Company: joint-stock company that received a charter from King James I in 1606 to establish settlements in North America.
 - Main goals: Promise of gold, conversion of Amerindians to Christianity (like Spain had done), and new passage through North America to the East Indies (Northwest Passage).
 - Consisted largely of well-to-do adventurers.
 - b. **Virginia Charter**
 - Overseas settlers were given same rights of Englishmen in England.
 - Became a foundation for American liberties; similar rights would be extended to other North American colonies.
 2. Jamestown was wracked by tragedy during its early years: famine, disease, and war with Amerindians
 - a. By 1625, only 1200 of the nearly 8,000 colonists survived
 - b. Only 60 out of 400 settlers survived the "**starving time**" of 1610-1611.
 3. **Captain John Smith** reorganized the colony beginning in 1608: "He who will not work shall not eat."
 - a. His leadership helped Jamestown survive the "starving time."
 - b. Smith was kidnapped in Dec. 1607 by **Powhatans** led by Chief Powhatan who subjected Smith to a what may have been a

- mock execution.
- Smith was perhaps "saved" by **Pocahontas**, Powhatan's daughter, when she was only 12-years old.
4. Pocahontas eventually was a central figure in preserving peace in early Jamestown.
 - a. Provided foodstuffs to settlers.
 - b. Became hostage of colonists in 1613 during military conflicts.
 - c. Later married John Rolfe and taught him Amerindian way of curing tobacco.
 - d. She died of small pox at age 22 in England.
 5. **John Rolfe** and **tobacco** crop economy: "Colony built on smoke"
 - a. Rolfe introduced a new tough strain of tobacco and it became perhaps the most important reason for Virginia's survival
 - b. Tobacco industry became cornerstone of Virginia's economy.
 - c. Plantation system emerged.
 6. **House of Burgesses** (a legislative assembly) created in 1619.
 - a. First colonial parliament in the British American colonies.
 - b. Representative self-government
 - However, most representatives were wealthy land owners
 - Created to attract settlers to Virginia (by offering more liberty)
 7. Virginia Charter was revoked by James I in 1624.
 - a. The king believed the assembly too seditious but he also loathed tobacco.
 - b. Virginia became a royal colony directly under his control.

B. Maryland (1634)

1. Charles I gave Sir George Calvert (the first **Lord Baltimore**), a portion of Virginia for creation of a Catholic haven and profit.
2. Eventually, growth of Protestants meant Catholics became a minority; Catholics feared loss of religious freedom.
3. **Act of Toleration** (1649)
 - a. Guaranteed toleration to all Christians but instituted the death penalty for anyone denying the divinity of Jesus (e.g. Jews and atheists).
 - b. Motive: Catholics sought to protect their faith by granting a certain degree of religious freedom.
 - c. Maryland became the largest haven for Catholics in the British American colonies.

C. Life in the Chesapeake tidewater region was perilous

1. Disease was devastating early on (took 10 years off the average life expectancy): malaria, dysentery, typhoid
 - a. Half of all those born in early Virginia and Maryland did not live past age 20.

- b. Less than 25% of men lived to see 50; women only 40 years
 2. Most immigrants were single men in their late teens and early 20's; most died soon after arriving.
 - a. Surviving males competed for extremely scarce women; women married early (some came over as "tobacco brides").
 - Women were recruited early on to come to Virginia; settlers had to pay their travel costs with tobacco.
 - b. Most men could not find mates.
 3. The region stabilized eventually due to increased immunities to disease and the rising influx of women.
 - a. By 1700, Virginia was the most populous colony (about 50,000 colonists).
 - b. By 1700, Maryland was the third most populous colony (about 30,000 inhabitants).
- D. The Tobacco Plantation Economy
1. The first Africans arrived in Virginia in 1619; were largely indentured servants in the early 17th century
 - White English indentured servants were more predominant until the late-17th century.
 2. The "**Headright**" System
 - a. A person who paid for the passage of a white indentured servant received 50 acres of land.
 - Some planters thus acquired huge tracts of land.
 - b. Indentured servants agreed to years of servitude in exchange for transatlantic passage (the term of servitude was usually 5-7 years).
 - c. Early-17th century: after contract expired the servant was often given some money, maybe some land, and other supplies to start their own farms.
 - Later, former indentured servants were given little and faced great difficulties in the back country.
 - d. By 1700, planters brought in about 100,000 indentured servants, about 75% of all European immigrants to Virginia and Maryland.
 3. Expansion of lands for tobacco farming resulted in conflicts with neighboring Amerindians.
 - **Anglo-Powhatan Wars** (series of three wars between 1610 and 1646) led to Powhatans' eventual removal from eastern Virginia.
- E. **Bacon's Rebellion** (1676)
1. By the late-17th century, large numbers of frustrated former indentured servants (freedmen) existed.
 - a. Most lived in western Virginia; resented planter aristocrats from the east.

