The Political Economy of Tobacco in the Seventeenth Century English Atlantic

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THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF TOBACCO IN THE SEVENTEENTH
CENTURY ENGLISH ATLANTIC

by

Ruth Savidge Turpin

A Dissertation
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I would like to gratefully acknowledge the hard work and support of both my Committee and my family. While everyone associated with my project has been helpful in many different ways, I would particularly like to thank James Farr and Saul Lerner who, in their respective fashions, have helped me to let go of it.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION AND HISTORIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Historiography</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 2 MERCHANTS, CUSTOMS, AND MARKETS</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Tobacco and Taxes</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Parliament, the King and Some Players</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 End of the Anglo-Spanish War</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 Customs</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5 Trade and Markets</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6 Smuggling</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7 The West Country</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.8 Colonization</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.9 The Expanding Tobacco Market</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.10 Charles I, Parliament and Finances</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.11 Some Tentative Conclusions and Observations</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 3 THE MANAGERS</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 The Virginia Company of London</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 The First Charter</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 The Second Charter</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 The Third Charter</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section</td>
<td>Title</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>The Great Land Grab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>The Magazine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>Labor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>June 22, 1620 “Notes on the State of Virginia”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CHAPTER 4 NETWORKS OF PRODUCERS AND CONSUMERS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Problems of Tobacco</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Gloucestershire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>Stratford’s Tobacco Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>The Consumers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>To Market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>Cromwell and English Tobacco</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>Virginia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>To Market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>The Dutch and the Civil War in the Chesapeake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>The First Anglo-Dutch War</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CHAPTER 5 TIPPING POINT AND EPILOGUE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>The Labor Force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>The Chesapeake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>Gloucestershire and London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>Conclusions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.1 Slave Disembarkations in the Chesapeake for the 17th Century………………..35
Table 1.2 Register of Servants Sent to Foreign Plantations……………………………..36
Table 2.1 Tobacco Shipped on the Elizabeth………………………………………………67
Table 2.2 Tobacco Recorded in the London Port Books…………………………………..68
Table 2.3 Stuart Borrowing from the Great Farm of the Customs James I ………………82
Table 2.4 Stuart Borrowing from the Great Farm of the Customs Charles I ………………83
Table 2.5 Virginia Price and Volume Data………………………………………………….84
Table 3.1 Wheat Prices at Oxford ………………………………………………………139
Table 3.2 Spanish Bullion Imports…………………………………………………………..140
Table 4.1 Workforce Data and Population Estimates in the Chesapeake………………184
Table 4.2 Ages of Male Emigres from England to the Chesapeake……………………..185
LIST OF FIGURES

Chart 1.1 Copy of Menard’s Original Graph of Volume Versus Price....................32
Chart 1.2 Semi-log Graph of Chesapeake Tobacco Following Menard................33
Chart 1.3 Linear Graph of Chesapeake Tobacco with Price’s Data......................34
Chart 1.4 Timeline..........................................................................................37
This thesis examines the political economy of tobacco in England and the Chesapeake in the seventeenth century, including production and labor, distribution and shipping, markets, taxes, and consumers. Because of James I’s struggles with Parliament, tobacco achieved a special tax status and thus a special relationship to the English Crown. That relationship persisted through the reign of Charles I, across the Interregnum, and into the Restoration. Tobacco was grown as a cash crop in both England and the Chesapeake. In England, production was exclusively by independent landowners hungry for a cash crop. English tobacco growing was outlawed in 1619, but growing continued and was clearly a financial success. Tobacco was introduced into the Chesapeake under the Virginia Company and supported the colony even though the Virginia Company collapsed. Although there were some slaves in the Chesapeake from 1619 on, due to the success of the headright system production was primarily by independent producers until the mid-1670s. English colonial merchants developed the Triangle Trade, increasing their profits. As a result, slave labor substantially replaced independent growers in the Chesapeake. There is no hard data showing when or how Gloucestershire tobacco growing died out, but merchant alliances to stamp out the competition from England may well have had an effect.
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION AND HISTORIOGRAPHY

1.1 Introduction

This thesis will explore the penetration by tobacco of seventeenth century English society and the growth of the English tobacco industry with special attention to the role of state power in the development of industry institutions in general and the colonial labor force in particular. These developments in the political economy of England are not trivial nor did they happen quickly or easily. They involved extensive changes in fiscal policy as well as collection practices. The founding of English colonies represented a major shift in England’s role in the Atlantic world and changed her relations with other European powers. Demographic changes resulting from economic and political upheavals involved hundreds of thousands of people. Finally, these new and enduring institutions emerged from titanic struggles between the Stuart kings and Parliament over the very basic question of who should rule England.

That tobacco should “catch on” does not at first seem surprising. Tobacco is a powerful addictive stimulant. Happy addicts tell their friends, who in turn tell their friends. However, some modern work suggests that addiction involves much more than the simple physical component of a chemical “hook.” The hook is a necessary requirement for repeat business, but not a sufficient one to establish the original connection. The spread of addiction may act like the spread of disease, but addiction itself is not contagious. The drug in question must be available and affordable, and it must also meet a psychological or social need. That is, addiction takes root most readily when future addicts are isolated, uprooted or otherwise frustrated in their pursuit of basic needs and social interactions.\(^1\) At several junctures in the seventeenth century, struggles for control of the English state appear to have fostered just such conditions in both England and her colonies. However, for tobacco to be widely available in England, what

needed to develop were markets wherein reliable tobacco suppliers could meet expectant tobacco buyers.

Markets cannot be created simply out of need. For a tobacco market to develop, there had to be other developments in production, transport, law, taxes, and social relations. Minimally, there had to be some agreement on prices, but this was hardly the only required agreement. Some sort of structure or regulation was also critical to the success of tobacco on questions such as: what product sources are legitimate; what sort of product quality controls are required; and of course, who is allowed to sell in the market. Changes in all of these factors, not necessarily in that order, took place in England across the seventeenth century. In general, these developments were not driven by a perceived need for tobacco, but they were strongly influenced by the expectation of profit to be made from it. Thus, except in the very beginning, this is not a tale of the creeping spread of an underground vice. It is a business history: the story of how a cash crop saved the Virginia colony, supported the Stuart monarchy, and then became a player in the seventeenth-century battle for control of the English state, supplying revenue and lines of credit to the various winners. Tobacco very quickly became a resource for the Crown, and in its time for the Protectorate, and later still for the Restored Crown. The resource needed to be protected, and production and distribution needed to be controlled.

Controlling tobacco production involved two things: controlling tobacco producers and controlling tobacco distributors. This was sometimes difficult because neither tobacco growers nor tobacco merchants necessarily supported Crown objectives. In fact, both frequently employed illegal means to protect their own interests, and sometimes resorted to violence. The large, slave-worked plantations of eighteenth century Virginia were not characteristic of tobacco production in the seventeenth century. Until the middle of the century, most tobacco growers on both sides of the Atlantic were relatively small and frequently fiercely independent landowners. In Virginia, this resulted from the Virginia Company’s adoption of the headright system in 1618 that gave fifty acres of land to anyone who paid the passage of a colonist. The offer was intended to prop up the staggering finances of the Virginia Company, and from that standpoint it had only a limited success. The Company’s charter was revoked in 1624 and Virginia
became a Crown proprietorship. However, the headright system remained in effect. The result in Virginia was rapid colonial expansion and an explosion of tobacco production.\(^2\)

Because their market was three thousand miles away, Virginia growers faced transport problems. Increasingly, successful planters were those that had close ties with merchant shipping, including family connections with merchants and London factors. For some, this eliminated the necessity to share tobacco profits with middlemen, but in the long run it did not completely remove the problem. There was no way to get their crop to England other than to put it on a ship, and merchant shippers had to make a competitive profit in order to stay in business. Dutch shippers moved into the Chesapeake, offering higher prices to growers and reliable shipping during the upheavals of the 1630s and 1640s. However, the long transportation line meant that Dutch shippers and Chesapeake growers were vulnerable to state intervention. The colony supported the Crown in the Civil War. To bring it to heel, Oliver Cromwell first attempted to embargo shipping, but discovered an unacceptable loss of revenue. He then fought – and won – the First Anglo-Dutch War in order to drive Dutch shipping out of the Chesapeake.\(^3\) The Navigation Acts and the Anglo-Dutch Wars were strongly supported by English merchant shipping, particularly colonial supply.

English merchant shipping, while not subject to the same downward pressure on prices that agricultural producers were, was under pressure to increase return on investment. There was not enough market for English manufactures in English colonies for them to do that. Their solution was to replace direct colonial supply – from England with manufactures to the Chesapeake, and back again with tobacco – with the increasingly lucrative Triangle Trade. The Africa coast offered more markets for English goods, and allowed the merchants to acquire a product with a guaranteed market, at least in the West Indies. From the West Indies, they returned with sugar to the English market. There was not enough demand for English manufactures in the West Indies to support an extensive and profitable bi-lateral trade. By the last quarter of the century, the Triangle Trade had come to include the Chesapeake, with tobacco carried on the return leg to

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England. Slave trade to the Chesapeake thus grew out of the needs of merchant shippers and colonial suppliers, not the plantation owners.⁴

Virginia was not the only source of tobacco in English markets, although it was clearly the favorite of the Crown. Imported Spanish tobacco, probably grown in the Spanish West Indies, initially dominated the market. Because Spanish tobacco had originally been smuggled into England during the First Anglo-Spanish War, it proved difficult to regulate and tax. If the taxes were set too high, the merchants simply resorted to smuggling techniques developed during the war.⁵ Charles I complained bitterly of his inability to wean his subjects from Spanish tobacco.⁶ He authorized a lucrative tax farm in exchange for a guaranteed [taxable] supply and ordered that all tobacco be unloaded in London. The two maneuvers failed to control Spanish imports, and Charles turned to retail regulation.⁷

However, there was a third tobacco source that had effects even more difficult to calculate than smuggled Spanish tobacco, but which appears to have had a significant impact on tobacco availability. That source was illegally grown Gloucestershire tobacco. Gloucestershire was not the only English county to illegally grow tobacco. Williams lists eighteen counties, including Yorkshire and Kent.⁸ However, Gloucestershire was the origin and remained at the center of illegal tobacco growing. There was never any question of coerced labor in Gloucestershire. Tobacco was adopted by English growers because it was a profitable cash crop. It was particularly profitable because it was illegal, and thus untaxable. Profits remained high regardless of other market conditions. Growing spread rapidly through an area hit hard by recession, contraction of the wool trade, and upheavals due to forest enclosure. Grower independence was added to the mix of social rebellion bubbling in the West Country. The mix boiled over in the upheaval of the era of Charles’ Personal Rule and effects may have persisted into the subsequent Civil

⁷ Neville Williams, 407 – 409.
Gloucester, clearly with the support of local tobacco growing gentry and yeoman, held out against Royalist forces at a key juncture in 1643.\(^9\)

From the standpoint of the tobacco industry, these developments were entirely successful. At the beginning of the century, tobacco use was mostly confined to seamen who had raided in the Caribbean or illegally traded with Spain during the war or to port workers who had direct contact with the raiders and traders. Tobacco use spread dramatically under the Stuarts. James I attempted both to suppress imports and increase revenue with taxes, and Charles I attempted to suppress illegal alehouse sales and increase revenue with more taxes. Oliver Cromwell attempted to suppress tobacco growing in England by force of arms and fought a war with the Dutch to protect English tobacco shipping. One result of all that suppression was the iconic Restoration coffee house with readily available pipes and tobacco, and ongoing discussions of the nature of the evolving English state. Another result was the establishment of commercially successful English colonies in the New World and the concomitant rise of mercantilism. Still another result was financial support for independent landowners, in some cases even very small ones, who urgently needed a cash crop. Other results include soil exhaustion; the destruction of whole Native American societies; brutality liberally applied to at least two generations of servants; and increases in the size and sheer awfulness of the Atlantic slave market. However, once tobacco was established in the colonies, revenue flow to the state might vary, but it was rarely interrupted.

Chapter 1, “Customs, Merchants, and Markets,” discusses James I’s attempt to rationalize customs, control smuggling and war time raiders, and establish peaceful relations with the Catholic powers of Europe in general and Spain in particular. English colonies were an important part of James’ international policy and one which he apparently hoped would also harness the energies and imaginations of seamen idled by the end of the war with Spain. James’ agenda was made more difficult by struggles with Parliament on issues of taxation, religion, free speech, and colonies. He was the target of

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several plots and one very serious assassination attempt. One of his most successful policies was the establishment of the General Farm of the Customs which rationalized revenue collection at the ports and increased lines of credit available to the Crown. The West Country and the ports of the south coast, home to many of Elizabeth’s raider/traders and also home to well-developed smuggling networks, supplied some of the most consistent opposition to Crown policies in regards to customs. They also supplied mariners and ships essential for the colonial project. The establishment of the Virginia colony aided James’ Spanish Policy and the successful introduction of tobacco cultivation into Virginia swelled Crown revenue.

In 1604, when James I ascended the English throne, tobacco was a luxury item; traded, taxed, and in wartime smuggled along well-established routes by well-established merchants trading with Spain and indirectly with her colonies. James ended the war with Spain and simultaneously launched a two-part plan to restrict the flow of tobacco into England; first by publishing a highly critical pamphlet, *A Counterblaste to Tobacco*, and then by adding a special import tax called an impost. The impost was expected reduce tobacco use and also to raise extra revenue for the Crown outside the control of Parliament. James conceded that the pamphlet had very little effect and we now know that price has, at best, unpredictable effects on the sales volume of addictive drugs. The impost appears to have had very little effect on the volume of tobacco entering England, and initially it generated very little revenue. Instead, smuggling increased. However, it did have one lasting effect: because of ongoing Stuart struggles with Parliament over money, first from taxes and later through the success of Virginia as a tobacco colony and a Crown proprietorship, tobacco became an increasingly important source of royal revenue. The Crown protected Virginia tobacco and Virginia tobacco paid off for the Crown.

If Crown protection had been the only factor in the success of Virginia tobacco, it could not have survived the reign of Charles I and certainly not his death. Charles taxed

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all the tobacco he could find and attempted to extend taxation and regulation to retail outlets. He focused his regulation efforts on alehouses and his success in this matter paralleled other successes throughout his reign. Among Charles’ political opponents in Parliament, the gentry tended to be opposed to taxation schemes that bypassed Parliament and the overseas merchants were opposed to import taxes that cut into their profits. Neither Charles nor his opponents seems to have seriously opposed the spread of tobacco use. Instead, they ‘piled on’ to its commercial success. The fight was about control and exploitation of a profitable product and included a banquet of regulatory attempts about where tobacco could be shipped from and to, and who by, and how much it would be taxed when it got there. One source from 1627 tax farm records shows Virginia tobacco accounting for fifty-five percent of all tobacco imports, including London and all the outports. The total revenue for all tobacco that year, not including Royal imposts, was £17,982 and three pence, with Virginia revenue accounting for a little over one-half. This is still pretty small compared to the sums collected by the later Stuarts. However, all of that revenue came from import taxes and suggest a strong motive on the part of Virginia growers to seek alternate markets for their tobacco.

Chapter 2, “The Managers,” describes the struggles of the Virginia Company to establish a viable and profitable English colony in mainland North America. The Virginia Company was a joint stock company whose leadership quickly discovered that project financial requirements exceeded their subscription base. Inadequately funded and ineptly managed colonial supply nearly destroyed the fledgling colony. The first Treasurer of the Company, Sir Thomas Smythe, introduced truly innovative fund-raising campaigns, including the Virginia Lotteries, but what saved the Company and the colony was the introduction of tobacco by John Rolfe. The timing was perfect, following as it did on the heels of the “Starving Time.” With the introduction of the headright system, which allotted fifty acres of land to anyone who paid the passage of a colonist, tobacco production surged. Colonial shipping and supply became a new kind of financial football

14 Neville Williams, 408.
15 Neville Williams, 414.
when Smythe and his allies formed a separate company of monopoly suppliers that profited from the colony, while the Company bore the cost of colonial administration.\footnote{Susan Myra Kingsbury, \textit{Records of the Virginia Company of London Volume III}.} Smythe was replaced in the leadership role by Sir Edwin Sandys, an MP in the House of Commons who opposed many of James’ policies; and Henry Wriothesley, 3\textsuperscript{rd} Earl of Southampton, whom James found only marginally more acceptable as Company Treasurer. Ultimately, the state of the colony following the Massacre of 1622, the failure of crop diversification, the fight over the colonial supply monopoly, and the long-standing political opposition of Sandys and Southampton to key Crown policies forced the end of the Virginia Company. James revoked the Company’s charter and Virginia became a Crown proprietorship.

Chapter 3, “Producers and Consumers,” contrasts tobacco growers in Virginia and Gloucestershire. Gloucestershire tobacco production began when two London merchants leased land in Winchcombe and in 1619, their first year of production, succeeded in bringing in a bumper crop. Unfortunately, they also succeeded in notifying the Virginia Company of what they were doing. Sandys and Southampton used their connections in Parliament and with the Court to get tobacco growing in England outlawed, and the 1619 crop was the last legal crop grown in Gloucestershire. However, Gloucestershire was poor and the commercial success of its first tobacco guaranteed continued interest. Tobacco growing spread to neighboring counties.

The tobacco was probably a different species than the one Rolfe introduced in Virginia: \textit{nicotiana rusticana} instead of \textit{nicotiana tabacum}.\footnote{Charles E. Gage, “American Tobacco Types, Uses, and Markets Circular No. 249,” Secretary’s Department Statistical Section, The Imperial Tobacco Company; United States Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C., June 1942.} Although English-grown tobacco had the reputation of being harsher and less flavorful than Virginian, and there must have been less of it produced, the experiment was sufficiently successful to have continued at least through the first decade of the eighteenth century. Tobacco was grown as a cash crop by English cottagers, renters, estate workers and small and medium landowners. Not only was labor not coerced, the growers defied all the Stuart kings and
the Protectorate – successfully defending their crop against Cornet Joyce, sent by Cromwell to stamp out Gloucestershire production.\textsuperscript{20}

Some problems faced by illegal growers are similar to problems faced by legal growers: the land must be fertile and sufficiently watered, and labor of an adequate skill level must be available. Their fields must actually be secure from marauding armies and vandals, and they must have transportation to market. In the case of illegal growers, the last two problems are exacerbated by the possibility that the state will not protect them and may itself be one of the marauders. Clearly, in this case, the state had no interest in promoting tobacco production. On the other hand, it seems not to have had much reach into the tobacco counties. English tobacco growers exhibited considerable independence and apparently handled any enforcement problems they encountered without recourse to forces outside their county. Transportation, on the other hand, was an ongoing problem. London was the biggest tobacco market during this period and Gloucestershire growers needed to get their tobacco to London, either overland or by ship. Research is a problem on this question because internal transport was not taxed and thus there are no records. Both possibilities, overland and coastal trade, are discussed in some detail, with the preponderance of the evidence suggesting that at least some Gloucestershire growers avoided the Bristol Channel and sent their product overland.

Under Charles I, the forest enclosure movement swept the West, and landlords around the Forest of Dean also attempted to deny access to wood gatherers and poachers, the poor of the West Country and the Cotswolds.\textsuperscript{21} Acts of rebellion followed. Lionel Cranfield, First Earl of Middlesex and a former Governor of the General Farm of the Customs, acquired an estate near Tewkesbury and attempted to protect his forest land. He encountered stiff opposition culminating in vandalism, certainly winked at and possibly led by some family members of a former gamekeeper who were also tobacco growers. The culture of illegal and profitable tobacco growing, combined with unrest and general dissatisfaction with the King, produced a volatile political situation. When

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\textsuperscript{20} A. R. Williams, 145 - 146.

the Civil War swept through three years later, Gloucester successfully held out for Parliament, effectively slowing the Royalist advance on London.

The tremendous outmigration during the period of Charles’ Personal Rule increased the transient population of London. It thus increased the London market for tobacco, and probably the demand for cheap Gloucestershire tobacco. It also sent thousands more colonists to the New World, including the Chesapeake, who hoped to settle and ultimately to acquire land of their own. Sometime early in the 1630s, the survival rate of new colonists also increased and the colony became self-sustaining – at least as long as it could sell its tobacco. The colonial workforce was primarily servants and small landowners. For a different set of reasons, Chesapeake growers also developed a culture of independence. They were not just an ocean away from home, but the practice of continually clearing new land meant that they were often isolated from each other.\(^2^2\)

Increasingly, Chesapeake planters became successful who were themselves merchant shippers or who could rely on family members in England to act as their factors. The Dutch attempted to move into Chesapeake tobacco transport, offering better prices because Dutch taxes were lower. Both the English and the Dutch had their eye on Baltic tobacco markets. London merchants re-exported Virginia tobacco. Price-wise, their product had to compete with Dutch tobacco. Although tobacco was grown near Amsterdam, there was not enough for an export market. Instead, Dutch tobacco merchants made direct connections with Virginia planters and undercut the English sellers in northern Europe.\(^2^3\)

Thus, we should not be surprised to find that when the Crown was defeated, the Protectorate took control of tobacco, using force on two fronts. The first was an abortive attempt to suppress tobacco growing in Gloucestershire. This part of the project actually touched on very serious issues of free men, free holds, and free markets that could not be solved with an army. The second, and the one that paid off, was to eliminate competition from Dutch shipping for Virginia tobacco by means of the Navigation Acts, enforced by the First Anglo-Dutch War. Chesapeake planters attempted to maintain what they called

\(^{2^2}\) Edmund S. Morgan, 108 – 130.

“free trade,” meaning that the Dutch would be allowed to ship Chesapeake tobacco and even settle in the Chesapeake if they wished. Unfortunately, the war ended Dutch access to North American tobacco and reduced their access to other European markets.

Although we do not have volume data for Virginia tobacco shipped to London during this period, tobacco production clearly continued to increase. When Charles II ascended the throne, Virginia was a cash cow – his cash cow and he did milk it. Chapter 4 “Tipping Point and Epilogue,” examines developing conflicts in the successful Chesapeake tobacco colony that ended with the switch to reliance on African perpetual chattel slavery. Because tobacco does not benefit from the same economies of scale that characterize sugar production, and because of the reliance on servant labor and independent growers from the early days of the colony, the switch requires some explanation and has been much studied. Slavery remains an emotionally demanding issue, and all narratives of its adoption in the Chesapeake in some sense run counter to the idealized picture of American independence.

