



# Chapter 3

## Black People in Colonial North America, 1526-1763

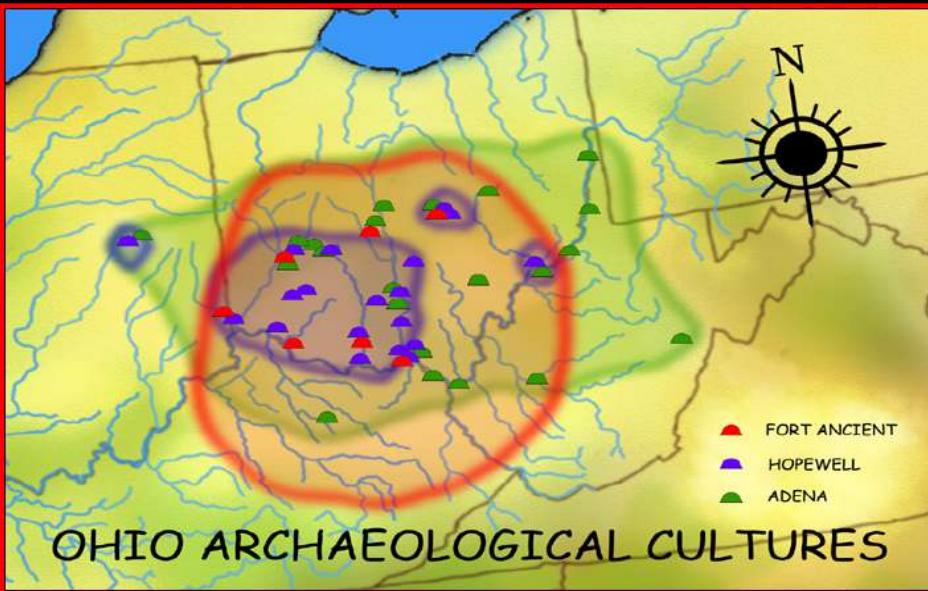
# THE PEOPLES OF EASTERN NORTH AMERICA

- Eastern Woodlands Indians
  - Diverse environments
  - Variety of languages
  - Influenced by Indian cultures of Mexico





