Chapter 3: PATTERNS OF SOCIETY
Objectives:

- We will examine the plantation culture and slavery in the Southern Colonies.
- We will examine the New England Colonies and the witchcraft incidents.
- We will examine the colonial cities.
Deu_30:19  I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live:
In the Colonies:
- The abundance of land
- People were scarce
- The aristocracy relied less on land ownership.
- And more on control of a substantial workforce
- The elite was less powerful and secure than in England.
- It allowed for opportunities in America for social mobility both up and down.
The Plantation:

- The plantation defined a distinctive way of life for many white and black southerners that would survive, in varying forms until the Civil War.
- The first plantations were in the early settlements of Virginia and Maryland fueled by Tobacco.
- Some plantations were huge, like the Maryland plantation of Charles Carroll of Carrollton, reputedly the wealthiest man in the colonies covered 40,000 acres and contained 285 slaves,
The Plantation:

• Most plantations were small estates.
• The economy of the plantation was often unstable and dependent on the demand from markets.
The Plantation:

- Plantations were sometimes far from cities and towns.
- Cities and towns were few in the South.
- Plantations tended to be self-contained communities.
- It usually consisted of a Great house of the Planter.
- The service buildings, barns, and the cabins for slaves.
The Plantation:

• Wealthy planters had their own mini town with a school (white children only) a chapel, and large population.

• Small planters lived more modestly.

• The wives of plantation owners could rely on servants for chores and had more time to devote for their husbands and children.
The Plantation:

- Planters had frequent illicit relationships with female African slaves.
- Southern Society was highly stratified.
- Great landowners controlled not only the lives of those who worked in their own plantations,
- But wealthy planters shaped the livelihoods of small farmers, who had to depend on them to market crops and receive credit.
The Plantation:

- Small farm owners had few or no slaves and were the majority of the Southern Agricultural population.
- These small farmers were dependent on the large planters because they could not compete with them.
Plantation Slavery.

- Africans developed their own society and culture in the plantation.
- Although not encouraging formal marriages,
- Africans developed an elaborate family structure and attempted to construct nuclear families and they managed at times to build stable households.
- But there was constant threat of being separated because masters could often sell them to other planters.
Plantation Slavery.

- There was an emphasis in extended kinship networks even creating surrogate relatives for those who were separated from their own languages.
- They developed their own dialects with hybrid of both African and English.
- They also developed a distinct slave religion that blended Christianity with African folklore.
Plantation Slavery.

- Nevertheless slave society relied on white society.
- African house servants lived in greater luxury but were isolated from their own community and were watched constantly by their white masters.
- Black women were often subjugated to unwanted advances that resulted in mulatto children.
- Some slaves were treated with genuine affection while others were treated with brutality.
Plantation Slavery.

- Most slaves, male and female worked as field hands.
- Some slaves learned trade and were skilled craftsmen, some were able to buy their freedom and a small free black population were living in southern cities by the time of the Revolution.
There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. Galatians 3:28-29
Rebellion and Resistance

• One was the Stono Rebellion in South Carolina in 1739 where about 100 Africans rose up seized weapons and killed several whites and attempted to escape south to Florida.

• Whites quickly crushed the uprising and executed most participants.

• The most frequent form of resistance was to run away.
The Puritan Community

- A very different form of community emerged in Puritan New England but one that was one distinctively American.
- Each settlement drew up a “covenant” among its members.
- Binding all residents in a religious and social commitment to unity and harmony.
- Some such settlements consisted of people who had immigrated to America together (occasionally entire Puritan congregations who had traveled to the New World as a group).
The Puritan Community

• When a town was established it was generally able to run its own affairs with little interference from the colonial government.
• Residents held a yearly “town meeting” to decide important questions and to choose a group of “selectmen,” who governed until the next meeting.
• But even among them, important social distinction remained, the most crucial of which was membership in the church.
The Puritan Community

- Only those residents who could give evidence of grace, of being among the elect (the visible saints) confident of salvation as result of a conversion experience, were admitted to full membership.
- Residents who had not experienced “conversion” could participate in the church through what was known as the “halfway covenant.”
The Puritan Community

- As the years passed and the communities grew, the tight knit social structure of the Puritans experience strains.
- This was partly because of the increasing commercialization of New England Society.
- But also because of population growth.
The Puritan Community

- As towns grew larger, residents tended to cultivate lands, farther and farther from the community center.
- Some farmers moved out of the town center to be nearer their lands and thus began to find themselves far away from the church.
- Outlying residents would often apply for permission to build a church of their own, which was usually the first step toward creation of a new town.
- Such applications were frequently the occasion for bitter quarrels between original townspeople and those who proposed to break away.
The Puritan Community

• The dispersion of communities was a result of the practice of distributing land through the patriarchal family structure.