In one narrative, a Dutch ship famously brought twenty Africans to the Virginia colony in 1619 and, while we are not sure what their subsequent legal status in the colony was, the Dutch traded them for ship’s provisions. They were trade goods, not passengers. Some form of slavery entered the Virginia colony in 1619, took root and grew. As early as 1704 Africans constituted fifteen percent of Maryland’s population. True, slavery was illegal in England, and by extension in her colonies. It had never been a part of English culture, but it rapidly and readily became an enduring part of colonial culture. The same probate inventories that indicate the reliance on servants also indicate the presence of slaves. There is recent scholarship to support this view by researchers Douglas M. Bradburn and John C. Coombs who emphasize that Africans were present in the Chesapeake from an early date, and point out that slave status for Africans was well established by mid-century. Their approach seems to say that the much-vaunted shift was already well underway long before 1676 and was only a small step for tobacco planters.

Their approach makes sense in terms of Edmund S. Morgan’s work on norms of servant status and treatment in the Chesapeake. However, early start or not, the main reason that African slavery was slow to take hold in the Chesapeake was that paying a servant’s passage would entitle a planter to an additional fifty acres and buying a slave would not.

While the narrative of an early development of chattel slavery in the Virginia colony runs counter to the evidence of the success of the headright system and successful colonial expansion, the opposing narrative has serious problems of its own. First, tobacco did not drive the switch to chattel slavery in any of the English colonies. That dubious honor goes to sugar production in the West Indies. Sugar requires a large labor force to harvest and process a large crop in a short period of time. Processing requires machinery to squeeze the juice from the cane and energy to boil the juice, both of which the workers must supply and maintain in addition to the harvest itself. Delay due to insufficiency in any of those requirements means spoilage and a loss of product.27

Tobacco, on the other hand, famously requires ongoing attention from at least a semi-skilled labor force: the soil must be prepared; the plants set out and protected from snails and weeds; then the plants must be topped; and finally, the leaves harvested, cured, and packaged for shipment. A large number of small growers can produce a lot of tobacco. They just have to get up every morning and do it. Furthermore, there is a great deal less land in Barbados than there is in Virginia. Servants who survived their indenture in Barbados immediately posed a competitive threat to the planters who had imported them, not just for future market share, but for available land. Indentured servitude survived longer in the Chesapeake than it did in the Caribbean, because there was room to expand. While some Chesapeake planters’ holdings subsequently become large and profitable, their chief advantage seems to have been control of transport, not control of the labor force.28

Key to understanding the growth and development of Atlantic slave markets is understanding that, wherever they were used, slaves were capital not labor, even though they replaced servants and did work. The trans-Atlantic slave trade represented a

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massive acquisition of capital by primitive accumulation from the west coast of Africa and its subsequent transfer to New World colonies. In the West Indies, the transfer began in the early 1640s with the clearing of sugar lands in Barbados and Jamaica. Nuala Zahedieh noted that the Barbadian business model required a large initial investment. In her example of the estimated costs of establishing a Jamaica plantation, the third highest expense is £830 for fifty blacks; the second highest expense is £988 for three years land clearing, including replacement tools and an estimated ten percent for replacement slaves. These are only exceeded individually by the cost of the milling machinery and housing: £1,000. The cost of using slaves to clear land for three years exceeded £1,800, almost all of it paid up front. By contrast, although skilled labor contracts might command an additional price, passage to Virginia for one person cost less than ten pounds for most of the seventeenth century and the payoff for that small investment was one laborer plus fifty acres of land. Of course, as the century advanced and planters began bidding on the new servants’ contracts, the price of servants also increased. And of course, there were additional costs associated with clearing and planting that fifty acres across three years, but payoff was much quicker on the smaller investment.

In between the establishment of successful sugar cultivation in Barbados and the widespread adoption of slavery in the Chesapeake is the growth of the Atlantic slave market. Trade between England and the Chesapeake was bilateral. Servants and manufactured goods went to the Chesapeake and tobacco went back to England. The problem was that there was not much demand in the Chesapeake for English goods, only for people. During the peak of the outmigration, the servant trade was very large. According to Brenner, a new group of overseas merchants arose in London during this period, different from the Levant and East India traders. Of course, they attempted to move into tobacco shipping. However, even after Dutch competition for tobacco was eliminated, the London tobacco market was saturated and the essentially bilateral trade starved merchant shipping. The establishment of a triangular trade from England to

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Africa and then to the West Indian colonies vastly increased the potential for profit.\textsuperscript{31} Africa was a much bigger market for trade goods and African slaves fed a growing market in the Caribbean. Sugar was returned to London markets on the third leg of the triangle. As Eric Williams pointed out, this trade was extremely lucrative and the Royal African Company, with James Duke of York as its Governor was formed to exploit this trade.\textsuperscript{32}

Some of the realities of indentured servitude in the Chesapeake would appear to contradict the idea that Atlantic slave markets had to develop before slavery would be accepted in the Chesapeake. There is no contradiction. A labor market is a market where people sell their labor. Examples of modern labor markets include Craig’s List, union halls, and men hanging around on particular street corners in construction season waiting to see if anyone comes by in a pickup truck with some work. The buying and selling of servant contracts is an example of a seventeenth century labor market, because the servants – at least in theory – are selling their future labor in exchange for passage. Slaves do not sell their labor – or anything else – in a slave market. They are bought and sold by other people. They do become part of the labor force, but they do not sell or donate their labor. It is coerced.

1.2 Historiography

The Internet has had an astounding impact on the availability of primary research documents. There is one large trove of original business records from the early part of the century that is online thanks to the Library of Congress and the Hathi Trust: \textit{The Records of the Virginia Company of London, Volumes I – IV}, edited by Bryn Mawr researcher and professor of social work Susan Myra Kingsbury and published beginning in 1906. The \textit{Records} are searchable. Volume I begins in 1619, the year the Sandys-Southampton faction took over leadership of the Company. Volume II begins in 1622 and tracks the final destruction of the Company. Volume III contains earlier documents


from the period of Sir Thomas Smythe’s Treasurership. Volume IV contains additional documents, retrieved from a variety of mainly British sources. The Minutes of the Council and General Court of Virginia, 1622 – 1632, 1670 – 1676 is also available online courtesy of the Internet Archive. It is searchable. However, there are serious gaps. Many records of Virginia history were burned by the Confederate Army retreating from Richmond in 1865. They have been partially reconstructed from British records.33

The Sackville Papers and the Ferrar Papers which supplement the Records – not always agree with everything in them – have also been published and are readily available online. The letters of John Chamberlain, London gossip and prolific letter writer who documented upper class social life in the reign of James I, are readily available online, thanks to the Hathi Trust and are easily downloaded.34 The papers and the letters are basically snapshots and are not searchable. Virtual Jamestown supplies access to original documents such as John Smith’s A True Relation by Captain John Smith 1608 and Edward Maria Winfield’s defense of his disastrous governorship. All of the above were edited and printed in the twentieth century. The language and spelling conventions of the period were preserved, and the publishing projects helped to both preserve the originals and to eliminate the requirement that researchers learn the seventeenth century paleography. They also meant that this material was ready for the Internet when that blessing arrived.

The Avalon Project is a large digital archive maintained by Yale School of Law that contains printed and digitized documents including colonial charters such as the first three charters of the Virginia Company, the Fundamental Constitutions of the Carolinas, and documents written for the debates about money and mercantilism by Dudley North and John Locke. The documents are web pages. They are not searchable on the site, but they are easily downloaded and may be converted to other, more searchable, formats.

On the other side of the Atlantic, British History Online (BHO) and The History of Parliament: British Political, Social, and Local History are both invaluable for any

researcher that did not grow up and go to school in the United Kingdom. *The History of Parliament* includes timelines, descriptions of key debates, reasons for convening or adjourning, and biographical sketches members. While it is a survey, the articles are prepared and signed by scholars. *British History Online* is a digital library that includes both primary and secondary source documents, maps, and calendars. BHO resources include Calendar of State Papers, Foreign, Domestic, and Colonial for all four Stuart kings, and journals of the Board of Trade and Plantations. The entries are searchable. There are two problems with using the Calendars. One is that the Calendar is not the state paper, it is a description of the contents and, hopefully, a date when it was discussed or promulgated. Proclamations may sometimes turn out to be different from their description in the Calendar. The other problem, of course, is that the Calendars are not always complete, thus frustrating their use as a timeline of actions on state issues.

In any case, reading the documents is no easier than it would be in a brick-and-mortar archive. As with the calendar, the English came late to the consistent use of Arabic numerals in their business records and entries are in Roman numerals. These are readable enough, but the Library of Congress edition employed some of the original representation conventions modified to accommodate their printing press, for example, the use of mysterious looking superscripts that are sometimes not all that legible in online editions. Furthermore, meanings of many tobacco business terms have not made it into the modern vocabulary. For example, in desperation for a definition of pudding tobacco, I queried the Library of Congress who passed my request to their science division. Apparently, up until quite recently, the word pudding meant sausage, not a species of jello. Pudding tobacco was a tightly packed and apparently frequently adulterated roll of tobacco that looked like a sausage.

The *Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database* is a wonderful thing; a searchable database of voyages in the Atlantic slave trade with numbers that give a truly shocking picture of the growth of the trade. According to their website, the idea for the Database emerged from a chance encounter between David Eltis and Stephen Behrendt in the British Public Record Office in 1990. The current open access website was launched in 2003. The Database is used extensively in Chapter 4 as a check on some of the classic theories of the introduction of slaves into the Chesapeake. The only other way for a
single researcher to get that kind of broad background picture would be to travel extensively – and hope she stumbled on the right set of troves.

The *Global Price and Income History Group* describes itself as “a research team measuring prices, incomes, and economic wellbeing around the world before 1950.” The Group’s website includes access to a series of spreadsheets with an extensive collection of economic data. Unfortunately, tobacco prices do not appear before 1741. However, the data has so far been useful for comparing wages and other cost of living data with wages offered in colonial Virginia, and for assessing the impact of the recession of the early 1620s.35

Because tobacco is only grown as a cash crop, the issue of prices arises again and again, or perhaps more specifically, issues of interpretation of the available price records that are sometimes misleading and may also be far from complete. Jacob Price collected seventeenth century tobacco price and import data from surviving *London Port Books* for the Bicentennial *Historical Statistics of the United States*.36 The *London Port Books* are customs records, now in the British National Archives. The Port Books are not online, although they are indexed in an online catalogue, and most of those preserved were already fragile, fragmentary, and some were completely illegible, when Price compiled the Virginia tobacco data more than forty years ago. Almost three decades of seventeenth century data are missing, either because of the condition of the surviving records or because they were not preserved at all. There are problems with the quality of the records. Even during periods when the book entries were supposed to follow a standard format, some formats seem to have been more standard than others. For example, ship names were recorded, but if more than one ship appeared with mixed cargoes including tobacco, the tobacco might be recorded from both in one entry. The books were required official documents and sometimes they do not tell the whole truth. Nevertheless, the books and Price’s work on them are invaluable to show the breadth and [relative] continuity of the Virginia tobacco project across the seventeenth century. Even though Jacob Price only had a mandate to collect Virginia tobacco records, the data also

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gives valuable insight into the English tobacco market operation. English tobacco was never recorded, and Spanish tobacco records are unreliable, both because of smuggling practices firmly in place before the General Farm of the Customs was established, and because of competing Dutch markets. Thus, nothing else comes close to giving a coherent picture of the English tobacco market as it developed across the century.

In 1980, Russell R. Menard used Price’s data to tackle the thesis that Chesapeake planters drove down the price of their crop by over-producing. While this thesis had tobacco growers behaving irrationally, it posited that their confusion was ultimately a good thing for the English tobacco market. The reduced prices and greater availability attracted more users. As the first two chapters show from different standpoints, Virginia tobacco was initially a very small part of the stream of tobacco entering England. Its success in the marketplace depended on the spread of tobacco use, not the other way around. Virginia tobacco needed to grow market share for itself in an already growing market. Also, students of the American Populist movement in the nineteenth century will recognize the charge of over production faced by Kansas corn growers and refuted succinctly by Mary Elizabeth Lease: “You farmers should raise less corn and more hell!”

Menard, less succinctly and much more politely, published a graph of Price’s data (original reproduced in Chart 1.1). The graph shows prices and volumes from 1617 to 1620 holding a steady twenty-seven pence per pound; then fluctuating wildly for the next three years; then beginning a determined decline from which they never recovered. Virginia tobacco imports increased dramatically as planters desperately attempted to maintain their livelihood. The graph is not that easy to read, but falling prices for the most part seem to lead increased production and Menard made his case.37 Both the data from the London Port Books and Menard’s use of it have been widely referenced.

However, Menard chose to chart tobacco imports on a semi-log graph, which gives the appearance of smooth exponential increase that we usually associate with increases in populations – including increases in tobacco smoking populations. The curve looks natural. It is not, however, the type of increase that we expect from agricultural production and the natural appearance is quite misleading and because tobacco imports are not a log function, the much-cited graph makes it difficult to

understand events. I have graphed Price’s data, the same data that Menard used, in a spreadsheet and the results are shown in two charts. Chart 1.2 uses a semi-log graph, following Menard. Chart 2.3 re-plots the same data on a linear graph. Interestingly, the linear graph makes Menard’s case far more clearly than the semi-log. We cannot tell what is affecting prices, but it is clearly not high volumes. It is far more realistic to look for the causes in English politics, rather than in the Chesapeake. The “paradise prices”38 as Joan Thirsk called them only in part reflected the intersection of supply and demand in a free market, as we now understand the term. The tobacco prices are the result of protection and monopoly and they collapsed when the price supports collapsed. There are also effects on volume from fights over the control of merchant supply. Nor do the volumes from the Port Book represent all of the tobacco shipped from Virginia in those years, or even all of it shipped to England and assumptions about the role of volume in the development of the English market cannot rest solely on the London Port Book data. Thus, the smooth production increases implied by the linear graph are also misleading.

The real use of Price’s data is the trans-century picture it provides. Three distinct periods of the Chesapeake tobacco industry emerge from studying the revised linear graph in Chart 2, each with its own political character and particular trans-Atlantic interactions. Unsurprisingly, these periods correspond with profound stresses on the English polity. The first period, 1616 – 1640, saw the establishment of the Chesapeake colonies as the sole legally protected tobacco producer and established the reliance of the English Crown on tobacco revenue. Simultaneously, the Stuart monarchy began its slow and torturous implosion. In the second period, 1641 – 1666, tonnage data becomes very sketchy or disappears completely, victim of a one-two punch, first of the Civil War and then the First Anglo-Dutch war under the Commonwealth. In the final period, 1666 – 1699, minor variations in the smooth curve of the semi-log graph that suggested some market control are revealed as bounces of millions of pounds. It would be misleading to ascribe these variations to market forces, because the price does not vary with the volume. They are much more likely to be weather or transport problems. Not

surprisingly, the third period corresponds to the simultaneous development of a strong retail market for tobacco under the returning Stuarts; and a securing of a share in the re-export market.

Examining British history covering the reign of the early Stuarts encounters major conflicts over religion and politics, some of which at least peripherally impact this dissertation. In general, the dissertation makes extensive use of economic, demographic and social historians and attempts to confine the political history to facts about which there is little or no dispute. For example, there is no dispute about when the Gunpowder Plot was discovered and it is widely accepted and easily documented that it resulted in increased oppression of English Catholics. However, what these events meant to the seventeenth-century political players can be very tricky, and it was the meaning to them – not to us – that contributed to their subsequent actions. Especially valuable in disentangling some of these complex threads is some older work by historians such as T. S. Willan, Robert Ashton, and Neville Williams. The work of Joan Thirsk has proved especially valuable. She documented economic action, such as the spread of English tobacco growing, without making a commitment to a particular political interpretation and thus gave a valuable picture of rural England. Similarly, Pauline Croft and Evan Jones attempted to document and explicate economic actions and institutions, respectively monopolies, the Spanish Company and smuggling, without committing to a particular contemporary interpretation of these events and institutions. The demographic research of Gemery, and Wrigley and Schofield remained ‘apolitical’ in the sense of demonstrating no overt commitment to a political interpretation of events they documented, but the results sometimes gave an unattractive picture of England and the colonization project and have occasionally attracted ire. The works of Kenneth Andrews, Michael J. Braddick and Theodore K. Rabb are sometimes more problematic.


While Braddick’s work is detailed and in mainly useful to this theses in documenting long term changes in fiscal policy, the work is intended to develop a complex and sometimes problematic thesis. Rabb in particular sometimes appeared committed to a twentieth-century interpretation that may or may not have adequately characterized the seventeenth century politics of his subjects.

The rise of Atlantic history in the last decade of the twentieth century, coupled with increasingly sophisticated and serious examination of the economic and political resources wielded by the combatants in the civil struggles in England, have resulted in both a deeper and a broader understanding of the relationship between the English colonial and political projects. There are several giant works upon which I have relied heavily that address the issues of overseas traders and colonial merchants in English politics: David Harris Sack’s *The Widening Gate: Bristol and the Atlantic Economy, 1450 – 1700*; Robert Brenner’s *Merchants and Revolution: Commercial Change, Political Conflict, and London’s Overseas Traders, 1550 – 1653*; and Richard Ashcraft’s *Revolutionary Politics and Locke’s Two Treatises of Government*. Others more specifically address the problems of Atlantic history: *Atlantic History, A Critical Appraisal*, edited by Jack P. Greene and Philip D. Morgan, and *The Atlantic World and Virginia, 1550 – 1624*, a book of articles originating from a conference in Williamsburg in 2004. Noel Ivor Hume’s *The Virginia Adventure: Roanoke to Jamestown, An Archeological and Historical Odyssey* treats early Virginia with astounding depth. Its interdisciplinary approach does not only cover recent archeology, but contextualizes findings within existing document narratives. Hume explored and documented an English colony while keeping a determined eye on the metropole. More recently, James Horn’s *Adapting to the New World* combined demography, geography and social history to form an impressively detailed and human picture of emigres from England to the Chesapeake. Brenner explored and documented London overseas merchant politics while keeping a determined eye on their overseas projects. While much of Brenner’s information is useful to this project only as background, the example of integration of the political and business negotiations in London with the actual events in Virginia is invaluable. While the work does not extend across the Interregnum, Brenner does supply valuable information about the development of the colonial supply sector that later
became part of the slave trade. Brenner and Hume supply complimentary pictures of related events on both side of the Atlantic.

*The Widening Gate* is a history of the merchant community of Bristol, seventeenth century England’s ‘Second City’ and its gateway to the West. *The Widening Gate* is a social history of important economic transformations in England from the medieval to the early modern world, including changes in apprenticeships, city government, shipping and smuggling, and a series of political compromises swept away by the Civil War. Bristol plays a minor but important role in this thesis, first in its relation to Gloucester and Gloucestershire both politically and economically; and second in its relation to other Atlantic ports in the west and south of England. It was a leader in sixteenth century trade with the Iberian Peninsula and was subsequently able to translate this into transatlantic trade, while other ports on the Bristol Channel maintained their traditional coastal trade routes with overseas goods from Bristol. The successful expansion involved changes in traditional merchant organizations and changes in their relationship with the City, while attempting, often successfully, to maintain and develop trade dominance over smaller Channel and south coast ports.

The Bristol servant trade has received considerable attention, but is almost impossible to document. The list of servants shipped from Bristol begins in 1654, well after the huge migration to the colonies has peaked. Even acknowledging the legendary Bristol dominance of the servant trade, those on the list can hardly have been all the servants who shipped out. The *Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database* does not record servants at all.

Bristol lost out on a share of the seventeenth century tobacco trade when the Stuarts required that all tobacco be unloaded in London, in order to collect their taxes. However, it reemerged in the eighteenth century as a leader in both the tobacco and slave trades. Beginning in the eighteenth century, tobacco became one of the sustaining industries of the Bristol economy and remained so until after World War II. For the

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44 Sacks, 10 – 15.
tobacco trade this meant that taxes and regulations concerning illegal Spanish imports, or legal Virginia tobacco illegally carried on Dutch ships, or Charles I’s requirement that all Virginia tobacco be delivered first to London, could easily be circumvented. Tobacco was handed from ship to ship, picking up the required paper work as it went. A little while later it was offloaded – somewhere – and disappeared into any of several markets. “Lord Sackville’s Papers of 1623” is an application for a waiver of port duties based on the claim that a port worker saw tobacco being passed from ship to ship and inappropriately (naively?) ordered it offloaded – thus making it subject to the tax.46 There are many small traces like this in surviving document collections that bring life to the numbers and are sometimes able to explain anomalies.

If goods could be smuggled up the Bristol Channel and the Severn and into Gloucester, why couldn’t Gloucestershire tobacco go the other way? As Chapter 1 develops, relations between Gloucester growers and Bristol shippers were complex, varied, and frequently unfriendly. Further complicating matters were political alliances: Gloucester held for Parliament and Bristol maintained good relations with the Crown as long as they could in spite of a divided city council. Even so, some of Gloucester tobacco was probably shipped out through Bristol, particularly later in the century, when it could serve as trade goods for the slave trade. Gloucester tobacco was a useful reserve when Virginia tobacco was in short supply due to a bad harvest or transport problems and could prevent the loss of local market share to other smuggled tobacco.47 However, as Chapter 3 shows, London was the biggest market by far and the import duties made it expensive and impractical to smuggle English tobacco to London by ship.

Assessing the impact of smuggling is a long standing and nearly intractable problem in the history of coastal regions. Smugglers do not keep records, or if they do for their own business purposes, they do not share them with the state. In the case of tobacco smuggling in seventeenth and eighteenth-century England, the first half of the twentieth century saw a spike of historiographic interest and some serious attempts to assess the overall economic impact of tobacco smuggling on the economies of England.

