Slavery in the Chesapeake

GOALS

➢ To explain why the English displayed no compunction about enslaving Africans.
➢ To make clear the advantages that slavery afforded Chesapeake planters over alternative forms of bound labor that developed in the region such as indentured servitude.
➢ To explain why, given its recognized advantages, the growth of slavery in the Chesapeake occurred so slowly.
➢ To examine patterns of slave ownership in the Chesapeake and how they changed over time.
➢ To provide some insight into the diversity of Chesapeake slavery.
➢ To discuss the long-term consequences of slavery’s development in the region.
Slavery in the Chesapeake

FROM THE FORUM

➢ Were those “twenty odd negroes” who came to Jamestown in 1607 slaves or indentured servants?

➢ What was the difference between slavery and indentured servitude?
John Coombs
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Hampden-Sydney College
Specialist in the history of the early Chesapeake, especially colonial Virginia.

Co-editor with Douglas Bradburn:
*Early Modern Virginia: Reconsidering the Old Dominion* (2011)
A collection of essays including “Beyond the Origins Debate: Rethinking the Rise of Virginia Slavery.”

Why does the story of Chesapeake slavery matter?

- Critical in the rise of an established planter elite that provided many of the most important early leaders of the United States such as George Washington, Richard Henry Lee, George Mason, James Madison, and Thomas Jefferson.

- The regional variety of slave society that emerged in the Chesapeake exerted a profound influence over the development of African-American culture in the southern United States.
The development of Chesapeake slavery was shaped by events and developments in the broader Atlantic world.

- Political and institutional change in England and the rest of Great Britain.
- Shifting geopolitical situation in Europe.
- Economic development of the West Indies.
- Expansion of European activity along the coast of west and west-central Africa.
- Evolving geopolitical situation in Africa and the growth of slavery and slave trading.
The importance of recognizing the region’s position within the transatlantic slave trade.

- Chesapeake was a marginal market for transatlantic slave traders.
- Throughout the seventeenth century, the scarcity of direct deliveries rendered it difficult for Virginians and Marylanders to obtain slaves.
- Access perhaps even more important than price in shaping patterns of slave ownership.
Chesapeake Bay, 1681
Subregions of the Colonial Chesapeake
From an account of John Hawkin’s first voyage to Africa:

And being amongst other particulars assured, that Negros were very good merchandise in Hispaniola, and that [a] store of Negros might easily bee had upon the coast of Guinea, resolved with himselfe to make triall thereof, and communicated that devise with his worshipfull friendes of London: namely with Sir Lionell Ducket, Sir Thomas Lodge, M. Gunson his father in law, Sir William Winter, M. Bromfield, and others. All which persons liked so well of his intention, that they became liberall contributers and adventurers in the action.

**Discussion Question**

- What does Hawkins’s account of his slave trading voyage to Sierra Leone reveal about how the English perceived Africans in the middle decades of the sixteenth century?
Anglo-Spanish War (1585-1604)

- Connected with Europe’s “Age of Religious Wars”
- Preceded by a prolonged “Cold War” between England and Spain between 1568 and 1584
- Begins with the signing of a formal treaty of alliance (Treaty of Nonsuch) in 1585 between England and the rebellious United Provinces
- Annual average of around 5,000 English and Welsh troops deployed to the Low Countries to fight alongside the Dutch during the conflict
- English naval strength largely directed to defending the home islands from the threat of invasion; Armadas sent in 1588, 1596-97, and 1599
- An average of between 100 and 200 English privateers sent against Spanish and Portuguese shipping each year; Caribbean most profitable hunting ground for these corsairs
- Ends with Treaty of London, 1604
Elizabethan Precedents (1601)

From the account of Captain William Parker’s 1601 Caribbean Cruise:

This done I proceeded on my journey, sayling directly for Cape de la Vela, and there meeting with a Portugall shippe of two hundred and fiftie tuns laden with three hundred and seventie Negros, brought from Congo or Angola, and going to Cartagena with little resistance I tooke the same. And sayling along with my prize Westward, not able to double the Iles, called Las Cabecas, I was driven farre downe to the Southward into the Gulfe of Acle, in Spanish called Eusenada de Acle, where we landed all our Portugals and Negros, keeping only the Captaine which afterward paid me five hundred pounds for his owne and their ransomes.

