Chapter 3: The British Atlantic World, 1660-1750

I. The Politics of Empire, 1660–1713

    A. Imperial Expansion and Aristocratic Power

1. Charles II gave the Carolinas to his aristocratic friends and gave the Dutch colony New Netherland to his brother James, the Duke of York.
2. James took possession of New Netherland and named it New York.
3. The proprietors of the new colonies sought to create a traditional social order with a gentry class and an established Church of England.
4. The Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina (1669) prescribed a **manorial system** with nobility and serfs that were governed by a small number of powerful nobles.
5. Poor families in North Carolina refused to work on large manors and chose to live on modest farms.
6. South Carolinians imposed their own design of government and attacked Indian settlements to acquire slaves for trade.
7. South Carolina remained an ill-governed and violence-ridden frontier settlement until the 1720s.
8. Pennsylvania, designed as a refuge for Quakers persecuted in England, developed a pacifistic policy toward the Native Americans and became prosperous.
9. Quakers believed that people were imbued by God with an inner light of grace and understanding that opened salvation to everyone.
10. Penn's *Frame of Government* (1681) guaranteed religious freedom for all Christians and allowed all property-owning men to vote and hold office.
11. Ethnic diversity, pacifism, and freedom of conscience made Pennsylvania the most open and democratic of the Restoration colonies.

    B. From Mercantilism to Imperial Dominion

1. In the 1650s, the English government-imposed mercantilism, via the Navigation Acts, which regulated colonial commerce and manufacturing.
2. The Revenue Act of 1673 imposed a "plantation duty" on sugar and tobacco exports and created a staff of customs officials to enforce the mercantilist laws.
3. In commercial wars between 1652 and 1674, the English ended Dutch supremacy in the West African slave trade. The English also dominated North Atlantic commerce.
4. Many Americans resisted the mercantilist laws as burdensome and intrusive. To enforce the laws, the Lords of Trade pursued a punitive legal strategy: in 1679, they denied the claim of Massachusetts to New Hampshire's territory, instead creating New Hampshire as a separate colony. In 1684, they annulled Massachusetts' charter.
5. When James II succeeded to the throne, his insistence on the "divine right" of kings prompted English officials to create a centralized imperial system in America.
6. In 1686, the Connecticut and Rhode Island colonies were merged with those of Massachusetts Bay and Plymouth to form the Dominion of New England, a royal province.
7. Two years later, New York and New Jersey were added to the Dominion.
8. Sir Edmund Andros, governor of the Dominion, was empowered to abolish existing legislative assemblies and rule by decree.
9. Andros advocated worship in the Church of England, banned town meetings, and challenged land titles.

    C. The Glorious Revolution in England and America

1. In 1688, James's Catholic wife gave birth to a son, raising the prospect of a Catholic heir to the throne.
2. To forestall such an event, Protestant parliamentary leaders carried out a bloodless coup known as the "Glorious Revolution."
3. Mary, James's Protestant daughter by his first wife, and her husband, William of Orange, were enthroned.
4. Queen Mary II and William III agreed to rule as constitutional monarchs loyal to "the Protestant reformed religion" and accepted a bill of rights that limited royal prerogatives and increased personal liberties and parliamentary powers.
5. Parliamentary leaders relied on John Locke's *Two Treatises on Government* (1690) to justify their coup. Locke rejected divine-right theories of monarchical rule.

6. Locke's celebration of individual rights and representative government had a lasting influence in America.
7. The Glorious Revolution sparked colonial rebellions against royal governments in Massachusetts, Maryland, and New York.
8. In 1689, Andros was shipped back to England, and the new monarchs broke up the Dominion of New England.
9. The monarchs did not restore Puritan-dominated government; instead, they created a new royal colony of Massachusetts whose new charter granted religious freedom to members of the Church of England and gave the vote to all male property owners instead of Puritans only.
10. The uprising in Maryland had both political and religious causes; Protestants resented rising taxes and high fees imposed by wealthy, primarily Catholic proprietary officials.
11. In New York, the rebellion against the Dominion of New England began a decade of violent political conflict.
12. The uprisings in Boston and New York toppled the authoritarian Dominion of New England and won the restoration of internal self-government.
13. In England, the new constitutional monarchs promoted an empire based on commerce; Parliament created a new Board of Trade (1696) to supervise the American settlements, but it had little success. The overall result was a period of lax administration.