47 A. R. Williams, 149.
and Scotland. The main problem with extending the procedure back into the seventeenth century seems to have been scanty, imprecise, and frequently speculative data on the overall carry trade of the period. This is not necessarily lost or damaged records. Cargoes in the Bristol Channel and the South Coast were often made up of a large number of small lots of merchandise which were sometimes recorded as one commodity or as the ubiquitous “miscellaneous.” Since goods produced in one part of England and shipped along the coast to another part of England were not subject to import duties, their entry into the port was less likely to be recorded. Jones discovered Of course, they needed documentation, called a cocket or coquet, to show that they were landing English goods. This gave one kind of opening to smugglers and sometimes invited a more rigorous inspection. However, without reading a large number of scattered cockets, many of dubious reliability, our vision of coastal shipping and the smuggling it enabled remains cloudy.48

Following Willan, British historians have long assumed that the coastal and river trade made up most of the carry trade in the seventeenth century.49 The first Turnpike Act was passed in 1663 but systematic construction did not actually begin until the eighteenth century. Canals followed a generation later. But while many anecdotes have come down to us attesting to the lousy condition of seventeenth century English roads, clearly, large quantities of goods must have been moved by land. There was an obvious problem with moving heavy, bulky goods by road, and the costs were generally assumed to be greater than by sea transport when that was available. However, Willan himself pointed to documentation of cloth, a bulky but not heavy product, moved by both routes from Sandwich to London.50

The real problem with assuming no substantial road traffic is that it leaves large areas of England cut off from each other in a way inconsistent with their growth. To take an extreme, if London were supplied only by the coastal and river trade, then in the winter at least, London was supplied only by the coastal trade because the upper Thames

48 Evan Jones, Inside the Illicit Economy: Reconstructing the Smuggler’s Trade of Sixteenth Century Bristol (Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate, 2012), 70 – 76.
was frequently dry in winter. Effectively, in that case, London would be a port with only a very small hinterland; certainly possible, but far from an obvious candidate for the center of international commerce and European population that it became. In fact, the population growth of London across the seventeenth-century is itself witness to road traffic in England. Literally, thousands of people immigrated to London, many of whom, when they did take ship, emigrated from there to the colonies.51

We have quite a lot of data from port records and some preserved business records that have been used to assess the volume of smuggling. But because there were no taxes on goods moved internally, anything might have been transported on English roads and when it was, it passed into a sort of historical black hole from which no information could emerge. Thus, the idea is developed in Chapter 3 that Gloucestershire tobacco moved to London internally. We know that it was sold to somebody. If it entered the coastal trade it had to arrange some sort of documentation. Some forms may be bulky, but tobacco is not heavy. Gloucestershire tobacco was an ideal candidate for the inland carry trade.

Tobacco is grown, not made. Thus, agricultural history is important to understanding the problems faced by tobacco growers on both sides of the Atlantic, and of course, how they overcame them. Joan Thirsk, working with a local historian and family genealogist, documented an experiment in tobacco growing in Winchcombe, Gloucestershire by John Stratford and Henry Somerscales. Stratford and Somerscales were gentlemen and London entrepreneurs, not local farmers. Based presumably on the “paradise prices,” they arranged loans and leases and brought in their first tobacco crop in 1619, the year tobacco growing was made illegal in England. Thirsk showed that tobacco meant a much higher return for Gloucestershire farmers than they could expect from other crops, even with falling tobacco prices. In addition to the discussion of English tobacco, Thirsk’s researches into English agricultural and economic history of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries give an invaluable picture of the agricultural sector generally, and excellent background on problems in the tobacco counties in particular.

It would be useful to have a clear demographic picture of England and English colonies in the seventeenth century: how many people; how long could they reasonable expect to live; how many children did they have and when; but there is no such clear background picture for the seventeenth century. It would be particularly useful to have pictures of the populations in London and in the Chesapeake. E. A. Wrigley, R. S. Schofield, and Henry A. Gemery supplied valuable pieces of demographic pictures for both sides of the Atlantic in the seventeenth century using sophisticated modelling techniques. Wrigley and Schofield led a parish record collection project then, using basic forecasting techniques, they “back cast,” to answer the question, “What would the population have been, and what must the birth and death rates have been, for levels to become what they did the nineteenth century?” Although surviving parish records are extensive, baptism records, for example, were clearly not intended as a census. The back casting encountered two problems with seventeenth century data: one was London which proved extremely opaque due to high population turnover. The other was the high, but only guessable level of in and out migration. Without an assessment of emigration, London appeared to have a very high death rate. However, the results, published in 1981, were impressive and gave an extremely plausible picture of English, and London, populations that is still widely cited.52

For the emigration data, Wrigley and Schofield used Henry Gemery’s work on colonial migrants.53 Unsurprisingly, Gemery found little usable departure data on the English side. Port data is basically tax data and departing people were not taxed. Surviving ships’ registers allowed some estimates of shipboard mortality, but not enough ships’ records survive to get an overall count. The problem was nearly as bad on the other side of the Atlantic. The New England colonies did keep reasonably good records, and especially good parish records. They also had a relatively high survival rate for new arrivals, because the climate was similar to the one they had just left. Virginia and Maryland told a different tale. Menard cited a head tax on workers in a 1625 census for Virginia and Maryland, but freely conceded that converting worker data to general

53 Gemery, 179 – 232.
population data was not plausible in that early period. Also of course, the death rate among new arrivals was very high. Gemery’s study begins in 1630, a time of high migration to the Virginia colony. Even if there were another worker count in 1630, there is no way to tell if those were the same workers in the two counts and good reason to think that a high percentage were replacements. Gemery, citing a letter from Governor Berkeley to the Lords Commissioners of Foreign Plantations, ultimately decided on a death rate due to “seasoning” of twenty percent. This might be a little low for the decade beginning in 1630, since it was more likely eighty percent for at least part of the preceding two decades. However, precisely because of the success of the headright system, the colony expanded and colonists moved upstream and away from swampy areas. This gave them access to a safer water supply, something that we would expect to increase the survival rate. Gemery noted that the death rate from the seasoning fell steadily across the century. The overall picture that emerges for the Chesapeake colonies is one of a high degree of uncertainty and instability in the early years, even with the success of tobacco. Obviously, that subsequently stabilized and the colony ultimately became self-sustaining; but partly because of the loss of records from the Virginia side of Chesapeake Bay and partly because of Gemery’s use of a flat death rate due to the seasoning, the picture remains cloudy.

The Civil War had several important effects on tobacco on both sides of the Atlantic, which are difficult to assess for several reasons. First and foremost, when the goal of the struggle is state power, state records may conveniently disappear until a clear winner has emerged. This is at least one plausible explanation for the disappearance of the tobacco records between 1640 and 1669. When he could no longer borrow enough from the General Farm of the Customs, Charles I attempted to collect tonnage and poundage illegally and took more direct control of the tax farm. Presumably, that had a disruptive effect on record keeping. Second, land wars disrupt farming and sea wars disrupt shipping. Trying to trace one crop or product through the disruption of war, particularly when the combatants are worried about practically everything else, is

probably impossible in the same way that tracing product through smuggling routes is impossible. However, the Civil War had an effect on tobacco shipping from Virginia and tobacco production in Gloucestershire seems to have had an effect on the Civil War.

Braddick’s *State Formation in Early Modern England c. 1550 – 1700* analyzes the growth of the English state in the face of demographic, economic, and political upheavals. While this work does not cover anything like the scope of that one, it agrees with the main thesis: that the growth of the early modern English bureaucracy, for example in the establishment of the Great Farm of the Customs considered in Chapter 1, resulted in a critical strengthening of the English state. This centralization and bureaucratization meant more than an expansion of territory. It meant increased control over the political economy of that territory.56

*The nerves of state: Taxation and the financing of the English state, 1558 – 1714*, although apparently intended as an upper-level textbook, describes and analyzes fiscal policies of the English Crown and its complex relations with legal and political discourse during this challenging century. Braddick, citing Joseph Schumpeter, identified a distinction between the demesne or feudal state, with its relations of personal loyalty and feudal dues, and the modern tax [based] state. Taxation is the means by which the modern state establishes and maintains that critical control. According to Braddick, Crown revenue as a percentage of total state revenue dropped steadily during the period from 1560 – 1640.57 Thus, the tobacco imposts established under James I were important to maintaining Crown income when other sources of revenue were diverted through the control of Parliament. Taxes must be legal. Otherwise, no one will voluntarily pay them and collection must be by coercive means. However, if the state is perceived as weak and divided, or opposed to the interests of one part of the population, coercion may be required. Tax evasion, during certain periods, may represent a serious undermining force, not just because of the loss of revenue, but because of the de-legitimation of the tax collector and the necessity to apply force.58

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Michael Braddick’s *God’s Fury, England’s Fire: A New History of the English Civil Wars* focuses on a detailed military and political history – the first one arising from the second. In particular, Braddick’s discussion of the role of Gloucester in the war in the West raises important questions about the role of Gloucestshire tobacco growers in that conflict. Braddock asserts that the decision to lay siege to Gloucester held up Royalist armies and allowed Parliamentary forces to regroup and raise a new troop levy. Otherwise, there would have been nothing to prevent the King’s army from marching on London. Braddick thought that Gloucester should have fallen easily and represents the surrounding county as already under Royalist control. While this thesis makes no attempt to analyze military strategy in the Civil War, due in part to illegal tobacco growing in Gloucestshire, Royalist control of the county remains an extremely problematic assertion. Braddick’s own arguments in the two works cited above suggest the reason why. The state was unable to prevent widespread tax evasion. If the Royalist army had left, the county would no longer have been under Royalist control.

Gaps in the graph of the London Port Book prices and volumes for Virginia from 1640 to 1669 suggest a different problem. We know Virginia was shipping tobacco during this period and we know Governor Berkeley declared for Charles I who was, after all, the colony’s official Proprietor; and after his death for Charles II. Parliament punished the colony in 1650 – one of the missing years – with a trade embargo, but this was quickly renegotiated when the true cost to the state was discovered. The last year available, 1640, shows more than one million pounds of tobacco landing in London, clearly a resource to be protected. However, even though hostilities had no yet broken out in 1640, Charles’ relations with the Great Farm had already become problematic. Due in part to his expenses and in part to illegal collection of other taxes during the period of Personal Rule, his credit-worthiness was in doubt. When heads of state break their own laws, we can expect records to disappear. As we shall see, Cromwell trusted the kind of credit arrangements that characterized the first two Stuart’s relationship to the Great Farm, to an individual merchant banker, Martin Noell. A plausible explanation,

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although by no means a certain one, is that the London Port Books were not kept by the Great Farm during this period.\textsuperscript{60}

The first of the Navigation Acts followed which required, among other things, that Virginia tobacco only be carried in English ships. This prevented Virginia planters from trading with the Dutch. Enforcement required the First Anglo-Dutch War. As will be shown in Chapter 3, Cromwell had a great deal more luck suppressing the Dutch tobacco trade with Virginia than he did suppressing the illegal tobacco growing in Gloucestershire. Tobacco could not be said to be under Crown protection, only partly because Cromwell never wore one. What was protected was not tobacco, but English merchant shipping and colonial supply. The move reflects a full-blown mercantilism.

The Restoration saw the introduction of the coffee house into London economic and political life. The explosion of coffee houses is significant for this narrative for two reasons. First, it marks a change in the tobacco market: coffee houses were licensed to sell tobacco and made pipes available to their regular customers. Unlike the alehouses of the 1630s that served the swelling and mainly poor migrant population, coffee houses of the 1670s and 1680s were frequented by merchants and retailers, including tobacco shippers and sellers; London bankers; and members of both Houses of Parliament. Coffee houses were where they met to discuss politics and business. While presumably they did not want to throw their money away, their regular coffee houses were one of their regular places of business. They clearly preferred legal tobacco in licensed public houses: Virginia or Spanish leaf.\textsuperscript{61} Their Libertarian outlook notwithstanding, they apparently had no qualms about the increasing dependence of England’s colonies on a slave labor force.

Although Eric Williams’ contention that the true source of British industrial capital was profits in the slave trade has not been completely borne out by the recent data explosion, the basic challenge to the older theory still stands.\textsuperscript{62} Because, while the internal developments described above were important for the emergence of the modern British state, they do not seem sufficient to account for the breadth and depth of its

\textsuperscript{60} Braddick, \textit{The nerves of state}, 37 – 38.
\textsuperscript{62} Eric Williams, 3 – 29.
triumph, particularly in view of the dramatic successes of English colonial expansion across the seventeenth century. In the eighteenth century, that expansion became the British Empire on which the sun never set. The colonization projects that subsequently became an empire took place, not with the blessing of a strong and secure state attempting to extend its reach, but with the tentative and typically underfunded blessings of individual commercial enterprises, each one in the service of a political faction or party at odds with each other and frequently with the state itself.

History and analysis devoted exclusively to tobacco spans the twentieth century but its growth is no more linear than the institutions it studies. The tobacco business benefits from war, even while transport becomes more complicated. Tobacco scholarship also benefits from war; the dates of works in the attached bibliography with tobacco in the title tend to cluster around large global conflicts. It is not hard to understand why governments would fund this work in wartime. But, there are also bursts of extremely useful scholarship in the economic upheavals of the 1920s and 1930s; followed by more of the same in the late 1950s and across the 1960s. Beginning in the early 1980s, there is a steady flow of sophisticated social and economic histories of tobacco, colonies, politics, and slavery and their effects on each other. A modern advantage in the still tangled fields of economic and political history, particularly in the areas of drugs and human trafficking, comes from the impressively high level of digitization of resources as described above, including both e-books and the creation of large, searchable databases. maintained by the British Government on their side of the Atlantic and by an honor role of American Universities and research institutions on this side.
Chart 1.1 Copy of Menard's Original Graph of Volume versus Price

Chart 1.2 Semi-log graph of Chesapeake tobacco following Menard
Chart 1.3 Linear graph of Chesapeake tobacco with Price’s Data

Chart 2
linear

British Imports of Chesapeake Tobacco in Pounds

Farm Price of Tobacco in Pence Sterling

Chart 1.3 Linear graph of Chesapeake tobacco with Price’s Data

Chart 2 linear

British Imports of Chesapeake Tobacco in Pounds

Farm Price of Tobacco in Pence Sterling
Table 1.1 Slave Disembarkations in the Chesapeake for the 17th century

From *The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database*

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### Table 1.2 Register of Servants Sent to Foreign Plantations

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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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Chart 1.4 Timeline

Screen shot of a timeline from the *Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database* showing slave landings in mainland North America in the years 1600 – 1700.
CHAPTER 2 MERCHANTS, CUSTOMS, AND MARKETS

2.1 Tobacco and Taxes

This chapter will consider tobacco’s achievement of an economic niche in England under the first two Stuart Kings: where it came from; how it got to England; what taxes were applied and who collected and who paid them. Unlike other products of the Atlantic expansion, tobacco came to have a special relationship with the Crown. Tobacco had been smuggled into England as part of the illegal war-time trade with Spain, and was never under the control of a Crown chartered monopoly or protected guild. In that respect, it was unlike other sectors in the overseas trade such as wool or currants. It was also unlike other sectors in the domestic economy such as the fishmongers or grocers. It had no market sector of its own under the Tudors, and it had no role in political struggles or negotiations.

For the early Stuarts, revenue was a constant power struggle with a generally unsympathetic Parliament. Ultimately, tobacco taxes and colonial profits assisted the Crown in their financial struggles, but in order to collect that revenue, the Crown needed to control smuggling. The creation of the General Farm of the Customs was an attempt to rationalize the system of tax collection in the ports that paid off, not just with increased revenue, but with increased lines of credit that enabled the Crown to survive some of its battles with Parliament.\(^63\) While it was definitely not the intention of any of the architects of customs collection, one effect was to create a legal and protected market for tobacco. The English tobacco market was created out of the Stuart struggles with Parliament over taxes, specifically import taxes; and by the development of colonies intended to promote English presence in the New World at the expense of Spain.

Before the passage of the Triennial Act in 1641, Parliament only met after it was called by the King.\(^64\) In theory, when it was in session, Parliament debated and

\(^{63}\) A. P. Newton, “The Establishment of the Great Farm of the Customs,” The Transactions of the Royal Historical Society 1 (1918), 129.

subsequently approved certain subsidies for the monarch, then authorized taxes to pay for them. Beyond that acknowledgement of royal prerogative, the King would need to call Parliament to fund wars or other extraordinary emergencies. Asserting its perceived prerogatives, the Parliament of 1604 proved extremely reluctant to assign even the traditional subsidies to James, including the funds for the celebration of his coronation. They proved equally reluctant to pay accumulating debt from the war with Spain. While continuing to debate the issue of subsidies, James and his minister, Robert Cecil, ended the Anglo-Spanish War, established New World colonies and created the General Farm. They also revived a tax, called an impost, on luxury imports that included tobacco. The revenue from the impost went directly to the Crown and was not under the control of Parliament.

As part of his post-war Spanish policy, James chartered colonies on the North American continent, a policy that ultimately resulted in the successful Virginia tobacco colony. Virginia tobacco received a special tax break that was intended to make it more competitive with Spanish tobacco. It only had to pay the impost to the Crown, not the regular import taxes. Ironically, James hated tobacco and was one of the few voices in Europe speaking out about its ill effects. His pamphlet, *A Counterblaste to Tobacco* argued against any claims of medical benefit and asserted that tobacco had a “venomous facultie.” Even though he allowed the Virginia colony a tax break, he apparently thought that high taxes would reduce overall tobacco consumption. They did not have that effect. Ironically, the end of the Anglo-Spanish War, the creation of the General Farm, and the founding of Virginia all worked together to develop the English tobacco market. James became tied to tobacco by his own fiscal and foreign policies, albeit with a rope supplied by the English Parliament.

The tobacco trade was not directly correlated with any one religious faction any more than it was correlated with status, wealth or hair color. Nevertheless, religion permeated every seventeenth century political institution and it intersected the development of the English tobacco market at several points, frequently by distorting

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66 *Counterblaste to Tobacco*; James I, London, 1604; [https://www.laits.utexas.edu/poltheory/james/blaste/blaste.html](https://www.laits.utexas.edu/poltheory/james/blaste/blaste.html)
debates in the House of Commons. Moreover, international relations were very difficult for a Protestant country surrounded by Catholic giants, particularly when one of the Catholic giants had access to New World bullion. Trade relations, the location and purpose of English colonies, and control of the Elizabethan raider/traders were all complicated by popular attitudes toward Catholics. Domestic issues were also complicated by the presence of English Catholics, particularly in the peerage. Recusancy laws plus a series of oaths discouraged Catholics from active participation in the House of Lords and there were no open Catholics in the House of Commons. However, Puritans and Presbyterians who were opposed to the episcopate constituted an immediate and pressing series of political problems. According to Fincham and Lake, James, in his role as head of the Church of England, attempted to maintain a peaceful ecumene without compromising Church authority.67 He considered Catholics and Puritans as equal threats to that goal. He was attempting to address this opposition in his famous Hampton Court statement, “No bishops, no King.” Unfortunately for James, there was considerable Puritan strength in Commons, enough to block or advance any legislation they perceived as related to defense of their religion.68

The opposition was not confined to speeches in Parliament. James was the target of several plots in the early years of his reign. The Main Plot and the Bye Plot were both attempts to kidnap the new King. The Bye Plot was a conspiracy led by Roman Catholic priests who wanted to force James to relax the Penal Laws. Investigation of the Bye Plot turned up evidence of what came to be called the Main Plot: a conspiracy led by a Protestant opposition to replace James on the throne with his [presumably more pliable] Protestant cousin, Arabella Stuart. The Gunpowder Plot, the best-known attempt of the period, was a full-blown assassination attempt aimed at both the King and Parliament. The conspirators who were caught were English Catholic laymen and, unlike the Bye plot, no direct connection to the Roman Catholic hierarchy or to Spain was ever established – not for lack of effort. The discovery of the Gunpowder Plot had several effects that were almost certainly not what the plotters had intended. First, it increased

pressure on James to enforce the Penal Laws beyond what he seems to have supported at Hampton Court. It also seems to have had the effect of pulling together previously disparate factions in Parliament and advancing some of the Crown’s agenda. For example, Parliament hastily voted James some subsidies, although less he had requested.69 Finally, while the Gunpowder Plot increased the pressure on James to take a strong stance toward Spain, Parliament appears to have become more receptive to colonization; although not, as we shall see, particularly receptive to the idea of funding it.

While it is true that the Stuarts held firmly to the idea that they had a God-given right to rule, at least some of James’ successes can be attributed to his relatively firm grip on the responsibilities of rule and the comparative willingness of his ministers to run down the details of state administration. James continually worked at being King of England; managing finances and foreign policy more or less well and occasionally innovatively. While he failed to unify England and Scotland, and ultimately was not able fully to implement his Spanish policy or forestall religious conflict on the continent, he enabled two critically important institutions that strengthened the English state and Crown finances: the General Farm of the Customs and the English colonies. His support for the Church of England ultimately made him Puritan enemies, but he continually tried to avoid open confrontation.

His son Charles I exhibited none of the same talent for navigating Parliamentary opposition. In fact, he exhibited considerable talent for exacerbating it. James used taxes, particularly the tax on tobacco, to the political advantage of the Crown. Charles taxed everything he could find, including retail tobacco sales. He borrowed against expected tax revenue from the General Farm, then raised taxes again when actual revenue did not meet expectations. James constantly struggled with a Parliament unwilling to accept him as King and apparently determined not to let go of a single penny. Charles sent Parliament home and illegally collected the taxes it had authorized. The period of Personal Rule and the Forced Loan illuminate Charles’ increasing need for funds, but they also illustrate his ultimately fatal contempt for his Parliamentary opposition. Far from attempting to create institutions or modify tradition to suit his needs, examination of

surviving customs records repeatedly shows Charles attempting to exploit the institutions
his father created, with no eye for possible consequences to the English economy or to his
governance. Overall, in looking at what enduring institutions emerged from the reigns of
the first two Stuarts, we find institutions that James was able to create and Charles was
unable to break.