Discussion Questions

- How important was the acquisition of slaves to corsair captains such as Newport and Parker?
- To what extent did their perceptions of Africans differ from those of Hawkins a generation earlier?
Elizabethan Precedents (1601)

Royal Proclamation Deporting Blacks from the Kingdom:

Whereas the Queen’s Majesty, tendering the good and welfare of her own natural subjects, greatly distressed in these hard times of dearth, is highly discontented to understand the great Numbers of Negroes and blackamoors which (as she has been informed) are carried into this realm since the troubles between her highness and the King of Spain; who are fostered and powered here, to the great annoyance of her own liege people that which co[vet] the relief which these people consume, as also for that most of them are infidels having no understanding of Christ or his Gospels.

Discussion Questions

- How familiar were ordinary Englishmen with Africans by the end of Queen Elizabeth’s reign?
- What attributes distinguished “Blackamores” from other inhabitants of the kingdom?
Changes in English Foreign Policy under James I (r. 1603-1625)

- Embraces the Latin phrase “Beati Pacifici” as a personal motto
- Maintains support for the Dutch rebels until the twelve-year truce between Spain and the United Provinces (1609-1621); average of 5,400 English volunteers were employed abroad as mercenaries in France and the Low Countries between 1605 and 1609
- Increasingly adopts a pro-Spanish policy following the deaths of Henry, Prince of Wales and Secretary Sir Robert Cecil in 1612, culminating in his pursuit of the so-called “Spanish Match” between 1616 and 1624
- Through numerous proclamations, takes a hard-line attitude toward piracy or any activity that might potentially offend Spain
- Resists becoming involved in the Thirty Years’ War (1618-1648) despite the Hapsburg invasion of the Palatinate, ruled by his son-in-law Frederick
John Rolfe to Sir Edwyn Sandys, January, 1620:

About the latter end of August, a Dutch man of Warr of the burden of 160 tunes arrived at Point-Comfort, the commando’s name Capt. Jope, his Pilott for the West Indies one M'r Marmaduke an Englishman. They mett wth the Trer. in the West Indyes, and determyned to hold consort shipp hetherward, but in their passage lost one the other. He brought not any thing but 20. and odd Negroes, wch the Goveno'r and Cape Marchant bought for victualle (whereof he was in greate need as he pretended) at the best and easiest rate they could. He hadd a lardge and ample Comyssion from his Excellency to range and to take purchase in the West Indyes.

Discussion Questions

- How do John Rolfe’s remarks regarding the circumstances surrounding the arrival of the “20. and odd” compare with other accounts of their capture and delivery?
- Why was the incident so controversial at the time?
Bermuda Governor Nathaniel Butler to Sir Nathaniel Rich, 1621:

If it were not for the accidental Negroes (a fortune cast upon my selfe by all due), I wer not able to rayse one pound of Tobacco this yeare for the defrayeinge of any publicke worck. Cap: Kendall pretendeth an interest by waye of gyft to 14 of them and I have give waye unto it untill I heare from the Company. But the truth is, that it wer fitter that he wer rewarded (if he have deserved any) some other waye. For thses Slaves are the most proper and cheape instruments for this plantation that can be, and not safe to be any wher but under the Governours eye.
Key Episodes

The development of the English transatlantic slave trade:

- Begins around 1640 in response to the sugar boom on Barbados
- Largely directed toward the Caribbean islands as sugar cultivation spreads to the Leewards and Jamaica over the second half of the seventeenth century
- Placed under monopoly control of the Company of Royal Adventurers in 1660; reorganized as the Royal African Company in 1672
- Monopoly weakened by the 1688 Glorious Revolution
- Trade opened up to all Englishmen by Parliament’s passage of the 1698 Africa Act
The declaration of H.RH. James Duke of York and Albany, Governor, and the rest of the Royal African Company of England, to all his Majesty's subjects, especially to those inhabiting the plantations in America. That their request of Fras. Lord Willoughby, Lt.-Gov. of the Caribbee Islands, to publish their orders to the company's factors to sell negroes at £17 per head found not that good acceptance by the planters as was hoped for. The Royal African Company do resolve and declare they will deliver, upon the conditions within named, negroes from 12 to 40 years old at the following prices, at Barbadoes, £15 per head; Leeward Isles, £16; Jamaica. £17; and Virginia, £18 per head.
Acting Governor Edmund Jennings to the Board of Trade:

…before the year 1680 what negros were brought to Virginia were imported generally from Barbados for it was very rare to have a Negro ship come to this Country directly from Africa since that time, and before the year 1698, the Trade of Negros became more frequent, tho not in any proportion to what it hath been of late, durjng which the Affrican Company sent several Ships and others by their Licence (as I have been informed) having bought their Slaves of the Company brought them in hither for Sale, Among which I remember the late Alderman Jeffrys and Sr Jeffry Jeffrys were principally concerned…
Sources of Slaves for Virginia (1640-ca.1700)