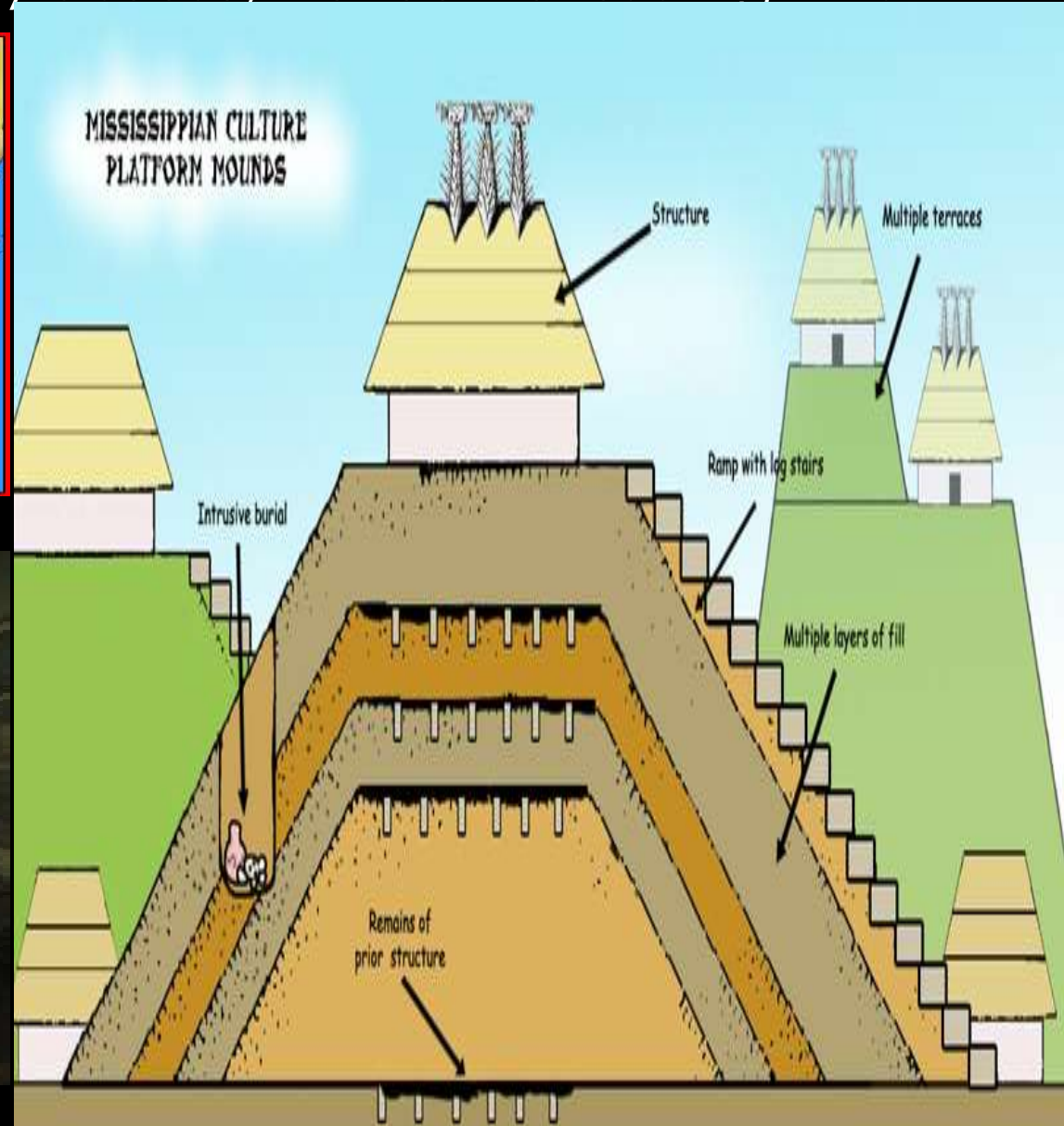
# Adena culture Ohio River Valley





# Mississippian culture

Extensive trade, division of labor, urban centers  
Weakened by disease, ineffective resisting British



# THE PEOPLES OF EASTERN NORTH AMERICA (CONT.)



- Indians knowledgeable about East Coast survival and influenced new arrivals
  - Food crops
  - Tobacco
  - Transportation
  - Clothing
- Race mixing
  - Sexual contact
    - Common between black people and Indians in early America





# THE BRITISH AND JAMESTOWN

- First permanent British colony in North America founded in 1607
  - Trading company looking to make money for investors
    - Gold, trade, lumber, rice, silk
  - Tobacco was a profitable crop
    - Labor intensive
      - Undesirables
      - Indentured servants
  - England's creating empires in N.A was slower due to climate here way different than in England, and Monarchy poorer than other Monarchies.



# AFRICANS ARRIVE IN THE CHESAPEAKE

- First arrivals
  - Origins unknown
    - Luis Vasquez de Ayllon
    - Hernando de Soto Slaves came with him in 1565 to build St. Augustine, FL
- 1619 Dutch ship
  - Unfree
    - English had no law for slavery
    - English custom forbade enslaving Christians

## II. BLACK SERVITUDE IN THE CHESAPEAKE

- Indentured servants
  - Sold labor for passage to Chesapeake
    - Two to seven years
  - High mortality ~ most died before term expired
  - Blacks and whites
    - Only skin color distinguished early laborers
    - Worked, lived, and slept together as unfree
    - Earned freedom at the end of term
    - This is where Irish would have fit in (Myth that Irish were same kind of slaves as Africans)
- Chattel slavery
  - Slaves were legal private property (no human rights)



# CHATTEL SLAVERY

- From unfree to slave for life
- Chattel slavery, also called traditional slavery, is so named because people are treated as the chattel (personal property) of the owner and are bought and sold as commodities. Typically, under the chattel slave system, slave status was imposed on children of the enslaved at birth.



# RACE AND ORIGINS OF BLACK SLAVERY

- 17th century British tobacco colonies
  - Evolved from an economy based on white indentured servants to one based on black slaves
  - British Caribbean sugar plantations created a precedent
  - British gained more control over Atlantic slave trade
    - Reduced price of African laborers

# RACE AND ORIGINS OF BLACK SLAVERY (CONT.)

- White indentured servants sought greater opportunities elsewhere (after years of servitude, they ascended into normal society)
- Race and class shaped the character of slavery
  - Belief that Africans were inferior to English (remember scientific and Biblical justification)
    - Prohibitions against bearing arms
    - Becoming Christian
  - Discrimination in colonial policies



- Mid-17th century Black men, women, and children served masters for life
- Slavery followed the mother (WHY?)
- Slave codes 1660-1710 aimed to control and exploit
  - owning property, making contracts, leaving without a pass
  - Christianity offered no protection against enslavement
- Masters exempt from charges for murdering slaves while administering punishment
- (Casual Killing Clause other laws in various states)



# BACON'S REBELLION, 1676

- Uprising against colonial elites
  - Demand for land and resources by white indentured servants
  - Class-based, biracial alliance
  - UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCE OF THE REBELLION?
- Less use of white indentured servants and more dependence on black slaves
  - Reduced class conflict



# III. PLANTATION SLAVERY, 1700-1750

- Tobacco ~ Chesapeake
  - Increased demands for labor and slaves
    - Racial prejudice
    - Fewer white indentured servants available
    - More Africans available
    - Fear of class conflict



# PLANTATION SLAVERY, 1700-1750 (CONT.)


- Rice ~ Low-Country
  - Early settlers were immigrants from Barbados
    - Brought slaves with them
    - Never any black indentured servants
    - Enslaved more Indians than other British colonies
    - West Africans experienced at cultivating rice

