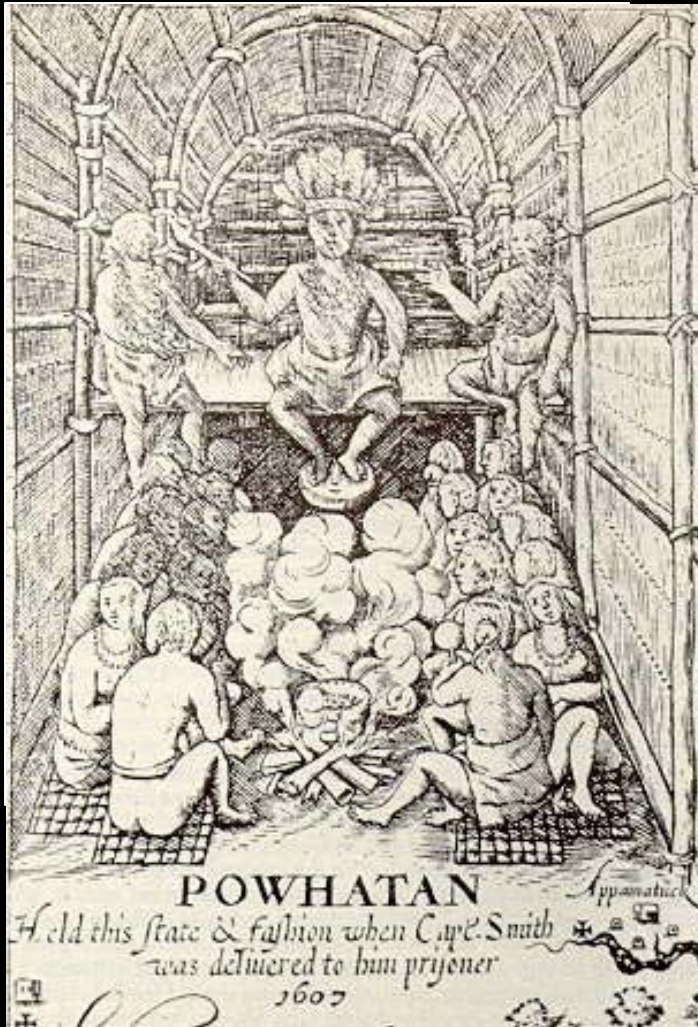




**PATRIARCHS IN THE
WILDERNESS:
THE 17TH-CENTURY ORIGINS
OF THE SOUTH**

HISTORY 1100.3, 14-19 SEPT. 2006

I. ENGLISH VS. SPANISH COLONIZATION



A. Similarities (applying mostly to VA)

- 1. Initially colonization was about money (keeping up with the Spanish) and delegated to sub-contractors
 - Joint-stock companies such as the Virginia Company of London (founded 1606), needing quick profits
 - John Smith as would-be English conquistador
- 2. Indians confronted by the Virginia colonists, the Powhatans, were by far the most patriarchal & centralized of all the Eastern Woodlands peoples.
 - Through military conquests, trade, & plural marriage, Powhatan had made himself paramount chief of a network of villages in VA Tidewater region.
 - Appointed sub-chiefs called *werowances* or *werowansquas*, ideally children of one his 100 wives, to run tributary villages.

God's PROMISE

TO HIS

Plantations :

2 SAM. 7. 10.

*Moreover I will appoint a place for my People Israel, and I will
PLANT them, that they may dwell in a place of their
OWN, and MOVE NO MORE.*

As it was Delivered in a

S E R M O N

By JOHN COTTON, B. D. and Preacher of God's Word
in Boston.