- Intercolonial trade with the Caribbean
- Transatlantic trade via the Caribbean
- Contracted direct shipments from Africa arranged by English tobacco merchants
## Black Headright Distribution in Virginia Land Certificates (1671-1699)

### Number of black headrights claimed (% of total)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subregion</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Officeholders</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Ordinary Planters</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sweet-Scented</td>
<td>783</td>
<td>585 (75)</td>
<td></td>
<td>198 (25)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oronoco</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>24 (96)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peripheral</td>
<td>562</td>
<td>364 (65)</td>
<td></td>
<td>198 (35)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Subregions</td>
<td>1367</td>
<td>973 (71)</td>
<td></td>
<td>394 (29)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Data from Virginia Black Headright Files*
# Slave Ownership Trends in Virginia Officeholder Inventories (1650-1700)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decade</th>
<th>No. officeholder inventories with labor&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>% officeholders with slaves&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>% officeholders’ bound laborers enslaved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1651-60</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>47.1</td>
<td>32.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1661-70</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>53.8</td>
<td>48.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1671-80</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>89.5</td>
<td>54.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1681-90</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>69.6</td>
<td>76.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1691-1700</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>91.1</td>
<td>90.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup> Source: Data from Virginia Probate Files
From the will of Colonel Richard Lee I (1664)

Item. To my wife, during, her life, I give the plantation whereon I now dwell, ten English servants, five negroes, 3 men and 2 women, 20 sows and corn proportionable to the servants; the said negroes I give to her during her widowhood and no longer, and then presently to return to those of the five youngest children, also the plantation Mocke Nock.

Item. I give to my son John and his heirs forever, when he comes to the age of 18 years, all my land and plantation at Machotick, all the stock of cattle and hogs thereupon, 10 negroes, viz., five men and five women, and 10 English servants for their times, all the corn that shall be found there, all tools, household stuff, and utensils thereupon.

Item. To Richard and his heirs forever, when he come to the age aforesaid, I give my Plantation called Paradise, with all my servants thereupon, all my stock of cattle and hogs, all working dung tools and utensils, and corn that shall be found thereupon to be for the provision of the said servants.

Item. To Francis and his heirs forever, when he comes to the age aforesaid, I give the Pipe-makers Neck and the War Captains Neck, with five negroes, three men and two women., and 10 English servants. and the stock of cattle and hogs, corn, and tools, and utensils upon the said necks.

Discussion Question

➢ What was Lee trying to accomplish by dividing his estate in the manner he did?
From the will of Surry County justice Robert Caufield (1692)

I give & bequeath to my niece, the wife of James Bruton, and the heirs of her body forever all yt my plantation or tract of land by me purchased of Joseph Rogers scituate in the parrish and County aforesd and commonly called Pokasink And I likewise give to my said niece my two Negroes on the sd plantation called Jack and Jude to her & to the heires of her body forever.

Discussion Question

- In what way does the wording of Caufield’s bequest to his niece differ from those made by Richard Lee to his wife and children?
William Fitzhugh to Ralph Smith (1686)

The Plantation where I now live contains a thousand Acres, at least 700 Acres of it being rich thicket, the remainder good hearty plantable land, without any waste either by Marshes or great Swamps the Commodiousness, conveniency, & pleasantness your self well knows, upon it there is three Quarters well furnished, with all necessary houses, ground & fencing, together with a choice crew of Negros at each plantation, most of them this Country born, the remainder as likely as most in Virginia, there being twenty nine in all, with stocks of cattle & hogs at each Quarter… & the Negroes increase being all young, &: a considerable parcel of breeders, will keep that Stock good for ever.

Discussion Question

- How did ownership of slaves figure in the ambitions of wealthier Chesapeake planters?
Law of Slavery (December 1662)

Negro women's children to serve according to the condition of the mother:

Whereas some doubts have arisen whether children got by any Englishman upon a negro woman should be slave or free, be it therefore enacted and declared by this present grand assembly, that all children borne in this country shall be held bond or free only according to the condition of the mother, and that if any Christian shall commit fornication with a negro man or woman, he or she so offending shall pay double the fine imposed by the former act.
An act declaring that baptism of slaves doth not exempt them from bondage:

