Chapter 4 Outline - American Society Transformed, 1720–1770

- I. Introduction

  After 1720, the American colonies expanded to cover most of the territory between the Atlantic coast and the Appalachian Mountains. Also, the population came to include a larger number of non-English people and a variety of ethnic groups and religious sects.

- II. Geographic Expansion and Ethnic Diversity

  - A. Spanish and French Territorial Expansion

    Spanish and French territory expanded over broader regions of North America than the British, although their populations were smaller. Nevertheless, Spanish and French settlements had an immense impact on the native peoples of the regions.

  - B. France and Mississippi

    French posts up and down the Mississippi River served as the "glue" of New France. French commerce extended from Quebec in the north to New Orleans in the south, and included trade in furs, hides, guns, and grain.

  - C. Involuntary Migrants from Africa

    About 260,000 Africans, taken from many different ethnic groups and regions in Africa, had been imported into England's mainland colonies by 1775.

    Because of natural increase, American-born people of African descent eventually dominated the enslaved population numerically.

  - D. Newcomers from Europe

    Some 500,000 Europeans moved to North America during the

eighteenth century, with most arriving after 1730.

- E. Scots-Irish, Scots, and Germans

  One of the largest groups of immigrants—about 150,000—came from Ireland and Scotland. They were joined by about 85,000 Germans.

- F. Maintaining Ethnic and Religious Identities

  By 1775, half of the population south of New England was of non-English stock. Assimilation of these migrants into Anglo-American culture depended on patterns of settlement, the size of the group, and the strength of the migrants' ties to their cultural roots.

  To retain power, the English elites sometimes fostered antagonism among ethnic groups. However, in the 1770s the elites realized they needed the support of non-English Americans in their rebellion against Great Britain.

- III. Economic Growth and Development in British America

  - A. Commerce and Manufacturing

    Large populations made British colonies economically stable, while the widely scattered people of the French and Spanish colonies left them weak and vulnerable and often dependent on foreign colonies for goods.

    Population growth in the British colonies in North America generated an ever-increasing demand for goods and services. Small-scale colonial manufacturing developed as did a network of internal trade.

  - B. Wealth and Poverty

    Generally, the American economy improved, which lead to a better standard of living for many people. Economic stratification, on the other hand, also shaped social and economic structures.

New immigrants usually faced fewer opportunities for advancement than had the earliest arrivals. Although rural poverty remained limited, a poor class did begin to emerge in urban areas.

- C. Regional Economies

Varied economies had developed in the British colonies by the mid-eighteenth century. New England exported timber and fish to the Caribbean; the Chesapeake produced wheat, corn, and tobacco; and South Carolina's rice and indigo harvests were shipped directly to continental Europe. Georgia eventually developed similarly to South Carolina.

- IV. Colonial Cultures

  - A. Genteel Culture

  Well-to-do Americans formed the core of a genteel elite that constructed a culture different from that of the seventeenth century and from that of ordinary colonists in the eighteenth century.

  Men from wealthy families prided themselves on their level of education and their intellectual connections to Europe.

  - B. The Enlightenment

  In the eighteenth century, Europeans' fascination with natural law led to an emphasis on acquiring knowledge through reason. This movement—known as the Enlightenment—affected American culture and politics, particularly among the elite.

  John Locke and other Enlightenment philosophers advanced the theory that governments were created by men and existed for the good of the people. A ruler who did not fulfill his contract with the people could be ousted from power.

  - C. Oral Cultures

The majority of Anglo-Americans could not read, and conversation provided the primary means of communication. Consequently, the exchange of information remained slow and restricted.

The culture of ordinary colonists tended to be oral, communal, and localized.

- o D. Religious and Civic Rituals

Many cultural identities grew out of public rituals, including attendance at church. These gatherings reinforced local attitudes, morés, and hierarchies.

Important public rituals included church festivals, militia musters, and, especially in the Chesapeake, court days and political events.

- o E. Rituals of Consumption

The growth of prosperity led to shopping and conspicuous consumption.

- o F. Tea and Madeira

Tea drinking was an important consumption ritual.

Madeira became the favorite drink of the elite, and elaborate ceremony accompanied its consumption.

- o G. Rituals on the "Middle Ground"

Relations with Indians led to innovative rituals, including those relating to trade, crimes, and punishment.

- V. Colonial Families

- o A. Indian and Mixed-Race Families

Pressure from European settlers forced most Indians to change their

traditional marriage views and roles.

Sexual liaisons occurred among European men and Indian women, producing a mixed-race population. The offspring of mixed unions were generally accepted in New France and in the Anglo-American backcountry, but they were considered degraded individuals in the Spanish Borderlands.

- B. European American Families

  In these more stable households, men held dominion over family external affairs but women ruled the home.

- C. African American Families

  The shape of African Americans' family lives were determined by the setting in which African Americans lived.

- D. Forms of Resistance

  Since slavery existed in all of the English colonies, slaves had few options if they considered running away. The extended family helped African Americans deal with the uncertainties associated with the institution of slavery, and slave families struggled to gain some sort of autonomy.

- E. City Life

  Urban dwellers had much more contact with the outside world than their rural counterparts, but sometimes the benefits of city life were overshadowed by epidemics.

- VI. Politics: Stability and Crisis in British America

- A. Colonial Assemblies

  American political leaders sought to increase the powers of elected assemblies relative to the powers of the governors and other appointed

officials.

By the middle of the century, Americans expressed a belief in balanced government, and they viewed assemblies as the people's protectors.

Assemblymen saw themselves as acting defensively to protect colonists' liberties, but they rarely responded to the concerns of the poor.

- B. Slave Rebellions in South Carolina and New York

  The first in a series of colonial crises occurred with the Stono Rebellion in South Carolina in 1739, an uprising that led to stiffer laws regarding slaves throughout British America.

  News of the Stono Rebellion was one factor that led to fears in New York of a conspiracy to foment a slave insurrection.

- C. Rioters and Regulators

  Growing competition for good farmland resulted in a number of violent disputes in New Jersey and along the Hudson River.

  In the Carolinas, frontier people's unhappiness with the colonial governments led to violence in the 1760s and 1770s.

- VII. A Crisis in Anglo-American Religion

  - A. George Whitefield

    A religious revival movement – the Great Awakening – spread throughout the colonies between the 1730s and the 1760s. Beginning in New England, and furthered by the preaching of Jonathan Edwards, it was actually George Whitefield, an Anglican minister from England, who played the dominant role in spreading the excitement to all corners of the colonies.

- B. Impact of the Awakening

  Many congregations splintered as a result of the Awakening, but the revival also led to more toleration of religious diversity.

  By challenging traditional modes of thought, the Awakening introduced a strain of egalitarianism to the colonies.

- C. Virginia Baptists

  These religious dissenters challenged the status quo in Virginia by condemning the lifestyle of the gentry and by preaching equality of races in the eyes of the church.