D. Imperial Wars and Native Peoples
1. Between 1689 and 1815, Britain and France fought wars for dominance of Western Europe.
2. As the wars spread to the Americas, they involved a number of Native American warriors armed with European weapons.
3. The War of the Spanish Succession (1702–1713) pitted Britain against France and Spain and prompted English settlers in the Carolinas to attack Spanish Florida.
4. So that they might help to protect their English settlement, whites in the Carolinas armed the Creek peoples to fend off French and Spanish attacks.
5. The Creeks took this opportunity to become the dominant tribe in the region.
6. Native Americans also played a central role in the fighting in the Northeast; aided by the French, the Abenakis and Mohawks took revenge on the Puritans, attacking settlements in Maine and Massachusetts. New Englanders responded by joining British forces in attacks on French strongholds in Nova Scotia and Quebec.
7. The New York frontier remained quiet because of the fur trade and the Iroquois' policy of "aggressive neutrality:" trading with the British and the French but refusing to fight for either side.
8. Britain used victories in Europe to win territorial and commercial concessions in the Americas in the Treaty of Utrecht (1713). Britain obtained Newfoundland, Acadia, and the Hudson Bay region of northern Canada from France and access to the western Indian trade. The treaty solidified Britain's supremacy and brought peace to North America.

II. The Imperial Slave Economy
A. The South Atlantic System
1. The South Atlantic system had its center in Brazil and the West Indies; sugar was its main product.
2. European merchants, investors, and planters ran the system in that they provided the organizational skill, ships, and money needed to grow and process sugar-cane, carry the refined sugar to market, and supply the plantations with European tools and equipment.
3. To provide labor for the sugar plantations, the British and French developed African-run slave-catching systems that extended far into the interior of Africa. They transported about 10,000 Africans per year to the Americas.
4. Beginning in the 1620s, Dutch merchants introduced sugar cultivation to English and French settlements in the West Indies, and a "sugar revolution" quickly transformed their economies.
5. Sugar was the most profitable crop in Europe and America.
6. As a result of the Navigation Acts, by 1750 re-exports of American sugar and tobacco accounted for half of all British exports.
7. The South Atlantic system brought wealth to the European economy, but it brought economic decline, political change, and human tragedy to West Africa and parts of East Africa.

B. Africa, Africans, and the Slave Trade
1. The slave trade changed West African society by promoting centralized states and military conquest by

kingdoms such as Barsally and Dahomey.

2. Many of these African kingdoms participated in the slave trade in order to gain wealth and power. Others, such as Benin, opposed the trade in male slaves for over a century.

3. In many African societies, class divisions hardened as people of noble birth enslaved and sold those of lesser status.

4. The imbalance of the sexes that resulted from slave trading allowed some African men to take several wives, changing the nature of marriage.

5. The Atlantic trade prompted harsher forms of slavery in Africa, eroding the dignity of human life there and in the Western Hemisphere.

6. African slaves who were forced to endure the **Middle Passage**, the ship journey from Africa to the Americas, suffered the bleakest fate; many were literally worked to death after reaching the sugar plantations.

C. Slavery in the Chesapeake and South Carolina

1. Planters in Virginia and Maryland took advantage of the increased British trade in slaves, importing thousands of slaves and creating a "slave society."

2. Slavery was increasingly defined in racial terms; in Virginia, virtually all resident Africans were declared slaves.

3. Living and working conditions in Maryland and Virginia allowed slaves to live relatively long lives.

4. Some tobacco planters tried to increase their workforce through reproduction, purchasing female slaves and encouraging large families.

5. By the mid-1700s, slaves constituted over 30 percent of the Chesapeake population, and over three-quarters of them were American born.

6. South Carolina slaves were much more oppressed. Growing rice required work amid pools of putrid water, and mosquito-borne epidemic diseases took thousands of African lives.

7. The slave population in South Carolina suffered many deaths and had few births; therefore, the importation of new slaves "re-Africanized" the black population.

D. An African American Community Emerges

1. Slaves initially did not regard one another as "Africans" or "blacks" but as members of a specific family, clan, or people.

2. The acquisition of a common language and a more equal gender ratio were prerequisites for the creation of an African American community.

3. As enslaved blacks forged a new identity in America, their lives continued to be shaped by their African past, influencing decorative motifs, housing design, and religious patterns.

E. Resistance and Accommodation

1. African creativity was limited because slaves were denied education and had few material goods or leisure time.

2. Slaves who resisted their rigorous work routine were punished with beatings, whippings, and mutilation, including amputation.

3. The extent of violence toward slaves depended on the size and the density of the slave population; a smaller slave population usually meant less violence, while predominantly African-populated colonies suffered more violence.

4. The Stono Rebellion (1739) in South Carolina was the largest slave uprising of the eighteenth century.

5. White militiamen killed many of the Stono rebels and dispersed the rest, preventing a general uprising.

F. William Byrd and the Rise of the Southern Gentry

1. As the southern colonies became slave societies, life changed for whites as well as blacks.

2. As men lived longer, patriarchy within the family reappeared.

3. The planter elite exercised authority over black slaves and yeomen – the American equivalent of oppressed peasants and serfs of Europe.