• In the first generations, fathers generally controlled enough land to satisfy the needs of all their sons.
The Puritan Community

- Even within the family economic necessity often undermined the patriarchal model in Puritan society.
- It was not only the sons who needed their fathers (as a source of land and wealth).
- Fathers needed their sons as well as their wives and daughters as a source of labor to keep the farm and the household functioning.
The Puritan Community

• In theory men had nearly dictatorial control over their wives and children.
• In reality relationships were more contractual, with the authority of husbands and fathers limited by economic necessity (and of course, bonds of affection).
The Witch Craft Phenomenon:

- Late seventeenth century, growth, diversity had begun to undermine the cohesiveness of many New England communities.
- One example is the widespread hysteria in the 1680s and 1690s over supposed witchcraft in New England.
The Witch Craft Phenomenon:

• Most famous in Salem, Massachusetts, where adolescent girls began to exhibit strange behavior and leveled accusations of witchcraft against several West Indian Servants steeped in Voodoo lore.

• More than a hundred people (most of them women) were accused of witchcraft.
The Witch Craft Phenomenon:

• As the crisis in Salem grew, accusations shifted from marginal women like the West Indians to more prominent and substantial people.
• Nineteen residents of Salem were put to death before the trial ended in 1692;
• The girls who had been original accusers later recanted and admitted that they had made up the story.
• Salem was one of many in New England in the 1690s that had witchcraft hysteria.
The Witch Craft Phenomenon:

- Most accused witches were middle-ages women often widowed, with few or no children.
- Many accused witches were of low social positions, were often involved in domestic conflicts, had frequently been accused of other crimes.
- They were considered abrasive by their neighbors.
The Witch Craft Phenomenon:

- Others were women through inheritance or enterprise, had come into possession of substantial land and property on their own and hence also challenged the gender norms of the community.
The Witch Craft Phenomenon:

• Puritan society had little tolerance for “independent” women.
• Many “witches were women who were not securely lodged within a male-dominated family structure (and that many seemed openly to defy the passive, submissive norms society had created)
• Tensions over gender roles may have played a substantial role in generating the crisis.
The Witch Craft Phenomenon:

- Witchcraft controversies were a reflection of the highly religious character of these societies.
- New Englanders believed in the power of Satan and his ability to assert his power in the world.
- It was a common feature of Puritan religious conviction.
The Witch Craft Phenomenon:

• What social groups or cultures are seen as a threat today?
“And many that believed came, and confessed, and shewed their deeds. Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.”
Acts 19:18-20
CITIES:

- Cities were equivalent of a modern small town.
- By 1770s, the two largest ports Philadelphia and New York had populations of 28,000 and 25,000 respectively, which made them larger than most English centers.
The colonial cities served as trading centers of farmers of their regions and as marts for international trade.

There was clear disparities between wealth in the cities.

Wealthy merchants were also living side by side with minor tradesmen, workers, and indigents who lived in crowded and often filthy conditions.

Social distinctions were real and visible.
CITIES:

• Cities were also center of much of what industry there was in the colonies, such as ironworks and distilleries for turning imported molasses into exportable rum.

• Location of the most advanced schools, and most sophisticated cultural activities, and shops were imported goods could be bought.

• In addition, there were communities with urban social problems.

• (e.g., crime, Vice, pollution, epidemics, traffic).
CITIES:

• Unlike smaller towns, cities were required to establish elaborate governments.
• Fire Department and Constables were established.
• Colonial cities became places where new ideas would circulate and be discussed.
• Because there were printers, it was possible to have regular newspapers.
• Books and other publications from abroad introduced new intellectual influences.
• Cities of would the catalyst for the American Revolution.
• Taverns and coffee houses is where people could debate the issues of the day.
New England for all its belief in community and liberty, was far from an equal society.

“Some must be rich and poor,” John Winthrop wrote.

Elites were given the best seats in their churches and had the most influence over the parish.

Men had more power than women.

Servants had few rights.

The church itself taught that inequality reflected God’s intention.

In cities like Boston the majority were wealthy, because they were most likely to move to cities and participate in commerce.
“My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?” James 2:1-4