2.2 Parliament, the King and Some Players

James had been designated Elizabeth’s heir after prolonged Parliamentary
maneuvering and negotiations by Sir Robert Cecil, Elizabeth’s Secretary of State. It
seems clear that a succession crisis would have been very dangerous for England in 1603,
a Protestant kingdom at war with a strong Catholic kingdom and with few allies.
Parliament formally accepted James, but then embarked on a series of moves that appear
designed to limit his rule and to expand their own. Lockyer suggested that Parliament
was concerned that James was still relatively young and his children were also very
young. A successful kidnap or assassination attempt would leave James’ ten-year-old
son next in line for the throne, raising regency issues that did not appear to have an easy
solution. On the other hand, if he lived as long as Elizabeth, any damage to English
institutions would be difficult to undo. James appeared not to understand the English
Parliament, and appeared particularly unsympathetic to the House of Commons. When
James was crowned, Cecil’s real work began.70

Robert Cecil was the second son of William Cecil, Baron Burghley, who had been
Elizabeth’s Lord Treasurer. As a second son, Robert Cecil had no expectations of land or
fortune, but his father noted his capabilities and introduced him at Court, where he was
trained by Walsingham, Elizabeth’s chief spymaster. Eventually, Cecil inherited his
father’s career. Cecil was hunchbacked in an age unforgiving of deformity and endured
insults and condescension from two monarchs. James called him “my little beagle.” In
exchange, Cecil loyally delivered his considerable intelligence and hours of hard work

70 Roger Lockyer, The Early Stuarts: A Political History of England, 1603 – 1642 (London and
defending the monarchy.\textsuperscript{71} It is difficult to determine the extent of Cecil’s impact on James’ policies or on Parliamentary politics, but it seems to have been considerable. After Cecil’s death in 1612, his reputation came under savage attack in a series of popular broadsides, called libels. Apparently, his power as James’ chief advisor had been much resented.\textsuperscript{72}

One of James’ first projects was the union of England and Scotland, but Parliament proved not agreeable. James’ case was simple: he would be a better king in both England and Scotland if they were one kingdom. The Scottish Parliament passed an act authorizing the union contingent on the English Parliament passing a similar act. The English Parliament failed to do so and the union did not take place until 1707, long after James’ death. Even a cursory examination makes it difficult not to conclude that substantial blocks in both Houses of Parliament did not really want him to be a better king, at least not if that meant that he would sometimes be a stronger opponent of Parliament. The House of Lords seems to have been unenthusiastic but ultimately persuadable, perceiving that the peerage was not directly threatened. However, in the House of Commons there was a vigorous and articulate opposition led by Sir Edwin Sandys. For Sandys, still new in Commons, this was the fight that showed what he could do politically and ultimately propelled him into a leadership role in Parliament and later in the Virginia Company.\textsuperscript{73}

Sandys’ father was one of the Marian exiles who became a prelate in the Anglican Church under Elizabeth I and had ended his days as Archbishop of York. Edwin Sandys was never rich, but always comfortable. He was well educated, thoughtful, articulate and a good writer. He trained in law before switching to politics. Sandys had earlier toured Europe and on returning to England wrote and published a sort of ideological travelogue: \textit{A Relation of the State of Religion, and with what Hopes and Policies it Hath Been Framed, and is Maintained, in the Several States of These Western Parts of the World.}


The book opened with a discussion of the sacrament of penance, of which Sandys disapproved, and continued with a litany of the sins of corruption of the sixteenth-century Catholic Church. Then, the *Relation* got down to business and treated the Catholic Church as a political institution, assessing its policies in terms of its legal and social effects rather than in theological terms. Sandys objected to what he considered the ignorance of the laity and the control of the scriptural message as examples of censorship that could only weaken a culture that practiced them. The book was hardly an example of the kind of toleration that Sandys advocated. Its criticisms of Catholicism were those that could have been levelled at any religious organization, including the Church of England in the seventeenth century. Sandys was convinced that free preaching was essential to the spread of Protestantism, and also firmly convinced that free discussion was an important tool in the fight against corruption.74

The book very intelligently assessed the relative political and economic strengths of Catholic and Protestant states throughout Europe and asked why Spain had been so successful in establishing an empire but no Protestant countries had so far established colonies. Although both are concerned with religion, Sandys’ vision of colonization differed from Hakluyt’s vision that seamen, and particularly explorers, saw God’s works. When Englishmen went forth into the Atlantic, they were doing God’s work.75 His is the practical political consideration of what Protestant countries needed to do to succeed. Sandys concluded that the only thing currently restraining the great Catholic nations of Europe from an all-out attack on their Protestant neighbors was their fear of the Ottoman. There would probably never again be unity in Christendom. Toleration was therefore essential, and discussion was essential for toleration.76 The book was prophetic in several ways: it presaged Sandys’ career as a leader of the loyal opposition in Commons and it also helped explain his subsequent commitment to the Virginia Company and to the

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74 Edwin Sandys, *A Relation of the State of Religion, and with what Hopes and Policies it Hath Been Framed, and is Maintained, in the Several States of These Western Parts of the World* (Early English Books Online, University of Michigan), http://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A11464.0001.001/1:2?rgn=div1;view=fulltext


76 Sandys, *A Relation of the State of Religion,*
Virginia colony. Protestant countries need colonies and all countries need free discussion of religion and politics. Sandys supported both for the rest of his life.\textsuperscript{77}

Book sales point to the possibility that Sandys’ contemporaries were extremely interested in England’s role in a peace time world that included Catholic powers.\textsuperscript{78} Certainly, the ideas would have interested James, although there is no evidence that he read it. The book was first published early in 1605. Copies raced off the booksellers’ shelves and there were two more printings before the discovery of the Gunpowder Plot negatively impacted sales of any book that discussed unity and toleration in Christendom, even pessimistically. The High Commission ordered the book burnt in the courtyard of Saint Paul’s. According to John Chamberlain, the burning was with Sandys’ consent and may even have been at his instigation.\textsuperscript{79}

With a Church of England background and an interest in religion, culture, and colonization, Sandys does not seem a likely opponent of the King. Initially, he was not. Working with Robert Cecil, Sandys supported a bill that lumped Puritans and Catholics together as recusants. Apparently, he was knighted for his support even though the bill failed.\textsuperscript{80} However, there were serious areas of ideological disagreement between Sandys and the King. Sandys was a supporter of free trade and a supporter of free speech, by which he appeared to include religious debate within Parliament. He was also a strong supporter of the rights and responsibilities of Parliament, in particular the House of Commons. James was opposed to all those things.

According to Rabb, the House of Commons was a melting pot where county gentry met and made deals with London merchants. Subsequent events would seem to suggest that some parts of the pot melted more readily than others.\textsuperscript{81} In the process of uniting the opposition to Union, Sandys became the leader of the Opposition in Commons. Sandys’ case was simple. Parliament needed more authority; England did not need more Parliaments. Sandys summed up the opposition’s point of view when he

\textsuperscript{77} Rabb, Jacobean Gentleman, 31 – 32.
\textsuperscript{80} Rabb, Jacobean Gentleman, 16.
\textsuperscript{81} Rabb, “The Role of the Commons,” 63 – 64.
said “We cannot make laws to bind Britannia.”82 In the first years of James’ reign, and in the teeth of his initial snub of Commons, the debates strengthened Parliament’s legitimacy and advanced Sandys’ career.

The refusal of Union was not the limit of Parliament’s reluctance to accept James. Traditionally, the Crown was entitled to support and Parliament was expected to vote grants and subsidies including purveyance, provisioning for the royal household at less than market price. Wardship, the right granted to the Throne in the Magna Carta to manage the estates of minors who held lands from the King, was another important source of Crown income. The House of Lords furiously opposed James’ wardship, afraid that Scottish lords would acquire English titles as a result and, while the debate on Union thundered on, joined Commons in refusing to discuss subsidies. Cecil attempted to negotiate a contract with Parliament that would commit it to paying the King a salary in exchange for giving up purveyance, wards, and other subsidies, but no amount was ever agreed upon. The King flatly refused to give up wardship for the sums discussed and short of a court challenge which they knew they would lose, Parliament had nothing of equal value with which to bargain. So, they argued and stalled and Cecil’s negotiations never produced a contract.83 The fight over finances gave Cecil and the King real motivation to reform Elizabethan customs collection and Parliament did agree to a reformed Book of Rates in 1604. However, while that increased money for subsidies and Crown income overall, the effect was neither immediate nor adequate. Fiscal reform alone could not correct the effects on the English economy of the war with Spain. James needed to change the direction of English foreign policy.

2.3 End of the Anglo-Spanish War

When James I ascended the Throne, England had been at war with Spain for eighteen years. There had been no land battles of any significance. Elizabeth I supported the Anti-Spanish forces in the Low Countries, but not to the point of a direct


83 Rabb, Jacobean Gentleman, 143 – 170.
confrontation on the ground. Instead, the war was fought primarily at sea, only briefly coming ashore, for example at Cadiz or when English privateers attacked Spanish colonies in the West Indies.84 Attacks on the coastal colonies in the West Indies grew increasingly fierce in the last five years of the war. Captains like Christopher Newport and the Earl of Cumberland, with armed merchantmen funded by merchant consortia looking for the quick payoff of privateering, successfully attacked even fortified harbors such as Puerto Rico and Tabasco. According to Andrews, profits from privateering averaged from £100,000 to £200,000 per year from 1585 to 1603. The yearly expenses for these ships might exceed £130,000, suggesting that not all privateers made very much money. However, there is no doubt that privateering damaged both Spanish commerce and her colonies.85 Furthermore, it appeared to be increasing toward the end of the war. Smaller players, motivated by a depression in commerce that was also a direct effect of almost twenty years of war, traversed the Atlantic in search of new looting opportunities. It became almost impossible for Spain to defend the miles of coastline of her Caribbean empire from the escalating attacks.86

James immediately began negotiations to end the war and the two nations signed the Treaty of London in August of 1604.87 Thanks to Elizabethan raiding, he was in a good bargaining position. Phillip III ultimately agreed to allow English Protestants to resume trading in Spain and the Spanish Netherlands, and to waive the thirty per cent import/export tax. The treaty allowed trading “where commerce existed before the war,” a formula which the English interpreted to mean that North America was open and the Spanish interpreted to mean the West Indies were still out of bounds. The treaty did impose the obligation on James not to permit any more English armed attacks on Spanish shipping or Spanish colonies.88

Colonization of the east coast of North America gave James a way to move England, both legally and aggressively, into the New World with its fabled riches.

87 Lockyer, 12 – 13.
Despite the successful attacks on Spanish shipping, the war had drained the English treasury, depressed commerce, and generally distorted the English economy. England needed to reestablish peaceful commerce and James urgently needed to assure his subjects, especially those that had made money and reputation from the war that he was not soft on Spain and that other economic opportunities would arise.

Clearly peace was not welcomed by everyone. English wartime privateering was well funded by English merchants and illegal trading was often protected by men of rank. The Lord High Admiral received a tenth of all wartime prize monies. He was probably not anxious for the end of the war. Even before the end of hostilities, some English merchants had begun developing illegal trade in the Spanish West Indies so that the lines between raiding and trading were already becoming blurred, at least from the standpoint of the English.89

By the end of the war some successful trading conglomerates had already grown very large and were experimenting with new, more open, business models to facilitate fund raising. They were able to outfit and arm large merchantmen for the risky and frequently profitable business of Caribbean raiding. The war thus helped harden these practices into a structural feature of English trade. Perhaps because of these developments, Spain continued to oppose an English presence in the Caribbean under any guise. The armed merchantman subsequently became a feature of other trading ventures in the Indian Ocean, the Mediterranean, and in the next war, the Baltic.90

The one exception to this line of adaptation was the illegal wartime trade with Spain itself. Armed merchantmen may have been effective and even necessary in the Caribbean, but they could hardly slip up the Guadalquivir for a little illicit trade in Seville. Although smuggled bullion rather than tobacco was the desired return, both in war and peace Spain was a source of trade goods accessible to small traders; tobacco, for example, was cheaper to acquire than bullion and brought a nice profit back in England. The war provided an opening for individual traders and tended to increase the supply of

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both New World bullion and tobacco circulating in England. This trade was thus not unpopular with either English merchants or the English Crown.91

In addition to pacifying and harnessing the merchants of war, as head of the Church of England negotiating with a Catholic country, James had to thread a narrow path between satisfying increasing Puritan strength in the House of Commons with their fear of English Catholics; and not oppressing England’s Catholic minority to an extent that would offend the Catholic powers of Europe, particularly Spain. Successful North American colonies would satisfy national pride and thus would satisfy political requirements that, while they did not directly impact the religious questions, did pull at least one of the fangs of the popular and patriotic opposition, while simultaneously giving seamen idled by war’s end new career choices.

2.4 Customs

Under Elizabeth, customs duties constituted a relatively minor portion of state revenue. The war at sea had been paid for primarily by piracy. Collection of customs duties was in the hands of private individuals called tax farmers or customers who paid an agreed upon rent for the tax farm; then kept whatever they could collect beyond that sum. Elizabethan tax farms generally were specific to one or at the most two related commodities; with the important exception of Walsingham’s lucrative and short lived general farm of the outports. Each port had a controller as well as the necessary customers who checked the necessary rate books, collected the specified duties, and generally saw to it that the docks and the warehouses ran smoothly. The system tended to be inefficient and local variation was the rule. By creating the General Farm of the Customs, James and Cecil began the process of imposing some sort of order on the anarchy of English privateering and smuggling, and turning them into English trade.92

While sixteenth and seventeenth century customs duties were hardly voluntary, enforcement at the port was basically an expansion of the watch and ward system.

Merchant communities in the outports had sufficient political access to get protection when needed, but they also had to give it. Private security was the rule, with all the overseas traders watching the customs houses and of course each other. Both Crown and local officials had an interest in collecting the lawful duties; but disputes seldom had ready solutions in a slow court system and officials often lacked the kind of authority they might have needed to impose them. Because of the system of farming, all prosecutions were basically civil cases. Not surprisingly, out of court settlements became the rule.93

The whole system worked at all because only some cities were licensed for international trade. In the thirteenth century when duties were first implemented, the Crown divided the English coastline into districts called Ports, each with one main seaport.94 By the seventeenth century, London had assumed commercial prominence and the other Ports were referred to as outports. This did not mean they were small. Like London, cities such as Bristol and Southampton had a sufficiently robust merchant class to effectively take on revenue collection. However, in Parliament where tax rates were determined, Bristol and Southampton might frequently be allies against policies they considered overly favorable to London. On the whole, in both London and the outports, it was in the cities’ and merchants’ interests to make regulation work and the big ports were strong enough to do so. But, London and the larger outports also had sufficiently robust merchant classes to effectively avoid regulation when they chose, particularly if they regarded that regulation as unfairly favoring another port.

Both imports and exports had on occasion been subject to taxation. Duties were not based on the item’s price and were not expressed as a per cent. Instead, the product would have a per unit, either mass or volume, assessment in pence, shillings or pounds. Hence the terminology “tonnage and poundage.”95 The customs duties of tonnage and poundage traditionally were determined by Parliament in conjunction with the Crown. The process was more or less rational, depending on when and which Sovereign, but

93 Jones, 42 – 47.
94 Jones, 38.
95 Originally this was tunnage, referring to the duty on a tun, or cask, of wine. Tonnage was a payment to ship owners for the use of their ships in wartime. The same spelling is now typically used for both applications.
some interest was taken in the effects on trade and national welfare. Wars were funded by direct taxes and, beginning with the Elizabethan Poor Laws, there were special taxes set aside to fund some very basic charity. By the later Tudors, these direct taxes were generally not farmed, but collected by the Crown.

Customs duties were intended to apply to international trade. English goods traded within England were not taxed, even if they were moved by the coastal trade. Necessities such as produce and fish were not taxed. But, beginning with Mary I, the Crown claimed the prerogative to add extra taxes, called imposts, on luxury imports such as sweet wine (shipped by the tun). Imposts were politically tricky because they risked being perceived as infringing rights of the peerage and the rights of cities first enumerated in Magna Carta; but as Crown revenue independent of Parliament they were also very tempting.96

The 1604 Parliament seems to have taught James I some important lessons. It continued to attempt control through financing: James was not granted Provisioning, the right of supply for the Royal household at below market price, which he deeply resented; and the grants from tonnage and poundage needed to pay the war debt were generally inadequate. Short of funds and running out of patience, James exercised his prerogative with an impost on currants, an extremely lucrative import of the formerly powerful Levant Company, whose monopoly had come under increasing challenge. James refused to sign needed letters to the Sultan of Turkey, because the Sultan was not a “Christian Prince.” This meant that the traders in Turkey had no protection at all, either from Englishmen or from Turks, and had to bear increased monopoly expenses in the Eastern Mediterranean.97 The Great Farm tightened dockside controls, so that almost all merchants were now paying more tonnage and poundage. The Crown’s addition of an impost on currants had an immediate impact on price and profitability.

There was not much currant importers could do about the tonnage and poundage, but the legality of the impost was challenged in Bate’s Case of 1606 in the Court of the Exchequer. Bate, an importer of currants, claimed that currants were a necessity in

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97 Pauline Croft, “Fresh Light on Bates’ Case,” 527 – 537.
English cooking and therefore should not be subject to imposts. The Crown claimed they were a luxury item and thus taxable by the Crown. When the Court ruled in the Crown’s favor, a delighted James added imposts on other luxury imports. It seems to have become clear to him that he could not rely on Parliament for adequate funds and the imposts had been confirmed as his prerogative.\(^{98}\) Apparently, he thought it also gave him an opportunity to strike a blow against tobacco.

The Elizabethan tax on tobacco was 2d/lb. The poundage was immediately raised to 4d/lb by an enthusiastic Parliament. The 1604 Book of Rates valued Spanish tobacco at 6s 8d/lb. In addition to the poundage, James added an impost of 6s 8d/lb, a 100% *ad valorem* tax. James was famously concerned with his English subjects’ virtue and he hated tobacco. He seems to have become convinced that raising the tax would do more to stamp out tobacco usage than his famous pamphlet, *A Counterblaste to Tobacco*.\(^{99}\) In fact, neither attempt appears to have worked at all. The impost initially failed to generate the expected revenue and under protest from the tax farmers had to be reduced. The 1608 Book of Rates placed a duty of 6d/lb on roll or pudding tobacco, and 4d/lb for leaf tobacco, representing an increase in poundage over 1604 and a substantial increase over the Elizabethan tax. James added an impost of 1s/lb, a decrease from the 1604 impost that was expected to generate more revenue. With this compromise, James appeared to have accepted tobacco, and no more pamphlets such as the *Counterblaste* appeared. The impost was expected to make money for the hungry Crown and English virtue would have to fend for itself. The tax war between James and Parliament not only did not stop the incoming tide of tobacco, it did not even slow it down. The Spanish tobacco trade appears to have increased dramatically in the post-war period, but revenue increases were much more sluggish and, if the tax was too high, revenue dropped off very fast.

Accounting procedures at the ports had been standardized under Elizabeth and some tax farms had been consolidated. These changes had tended to make collections more efficient, but still left a trail of uncollected taxes and administrative nightmares.\(^{100}\) Attempts at enforcement of smuggling around the outports had delivered mixed results.

\(^{99}\) *A Counterblaste to Tobacco*
\(^{100}\) A. P. Newton, “The Establishment of the Great Farm of the Customs,” *The Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 1 (1918), 130 – 133.
At the King’s urging and under the direction of Robert Cecil, the Parliament of 1604 agreed to the formation of the General Farm of the Customs, which organized rather than replaced the older and more anarchic series of individual collectors under one umbrella institution. Instead of one tax farm for currants and another for wool each reporting to the Crown, the Great Farm organized each port into one farm to which the individual customers for wool or for currants reported. The farms in each port then reported to the Great Farm.  

The Great Farm itself, the umbrella organization, was leased to a group of wealthy and powerful individuals who acted more like a banking syndicate than like tax collectors. They paid yearly farm rent to the Crown, then administered tax collection at the ports, sometimes subcontracting actual collections. Rents could be and were renegotiated if a farm proved much more or much less profitable than anticipated. Overall, the system was extremely profitable for the original customers of the Great Farm. Lionel Cranfield, officially appointed Surveyor-General of the Customs in 1613, stated firmly that the men who ran the system for the first seven years had all purchased great estates with their profits. However, smaller farmers in the ports had a mixed experience. Usually, they paid most or all of their farm rent in advance and then grappled with the problems of collection discussed below under smuggling.

The chief advantage of the Great Farm was initially presumed to be the predictability of the rent revenue, and both predictability and Crown revenue certainly increased. However, the system had an added advantage which the perpetually cash-strapped Stuarts soon learned to exploit. The Farm was a source of short term loans that could be drawn against collections in advance of the next rent payment. The loans were generally interest free if the collection accounts had money in them. The process has been compared to overdraft protection, and that feature was included, but the concept of payday loans seems more appropriate for the advance payment feature. According to Ashton, long term loans did not come through the Farm directly, but lending to the Crown was regarded as an opportunity for increased status and expanded political access,

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102 Cited in Ashton, “Revenue Farming Under the Early Stuarts,” 311 – 313.
as well as a financial opportunity. Long term loans may have come from other sources, but they frequently involved the same people. Compared to his son and successor, James made relatively infrequent use of his newly expanded credit line.\textsuperscript{103}

However, Tables I and II show certain key points where the resources of the tax farms proved critical to the independence of the Crown from Parliamentary dickering over subsidies. Together the tables make a nice timeline of early Stuart financial and political crisis and suggest their preferred solutions. For example, Charles’ borrowing seems light for the period from 1625 to 1630 that included two wars: the next Anglo-Spanish War, primarily a land war in the Low Countries fought from 1625 to 1630; and war with the French from 1627 to 1629, which, happily for Charles’ finances, was fought mainly at sea. Charles ran up some hefty overdrafts, but he only needed interest bearing loans for two of the years in that period, both at the beginning of active conflict. Once England was at war two things happened: Parliament loosened the purse strings; and other lenders appeared, probably looking for access. The one thing the Tables do not show is how and how promptly the Crown paid back its loans. After 1638, loan sources including the Farm began to dry up for Charles I, suggesting that he did not manage repayments well.

While Farm rent is not a simple per cent of imports and exports, the Farm rent gives a picture of how much is at stake in the import/export market and something to which to compare the expanding tobacco market. For example, farm rent for 1621 was £160,000 and the syndicate undoubtedly collected more than that. Otherwise, they would have renegotiated the rent.\textsuperscript{104} Virginia sent 38,452 pounds of tobacco to London that year and should have paid approximately £13,000 in taxes and imposts.\textsuperscript{105} That is approximately eight percent of the rent. Without knowing either the price per pound or the number of pounds of Spanish tobacco we cannot really compare collections, but negotiations earlier that year for a tobacco contract anticipated 50,000 – 60,000 pounds of Spanish tobacco. If it actually turned up in London, that would pay at least another twelve per cent of the rent. Of course, the syndicate men outsourced the actual

\textsuperscript{103} Ashton, “Revenue Farming under the Early Stuarts,” 314 – 316.
\textsuperscript{104} Table I.
\textsuperscript{105} Table III.
collections so that there were other expenses as well as profit beyond the rent. Still, a product line that pays somewhere between ten and twenty per cent of the base rent is not to be ignored. Nor was it ignored. The foregoing shows that, by 1621, tobacco had its own stalls in the marketplace and that, even though the exact percentage is unknown, Chesapeake tobacco had both a respectable market share, and was a respectable source of revenue for the beleaguered Crown.

In the “Dearth of Money” debate in Parliament in 1621, Sir Edwin Sandys complained of the loss to the English economy of £100,000 in bullion, once paid by Spain for English exports. The only return from the trade in 1621 was Spanish tobacco. He may have considered Virginia tobacco a domestic product, but by 1621 it paid the same duties that Spanish tobacco did. Sandys was ignoring any effect that the collection of port duties may have on the economy, or the trade in tobacco may have had on the employment of seamen and port workers. His only concern in that debate was the loss of bullion, compared to which changes to the economy due to tobacco must have seemed pretty small. He was certainly not advocating war, even though it was under war-time conditions that trade with Spain returned large quantities of bullion. What is clearly shown in the debate is both the expanding English tobacco market and the relative inelasticity of tobacco demand. Imports from both the Chesapeake and from Spain had increased during the previous decade of economic expansion, but did not fall off during the depression. Instead, tobacco took over a bigger share of England’s international trade.