4. To prevent rebellion, the southern gentry paid attention to the concerns of middling and poor whites.

5. By 1770, the majority of English Chesapeake families owned a slave, giving them a stake in the exploitative labor system.

6. Taxes were gradually reduced for poorer whites, and poor yeomen and some tenants were allowed to vote.

7. In return, the planter elite expected the yeomen and tenants to elect them to office and defer to their power.

8. By the 1720s, the gentry took on the trappings of wealth, modeling themselves after the English aristocracy, and practicing **gentility**, a refined but elaborate lifestyle.

9. The profits of the South Atlantic system helped to form an increasingly well-educated, refined, and stable

ruling class.

G. The Northern Maritime Economy
    1. The South Atlantic system tied the whole British Empire together economically in part through **bills of exchange**, a form of credit offered by London merchants and used by planters to buy slaves from Africa, and to pay North American farmers and merchants.
    2. West Indian trade created the first American merchant fortunes and the first urban industries – in particular, shipbuilding and the distilling of rum from West Indies sugar.
    3. In the eighteenth century, the expansion of Atlantic commerce in lumber and shipbuilding fueled rapid growth in the North American interior as well as in seaport cities and coastal towns.
    4. A small group of wealthy landowners and merchants formed the top rank of the seaport society.
    5. Artisan and shopkeeper families formed the middle ranks of seaport society, and laboring men, women, and children formed the lowest ranks. Historians have tested this hypothesis by studying the **probate inventory** of selected individuals.
    6. Between 1660 and 1750, involvement in the South Atlantic system brought economic uncertainty as well as jobs to northern workers and farmers.

III. The New Politics of Empire, 1713–1750
A. The Rise of Colonial Assemblies
    1. The triumph of the South Atlantic system changed the politics of empire; the British were content to rule the colonies with a gentle hand, and the colonists were in a position to challenge the rules of the mercantilist system.
    2. In England, the Glorious Revolution strengthened the powers of the Commons at the expense of the crown.
    3. American representative assemblies also wished to limit the powers of the crown and gradually won control over taxation and local appointments.
    4. The rising power of the colonial assemblies created an elitist rather than a democratic political system.
    5. Neither elitist assemblies nor wealthy property owners could impose unpopular edicts on the people.
    6. Crowd actions were a regular part of political life in America and were used to enforce community values.
    7. By the 1750s, most colonies had representative political institutions that were responsive to popular pressure and increasingly immune from British control.

B. Salutary Neglect
    1. **Salutary neglect** – under which royal bureaucrats relaxed their supervision of internal colonial affairs, focusing instead on defense and trade – was a byproduct of the political system developed by Sir Robert Walpole, a British Whig.
    2. **Radical Whigs** argued that Walpole used patronage and bribery to create a strong Court Party.
    3. Landed gentlemen argued that Walpole's high taxes and bloated, incompetent royal bureaucracy threatened the liberties of the British people.
    4. Colonists, maintaining that royal governors likewise abused their patronage powers, tried to enhance the powers of provincial representative assemblies.

C. Protecting the Mercantile System
    1. Walpole's main concern was to protect British commercial interests in America from the Spanish and the French.
    2. Walpole arranged for Parliament to subsidize Georgia in order to protect the valuable rice colony of South Carolina.
    3. Resisting British expansion into Georgia and growing trade with Mesoamerica, Spanish naval forces sparked the War of Jenkins's Ear in 1739.
    4. Walpole used this provocation to launch a predatory, but largely unsuccessful, war against Spain's American Empire.
    5. The War of Jenkins's Ear became a part of the War of Austrian Succession (1740–1749), bringing a new threat from France.
    6. The Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle (1748) returned the French naval fortress of Louisbourg to France after its capture by New England militiamen, but the treaty also reaffirmed British military superiority over Spain, effectively giving Georgia to the British.

D. The American Economic Challenge
    1. Colonial merchants took advantage of a loophole in the Navigation Acts that allowed Americans to own ships

and transport goods. The loophole allowed colonists to cut dramatically into commerce in the Atlantic.

2. The Molasses Act of 1733 placed a high tariff on imports of French molasses to make British molasses competitive, but sugar prices rose in the late 1730s, so the act was not enforced.

3. The Currency Act (1751) prevented colonies from establishing new **land banks** and prohibited the use of public currency to pay private debts. This was in response to abuse of the land bank system by some colonial assemblies that issued too much paper currency and then required merchants to accept the worthless paper as legal tender.

4. In the 1740s, British officials vowed to replace salutary neglect with rigorous imperial control.