- b. Many were too poor to own land and could not find wives (men still greatly outnumbered women).
 - c. Freedmen did not gain access to large land grants in the east and were forced to squat for lands in western part of the colony.
 - d. Amerindians resisted white expansion in western Virginia while freedmen were angry that gov't of Virginia didn't protect white settlers from Amerindian attacks.
 - **Governor Berkeley** was generally friendly toward Amerindians who traded with the colony.
 - House of Burgesses did not usually order attacks on Amerindians that cooperated with the gov't.
2. **Nathaniel Bacon**, an aristocrat in western Virginia and member of House of Burgesses, began mobilizing a militia to protect whites from Amerindians.
- a. In 1676, Bacon's militia massacred Amerindians and set fire to Jamestown, forcing Governor Berkeley out of the city.
 - b. Bacon's rebels were opposed to aristocrats and Amerindians.
3. Bacon subsequently died of disease and Berkeley crushed the rebellion.
4. Significance of Bacon's Rebellion: Planters saw white indentured servants as too difficult to control and significantly increased importation of black slaves while reducing the number of white indentured servants.
5. Planter elite increasingly played the "race card": encouraged poor whites to discriminate against blacks. Planters feared blacks and poor whites could form an alliance again in the future.
- Planters effectively controlled poor whites psychologically by emphasizing that poor whites, despite poverty, would always be "superior" to blacks.
- F. By the early-18th century, North Carolina had developed a plantation tobacco economy as well.

III. The Carolinas

A. Impact of the **British West Indies**

1. West Indies (Caribbean), especially **Barbados**, developed a sugar plantation economy.
2. Slaves in British West Indies outnumbered whites 4 to 1.
3. Slave codes were adopted in Barbados to control slaves.
4. West Indies increasingly relied on mainland British America for foodstuffs.
5. As sugar plantations began to crowd out small farmers, many came to Carolina with their slaves to farm.
6. Carolina adopted the Barbados slave code in 1696.

- B. American colonization was interrupted during the English Civil War (1640s) and Cromwell's Protectorate (1650s)
1. New colonies were not founded until restoration of Charles II (1660-1685).
 2. New Restoration colonies included the Carolinas, New York and Pennsylvania.
- C. **Carolina** was created in 1670 after the Restoration and named after King Charles II.
1. Goals: grow foodstuffs for sugar plantations in Barbados and export non-English products like wine, silk, and olive oil.
 2. Exported Amerindians as slaves to the West Indies and New England colonies (perhaps as many as 100,000).
 - **Yamasee** Amerindians led a rebellion in 1715 against advancing settlers and corrupt traders from Charleston who captured and sold Indians into slavery in Barbados.
 3. Rice became the main cash crop in Carolina for export; by 1710 blacks outnumbered whites.
 - In the 18th century, **indigo** became the second largest crop.
 4. **Charles Town** (Charleston) became the most active seaport in the South.
 - a. Became a center for aristocratic younger brothers of English aristocrats (who inherited father's fortune due to primogeniture laws)
 - b. Religious toleration existed.
 5. Amerindians and Spanish soldiers attacked southern Carolina settlements as they opposed English settlement.
- D. North Carolina
1. Created officially in 1712 as a refuge for poor whites and religious dissenters from Carolina and Virginia.
 2. Became the most democratic, independent and least aristocratic of original 13 colonies (similar to Rhode Island).
 3. Tobacco became its main export (similar to the Chesapeake).
 4. Treated Amerindians ruthlessly and sold many into slavery.
- IV. **Georgia** was the last British American colony to be founded (1733).
- A. Founded by **James Oglethorp**
 - B. Founded as a haven for debtors as well as a buffer state against Spanish and Amerindian incursions from the south.
 - C. Initially, prohibited free blacks or slaves from living in the colony for fear that slavery might take root there.
 - By the American Revolution, it had incorporated rice and indigo production worked by African Slaves
 - D. Savannah emerged into a diverse community (included German