2.5 Trade and Markets

A niche for tobacco does not mean a specialty market, it means a place in the mainstream of English economic life which, in the case of imports and exports, was subject to regulation by Parliament. The locus of this regulation was England’s thriving merchant community, particularly her overseas traders. Most of the Parliamentary wrangling over taxes is dedicated to the traditional English exports such as wool and

wheat, and of course the cash payments those exports were supposed to return. On the import side, the importation of fine wines from Europe was a well-established, highly respectable, and highly profitable business, controlled by a monopoly. Monopoly protection was a grant of exclusivity to protect from other English traders. Of course, the Crown could not protect against losses in overseas markets. Overseas traders were chartered by the Crown and the sale of monopolies was a source of Crown revenue, one also fraught with political peril due to a growing block of free traders in the House of Commons.

Free traders were opposed to protected English overseas trading monopolies. Free traders were not necessarily in favor of free markets, although gentry supporters of free trade tended to support expanded access to domestic markets and to resent control by “closed” companies and powerful London guilds. Sir Edwin Sandys’ speech in the 1604 Parliament emphasized the natural rights of all Englishmen to trade.\(^{107}\) Lurking behind the seventeenth century ideas of both free trade and monopoly was the notion of foreign riches in the fabulous East or in the New World that smart English traders might take advantage of – and according to free traders, all should be free to do so. The counter argument for monopoly was much simpler: traders took risks and incurred expenses in establishing their presence in overseas markets and needed their investment protected. From the monopolist point of view, free traders were free loaders.

Most of the time, the practice of chartering monopolies to trade in overseas markets had no discernable effect on prices or available commodities back home in England. Monopolies tended to be more efficient transporters and had more control over prices in markets where they were large buyers.\(^{108}\) Small traders had less overhead and were better able to seek out new opportunities, but they had small profit margins. If competition reduced prices, it left them more vulnerable to failure.

Free trade may have become an issue in the seventeenth century, but a free market as we understand it was still a thing of the future. To understand markets in seventeenth century England, consider the following modern example of Mercado La Merced, a huge


market in the center of Mexico City. Despite enthusiastic tourist descriptions of chaos, La Merced is highly organized. In the produce section, one may look across a warehouse of small, leased stands, each with a giant pyramid of tomatoes. Each pyramid is topped by a sign, sometimes with the seller’s name preprinted but with the day’s prices usually in magic marker or ball point pen. The signs are all different and the prices are all the same. If any seller tried to start a price war, his competitors would end the war very quickly. Either his prices would go back up or his career in La Merced would come to an abrupt end. The prices are good. Restaurants, wholesalers and retailers buy here, and individuals shopping for large parties and weddings. By contrast, on Saturday there are small markets all over Mexico City where Mexican housewives do their weekly shopping. There is bargaining in the Saturday markets, but the prices are a little bit higher than La Merced and one cannot rely on the availability of large quantities. English markets in the seventeenth century were closed markets in the same way that La Merced is now, although in some respects tighter, and they served and were served by smaller markets in the countryside and the outports.

In the countryside, there were market towns where there was plenty of hard bargaining. Sellers and buyers traded without being of any special status or members of any special guild, more like the Saturday markets just described. But if the buyers then took the product to a major city such as Bristol or London – which, as London grew, increasing numbers routinely did - resale became a matter of wearying regulation. Retail merchants were generally barred from overseas trading and vice versa; guilds had previously negotiated first buyers’ rights to products essential to their craft; and at least in the big cities, there was not much individual bargaining. Although retail merchants and exporters were not – so to speak – shopping in the same stores, there was considerable feedback in prices. Thus, when we look at tables of prices in this general period, our natural assumption is that the price represents an intersection of supply and demand, with perhaps some variation due to differences in product quality or the reputation of the seller. In fact, the price very often represents the endpoint of a set of complex negotiations which presumably referenced supply and demand at some point, but which also included credit arrangements, long term contracts, membership in a guild, company
or trading association and most important, whether the product had been imported or was intended for export.

Efforts to restore the prewar monopoly of the Spanish Company failed both an ideological challenge in Parliament, and the practical challenge of trade relations firmly established by wartime smuggling. The Spanish Company, with membership in London and Bristol, originally received monopoly privileges from Elizabeth in 1577. At that time, Spanish Company merchants had asked for and gotten specific exclusion of London retailers from their monopoly, because the London retailers, although they did not handle large quantities, had been able to undersell Spanish merchants in wine and tobacco. As a result of the monopoly, only “mere merchants” could trade with Spain. The monopoly was much resented by London guilds such as grocers who would have preferred to trade directly with Spain, rather than going through the Spanish monopoly. When war officially broke out in 1585 the Company’s monopoly became moot and the hungry small players of the West and the South Coast entered the Spanish smuggling game. Of course, the Spanish trade became riskier during the war, but according to Pauline Croft, it never stopped.

When the war ended, former Spanish Company merchants attempted to revive their organization and applied for renewed monopoly privileges. James apparently supported the attempt, but the war had gone on for so long that legal and diplomatic documents in support of their privileges were missing and the merchants were more than a little hazy about details. In the meantime, a major political fight erupted. Customs in several of the outports refused to enforce the monopoly and it was challenged twice in Parliament. The first time, in 1604 in the midst of a fierce debate on free trade, Commons voted to revoke the charter. Representatives of the outports already outnumbered London merchants, and in addition to their elected representatives the outports had the backing of gentry free traders. However, Lords found some

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objectionable wording and Parliament was adjourned before the two Houses could resolve their differences.\textsuperscript{112}

In 1605 the Crown, aware of the threat of future challenges from Parliament, carefully revised and reissued the charter. Among other things, it required a much larger and generally more open membership, and required that the outports be well represented. This was clearly a bow to the concerns expressed in Commons a year earlier. But the second challenge came from Commons anyway in 1606, and it raised a much more substantive issue. Traders to Spain, including the Spanish Company traders, had been running a triangle trade; picking up salt cod from Newfoundland fishermen in western ports and trading it to Spain for luxury goods for the London trade. Good business by all accounts, but not suitable for monopoly control because at least some controls would have had to apply to the cod trade in order for the Spanish trade to be fully protected. There was very little support for this inside the Spanish Company and even less in Parliament. The Spanish Company’s charter was revoked.\textsuperscript{113} The people who had been trading salt cod for luxury items continued to do so and supplied their London retail connections with Spanish wine and tobacco. Of course, in order to sell in London after the Great Farm was established, some believable amount of product had to be declared, and both tonnage and poundage and impost had to be paid – part smuggling part juggling. It was business as usual and it worked.

Tobacco was never a chartered monopoly. Under the first two Stuarts, tobacco revenue was a side show, important only in so far as it impacted larger issues such as Crown finances or upset power relations in Parliament. Even after tobacco revenue became important, Virginia tobacco remained a fraction of the tobacco circulating in England. Virginia tobacco imports only exceeded 100,000 lbs in 1624, the year the Virginia Company charter was challenged in Chancery Court (and subsequently revoked).\textsuperscript{114} But however large or small, tobacco revenue was reliable. It was always positive and it continued to grow. The problem with tobacco was that it was very freely traded. It was difficult to control.

\textsuperscript{112} Brenner, 87.
\textsuperscript{114} Table III.
The combination of trader and retailer is perfect for tobacco and a relatively large number of small and medium shippers and suppliers made for a robust market. This is fairly certainly the route by which tobacco became commercially traded into England. The system was clearly successful, too. In 1622, in negotiations with the Virginia Company over a new contract, Lionel Cranfield, negotiating for the Crown, offered the Company a monopoly on the tobacco trade provided they would agree to import large quantities of Spanish tobacco for the firmly established market. Amounts of 30,000 and 50,000 pounds were discussed. Sandys, negotiating for the Virginia Company, demurred. The Company could not be sure of finding that much Spanish tobacco. Cranfield had clearly hoped that someone could, and why not Edwin Sandys, champion of free trade?

2.6 Smuggling

After 1604, tobacco was officially a luxury import and was thus subject to two types of import duties. If both had been consistently applied, the price would have risen dramatically. However, because trade with Spain had been illegal during the war, tobacco had entered the country without paying any import duties. We can guess that some traders paid bribes. But as long as the House of Commons was opposed to monopolies, relatively small Spanish traders had a very free rein. They did not have to return to London, at least not before the 1620s. They could carry their cargo to Southampton, Plymouth or Bristol where they had more connections. They could negotiate which taxes they were going to pay and which bales or barrels would turn out to be miscellaneous goods. The most likely solution was to activate some modification of wartime smuggling, but with the end of the war, they now had many more choices for avoiding import taxes.

Smuggling is a complex problem. It is extremely difficult to gauge the economic effects precisely because it is smuggling and records are, at best, misleading. There are different types of smuggling. Approaching London, the Thames Tideway offered plenty of private landing places where ships could unload goods before reaching customs on the

London docks. Although there are surviving descriptions of the practice, the goods themselves were only recorded, if at all, in private business records and generally these have not been preserved. We know that shippers unloaded goods before customs, but we don’t know what goods they unloaded or how many. On the South Coast and around the Bristol Channel there is reasonably well documented evidence of smuggling going back to medieval times, although once again, we know little detail. The Severn Estuary provided plenty of cover for small boats to load, unload or pass cargo ship-to-ship and the smaller ports provided plenty of opportunity to get cargoes to and from local markets.\textsuperscript{116}

In Tudor England, evading customs appears to have held a place somewhere in between a national pastime and an essential feature of international trade. But as Evan Jones makes clear, certainly by the middle of the sixteenth century the successful smugglers were not hiding in coastal caves or lurking in the mouths of creeks. They were well-established merchants easing the overhead costs of doing business internationally. One method of evading duties on exported commodities was to declare less than was actually being shipped. This worked as long as the export was legal but heavily taxed, for example grain exports. A shipper could calculate the cost of the export duties and compare that to the cost of the required bribe to the customers. Negotiations needed to be both discreet and explicit.\textsuperscript{117}

Another method lay in manipulation of the cocket. Because of the importance of the coastal trade, outbound ships could obtain a document which allowed them to land English goods in other English ports without paying import duties. The outbound vessel obtained a document called a cocket to cover legitimate cargo from, say, Plymouth to London. However, the cargo the vessel unloaded at the next English port sometimes differed from the original in that it might contain goods, perhaps from La Rochelle or from a Spanish port, possibly from as far as the Canaries, but probably not from the English port that issued the cocket. This worked as long as the goods could pass at least a cursory inspection as English – or as long as their containers could.\textsuperscript{118}


\textsuperscript{117} Jones, 14 – 16.

\textsuperscript{118} Jones, 75 – 76.
cocket could not have worked with illegal wartime goods, but it probably worked well afterwards for Spanish goods in the south coast trade.

Considerable complicity from customs officials and tax farmers was required to make any of these methods run smoothly. Everyone had to get protection and everyone had to get paid. By the beginning of the seventeenth century, smuggling was a business dominated by large players with reliable relations with local officials and frequently with input into the legal process itself due to their position in the community. They did not have to “hide their tracks” because it was unlikely those tracks would be followed.\(^{119}\) The relationship between the merchant communities and the city government mattered a great deal. In London, there was a self-conscious effort to make the City government reflect the city’s economic diversity. The guilds were represented as well as the merchants. This somewhat republican – if surely not democratic – form meant that successful players had to be either very large and powerful already or firmly embedded in a strong and functioning political faction. In Bristol, the overseas merchants, increasingly represented by the Merchant Venturers, came to dominate the city government. Bristol merchants and the City Council together were anxious not to strangle the golden goose with extra duties or over enthusiastic enforcement. They were the golden goose.

Thus, legal international trade came to be dominated by a small number of large merchant companies who held protected monopolies. The Merchant Adventurers dominated the cloth trade, the jewel in the crown of England’s exports. This fiercely competitive trade was primarily with Northern Europe and, by the time Elizabeth ascended the throne, had been adversely affected by the general economic disruption of the Protestant Reformation and by war in the Low countries.\(^{120}\) Under Elizabeth, international merchants increasingly traded with Russia, with India, with Turkey, and with Spain and the growing Spanish colonial empire.

Trade with Spain from the West Country and the South Coast ports proved both robust and lucrative, possibly in part due to the large supply of Spanish bullion. This trade was well established and extremely important to the local English economies – and

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\(^{119}\) Jones, 15.
\(^{120}\) Brenner, 3 – 6.
apparently to the Spanish economy – by the end of the sixteenth century. Bristol grew in importance in the Spanish trade due to easy access through Gloucester to the rich West Country hinterland on the one hand; and to the ports of the south coast of England and the west coasts of France, Spain and Portugal on the other. Grain, cloth, fish, metals, and manufactured goods including ordinance all made their way to Spain. Wine and other luxury goods, plus the all-important bullion from Spain’s New World colonies, made their way back to England. The balance of trade appears to have favored England during this period.

Croft describes a rich and complex network with English merchants supplying her enemy both through trade in French ports and directly, sometimes including sailing up the Guadalquivir to the big market in Seville. English Catholics living in Spain helped enable effective avoidance of over eager Spanish port officials. At first glance, it seems easier to understand why English merchants would trade with Spain than to understand the reverse – Spanish merchants shipping silver bullion to their country’s enemy – at least until you consider how Spanish bullion shippers might have evaded the *quinta real*: the manifest sometimes contained as much as twenty per cent less silver than the hold of the ship. Of course, the Spanish traded with the English. The English were supplying them with war materials while laundering their smuggled bullion for them.121

2.7 The West Country

If the trade with Spain had collapsed at the end of the war, the West Country and the south coast ports would have suffered dramatically. Bristol’s trade with the French coast and the Iberian Peninsula had enriched the city’s merchants and admitted Spanish goods into the west of England. It was a very large international port, second only to London. However, it was not the only international port in the Severn Estuary: Gloucester, not actually a seaport at all, officially became an international port in 1585. Bristol merchants fought this development fiercely but to no avail. On the one hand, this meant that Gloucester’s better access to the hinterland via the Severn Estuary and to the Cotswolds could translate into increased cost of goods for Bristol’s international trade.

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While Gloucester was in no position to compete with Bristol in large international cargoes, the move gave small independent shippers a bigger share of that trade since they no longer had to compete for the inattention of customs with large Bristol shippers. It also gave Gloucester better access to the coastal trade. Both Bristol and Gloucester trade typically consisted of mixed loads of miscellaneous goods. Thus, workable smuggling methods in this trade were probably manipulation of the cocket for imports and the under-declaration of legal exports.\textsuperscript{122}

The coastal trade was essential for the movement of goods, like tobacco, into and out of the major international ports such as London and Bristol. Each of the smaller ports had their own hinterland and their own markets, both for legally declared and for smuggled goods.\textsuperscript{123} This interaction between major international English ports, the Spanish coast, and the smaller ports particularly in the South-west, was essential for the spread of tobacco use in England as long as the tobacco was imported from Spain. Only with the establishment of the Virginia trade and the subsequent establishment of English tobacco production in Gloucestershire do any questions arise about the distribution of tobacco internally. For now, the initial spread of tobacco use was through seaports, either with direct access to Atlantic trade or serving Atlantic ports. Because there was no regulation of the internal movement of goods, there are almost no records of the internal movement of goods and it is worth noting at this point that the focus on river and coast trade may in part be the reliance of historians on the more accessible data of the ports. Willan’s original work diverted attention from land carriers — a reasonable diversion in light of the admittedly lousy English roads of the period, but as we shall see, and as Willan later discussed, we should not thereby assume that there was no road traffic.\textsuperscript{124}

Why was the West Country important? It was important culturally; many of Elizabeth’s most famous Sea Dogs, the raiders/traders of the Spanish Main, came from the West. Sir Francis Drake, Sir Walter Raleigh, and John Hawkins were all born in Devon. In addition to the complex local trade networks of the Bristol Channel and the

\textsuperscript{122} Jones, 75 – 79.


\textsuperscript{124} T. S. Willan, The Inland Trade, Studies in English internal trade in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1976), 12 -15
Severn Estuary, the Bristol Channel opened directly into the Atlantic. In the seventeenth century, this became the locus of international relations for western Europe and the Atlantic trade became increasingly important to English merchants and England as a whole. Individuals merchants of Bristol and the outports were well represented in the Spanish Company, for example, but the towns themselves fought every privilege tooth and nail both in Parliament and in port because of the competition with London. Politically the west was important precisely because, with good ports and rich, interconnected hinterlands, it might compete with London economically. London was the seat of government and London was the locus of the changing forms of economic activity that characterize the seventeenth century. This allowed its phenomenal growth across the century. But London always kept an eye over its shoulder to make sure the West Country was still with it. Because sometimes the West Country was, and sometimes it was not.

2.8 Colonization

With Parliamentary relations unexpectedly improved in the aftermath of the Gunpowder Plot, the following April, James chartered two companies formed for the express purpose of establishing New World colonies: the Plymouth Company and the Virginia Company. Chapter 2 discusses the legal terms of the charter in more detail. However, the outlines of the colonization project are clear enough. The Plymouth Company men were from the West and their intent seems to have been to develop and promote fishing in the North Atlantic by establishing colonies in Maine and Newfoundland. This would have given them a profitable product that could support the trade with Spain for luxury goods, compete in other European markets, and could always be sold in England tax free. Fish caught by Englishmen were not subject to import taxes. And of course, they could always hunt for a westward water passage. In theory, the Plymouth Company’s charter put them well north of waters claimed by Spain.

That was not true of the Virginia Company’s charter. Although the Virginia Company seems to have been conceived in very traditional terms, as a joint-stock

company raising funds for trading missions through subscriptions, an early (pre-1609) document specifically rejects the encouragement of trade as a motive for investment on the grounds that “adventurers. . . at this point need it not nor require it.” The document’s author and intended reader are unknown. While there may have been no requirement for encouragement, Crown protection was an essential feature of any merchant undertaking in this period for two reasons. Imagine that a westward water passage had been found in Virginia. Every mariner in England would have been trying to follow it to riches in the fabulous East. Traders and explorers took substantial risk in a dangerous business and expected to be rewarded with a monopoly if they succeeded. Regulation was essential for protection from their fellow Englishmen. What the Justification took up was the problem of relations with Spain. The Spaniard is to be “retarded” by the establishment of English colonies. The Spaniard will presumably object to this and forthright Crown support – from the beginning – is required for the colonization effort to succeed. If significant trade opportunities had opened, the opening would have been contested on an international level, requiring Crown input and, maybe, expensive action. The document sums up James’ colonization policy and his Spanish policy. Thus, English-Spanish relations were one of the forces that shaped the colony from the very beginning, even though very few Spaniards ever turned up in Virginia.

The Virginia Company needed the protection from other Englishmen as well. It was difficult to compete for investment in early seventeenth century London with the more glamorous overseas trading companies such as the Adventurers, the Muscovy Company, and the Turkey Company. The Adventurers managed in raw wool, exported to Flanders for processing until the collapse of the Antwerp textile industry in the midst of the Dutch Revolt. The Turkey Company, the Venice Company and the Spanish merchants were originally oriented toward the Mediterranean trade, but with the Spanish and Portuguese expansion into the Atlantic, they sought new opportunities in exotic luxury goods from the New World. The Mediterranean traders in particular were closely interconnected with the same dozen men sitting on multiple boards. These men were

https://archive.org/stream/recordsofvirgini03virg#page/n7/mode/2up.
merchants, traders, and some had been raiders during the war. They did not manage the production of the goods they bought and sold. Their capital was merchant capital and, while a quick turnaround was not necessarily required, long term investments were reserved for projects that promised a high and preferably steady return. A few were nobility and many were knights. The latter were well-represented in the House of Commons.\footnote{Brenner, pp. 16 – 17.}

In case the above were not sufficient fiscal anarchy, in 1612 both the Virginia and Bermuda companies received an exemption from all taxes, other than the impost, on its imports to and exports from England until March 12, 1619. A document from “Lord Sackville’s Papers” provides an example of calculating the reduction in revenue due the tax farmers, called the defalcation. The calculations were intended for Sir Lionel Cranfield, then Surveyor General of the Customs. The word defalcation now means misappropriated or mismanaged funds, but in the seventeenth century it simply meant a curtailment, in this case of customs revenue. James’ impost of 1s/lb still obtained, but lost revenue from increasing quantities of protected tobacco imports meant a reduction in the expected profit for the tax farm. It turns out there are some oddities in the different books. For 1616, 1617, and 1618 the Elizabeth’s declared cargo was approximately double the amount of tobacco in the London Port Books for the Chesapeake.\footnote{Russell R. Menard, “The Tobacco Industry in the Chesapeake Colonies, 1617 – 1730: an Interpretation,” \textit{Research in Economic History} 5 (1980), 109 – 178; “Lord Sackville’s Papers Respecting Bermuda and Virginia,” Document 6203: MISCELLANEOUS CUSTOMS ENTRIES FROM VIRGINIA AND BERMUDA, 1613 – 1614.}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Product Label</th>
<th>Pounds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1616</td>
<td>Tobacco</td>
<td>2,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1617</td>
<td>Tobacco</td>
<td>18,839</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1618</td>
<td>Pudding Tobacco</td>
<td>48,572</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1618</td>
<td>Leaf Tobacco</td>
<td>956</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2.2 Tobacco Recorded in the London Port Books

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>British Imports of Chesapeake Tobacco in Pounds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1616</td>
<td>1,250.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1617</td>
<td>9,419.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1618</td>
<td>24,834.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Which source is correct – if either one? Both documents are, in their way, official. The tobacco series was supposed to collect tobacco data from all the ports, even though it ended up in the London Port Books. Some of the Elizabeth’s cargo came from Bermuda and it is possible that some of the tobacco also came from Bermuda and the farmers simply attributed half to one source and half to the other. Bermuda tobacco production was much less than Chesapeake production, but it would hardly have mattered to the customers since the duties were the same. Price did not record the Bermuda tobacco, since he was working on Chesapeake tobacco.