# PLANTATION SLAVERY, 1700-1750 (CONT.)

- Race relations
  - White fears of revolt
  - Slave code
    - Carolina had strictest in North America in 1698
    - freehold property, which was a higher level of property than chattel. Freehold property in theory could not be moved or sold from the estate, similar to the position of medieval serfs who were tied to specific farms or feudal estates.
    - Watch patrols
    - Curfew

- 1690 code explicitly spelled out the punishment for those who struck a white person and for runaways. **First offenders** were severely whipped, followed by slitting the nose and burning “some part of his face with a hot iron” and even death for those who attacked whites a **second or third time**. Enslaved blacks found off the plantation without written permission from their master were considered runaways. Those who ran away more than once could be branded with an *R* on their cheek and might suffer the loss of an ear. Castrating male slaves and branding an *R* on the left cheek of female slaves punished **a fourth offense**. **A fifth failed attempt** could be punished by either cutting the tendon in one leg or sentencing the enslaved person to death. .



- 
- Task system
    - Permitted autonomy without white supervision
  - Preserved more of their African heritage
  - **the Gullah have been able to preserve more of their African cultural heritage than any other group of African Americans: they speak a creole language similar to the Krio of Sierra Leone, are skilled in the creation of African style handicrafts and enjoy a rich cuisine based primarily on rice.**



# SLAVE LIFE IN EARLY AMERICA

- Minimal housing
- Dress
  - Men wore breechcloths
  - Women wore skirts
    - Upper bodies bare
  - Children naked until puberty
- Heritage and culture
  - Slave women used dyes made from bark
    - Decorated cloth with ornaments
  - Created African-style head-wraps, hats, and hairstyles

# IV. MISCEGENATION AND CREOLIZATION

- Early Chesapeake
  - Africans, American Indians, and white indentured servants interacted
  - Cultural exchanges part of creolization
- Miscegenation
  - Extensive in British North America in 17th and 18th centuries, though less accepted than in European sugar colonies in Caribbean, Latin America, or French Canada
    - British North America had many more white women
    - Interracial marriages banned by colonial assemblies
      - Kept white women from having mulatto children
      - Prevented a legally-recognized mixed-race class



# V. THE ORIGINS OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN CULTURE

- Creolization and miscegenation
  - Created African Americans
    - Retained a generalized West African heritage
      - Family structure
      - Kinship
      - Religious ideas
      - African words
      - Musical instruments
      - Cooking and foods
      - Folk literature
      - Folk arts





# THE ORIGINS OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN CULTURE (CONT.)

- The Great Awakening
  - Began process of converting African Americans to Christianity
    - Evangelical churches welcomed black people
      - Increased black acculturation
      - Biracial churches
  - Segregation and discrimination



## VI. SLAVERY IN THE NORTHERN COLONIES

- Fewer slaves
  - Cooler climate
    - Sufficient numbers of white laborers
    - Lack of staple crop
    - Diversified economy



## SLAVERY IN THE NORTHERN COLONIES (CONT.)

- Less threat of slave rebellion
  - Milder slave codes
    - New England slaves could legally own, transfer, and inherit property
  - Rapid assimilation
    - Fewer opportunities to preserve African heritage

## VII. SLAVERY IN SPANISH FLORIDA AND FRENCH LOUISIANA

- Routes to freedom more plentiful
  - Spanish Florida
    - Blacks needed as soldiers
    - Became Catholic and acquired social status
    - People of African descent fled to Cuba when British took control in 1763
  - French Louisiana
    - Most black slaves lived in New Orleans
    - Became skilled artisans
    - Catholics
    - Extensive black population remained when the United States took control in 1803

# VIII. BLACK WOMEN IN COLONIAL AMERICA

- Varied according to region
  - New England
    - Boundary between slavery and freedom permeable
      - Lucy Terry Prince
  - South
    - Few opportunities
      - 17th and 18th centuries ninety percent work in fields
        - In time more women become house servants
        - Constant white supervision
        - Sexual exploitation
    - More complications giving birth



# IX. BLACK RESISTANCE AND REBELLION

- “Goldbricking” to sabotage to escape and rebellion
  - Early resistance and rebellion aimed to force masters to give concessions and not end system
- New arrivals
  - Most open to defiance
  - Maroons
    - Escaped slaves
    - Established communities
      - Spanish Florida
      - Great Dismal Swamp

# IX. BLACK RESISTANCE AND REBELLION (CONT.)

- Resistance
  - Subtle day-to-day obstructionism
    - Malingered, broke tools, mistreated animals, destroyed crops, stole, and poisoned masters
- Rebellions
  - Smaller and fewer than in Brazil or Jamaica
  - Several in 18th century British North America
    - New York City, 1712
    - Charleston, South Carolina, 1739
      - Intensified fear of revolt in Deep South



# X. CONCLUSION

- Resistance to oppression
- Much lost but much West African heritage preserved
- Fundamental issues
  - Contingency and determinism in human events