Lutherans and Scottish Highlanders; but no Catholics)

- English settlers made up a lower proportion of the colony's population than any of the original thirteen colonies.
- E. Least populous of the 13 colonies

V. Colonial Slavery

A. Most slaves came from the West African coast (Senegal to Angola)

1. Originally captured by African coastal tribes who traded them to European and American buyers.
2. About 40% of slaves captured by Africans in the interior died en route to the coast.

B. Of the 10-15 million Africans sent into slavery in the New World, 400,000 came to North America. (Majority were sent to Spanish and Portuguese colonies in the Caribbean and South America.)

1. About 25% of slaves died during the "**Middle Passage.**"
2. Horrific conditions:
 - a. Slaves often chained by neck and extremities to deck floor
 - b. Packed into spaces about the size of a coffin; lay in own excrement
 - c. In some cases, next deck only 18" above deck floor; slaves could not turn over; lay on their back the entire voyage.
3. Survivors eventually were sold at auction blocks at ports like Newport, RI, or Charleston, SC (giant slave market).
4. Most slaves came to North America after 1700
 - a. Some came to Jamestown as early as 1619 but only 2,000 lived in Virginia in 1670.
 - Accounted for about 7% of southern plantation population by the mid-17th century.
 - b. Rising wages in England in 1680's reduced immigration to America.
 - By 1680's, black slaves outnumbered white servants.
 - c. 1698, Royal African Co. lost its monopoly on the slave trade.
 - Some Americans, especially from Rhode Island, took advantage of the lucrative slave trade.
 - d. The numbers of slaves in America dramatically increased.
 - Accounted for 46% of Virginia's population by 1750.
 - In South Carolina, blacks outnumbered whites 2 to 1.
 - In contrast, slaves accounted for only 5% of the North's population (only 2% in Massachusetts).
 - e. Until 1750, 25% of all slaves who arrived in North America died within the first year.
5. A few slaves gained their freedom and some even became slave owners.
 - However, this fact shouldn't be over-exaggerated as they were minuscule in number relative to entire slave population.

C. Slave Codes

1. As Africans grew in numbers, threatened whites passed laws to severely control the slave population.
2. Most common codes stated:
 - a. blacks and their children were their white masters' property for life.
 - b. it was a crime to teach literacy to slaves.
 - c. conversion to Christianity was not grounds for freedom.
3. South Carolina's inherited Barbados slave codes influenced codes in other colonies.

D. Slavery became the root of racism in America as a distinct color line was drawn.

1. Unlike the intermingling of whites, blacks, and Amerindians that existed in the Caribbean, Mexico, and South America, very little intermarriage occurred among blacks and whites in Britain's North American colonies.
2. In effect, a caste system emerged in North America where African Americans, free or slave, were relegated to the bottom of the social hierarchy.
3. Children born to a slave woman and a white slave-owner—*mulattos*—were still considered slaves or were marginalized if set free.
4. Sexual relations between white women and males of other races were often prohibited.
5. The notion of inferiority based on skin color was embedded in U.S. law until the 1960s.

E. Slave Life

1. Slavery was harshest in the lower South (especially South Carolina); least harsh in the New England and Middle Colonies.
 - a. Brutal and isolated conditions in rice and indigo farming led to many deaths.
 - b. Fresh importation of slaves was needed to sustain productivity
2. Tobacco-growing in the middle south was less deadly.
 - a. Plantations were larger and closer together.
 - Afforded slaves more contact with friends and relatives
 - b. Increase of female slave populations made family life more possible by 1720.
 - Slave population increased through higher birthrate.
 - America became one of few slave societies in history to grow by natural reproduction.