There is one clear problem with that hypothesis. For 1616, the 2,300 pounds is specifically attributed to Virginia, not Somers Island. For 1616, Price found 1,250 pounds in the London Port Books. If the London source showed twice as much tobacco as the cargo of the Elizabeth, then we could assume that we are missing data from another shipment or another port that did not get passed on to London. But the Elizabeth carried approximately twice the tobacco that was declared in London for the year. If all the tobacco for that year was shipped on the Elizabeth, then only half was declared at the Port. If there were any other shipments, then less than half was declared. There is no specific attribution for 1617 and 1618. However, the ratios of tobacco on the Elizabeth to tobacco declared are tantalizingly similar to 1616 and, as noted above, Bermuda tobacco production was never the equal of Virginia. It seems far more likely that most of the tobacco came from Virginia and either half or less was landed in London or the same percentage was actually declared. There is a problem with the fact that the Virginia Company was a fairly high-profile operation. Ships such as the Elizabeth that regularly supplied the colony would either have to have very good connections at the port, or

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declare more and more of their cargo as the General Farm operations increased in efficiency under Lionel Cranfield. It seems unlikely that level of smuggling could continue in a more controlled situation, which Cranfield set out to implement.

Sir Lionel Cranfield was a Merchant Venturer and a subscriber to the Virginia Company. He was also, as indicated earlier, General Surveyor of the Customs and after Cecil’s death, promoted to Treasurer. Cranfield had been both customer and importer. That he had a foot in both camps was not regarded as a conflict of interest in his time, but as good business experience. Cranfield certainly understood the business of the ports and the practices of merchants, maybe a bit too well. He was subsequently required to apologize for corruption to the House of Lords. However, in addition to C. T.’s pamphlet (discussed below), we may have Cranfield’s promotion and a shake up in the Great Farm of the Customs to thank for the Tobacco Series in the London Port Books – the series begins in 1616. In view of his experience, it seems likely that Cranfield was looking for the missing tobacco revenue, which prior to the start of the tobacco series was spread throughout the system.

Was the valuation of Virginia tobacco part of the same manipulation or merely a result of the protectionist policy? Price records 27d/lb for the years 1616 through 1619 and then falling prices beginning the following year in 1620. Russell Menard extracted prices of 36d/lb and up for the best tobacco from 1618 through 1622. Spanish tobacco, valued at six shillings and up, still dominated the market and left the Chesapeake and Somers Island shippers in a relatively weak bargaining position. Questions of volume and shipping are discussed in more detail below, but we are in a good position to refute the charge that Virginia over production drove down the price of their product. In 1619, the protection for Virginia Company and Somers Island Company tobacco expired, and in 1620 they were required to pay a substantial increase in taxes. The price collapsed after 1619 because the price supports collapsed. The Virginia company quickly negotiated some tax relief for the following year and the price partially rebounded. Clearly, part of the decrease in the price is due to the increase in the tax. However, the

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130 Menard, “The Tobacco Industry in the Chesapeake Colonies,” 120.
tax farmers yearly rent no longer reflected the income from tobacco taxes, which had just increased. Cranfield was as well informed about port operations as any man in England, and as Lord Treasurer he was in a very good position to force a renegotiation of the rent if he thought that the Crown was not getting its share. The increased duties only partially account for the price drop. The rest of the difference seems likely to have come from tax farmers at the port squeezing more money out of the shippers.

But, the question really should be, not what caused the price of Virginia tobacco to drop after 1619, but where did the high price come from in the first place? Menard speculated quite reasonably that the pre-1620 Virginia Company prices are an attempt at marketing. Even with high duties and additional impost, tobacco was a good investment. Virginia Company tobacco was a particularly good investment as long as it only paid the impost. But, while high tonnage and poundage might very well have reduced the chances for success of Virginia tobacco, low prices also meant low return on investment and, strictly from a tax standpoint, prices did not affect taxes, but taxes did affect prices. Cranfield’s tax farmers had no stake in Virginia tobacco prices, but the Virginia Company very definitely did have a stake in keeping them as high as they could for as long as they could.

For the Virginia tobacco growers, the tax exemption was much needed protection. For Cranfield it was a bargaining chip, both with Parliament and the King on the one hand, and with his men at the port on the other; one that might be used to force collection of more duties on Spanish tobacco, possibly increase the farm rents, and perhaps result in his actually making some money from his investment in the Virginia colony. In September 1619, when the exemption was just about to expire, Sir Edwin Sandys of the Virginia Company wrote an “affectionate” (his word) letter to Sir Lionel Cranfield, thanking Cranfield “for all you have done for us,” and assuring him that all was well in Virginia.

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132 The fiscal year ran from Michaelmas to Michaelmas.
2.9 The Expanding Tobacco Market

In 1614, with marriage negotiations for Charles and the Infanta stalled and Crown debt piling up, James called a Parliament, clearly hoping for a new subsidy. The 1614 Parliament is referred to as the Addled Parliament, probably because they did not pass the desired revenue bill. Instead, the House of Commons began debating the legality of imposts. Lords refused to confer with Commons on the subject, reminding Commons that imposts were the King’s prerogative. James sent the Addled Parliament home and did not call another Parliament until 1621. This gave him more than six years to operate on the revenue he had from the Great Farm and to attempt to pursue foreign policy – that is, arrange a new marriage and dowry between Charles and the Spanish Infanta. However, it also gave English merchants the same amount of time to look for alternative business opportunities that did not require putting as much money into the Royal pouch. Virginia tobacco was still protected: imposts were due but not tonnage and poundage. If it could be grown in England, tobacco might escape even that tax.

In 1615, a pamphlet titled “An Advice How to Plant Tobacco in England,” by C. T. quoted estimates that more than £200,000 was “paid out of England and Ireland” every year for tobacco for the past seven or eight years. The phrase “paid out of England” implied that C. T. was not referring to retail prices. If we use six shillings, the valuation from both the 1604 and 1608 Book of Rates, then when all had been declared and all taxes applied, this would have amounted to an annual customs revenue of more than £30,000, considerably larger than the £13,000 revenue that Williams found in the London Port books. If C. T. is right, then more than half of the Spanish tobacco entering England paid no taxes, although presumably they paid at least some of the difference in bribes at the port. Of course, C. T. is quoting rumor and it seems very likely that at least his quotation and possibly also the original rumor are highly inflated. However, his main point emerges pretty clearly. Whether the tobacco is making money for the Crown or

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134 C. T. “An Advice How to Plant Tobacco in England: and How to bring it to color and perfection, To whom it may be profitable, and to whom harmful, The virtues of the Hearbe in general, as well as in the outward application as taken in Fume, as well as The Dangers of the Spanish Tobacco,” London, 1615.
not, it is making money for Spain. His pamphlet was intended to promote growing tobacco in England and he opened with a strong financial and patriotic incentive.

When C. T.’s pamphlet was published in 1615, eleven years after the end of the war, there must already have been a booming English tobacco market. The pamphlet is focused on a comparison of potential benefits to both consumer and producer of English versus Spanish tobacco. However, the benefits to the producer are the kind that result from grabbing a share of an already developed market. C. T. cited health and aesthetic benefits to the consumer in the following passage when he describes tobacco processing in the Spanish West Indies.

The black color which it has and for which our shop keepers praise it, is artificial: yea all the tobacco (the leaves of Hispaniola excepted, which we call Santo Domingo tobacco) [mixed with] with a kind of juice, or syrup, made of salt-water, of the dregs or filth of sugar called molasses [called] black honey, Guiana pepper and [dregs] of wine; to which in some places they add a kind of red berry called annatto.¹³⁵

C. T. went on to speculate that when the Spanish tobacco colonies were first established, they would take food, clothing, and manufactured goods in trade for tobacco; but as their colonies became better established, they wanted cash. The pamphlet spends some time on this. Once, the West Indies were a source of wealth to English mariners. Now the Spanish have driven the English out of the West Indies and take their money for tobacco. C. T. was not concerned with the health of Spanish tobacco colonies. He was playing on the growing mercantilist assumptions that protection for English traders benefitted England, not just the traders. Bullion was flowing out of England and going up in smoke. We will see this argument again connected with tobacco imports in 1621 to partially explain the “dearth” of money.

The arguments in C. T.’s pamphlet suggest that mercantilism had entered the ideological discussion of English foreign trade; an ideology that understood international trade as a zero-sum game. One country’s advantage was another country’s disadvantage. However, the traditions and experiences of actual merchants in international trade

¹³⁵ C. T.
allowed them to take a more nuanced view in practice and this had also appeared alongside mercantilism.\textsuperscript{136} Edwin Sandys, leader of the free trade faction in Commons, used the same argument in 1621, and even though he came at the point from the opposite direction, he was doing the same thing.\textsuperscript{137} C. T. wanted to counterpoise the growing of English tobacco to the importing of Spanish tobacco. Sandys wanted to counterpoise the importing of protected Virginia tobacco to the importing of Spanish tobacco. Both were national-tobacco-security arguments – in other words, mercantilist arguments. The English have barely begun their colonial project, but already conflicts of interest have appeared. The old monopoly versus free trade argument would not work for either colonies or home-grown.

There are two problems with C. T.’s proposal of which his intended audience was probably well aware. The first was attracting interest and investment from the merchant community. Overseas merchants had the most money to sink into such a project, but no particular interest in growing anything at all, including tobacco in England. Groups such as the Merchant Venturers moved large quantities of goods to and from ports in Spain and France. They bribed or evaded customs as required for their profit margins. They were impressed with new trading opportunities in the East and not interested in the long investment and slow returns of plantations in either Virginia or England. Those who could invested in the East India Company with its more traditional opportunities for trade in exotica.\textsuperscript{138} Among these investors, C. T.’s argument for investment in English tobacco probably fell on deaf ears.

C. T.’s second problem was the Virginia colony. In 1615, Virginia tobacco was already making market in-roads due to its advantage as a protected industry. It was not as good as the best Spanish tobacco, but not all Spanish tobacco was the best and Virginia tobacco was affordable, the Virginia colony generally excited a better public response than Spain or Spanish colonies, and the King himself had an interest in its success. By 1615, it had created a market niche for itself and the niche was expanding.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{137} Joan Thirsk and J. P. Cooper, Ed. “A Commons Debate on the Trade Depression, recorded by John Pym, 26 February, 1621” and “The same Commons debate recorded by Sir Thomas Wentworth, 26 February 1621,” \textit{17th Century Economic Documents} (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 1 – 3.
\item \textsuperscript{138} Brenner, 65.
\end{itemize}
English tobacco would either have to go head-to-head with Virginia tobacco – minus the Royal protection – or with the lower grades of Spanish tobacco, minus the international connections. English tobacco could still have been a good investment. Because it was domestic, it would not be subject to any import duties. However, probably just because it was domestic, it did not interest the big international players. It certainly did not interest the already committed investors in the Virginia colony. For the time being, C. T.’s writing had no discernable effect on investors.

But by 1619 the winds of change were blowing. A London Salter named John Stratford took C. T.’s advice and invested in tobacco production in Winchcombe in Gloucestershire. The same year, James proclaimed tobacco growing in England illegal, partly as a sweetener to the Virginia Company for the loss of their exemption from tonnage and poundage, and partly based on the shrewd assessment that it threatened his income from the Great Farm. He would never be able to collect duties on domestic tobacco. In this case, the Crown’s interests were directly opposed to the mercantilist conception of England’s interest. Stratford was allowed to bring in his first crop, then left to his own devices in the matter of settling long term leases for which he no longer had any legal use. Stratford subsequently emigrated to Virginia, but tobacco growing persisted in and then expanded across Gloucestershire and into Wiltshire, as we shall see in Chapter 3.

In 1618, the Thirty Years War exploded on the European continent, negatively impacting both English trade and James’ Spanish policy. Beginning in 1619, the shrinking supply of New World bullion exacerbated the contraction of trade and a currency crisis exploded across northern Europe. In 1620, Spanish forces drove James’ daughter Elizabeth and her husband Frederick V out of the Palatinate. James’ Spanish policy was in complete disarray, prospects for a Spanish dowry had dimmed, and the Crown was in debt. By 1621, England was enduring an almost perfect economic storm: a need for at least a show of force, if not actual battle on the continent; a continuing recession in the wool trade; a growing monetary crisis among long term trading partners; and just to compound the problem, bad weather produced successive bad wheat harvests.

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raising prices just when nobody had any money to pay them. Reluctantly, the King called the Parliament of 1621 and somewhat to his surprise, it voted a strongly worded resolution of support for Elizabeth and Frederick. Perhaps less surprisingly, no specific sums were authorized.\footnote{“Parliaments 1604 – 1629, the Reigns of James I and Charles I, History of Parliament Online http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/research/parliaments/parliaments-1604-1629.} However, once Commons was in session it began debating the “dearth of money problem” and the general state of the English economy – precisely why James had not called them back sooner. Many problems were explored, among them the lack of jobs in the wool trade and the lack of plate for producing coinage, but few solutions appeared.

Sandys led the free trade faction, as usual, and took the opportunity to oppose monopolies in general and the trade with Spanish tobacco in particular. He used a mercantilist approach as we saw earlier. According to Sandys, trade with Spain had once brought in bullion and now brought in nothing but smoke.\footnote{Joan Thirsk and J. P. Cooper, Ed. “A Commons Debate on the Trade Depression, recorded by John Pym, 26 February, 1621” and “The same Commons debate recorded by Sir Thomas Wentworth, 26 February 1621,” \textit{17th Century Economic Documents} (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 1 – 3.} Sandys cited £100,000 lost to Spanish trade six years after C. T. had mourned the loss of £200,000. While it seems plausible that Virginia tobacco had substantially increased its market share in the intervening six years, it does not seem likely that the market did not grow at all and Virginia tobacco took half the business away from Spanish tobacco. Tobacco markets do not work that way. Probably Sandys was citing the official Spanish tobacco numbers from the Great Farm, the amounts declared that earned revenue in the neighborhood of £13,000 and that C. T. was citing both official and black-market estimates of actual trade. Was the remaining £100,000 still going for undeclared Spanish tobacco in 1621, or had the black market begun to lose to Virginia tobacco? The recession, coupled with the presence of an unknown quantity of English tobacco flooding the market, suggests that Spanish tobacco had lost market share, but not very much of it to Virginia tobacco. The increasing quantities of all sources of tobacco: Spanish, Virginia, and illegal English, coupled with the direct link between the docks and the retailers, meant that some “cutting,” partial substitutions of cheaper tobacco for more expensive, was increasingly
likely in any price category. And the same choices meant that as the economy worsened the cheaper varieties gained market share under their own names.

2.10 Charles I, Parliament and Finances

Charles I became King of England in March of 1625. Although he did not experience anything like the general rejection of the legitimacy of his rule that had so frustrated his father, Charles’ reign was marked by increasingly intractable financial struggles with Parliament. One root of Charles’ financial problems is generally thought to be his new wife’s spending habits, guaranteed not to endear her to a country still groping its way out of recession. But his wife’s religion and nationality were far more serious problems. Henrietta Maria was a Bourbon princess whose mother was a Medici. In seventeenth century European politics, and to men who believed in the importance of blood kin, that was a problematic alliance. Charles exacerbated the problem by not calling Parliament into session until after the marriage had taken place. To say Parliament felt slighted by this maneuver would be a serious understatement. But to a Parliamentarian, they were concerned that Henrietta Maria was a Catholic and what that might mean for the laws and the Church of England. Charles had made promises (that he had no more intention of keeping than any other promises he made) to Louis XIII his new brother-in-law, to relax the penal laws. And, Henrietta Maria was a very determined and public Catholic. She was never crowned, for example, because she would not take part in a Protestant ceremony. In addition, there was the problem of her name. She quickly came to be referred to as Queen Mary, a practice that for many evoked memories of another Catholic Queen Mary.\footnote{Diane Purkiss, \textit{The English Civil War: Papists, Gentlewomen, Soldiers, and Witchfinders in the Birth of Modern Britain} (New York: Basic Books, 2006), 28 – 36.}

The marriage maneuver squandered any good will Charles might have garnered by clearly being his father’s son and by clearly not being his father. Predictably, Parliament responded by withholding subsidies. Less predictably, Charles raised the stakes by collecting tonnage and poundage with Buckingham’s help and with the active cooperation of the General Farm, but without Parliamentary authorization. Parliament
did not grant subsidies until 1628 and in the meantime, Henrietta Maria proved to be a very big spender. She liked theatre and acted in her own pageants – John Chamberlain did not comment on how well, only that it was new and different.\(^\text{143}\) It was clearly also expensive. A look at Table II shows the trend for Charles. Farm rent was actually reduced from £160,000 to £150,000 per year when Charles became King, but the advance payment columns, both with and without interest, show a lot more loans. The table suggests a man who was experiencing regular difficulty making it to the next payday. The Farm was paying less rent and lending more money to the Crown. That combination suggests why they might have been willing to help him collect tonnage and poundage without the normal Parliamentary authorization. The table for Charles shows that he did repay loans in the following year, at least until 1632.\(^\text{144}\) Of course, in theory, Charles could borrow elsewhere. He was King of England. In practice, he had to deal with the same group of men who had already decided how much to lend him and how much to charge him for it.

Charles dissolved Parliament in 1626 and attempted a series of Forced Loans to fund war on the continent, a project which customs collections could not hope to cover. The collection process was simply a letter from the King. Approximately seventy men refused, tacitly or explicitly, to pay and were subsequently arrested. The Court ordered them released, although the ruling did not comment on the legality of the loan, merely on the incarcerations. The Forced Loans were a stand-off.\(^\text{145}\) Charles found his credit disappearing and had to recall Parliament, which required him to sign the Petition of Right before it would authorize more money for war against Spain or France. Among other things, the Petition of Right clearly stated the principle of no taxation without representation. That is, no money without Parliament. Charles signed, but subsequently ignored the Petition.\(^\text{146}\)

In 1628, more or less grudgingly and after the assassination of Buckingham, Parliament authorized subsidies, but on condition that Charles stop collecting tonnage and poundage. Charles agreed, then prorogued Parliament, just as they had feared he


\(^{144}\) Ashton, “Revenue Farming under the Early Stuarts,” 312 – 320.

\(^{145}\) Lockyer, 230 – 231.

\(^{146}\) Lockyer, 223.
would. This began the extended period known as Personal Rule, a period where no Crown finances are authorized by anything or anyone but the Crown, in complete violation of both the spirit and the letter of the Petition of Right. To cover his accumulating shortfalls, Charles attempted to revive the collection of Ship Monies. Ship monies were the old feudal dues of the sea, quite comparable to the dues of the landed aristocracy. They had long since been replaced by collection of customs duties, which Charles also attempted to continue, as we have seen. Table II shows that in 1628 – 1629 Charles’ borrowing from the Farm dropped off sharply after Parliament granted the subsidy, but then began rising sharply, reaching a peak in 1632 – 1633. Rolling over loans beyond one year began at the same time that the borrowing peaked. Charles was literally living on borrowed money and as we now know, on borrowed time.

Although tobacco revenue was a relatively small share of the total customs revenue, as proprietor of the Virginia colony, Charles had an interest in the relative success of Virginia versus other sources of tobacco, and an interest in maintaining high prices for Virginia tobacco. In a Proclamation of January 1631, Charles ordered: that no tobacco could be imported without a special license; that all imported tobacco had to be unloaded in London; and, although the Proclamation does not give any specific number, the Crown would limit the quantity, presumably in order to increase the price.

There is a gap in the Minutes of the Council and General Court of Virginia from 1629 to 1631 that unfortunately covers the period when the Assembly would have discussed the limitations on production. However, other sources have long indicated that the Virginia Assembly did attempt to restrict tobacco production to 1,500 pounds per grower. Considering the quantities of tobacco that were still widely available in England from multiple sources, that would seem to be a big risk. The Proclamation admits that Spanish tobacco is entering the country illegally, which implied that it would not be effected by the Proclamation. However, volumes imported do steadily increase,

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147 Lockyer, 230.
149 Minutes of the Council and General Court of Colonial Virginia, https://archive.org/stream/minutesofcouncil00vирg#page/n0/mode/2up/search/tobacco.
despite subsequent price gyrations. From 1633 to 1636, roughly corresponding to the period of increased Crown borrowing, the prices appear to have been fixed at 5d/lb.\textsuperscript{151} During this period, Charles issued additional proclamations condemning the spread of tobacco use and began his attempts to wring revenue from retail outlets, discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.\textsuperscript{152} It seems probable that a large proportion of the tobacco in the retail outlets was illegally grown English tobacco rather than Spanish tobacco. However, it seems clear that Charles discovered the same problems with wringing tax revenue from tobacco that his father did. If the taxes were set too high, smuggling increased. In 1636, prices begin to fall again.

From 1640 to 1669, we have no tobacco data at all and there are large gaps in the Port Books themselves. This time the problem has little to do with the tobacco trade or deceptive practices at the ports and nothing at all to do with Virginia. The system was breaking down. While the Great Farm was only officially ended by Charles II, who ended the privatization, not the collections, Charles I was collecting money from the ports illegally and so had no interest in fostering good administration or good record keeping.

After the Court moved to Oxford, Parliament attempted to borrow money from the General Farm, but were refused by the bankers that may have still been owed money by Charles and who were concerned about their chances of collecting it if he lost. In response, Parliament disbanded the Farm, empowered a customs commission, and used the navy for customs collection. According to Brenner, not only was the tax collection effort successful, the arrangement strengthened the navy.\textsuperscript{153} However, the apparent success for Parliament was a small disaster for historians. The gaps that began in the period of Personal Rule extend right across the Interregnum. We cannot tell how much tobacco was landed in London, or anywhere else in England. Curiously, we still have price data, but due at least in part to attempts at market manipulation, the relationship between price and volume has never been firm enough to deduce anything.

\textsuperscript{151} Table III
\textsuperscript{152} Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, in the Reign of Charles I, 1633 – 1634, 479. https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015004747724;view=1up;seq=527.
\textsuperscript{153} Brenner, 432 – 433.
2.11 Some Tentative Conclusions and Observations

While James initially succeeded in threading his way between the Scylla of ‘soft on Catholics/soft on Spain’ and the Charybdis of an economy disrupted by Elizabeth’s war with Spain and repression at home, his son was neither as skilled nor as lucky. Parliament gained in authority as a result of the struggles, first with James and then with Charles, and the Crown gained in administrative sophistication. Trade, markets and market ideology all changed very much as a result of these struggles. Because tobacco imposts were not under the control of Parliament, it became a tool for the Crown in battles over subsidies. Tobacco did not decide whether or not Parliament would grant James subsidies, or whether Charles would try to collect the Forced Loans. But at those and many other points, it was a resource for the Crown. Even though the Virginia Company failed, the Virginia colony became a successful Crown proprietorship. The colony served the dual purpose of making money for the Crown and advancing James’ international policy with regard to Spain. Ironically, the Virginia Company also contributed to the career of Edwin Sandys, leader of the political opposition in the House of Commons.