*Pfal. 22. 27, 30, 31. All the ends of the World shall remember and
turn unto the Lord, and all the kindreds of the Nations shall worship,
before thee.*

*A seed shall serve him, it shall be accounted to the Lord for a Genera-
tion.*

*They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a People that shall
be born, that he hath done this.*

*London, Printed by William Jones for John Bellamy, and are
to be sold at the three Golden Lyons by the Royal Ex-
change, 1634.*

*Reprinted at Boston in New-England, by Samuel Green; and
are to be sold by John Usher. Anno. 1686.*

I. ENGLISH SPANISH COLONIZATION

B. Differences

- 1. A century later, with less of a religious element but (eventually) a larger transferred population.
- 2. As English saw it, much less aggressive & brutal – a voluntary transaction
 - Legal acquisition of land, through purchase or treaty, rather than pure conquest
 - Jamestown set precedent, buying site from the nearby Paspahegh indians
 - While granting Indians title to their own land, English legal doctrines of “waste” & *vacuum domicilium* “justified” them in taking lands Indians were not actually living on or farming in English style.
 - Religious backing: John Cotton’s 1634 sermon, God’s Promise to His Plantations
 - European customs regarding labor & gender as key elements of “true” ownership as English saw it.
 - Spanish conquered land, English “commodified” it

II. THE JAMESTOWN DISASTER



- ◆ A. Powhatans & English fight to a draw
 - 1. Smith & Powhatan each maneuvered to be patriarch over the other.
 - The **Smith-Pocahontas legend**: an adoption that became a seduction & penetration
 - Smith's self-promoting writings
 - Legend underwrote Anglo-American claim that *their* Indians *consented* to colonization
 - 2. Powhatan's tactical error: believing English could be incorporated into his own chiefdom.
 - Kept English alive with corn supplies
 - Underestimated English based on Indian gender stereotypes
 - As sexual/familial diplomacy failed, both sides turned to force, especially Smith
 - Powhatan agreed to the **strategic marriage of Pocahontas** after her kidnapping
- B. The Failure of the Virginia Company
 - 1. Incompetence at Jamestown: inappropriate colonists, **poor site**, cannibalism.
 - 2. Saving the situation:
 - Martial law: *Laws Divine, Moral, and Martial* (1609-1611)
 - Switched colony's focus to *commercial* farming: John Rolfe's introduction of tobacco
 - Opechanacanough's revenge: 1622 uprising caused failure of company, made Virginia a royal colony

III. 17TH-CENTURY VIRGINIA AND THE BEGINNINGS OF SOUTHERN SOCIETY

- ◆ A. Land of the Unfree
 - 1. Early labor system: white indentured servants, often convicts sentenced to “transportation” or poor people lured on false or exaggerated promises.
 - Among exaggerations: female servants not supposed to work in fields; “freedom dues” & opportunities to become independent farmers once term was up
 - 2. Seeds of slavery sown in the way southern laborers were mistreated & disrespected
 - Binding people to service & extending terms of service major forms of punishment
 - Servitude far more common in the colonies than Europe
- ◆ B. 17th-Century Virginia Society
 - 1. Heavily male, young, & unfree
 - 2. Rampant disease, high death rates, & low life expectancies
 - 3. Weak communities: dispersed settlement – no cities & few community institutions
 - Planters dealt directly with British traders to sell crops & buy supplies & manufactured goods
 - Church of England came over in a weakened state – priests paid in tobacco
 - Few schools or colleges – College of William and Mary not founded until 1693.
 - 4. Ethic of “looking out for number 1,” keeping \$ within family
 - 5. Aggressive economic & social behavior
- ◆ C. The Paradox of Patriarchy in the New World
 - Low life expectancies in 17th-century South created many female-headed households & opportunities for women to cross normal boundaries
 - Partly in response to this, colonial governments strengthened the hand of patriarchs with household government laws tighter than those in Europe
 - Extending a European trend, colonies diminished other institutions (church, extended families, common law rights like dower & entail) that might intervene in families on behalf of dependents, protect property rights of wives
 - On paper, heavy responsibility for maintaining social order placed on household heads
 - Patriarchy grew more powerful in South, but became largely privatized, centering all power in heads of households, w/o father’s traditional superiors (God & King)