F. Slave culture became a mixture of American and African folkways

1. Elements of West African culture—such as languages, oral traditions, music, religious practices and family patterns—remained part of the American slave community.
2. Family ties were often informal and extended family ties were important
 - a. Result of slave families being broken up regularly due to members being sold
 - b. “Fictive kin”: members of a community might be considered “family” even though they were not related by blood.
 - c. Children were primarily raised by their mothers, who often dominated the home in slave quarters.
 - d. Children were often looked after by many members of the community.
3. Oral traditions were valuable in maintaining the African heritage.
 - a. Teaching slaves to read was illegal in much of the South so alternate ways of spreading culture was necessary.
 - b. After the work day was over, slaves would often get together on large plantations and share stories or their hopes of eventual liberation.
 - c. Oral traditions were passed on in several languages e.g. Gullah, pidgin English, and Creole.
4. Religion
 - a. Call and response tradition from Africa was a component of slave religious meetings.
 - b. Religion in slave communities often blended various forms of Christianity mixed with African traditions (such as voodoo).
 - c. Certain elements of Christianity were very appealing (e.g. everyone is equal in heaven, Christ ministering to the poor).
 - d. The book of Exodus in the Bible was particularly popular (Jews led by Moses had escaped Egypt).
5. Music
 - a. Rhythmic complexities of Africa were incorporated into music and drum rhythms played by slaves.
 - b. The banjo, an African instrument, was used regularly.
 - c. The European violin (fiddle) was adapted by slaves and became a staple instrument.
 - d. Call and response singing was a popular element of slave music.

- G. Slave rebellions show that slaves were not always docile.
1. About 250 revolts occurred during the colonial era.
 2. **Stono Rebellion (1739): largest slave revolt in history of the 13 colonies**
 - a. Spanish authorities offered freedom to any slave who escaped to Florida and converted to Catholicism (original offer occurred in 1693).
 - A steady stream of slaves had escaped to Florida in the early 1700s.
 - Escaped slaves represented a drag on the South Carolina economy and embarrassment to the British Empire.
 - Some escaped slaves fought to protect Spanish Florida from British attacks.
 - b. 1739, Slaves in South Carolina tried to march to Spanish Florida.
 - c. Slaves were eventually stopped by a militia after 25 whites had been killed; eventually scores of slave rebels were killed by militia and settlers.
 - d. Significance: slave system became more strictly controlled (eg. curtailed rights of slaves to assemble with one another).

VI. Southern Society -- 18th century

- A. Southern class structure (from most powerful to least powerful)
1. Plantation owners were at the top of the social ladder.
 - Ruled region's economy and monopolized political power.
 2. Small farmers comprised largest social group.
 - a. Considered far below the prestige and power of planter class
 - b. Most lived meager existences; some owned 1 or 2 slaves
 - c. Modest sized plots
 3. Landless Whites -- most were former indentured servants
 4. Indentured Servants (lowest of whites)
 - a. Decreased as black slavery increased (after Bacon's Rebellion)
 - b. Only black slaves were lower in the class structure
 5. Constituted about 20% of colonial population by 1775
- B. The South remained underdeveloped.
1. Few cities emerged.
 2. Life revolved around southern plantations.
 3. Poor transportation: waterways were principal means of transportation
- C. Why did the southern colonies differ from England?
1. Demand for labor of indentured servants in the South (indentured servants)
 2. Women came in much smaller numbers
 3. Importation of slaves from Africa

Terms to Know

Church of England (Anglican Church) Chesapeake Virginia Jamestown, 1607 Virginia Company Joint-stock company Virginia Charter "starving time" Captain John Smith Powhatans Pocahontas John Rolfe tobacco House of Burgesses Maryland Lord Baltimore Act of Toleration, 1639 "headright" system	indentured servants Anglo-Powhatan Wars Bacon's Rebellion, 1676 Governor Berkeley Nathaniel Bacon Carolinas "Restoration" colonies British West Indies Barbados Yamasee rice and indigo Charles Town North Carolina Georgia James Oglethorpe Middle Passage slave codes <i>mulattos</i> Stono Rebellion
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Essay Questions

Note: This sub-unit has been a high probability area for the AP exam. The new Curriculum Framework provides extensive coverage of the material contained herein. In the past 10 years, 4 questions have come wholly or in part from the material in this chapter. Below are some questions that will help you study the topics that have appeared on previous exams.

1. Compare and contrast the Chesapeake and Carolina regions. Were there actually two "Souths?"
2. What role did geography play in the development of the Southern colonies in the 17th century economically, socially, and politically?
3. Trace the development of indentured servitude and black slavery in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.
4. Analyze the relations between the governments and settlers of the southern colonies and Native Americans.

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