We can track the penetration of tobacco because of the creation of the Great Farm of the Customs under James, and the maintenance of the London Port Books. The political tug-of-war between the Crown and Commons strongly suggests that collection of imposts would have been impossible without the Great Farm. The Crown had turned to imposts in order to achieve some independence from a hostile Parliament. Parliament understandably hated them. Imposts were an important expression of the continuing political and economic war between Crown and Parliament.

However, smuggling of Spanish goods, including tobacco, continued across the reign of both Stuarts. After English tobacco production began, the market picture became even more cloudy. Charles, perpetually at odds with Parliament, attempted illegal customs collections. He also attempted to control Virginia tobacco prices by cutting back production. The effects seem to have been temporary. Once the Court moved to Oxford and Parliament took over customs collection, tobacco volumes
disappear. But by that time, tobacco was a part of English culture and its market share was assured.
Table 2.3 Stuart Borrowing from the Great Farm of the Customs<sup>154</sup>  

James I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year (Christmas to Christmas)</th>
<th>Rent in £</th>
<th>Advance Payments Current Year with Interest</th>
<th>Advance Payments Subsequent Year</th>
<th>Overdrafts on Current Account</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1604 – 1605</td>
<td>112,400</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1605 – 1606</td>
<td>118,400</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>16,000</td>
<td>1,525</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1606 – 1607</td>
<td>120,000</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1607 – 1608</td>
<td>120,000</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>4,470</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1608 – 1609</td>
<td>120,000</td>
<td>45,754</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1609 – 1610</td>
<td>120,000</td>
<td>18,817</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1610 – 1611</td>
<td>120,626</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1611 – 1612</td>
<td>136,226</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1612 – 1613</td>
<td>136,226</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1613 – 1614</td>
<td>136,226</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>18,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1614 – 1615</td>
<td>140,000</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>90,071</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1615 – 1616</td>
<td>140,000</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>34,114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1616 – 1617</td>
<td>140,000</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>19,004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1617 – 1618</td>
<td>140,000</td>
<td>21,500</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>27,488</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1618 – 1619</td>
<td>140,000</td>
<td>40,078</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>18,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1619 – 1620</td>
<td>140,000</td>
<td>6,000</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>18,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1620 – 1621</td>
<td>140,000</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1621 – 1622</td>
<td>160,000</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1622 – 1623</td>
<td>160,000</td>
<td>38,380</td>
<td>11,760</td>
<td>2,262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1623 – 1624</td>
<td>160,000</td>
<td>29,435</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 1624 – 1625                  | 160,000   | 20,000                                    | Nil                             | 1,842                        

Table 1.2

<sup>154</sup> Ashton, “Revenue Farming under the Early Stuarts,” 314.
## Table 2.4 Stuart Borrowing from the Great Farm of the Customs

Charles I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year (Christmas to Christmas)</th>
<th>Rent in £</th>
<th>Advance Payments Current Year with Interest</th>
<th>Advance Payments Subsequent Year</th>
<th>Advance Payments of Rent Further into the Future</th>
<th>Overdrafts on Current Account</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1625 – 1626</td>
<td>150,000</td>
<td>24,000</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1626 – 1627</td>
<td>150,000</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1627 – 1628</td>
<td>150,000</td>
<td>25,996</td>
<td>7,816</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1628 – 1629</td>
<td>140,000</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>4,500</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1629 – 1630</td>
<td>150,000</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>27,000</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1630 – 1631</td>
<td>150,000</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1631 – 1632</td>
<td>150,000</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>57,200</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1632 – 1633</td>
<td>150,000</td>
<td>1,230</td>
<td>67,569</td>
<td>6,000</td>
<td>6,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1633 – 1634</td>
<td>150,000</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>7,000</td>
<td>7,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1634 – 1635</td>
<td>150,000</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>27,000</td>
<td>38,500</td>
<td>38,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1635 – 1636</td>
<td>150,000</td>
<td>28,814</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>30,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1636 – 1637</td>
<td>150,000</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>30,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1637 – 1638</td>
<td>150,000</td>
<td>1,614</td>
<td>31,000</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1638 – 1639</td>
<td>172,500</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

155 Ashton, “Revenue Farming under the Early Stuarts,” 316.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>British Imports of Chesapeake Tobacco in Pounds</th>
<th>Farm Price of Tobacco in Pence Sterling</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1616</td>
<td>1,250.0</td>
<td>27.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1617</td>
<td>9,419.0</td>
<td>27.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1618</td>
<td>24,834.0</td>
<td>27.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1619</td>
<td>22,882.0</td>
<td>27.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1620</td>
<td>59,510.5</td>
<td>12.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1621</td>
<td>38,452.6</td>
<td>20.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1622</td>
<td>33,431.9</td>
<td>17.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1623</td>
<td>75,864.5</td>
<td>16.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1624</td>
<td>118,692.2</td>
<td>12.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1625</td>
<td>79,875.6</td>
<td>11.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1626</td>
<td>208,921.6</td>
<td>10.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1627</td>
<td>244,354.7</td>
<td>9.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1628</td>
<td>369,354.0</td>
<td>7.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1629</td>
<td>124,510.7</td>
<td>6.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1630</td>
<td>331,426.4</td>
<td>5.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1631</td>
<td>206,498.8</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1632</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1633</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1634</td>
<td>523,232.0</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1635</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1636</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1637</td>
<td>1,080,927.0</td>
<td>3.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1638</td>
<td>2,361,999.0</td>
<td>2.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1639</td>
<td>1,092,873.0</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1640</td>
<td>1,044,544.0</td>
<td>2.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 3 THE MANAGERS

3.1 The Virginia Company of London

This chapter focuses on the Virginia Company of London and the effects of its struggles, internal divisions, and decisions on the tobacco colony it founded. The Company itself was a failure in the very basic business sense that it failed to make money and ultimately, in a flurry of charges, had its charter revoked. This failure is sometimes attributed to greed and lack of imagination, and certainly both were present; but a closer look suggests that there were several very concrete and serious problems. From the beginning, both Company officers and investors were divided in their goals. Some, Richard Hakluyt for example, dreamed of a plantation. Others imagined a trading post or a way station on a westward water passage. Others dreamed of gold. With the possible exception of James I, no one imagined the colony as a spiritual undertaking, and even James thought it was supposed to pay for itself and to reward its investors, while simultaneously advancing his policy with regard to Spain. Divided goals resulted in divided leadership that in turn increased – when they did not actually cause – risk and hardship for the colonists.

But after a very few years even the most stubborn visionaries had discovered that there was no gold and no westward water passage, and had shifted their sights to investment in a successful and prosperous colony. This leads us to the heart of the problem: no one seems to have known how to create a profitable colony – at least not from scratch. The most persistent disagreements were always about how to make money from Virginia. A trading post pays for itself with trade. Ships bring supplies and trade goods and return with a new set of trade goods that can be profitably sold in the home port. A successful plantation, on the other hand, is a kind of production facility – a large agricultural factory wherein the workers lived on the premises and did not cause too much trouble. The Chesapeake colony was the first English experiment in a production facility of continental scale. Of course, there were large estates producing cash crops in seventeenth century England, but it had been many generations since any of them had been carved out of the wilderness or needed to import and season a labor force. A
generation later, a simplified model worked well for the clearing and planting of the sugar colony on the small island of Barbados: a few planters directed a large slave workforce to produce a reliable cash crop. The model of Ireland was of limited use, because the English defeated the Irish in war and maintained an armed occupation in order to exploit an already functioning society. It is difficult to see how either model could have worked in the early Chesapeake. The English were never truly able to conquer the Native Americans they encountered, only push them back out of colonial space. The Barbados model was never actually tried. Instead, in the face of increasing financial difficulties, the Company initiated a land giveaway that resulted in a colony composed of a large number of freeholders. The Company itself was one landholder among many; in fact, was not even the largest one and in order to maintain good relations with the King, undertook expensive diversification efforts that cut into its own profits while its neighbors planted tobacco on every square inch they could clear.

At least in some respects, Ireland could and should have provided some colonial lessons, if not a full colonial model. Ireland was divided into plantations: Munster, Leicester, Ulster, and Connaught and many of the English who colonized Ireland thought of themselves as heirs to the Hakluyt Society. There is one fundamental and relevant difference that James continually exploited, both when he wanted to save money and later when he wanted to revoke the Virginia Company’s charter: Virginia was not conquered by England, it was a for-profit venture by a joint stock company. Ireland was conquered by England, even though it had to be done more than once.

The Company’s and the colony’s troubles have sometimes been attributed to a simple lack of funds. According to Brenner, Sir Edwin Sandys’ gentry faction was not able to raise enough money, at least by comparison with merchant investment in the East India Company.\(^\text{156}\) This explanation is far too simple and it is misleading. Sir Thomas Smythe, merchant and Treasurer of the Virginia Company from 1609 to 1619, repeatedly raised substantial sums through subscriptions from gentry, London guildsmen, and overseas merchants, and later through lotteries that worked their magic throughout England, but never formulated a business plan that rationally allocated those funds.

toward a reasonable expected return. Lots of money flowed in and lots of money flowed out, but the connection between those flows was typically quite tenuous and that weakness left the Company floundering from financial crisis to financial crisis. Income from successful fundraising projects was often simply absorbed by obligations arising from the previous successful fundraising project.

Thus, although there seem to have been sufficient resources available for at least a very limited continent modification experiment on the shores of Chesapeake Bay, they were repeatedly misallocated. From first to last, the Virginia Company was severely under-capitalized, with the (to us) all too predictable result that operating expenses ran high. This placed certain restrictions on the effectiveness of attempts to fund colonial expansion that this chapter will explore in some detail. The Company paid too much for labor, for transport, and because it did not adequately police its supply chain, sometimes even for tools and basic supplies. Instead of tightening Company logistics, once tobacco was established some of the Company’s officers formed a kind of subsidiary that they called the Magazine to supply the growers and market the tobacco. They were merchants, not producers, and they saw the success of tobacco as an opportunity for trade. The trick was, the Magazine’s profits went into the pockets of the Magazine’s owners. The Virginia Company was just their connection to the Virginia colony. The Company invested in the colony while the Magazine profited from it. Edmond Morgan compared the results to a mining camp. The miners sometimes made some money, but the general store more often made a lot more.157 This left both Company and colony ill-prepared to deal with the unexpected. Time and again, the Virginia Company threw people and money at their colony, but the next disaster wiped out their efforts and they began the cycle again.

That brings us to the final and most frightening of the examples of Virginia Company mismanagement: the utterly callous attitude of the Company and its officers toward the colonists. This chapter will explore only two examples in detail: the winter of 1609 – 1610, known as the Starving Time; and the Company response to the Massacre of 1622. They took place at very different periods in the life of the Virginia Company, the

first before and the second after the introduction of tobacco. They also took place under
different Treasurers, the first under Smythe and the second under Sandys, which means
that the documentation is much more extensive in the second case. Nevertheless, there
are similarities of actions, reactions and consequences that need examination.

The high passage and seasoning mortality rates of the first twenty years of
Virginia settlement cannot altogether be accounted for by the New World biosphere; even
coupled with much publicized lack of skills and sometimes lack of moral fiber attributed
to some of the Jamestown settlers. The Virginia Company seems to have regarded
colonists as expendable and endlessly replaceable. Not that the Company was wrong
about their ability to recruit colonists, they obviously could and did recruit. But passage
and seasoning mortality also were very high throughout the life of the Company, issues it
never seems to have directly addressed. Instead, whenever a crisis occurred, the
Company’s first response was to send more colonists to replace those who had been lost
to sickness, shipwreck or Indian war. There appears to have been a kind of simple
calculation: the more colonists, the more successful the colony.

Actually, if there was a calculation, it was more realistic than that. After 1609,
colonists’ passage was paid for by someone other than the Virginia Company and after
1618, if the Company did pay for colonists, the Company assigned itself fifty acres for
each one. Emergency supplies, tools, weapons, everything other than people, was paid
for by the Company. It may be overly simple to regard this as a practice run for the
creation of West Indian sugar colonies in the 1640s, but consider the following. The
death rate was definitely one factor that James used to justify revoking the Virginia
Company charter. Slavery was illegal in England and was definitely not part of
traditional English culture; by extension this applied to her colonies. But from James’ as
well as from a purely business standpoint, African slavery was arguably the lesser evil by
comparison with shipping Englishmen off to their deaths at the rate of four out of five.

The chief officers and investors of the Virginia Company did not refer to
themselves as managers, but considering the scope and scale of their endeavors, it seems
a fair name for them. They conceived the venture, acquired the all-important legal status
for it, raised money to support it and, when it was clear that tobacco might save the
project, got protection for their product in the cut-throat English market. Their work took
place in Company board meetings, called Courts; in various courts of law; in Parliament; and in the endless networking and fundraising that any seeker of venture capital would find familiar.

There were no official capital markets in early seventeenth century London. The Exchange did not open for stockbrokers until after the Restoration. Thus, good public relations were critical to the survival of the Virginia Company. Successful fundraising initially depended on the perceptions of a large number of small investors at many different levels of English society. Throughout its short life, the Virginia Company practiced very good public relations. Glowing reports of Virginia’s wonders such as John Smith’s *A True Relation*\(^{158}\) kept interest in the colony high, while more negative narratives of the colonial experience such as Edward Maria-Wingfield’s description of his governorship, went unpublished or received limited circulation.\(^{159}\) In the end, this worked against the Company. When colonial conditions after the devastating Massacre of 1622 came to light, their former good press now made them look like liars.

As tobacco production took hold and the colony became a financial success, managing the Company became increasingly complex. Once Sandys took over as Treasurer in 1619, Company activity was well documented. Beginning with Volume II, *The Records of the Virginia Company* contain meeting minutes, details of shipments ordered and colonists recruited; land allocation disputes; correspondence with government officials; complaints from colonists; law suits from investors; progress reports from Company projects like the iron works; and appointments and commissions for colonial officers – to name only some. In a modern corporation, many of these would have different personnel up to and including the management level. While there were certainly capable people in the Company and tasks were delegated, the structure of the Virginia Company does not seem to have included much differentiation. No one manager was consistently in charge of the colonial supply chain, for example, or in charge of public relations, or in charge of legal affairs, or in charge of marketing. Due to


the overly simple internal structure, the Virginia Company can fairly be said to have suffered from the success of its colony.

It should be noted that the colony the Virginia Company founded was, after a very rocky start, a resounding success. From the first landfall in 1607 to the present day, English colonists and their descendants, along with a great many other people, have continuously inhabited colonial and later Commonwealth Virginia. Most of the people who have ever lived in Virginia have not been rich, but the land itself is still rich and beautiful. Once it was introduced, tobacco supported Virginia colonists and they in turn made Virginia leaf justly famous in the Atlantic world. Of course, without the Company there would have been no colony, even if during some periods it seems fair to say that the colony was a success in spite of the Company.

3.2 The First Charter

James I signed the First Charter of Virginia creating two companies: the Virginia Company and the Plymouth Company in April of 1606. Each company had settlement rights on the North American coast and up to one hundred miles inland. The Virginia Company was assigned the land between thirty-four and forty-three degrees north latitude, from approximately Cape Fear to the southern end of Long Island. The Plymouth Company had permission to found their colony between thirty-eight and forty-five degrees north latitude. Clearly, the northern border of the first colony is north of the southern border of the second colony. The charter deals with this: the two colonies are not supposed to be planted within one hundred English miles of each other. Siting is first come, first served, although enforcement is not spelled out.\textsuperscript{160} However, if any strangers should attempt to use land or resources assigned to the colony – and presumably this includes members of the other colony – the Charter assigns a stiff fine. A more serious problem is that thirty-four north latitude was very close to territory the Spanish Crown claimed exclusive right to and was clearly willing to defend. Even the latitude of the site chosen for Jamestown, thirty-seven degrees north, seemed too close for comfort to some colonists and did seem suspicious to Spain.

\textsuperscript{160} The First charter of Virginia; April 10, 1606. http://avalon.law.yale.edu/17th_century/va01.asp.
This was a bold move. In the Treaty of London of 1604, Spain had given up direct claim to parts of North America where she did not already have colonies, while insisting on the inviolability of her sea trading routes in the West Indies.\footnote{161} Given the wartime successes of Elizabeth’s privateers and the pride of place they still held in the English imagination, Spain had good reason to fear encroachment. Many of the seamen and at least some of the ships that brought about that success were still very much afloat. James could hardly have been unfamiliar with the antics of men like Raleigh, Hawkins, and Newport in the Spanish West Indies and clearly wished to avoid further provocations. To the north there were French claims to consider. France had not been at war with England, but France was also a Catholic country and relations were both complicated and important. Politically, James could not afford to ignore the opportunity opened up by the Treaty because to do so would have appeared weak in the face of the Spanish/Catholic threat. Merchants of London and their allies in Parliament saw colonization as an opportunity. Catholic Spain, their enemy of old, had become very rich in the New World and Catholic France appeared to be following in her footsteps. Now, Protestant England would have a chance.

The First Charter differs from Elizabethan charters in some specific and significant ways. The company men have a council, but they are not proprietors and the only feudal obligation is twenty percent of precious metal finds due to the King. Land was to be owned in “free and common socage only, and not in capite” and the Company was allowed to sell land. James made the example of his estates in Kent, but in more familiar terms, the colonists were the King’s tenants not his servants. Unlike servants, tenants are free men. They owed the King money in the event that they made some. Although the King reserved control on paper, in practice the Virginia Company Council made the decisions and simply kept him informed – about some problems not particularly well.\footnote{162}

\footnote{162} The Records of the Virginia Company of London, Volume I the Court Book from the manuscript in the Library of Congress, ed. Susan Myra Kingsbury, digitized from the Library of Congress by the University of Michigan, 12. https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015021921328;view=1up;seq=24
The Charter also contained a pious paragraph about the “propagating of Christian Religion to such People, as yet live in darkness.” This sounds very strange and unpleasant to twenty-first century readers, but the granting of the First Charter was a political act with international consequences in a time when monarchs took their religious duties very seriously. James was chartering English colonies and they would be part of the English state, which in James’ view (and a great many of his contemporaries’) was also a religious body. In fairness to the twenty-first century, there is only one possible example of proselytizing in the Virginia colony, namely the baptism and marriage of Pocahontas, and Rolfe seems to have had other things on his mind.

Emphasizing the language of the charter here is not an apology for the colonizers, or an attempt to ignore the fact that there were slaves in the colony as early as 1619. However, as Ivor Noel Hume pointed out, there were no laws or social structures in place that acknowledged slavery. Legally, the colonists were free men from the very beginning of the enterprise. True, slaves existed and were traded in the West Indies and English shipmasters had been involved in that trade, generally in the most provocative fashion. That is, men like Hawkins were not a part of the regular trade from Africa, they stole slaves from the Spanish and Portuguese traders who had already bought them and were trying to deliver them. The careful language of the Charter seems to suggest that James knew at least something about this, and did not want the activity duplicated in his colonies. The First Charter specifically authorized the colonial council to prosecute criminals, even criminals who are fleeing prosecution in another country or colony. Overall, the language of the First Charter is precise and middle of the road. James supported a colony, particularly one that might retard Spain, make money and advance the Church of England; and he did not support slavery or war with Spain.

Significantly, the Crown did not invest any money in the project. James proposed to Parliament that the Company would raise money by selling stock and the state would gain new revenue, presumably from Customs. The speech was partly a pitch for investment and partly a concession to the political reality that Parliament would never

163 The First charter of Virginia; April 10, 1606. http://avalon.law.yale.edu/17th_century/va01.asp.
have levied the taxes or assigned the funds to James to found a colony in North America. Ideologically speaking, money was supposed to flow the other way. On paper, James’ plan made sense. The first patentees of the Virginia Company were successful London merchants: Sir Thomas Gates, Sir George Somers, Richard Hakluyt, and Edward-Maria Wingfield, all members of the Adventurers who became either the core leadership of the Virginia Company or close companions and advisors. While there is good reason to think that their goals were not all alike, they were all able and willing to invest in their project and to command financial help from friends if times got tough. They did not need financial help from the state and they would have been unhappy at the implied commitment to share profits if help had been forthcoming.

Relations with Spain were challenged very soon by the Plymouth Company. Plymouth Company members were West Country merchants with interest in the Spanish trade. The northern colony had promise for them because they could expect to develop their fishing interests with the establishment or at least semi-permanent processing sites. Fish were not at all the same kind of business as imports and exports. Fish were profitable only when the catch was large, and fishing required dedicated ships and experienced crews to manage well. On the positive side, there were two markets for fish: the strong and reliable – and untaxable – domestic market, and the trade of fish for Spanish wine and tobacco, both of which were big ticket items. Both markets provided sound financial reasons for the Plymouth Company to invest in colonization.

James had ended the war with Spain two years before; had been careful to keep English settlement at least technically north of the Caribbean; and had made it clear that he did not support the raider/traders of yore. Despite all that, an English ship of the Plymouth Company, the Richard, while they claimed to be looking for a colony site in what is now southern Maine, encountered a Spanish fleet. According to Spain, the encounter was somewhere near the Bahamas. Both countries were familiar with latitude measurement at sea. Unfortunately, sea captains of neither country knew anything about the measurement of longitude and probably neither knew anything about the action of the Gulf Stream. In other words, probably neither captain really knew where they were. The Spanish fleet apparently considered the English in violation of the Treaty. They may have had specific orders to prevent English penetration of the Caribbean and they may
have been hunting for English ships and got a little farther north than they would later admit. Wherever the encounter actually happened, it went very badly for the Plymouth Company. The Spanish fleet shot up the Richard and took the crew hostage. The incident evoked widespread outrage in England and James was forced – at least publicly – to take a stronger stand in relations with Spain. Spain was unmoved. The English ship was where it should not have been. The Plymouth Company claimed the incident cost them £5,000, and the incident – or something – seems to have negatively impacted interest and investment in the Second Colony.166 A site near the mouth of the Kennebec River was inhabited briefly, then abandoned.167 Beginning in 1610, the English attempted several settlements on Newfoundland, but these remained little more than a series of outposts to support North Atlantic fishing for the next decade. The English did not found a permanent colony in New England until 1620.

By contrast, the Virginia Company’s first efforts looked very good. Three ships made landfall in the Chesapeake in April of 1607. The largest, the Susan Constant, was captained by Christopher Newport whose personal goals were very much centered on the search for a westward water passage. Newport was in charge of the expedition only until landfall and his orders were sealed, to be opened only on arrival. The sealed orders suggest a very tense situation involving disagreement and even mutual suspicion among Company men about the purpose of the adventure. Possibly they were intended to keep the lid on factionalism. If so, they appear to have had very limited effect. The orders contained instructions from the King concerning a colonial council, governor and lieutenant governor. Newport reluctantly let John Smith out of the ship’s brig when Smith was named as Lieutenant Governor.