Whereas some doubts have arisen whether children that are slaves by birth, and by the charity and piety of their owners made pertakers of the blessed sacrament of baptism, should by virtue of their baptism be made free; It is enacted and declared by this grand assembly, and the authority thereof, that the conferring of baptism doth not alter the condition of the person as to his bondage or freedome; that diverse masters, freed from this doubt, may more carefully endeavour the propagation of christianity by permitting children, though slaves, or those of greater growth if capable to be admitted to that sacrament.
An act about the casual killing of slaves:

Whereas the only law in force for the punishment of refractory servants resisting their master, mistris, or overseer cannot be inflicted upon negroes, nor the obstinacy of many of them by other than violent means suppressed, be it enacted and declared by this grand assembly, if any slave resist his master (or other by his masters order correcting him) and by the extremity of the correction should chance to die, that his death shall not be accounted felony but the master (or that other person appointed by the master to punish him) be acquit from molestation, since it cannot be presumed that prepensed malice (which alone makes murder felony) should induce any man to destroy his owne estate.
Law of Slavery (September 1672)

An act for the apprehension and suppression of runaways, negroes and slaves:

…that if any negro, molatto, Indian slave, or servant for life, runaway and shalbe persued by warrant or hue and crye, it shall and may be lawfull for any person who shall endeavour to take them, upon the resistance of such negroe, mollatto, Indian slave, or servant for life, to kill or wound him or them soe resisting; Provided alwayes, and it is the true intent and meaning hereof, that such negroe, mollatto, Indian slave, or servant for life, be named and described in the hue and crye which is alsoe to be signed by the master or owner of the said runaway. And if it happen that such negroe, mollatto, Indian slave, or servant for life doe dye of any wound in such their resistance received the master or owner of such shall receive satisfaction from the publique for his negroe, mollatto, Indian slave, or servant for life, soe killed or dyeing of such wounds.

Discussion Question

➢ What were the problems and concerns that Virginia’s planter elite sought to ameliorate with the various laws they passed to govern the enslaved population?
Coalescence of an Institution

- Clearly established slavery as an hereditary condition even in cases of inter-racial sexual pairing
- Prevented the enslaved from challenging their status on the basis of Christian baptism
- Provided masters with almost unlimited authority over their enslaved bondsmen and bondswomen
- Committed the government to policing the privately-owned enslaved population
### Probate Inventories: Maj. Robert Beverley, 1687

#### Att Bald Eagle Neck Quarter, George Keeble Overseer, 1687

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One Negro Man Named Peter</td>
<td>27.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One Negro woman Named, Moll</td>
<td>26.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One Negro woman Named Joan</td>
<td>18.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One Negro woman Named Betty</td>
<td>20.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One Negro woman Named Betty and a sucking child</td>
<td>25.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One Boy Named Coffee</td>
<td>5.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One Boy Named Tim B---ton</td>
<td>10.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**English Servants**

John Pearse two yeares and four

**Months to Serve**

9.  

### Discussion Question

- What information about the individual workers at this quarter can we glean from this listing?
- What can such documents tell us about the shift from servitude to slavery and the lives of the enslaved?
Estimates of Net Slave Migration from the Former Colonial South (1790-1829)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>1790-1799</th>
<th>1800-1809</th>
<th>1810-1819</th>
<th>1820-1829</th>
<th>1790-1829</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>-22,767</td>
<td>-41,097</td>
<td>-75,562</td>
<td>-76,157</td>
<td>-215,583</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maryland</td>
<td>-22,221</td>
<td>-19,960</td>
<td>-33,070</td>
<td>-32,795</td>
<td>-108,046</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Carolina</td>
<td>+3,671</td>
<td>-407</td>
<td>-13,361</td>
<td>-20,113</td>
<td>-30,210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Carolina</td>
<td>+4,435</td>
<td>+6,474</td>
<td>+1,925</td>
<td>-20,517</td>
<td>-7,683</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>+6,095</td>
<td>+11,231</td>
<td>+10,713</td>
<td>+18,324</td>
<td>+46,363</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colonial South Total</td>
<td>-30,787</td>
<td>-43,759</td>
<td>-109,355</td>
<td>-131,258</td>
<td>-315,159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chesapeake Total</td>
<td>-44,988</td>
<td>-61,057</td>
<td>-108,632</td>
<td>-108,952</td>
<td>-323,629</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chesapeake %</td>
<td>[100]</td>
<td>99.3</td>
<td>89.0</td>
<td>72.8</td>
<td>[100]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Michael Tadman, *Speculators and Slaves: Masters, Traders, and Slaves in the Old South* (Madison, WI, 1989), 12
Thank you.

Final slide