Newport was a committed explorer and a capable seaman. Beyond delivering colonists and supplies, and occasionally some very good advice, he played almost no role in the colony itself. He does not appear to have considered this a hardship. Virginia was supposed to be a base camp for exploration; a trading post with fort for dealing with native peoples; perhaps a secure place from which to launch raids on Spanish shipping or

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166 Calendar of State Papers, 1608
167 Hume, 109 – 111.
to prevent Spanish penetration of the mainland, although that would not have been written down.

Hakluyt and Somers seem to have been determined to found a plantation. John Smith, one of the Virginia colony’s most articulate supporters and strongest boosters, sometimes appears to have been working toward a permanent fort rather than a fully functioning society. Christopher Newport just wanted a stopover on the way to Japan. But in that magic first landfall, any and all of these goals might still be realized and Newport headed back to England carrying some iron pyrite for assay, to report success and to obtain more supplies.

Problems began almost as soon as Newport left and dogged the colony inexorably for the next two years. While the English were initially able to trade for food with local tribes and to supplement their diets with some hunting and fishing, they soon reached the limits of what the local Indians were willing and able to trade out of their own food supplies, and equally soon proved unable to fend for themselves in this strange new land.

Extremes of factionalism and personal antagonism coupled with inadequate or inappropriate supply from England resulted in charges and countercharges of mutiny and mismanagement; the fire of 1608; increasingly problematic relations with Powhatan; the attempt to depose the unpopular Governor Wingfield; and the attack on Smith that resulted in his permanent repatriation. Waterborne disease is a great villain in this story, because sick and hungry men whose chief distraction was watching their comrades die do not make the most rational of colonists. We have more than one surviving report of the hardships faced by the first colonists. Wingfield described his ordeals, both political and physical, in considerable detail. He did not manage to make himself sound good, but even a very critical reading could not make his opponents attractive or their case against him look strong.

Certainly, the colonists were short of supplies and many were very ill. But, Wingfield’s description of colonial hardship did not get wide circulation and was not preserved by the Virginia Company, at least not in their surviving records. In this matter,
their memories proved selective. Instead, the Virginia Company saw to it that Smith’s exciting account in 1608, *A True Relation*, did get wide circulation and his glowing report on the richness of Virginia – and the excitement of his own adventures – sparked considerable public interest in the colony. At the same time, it changed and sharpened the focus of the Virginia Company’s colonizing efforts.

While the First Charter gave colonists the right to trade, the Indians they encountered, as Sir George Somers later put it, “had nothing to trade but mulberries.” The colony after the first year was clearly not a financial success and was not even self-sustaining; but the Virginia Company had proved much better at establishing a permanent colony than the Plymouth Company, and by all accounts the land had potential. By 1609, that potential had generated considerable interest among London investors. Brenner interpreted the new interest to mean that the Company’s investors had discovered that, while there was no gold in Virginia and no quick payoffs from trade, they could make money from a successful plantation, that is, from agriculture for export and the exploitation of Virginia’s natural resources such as lumber and bog iron. A successful plantation would require many more colonists and an expanded permanent settlement. It would require more money. It would also require structural change. A small group of large investors with sealed orders reporting to the King had already proven inadequate and would have to be changed.

3.3 The Second Charter

The Second Charter of 1609 granted the Virginia Company a proprietorship. This meant that the Company owned land and had jurisdiction at least of the kind still afforded manorial courts in England. This may not sound like much of a change from the power to try criminals in the First Charter, but that court would, legally, have been a King’s

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168 Edward Maria Wingfield, *A Discourse of the Colony*. Digitized Library of Congress manuscript including publication history [https://archive.org/stream/adiscourseofvirg00wing#page/8/mode/2up](https://archive.org/stream/adiscourseofvirg00wing#page/8/mode/2up).
169 John Smith, *A True Relation 1608*.
170 Cited in Hume, 112.
171 Brenner, 93 – 94.
court with his appointed representative on the bench. Wingfield for example, had the right of appeal to the King, which he gratefully used.

After 1609, the colony was governed by the Company and its Council had primary jurisdiction. For large investors, this would have increased its attractiveness. In addition, Company proprietorship strengthened the legal case for colonization by servants indentured to the Company, not just by Company employees or investors. Indentured servants were perfectly legal in England and by extension in Virginia, but contract disputes in the King’s proprietorship would have been contract disputes in a Common Law court which the investors and the Company might not have won. Such disputes would certainly not have meant good public relations with future subscribers. This was not the headright system, which did not begin until 1618, and which allotted 50 acres of land to anyone who paid a colonist’s passage. It did mean that the Company was investing in itself, not just the colony, when it paid for new colonists’ passage. Colonists that the Company paid for were Company servants, not the King’s tenants.

The most obvious benefit of the new charter is the greatly expanded subscription list. Rabb insisted that merchant investors – he implied overseas merchants – maintained fifty-five percent or better of capital investment in the Company and they typically had more access to investment funds. But the list is a Who’s Who of London players and wannabes: merchants, members of Parliament, minor (and a few not so minor) members of the nobility, tradesmen and London Livery Companies. The first name on the new list is Robert [Cecil], Lord Salisbury. Other names include John Smith; Sir Edwin and several other men named Sandys; Captain Christopher Newport; someone named William Berkeley, although the later governor of Virginia would have been not quite five years old at the time; Sir Thomas Gates later a governor of Virginia; Sir George Somers; and Oliver Cromwell, probably the rich uncle of his namesake, the future Lord Protector. There are more than two hundred fifty names on the Second Charter, not counting the fifty-six names of Livery Companies. Clearly the Virginia Colony has had sufficient

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initial success, or a sufficiently good press, to attract serious money to its first public offering.\textsuperscript{173}

Sir Thomas Smythe was named the Virginia Company Treasurer in the 1609 Charter, possibly because of his work in rounding up investors. He was also a large subscriber, listed as Thomas Smith and the spellings appear interchangeably on several of the few surviving documents of the early period.\textsuperscript{174} Of course, we cannot be completely certain that Smith and Smythe are the same person, but based on action, if Smith/Smythe had changed his name to John Doe, we would still have suspected they were. Smythe’s inspired salesmanship left an indelible mark on the Virginia Company, first with the subscription rolls in the Second Charter; next with the Lotteries; and overall with the impressive list of subscribers carefully documented in the report to the Commission in 1620 by his assistant and successor Sir Edwin Sandys.

Smythe was a merchant and his colleagues and cohorts wanted a return from trade. When no other return on their investment turned up in Virginia, Smythe organized a trade monopoly with the colony. Sandys was gentry, a Member of the House of Commons and had long been interested in the possibility of English colonies. Brenner characterizes the merchant – gentry alliance in business ventures of this period as workable as long as the merchants led.\textsuperscript{175} Clearly without Smythe’s work the Virginia Company’s existence would have been much shorter – about two years, from 1607 to 1609. Its colony presumably would not have survived that termination. If cash flow was your problem, Smythe was your man. But cash flow was only one of the Virginia Company’s problems. The structure his salesmanship imparted, while it managed to keep the colony going, was ultimately very, very bad for the Company. From 1609 until its final demise, the Virginia Company struggled with the obligations contracted with each Smythe ‘success’, never quite managing to get itself on a sound financial footing.

Smythe’s friends and political allies may have been merchants, but many of the names on the subscription list were not overseas merchants and many were not merchants at all. What Smythe’s fund-raising did was, in a very crude financial sense and

\textsuperscript{173} The Second Charter of Virginia
\textsuperscript{174} Records of the Virginia company of London, Volume III, 32 – 33.
\textsuperscript{175} Brenner, 96.
undoubtedly unintentionally, democratize the Virginia Company. Shares in the 1609 offering cost £12 10s, steep for individual investors, but they could be bought on installment. The Livery Companies of London, including Grocers, Fishmongers, Salters, and Clothworkers among others, were new sources of investment funds. These were associations of domestic and retail merchants and manufacturers, usually without direct access to overseas trade. In some cases, the Livery Companies made, in the view of their membership, substantial initial investments. For example, the Fishmongers bought five shares and the Mercers made a corporate investment of £200.176 There is no record of what Smythe promised, or for that matter, any complete record of what he collected in the initial subscription. Scott discusses promises of land and money, but the document he references in *Records of the Virginia Company, Volume I* is dated July 7, 1620, after Sandys became Treasurer and well after the establishment of the headright system.177 Records of Smythe’s financial activities, rather like negative reports of the colonial experience, have shown a pronounced tendency to disappear. Expectations of a rich reward seem to have run very high in London early in 1609, but Company funds soon ran desperately short when costs mounted and returns failed to materialize. Many of those new subscribers did not pay past their first installment on their stock.178 The expanded subscription list and what followed in the colony suggest an extraordinary degree of self-delusion.

The third supply expedition of 1609, funded by the subscribers on the Second Charter, recognized the new objectives and sent out settlers, not explorers. The results were not what anyone had wished for. The Second Charter went into effect on May 23rd 1609 and the winter of 1609 – 1610 in Jamestown is now referred to as the “Starving Time.” The supply ship failure was not the result of a policy decision to withhold resources from the Virginia colonists. On the contrary, the colony was, if in no other sense, a publicity success and both money and volunteers flocked to the project. While


178 Brenner, 94 - 95.
later records suggest that supply shipments also suffered from attrition due to theft and general mishandling, the influx of funds from the 1609 subscribers resulted in an impressive fleet of seven ships being sent out, loaded with supplies and colonists and also towing two smaller pinnaces intended for exploration in the Chesapeake.

The fleet was delayed in England for months. Part of the delay may have been due to the flagship *Sea Venture*. She was newly built and needed time for her caulking to set. Part of the delay may have been due to what Hume described as “leisurely” loading of supplies, implying a leisurely paying of suppliers.\(^{179}\) In any case, when the fleet finally set sail, it blundered into a hurricane in the western Atlantic. The fleet was blown apart with all ships suffering damage, some of it severe. The *Sea Venture*’s new caulk was not equal to the storm and she took on water. Newport was Captain of the *Sea Venture*, but Sir George Somers was Admiral of the fleet, and Somers is credited with saving his people and supplies by running the *Sea Venture* onto a reef just off Bermuda, inadvertently founding the Somers Island Colony. One ship, the *Catch*, was lost completely. Five other ships survived the hurricane – just barely – and made it to Virginia, some to Jamestown and some to Point Comfort, well before winter set in. The surviving ships were in very bad shape. Most of the supplies had either been on the *Sea Venture* or lost in the storm. Sickness had decimated both passengers and crew of two ships, but they still brought about three hundred people to eat the supplies that remained. Four of the ships returned to England to bring word of the disaster.

Unfortunately, leadership of both the fleet and the colony, including the new Governor Sir Thomas Gates, had crossed on the *Sea Venture*. No one in Virginia knew where they were and, apparently, most of the initiative was with them. John Smith, badly injured, had already been taken back to England and Governor Percy was desperately ill and not best known for his leadership qualities when well. In Smith’s absence, relations with the Powhatan Confederation had gone from problematic to very bad. The fifth surviving ship from the supply mission, the pinnace *Virginia*, was sent north up the Chesapeake to try and acquire supplies from Indians that the English had not already alienated. Apparently, they were at least partly successful, but the captain concluded that he did not have enough grain to help Jamestown. He did, however, have enough to get

\(^{179}\) Hume, 284 - 287.
his ship and crew safely back to England and that is what he chose to do. The colonists at
Jamestown spent a desperate winter. The following spring, Somers built pinnaces out of
the wreckage of the Sea Venture and in May of 1610 arrived in Jamestown to find sixty
survivors. Shocked, Somers loaded up the survivors and was preparing to take them
back to England when another supply ship arrived and one more attempt was made to
colonize Virginia. This time, it worked. Somers saved one colony and founded another.
Neither he nor the Virginia Company can be blamed for a hurricane.

There have been several modern challenges to the traditional narrative of the
Starving Time. Hume raised question after question about the degree of suffering
endured by the early Jamestown colonists. Why did they go hungry next to a river
teeming with fish? They may not have known the germ theory of disease, but the danger
of bad water was well-enough understood. Why did they not try to secure a better water
supply? John Smith’s is not the only report of the great plenty of Virginia. Much has
been made of the first colonists’ general unsuitability for wilderness taming – too much.
Were the early colonists so depraved that they preferred starvation to initiative?

Taken at face value, the indifference of the men at Point Comfort and the captain
and crew of the Virginia to the plight of the people at Jamestown is astounding. How
much did the division of goals within the Virginia Company leadership contribute to the
colony’s troubles? Were the Point Comfort garrison and the crew of the Virginia so
determined on their idea of what they were there for that they watched their fellow
colonists die? Clear lines of authority and working chains of command have saved many
lives both before and since the Starving Time, and they seem to have been absent from
the English of Virginia in the Winter of 1609 – 1610. It is at worst a defensible thesis
that their presence would have made a critical difference. The colony was only saved by
the arrival of Sir Thomas Gates.

Virginia Bernhard’s discussion of the effect of ships’ crews on the supplying of
the Jamestown colony poses some more concrete questions. She cited several complaints
by John Smith that various ship’s crews ate up all the supplies and “traded irresponsibly”

180 Hume, 284 - 287.
181 Hume, 259 – 263.
with the Indians. Smith meant that, in addition to eating up ship’s stores, they traded
with the Indians for supplies that would and should have gone to the colonists. Smith’s
complaint about the sailors trading irresponsibly with the Indians highlights an additional
expense in supplying Virginia that a successful trading mission would not have faced: the
supply ships did not return home with trade goods which were their normal source of
profit. Trading was not confined to the owners or ship’s officers. The sailors also
expected to bring something tradeable home with them. With a few exceptions, the
supply ships to and from Virginia came home empty. Ship owners and ship masters
would have understood this very quickly and would have been prepared to charge the
Virginia Company accordingly. Thus, each supply expedition cost somebody twice as
much as a successful trading mission would have. But whatever the compensation, it
would not have been extended to the crews who were likely to have been frustrated by
the situation and to have contributed to the general disorder when the ships came in.

If they did not ‘count’ the needs of the ships’ crews, the Virginia Company could
be held to account for far more than fostering bad leadership. Would the food supply
have been sufficient for the expanded number of colonists even without the hurricane
damage and the absence of the Sea Venture’s supplies? What were all those colonists
going to do when they got to Virginia in late summer, other than eat supplies and get sick
until the next expedition arrived? Smith pleaded for craftsmen, and presumably at least a
few survived on board at least one of the ships. But, imagine that there had been no
hurricane and that four hundred people descended on a small but functioning society of
about one hundred people. Craftsmen or no, extra supplies notwithstanding, at least
temporarily there would be disruption, stress and dislocation. The newcomers would
have had to adapt, but since there were more of them than old timers some may, without
leadership some will, decide not to adapt very much on some issues. If the society they
are entering is sick, hungry, homesick, under siege by some very angry Indians, and
largely dysfunctional due to conflicts among the leadership, quadrupling the number of
people will not make it better. Quite a few things will get worse.

182 Virginia Bernhard, “Men, Women, and Children at Jamestown: Population and Gender in Early
To compound the problem and partially explain the behavior of the captain of the Virginia and the men who wintered at Point Comfort, remember that those three hundred brought deadly diseases with them. How much sickness remained and of what sort, no one in Virginia could be sure. If the fort at Jamestown were not just undersupplied, but a charnel house, the behavior of the Point Comfort men and the ships’ crews that returned to England is much more understandable. They really could not help. Why add their deaths to the total? Much has been written about the Virginia colonists’ experience with disease in a sub-tropical biosphere to which they were completely unaccustomed. This is particularly applicable in the case of colonists arriving in summer. The mortality rate of the period known as the seasoning, the first year of colonization, has generally been the focus of the discussion. Somewhat less discussion has been dedicated to passage mortality rates in this early period because we have only sketchy records. But the English, like the Spanish, Portuguese, and French brought deadly diseases to the New World with them. Sometimes those diseases killed Englishmen, sometimes on the ship and sometimes after disembarking.

Finally, there is the question of the distribution of supplies and colonists throughout the fleet. Apparently, most of the supplies were on the Sea Venture, along with the fleet command and the new colonial leadership. Each of the other ships presumably had enough supplies for their passengers and crew for the anticipated voyage. Why distribute supplies and men that way? It does not quite make sense to say that the senior officers wanted to eat all the good food. If the Sea Venture’s cargo was intended to supply a colony, then it would have included bulk grain and barrels of salted meat; life sustaining but not exactly dinner at the palace. It would make sense if the overriding consideration was that the senior officers maintain control of supplies. The danger that supplies distributed around seven ships would not last for a long ocean voyage was perceived to be much greater than the danger of hurricanes. The fleet encountered a low probability, high stakes situation. The disastrous outcomes were not just the effects of the original event, those effects were compounded by planning for a different danger.

How does that leave the Virginia Company responsible, since they could not have anticipated sickness or hurricanes? But they did know about sickness, they did know about storms at sea, they did know about fire, and they knew that the colony was not fully
functional. If nothing else, the return of the injured John Smith should have told somebody that much. To do what the colonists actually had to do, establish a self-sustaining community, takes a long time and considerable resources; but it also requires a shared image of what that colony will do when it succeeds and a good plan for the deployment of resources to bring that about. If the Company had planned to found a self-sustaining colony, it might very well have sent a small expedition to find a site and establish relations with the Indians, which it initially did; then staged colonial development with selected projects – building a port, farming or lumbering and importing families, perhaps fifty at a time, with experience to work on them; sending seeds and farming tools as well as grain supplies; and correcting for problems that actually arose – which it failed utterly to do. Staged development requires planning and dedicated resources to carry the project through whatever setbacks – fires, sickness, and hurricanes for example – occur until there is at least some success, exactly the kind of management that the Virginia Company never exhibited.

Some of the Company’s ‘mistaken’ assumptions about the colony were more than a little self-serving. The shipmasters were paid and supplied for the passage of colonists and transport of supplies. At least some of those colonists were servants, which means that they owed the Company labor in return for their passage. Payment for their passage was deferred, but it was still owed. Other colonists were subscribers who had already paid for their passage. Regardless of their legal status, they would repay the Company for any investment once they arrived in Virginia. Supplies, on the other hand, were overhead. The Company had to pay for those for all the colonists and what they paid for shipping had to cover supplies for the crew. The first and second supply missions were too few and too far between, but they were assumed to be supplemental. The colony was in the process of establishing itself. Even with the large subscription list, the only way the third supply could pay for itself was to load the ships up with people and hope they got enough to eat – from someone else.
3.4 The Third Charter

The Third Charter of Virginia issued in 1612 extended the colonial boundaries eastward to include the newly discovered islands. With the success of the new island colony, the Somers Island Company was spun off from the Virginia Company in 1615 taking at least some investment with it. However, the Third charter did permit the Virginia Company to hold public lotteries in order to raise funds. These appear to have been another brain-child of Sir Thomas Smythe. The problem of Company finances was critical. The clear downside to the huge subscriber list of the Second Charter was that the Company was oversubscribed. From the standpoint of the stockholders, unless the Company received a huge windfall they could not expect to receive a dividend, or only a very small one, because the profits could only be subdivided so many times. From the standpoint of the Company, they were saddled with promises they could not hope to keep – unless of course they received a very large windfall. Lotteries did not commit the Company to anything other than the cost of the prizes. In effect, the lotteries were the next windfall.

The first Great Standing Lottery was held in London in 1612, practically as soon as the ink was dry on the Third Charter. The Company built a house to hold the drawing (and presumably to keep the prizes secure). Lottery tickets cost 2s 6d and at least one prize was valued at £1,000. Smythe sold blocks of tickets to the several London Livery Companies in addition to personal sales and Sandys wrote fine fundraising letters to his contacts among the gentry and in several churches. Initially, ticket sales were slow due to a general suspicion of lotteries and a general disillusionment with the Virginia Company. Even though winning the lottery did not depend in any way on what happened in Virginia, London tradesmen and merchants alike were understandably reluctant to give money to anyone associated with the Virginia Company. The drawing for the first lottery had to be postponed from March to June. However, Smythe’s salesmanship reaped its predictable rewards. We do not know how much money the Lottery made, and it

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183 Third Charter of Virginia; March 12, 1611, Avalon Project, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/17th_century/va03.asp.
probably did not match Company hopes, we do know that the grand prize winner was a tailor, one Thomas Sharpliss. If nothing else, this made it a public relations success.

The Spanish Ambassador informed his government that the lottery had raised sixty-thousand ducats, enough to send six supply ships, but a former clerk of the Company wrote that the money would hardly pay the Company’s debts. The Spanish Ambassador’s estimate is almost certainly inflated, but given lottery expenses and accumulating debt the two statements are not necessarily very far apart. While the Company did not yet have to face the balloon payment of dividends for the 1609 subscribers, it had to pay for the commitment to send regular supply ships to its still struggling colony, and it had to at least make payments on debt incurred by previous supplies. Overall the fundraising was sufficiently successful that the Virginia Company immediately began planning the Second Great Standing Lottery, simultaneously launching several smaller lotteries in 1613, with lower ticket price of 12d and more modest prizes to appeal to a wider public.

Collections for the Second Great Standing Lottery stalled, hindered by ticket prices and charges of corruption, theft, and mismanagement in the little lotteries. The Company attempted to promote interest with an impressive list of prizes. From a leaflet, the cash prizes alone came to £24,225. The drawing was postponed several times and was not finally held until November of 1615. By that time, tobacco had taken hold and investment in Virginia was beginning to look more hopeful. The following year, the Company launched a series of what were called Running Lotteries that ran throughout England until the King suspended them in 1621. The Running Lotteries did not have single grand drawings, but were more like a “scratch off” or “instant win.” You bought your ticket and found out if you were a winner right away. While the Company sent letters and presents to town officials to make sure they had local government support, it outsourced the actual management. That proved a successful strategy. The Running

Lotteries never produced huge sums, but were a steady source of Company revenue, sometimes the only source.\(^{187}\)

The Charter of 1612 moved the southern latitude of the newly discovered island colony to thirty degrees north. It appears that Spain was not worried about the tiny settlement in Virginia and England was no longer worried about Spain. The Charter added some high-ranking names to the Company, including an Archbishop. It also specified method of governance for the Virginia Company. The Treasurer and other members should meet once a week for normal business – the meetings were called Courts. A quorum was five officers and fifteen general members. There were the Treasurer, the Deputy, a group called the Committees that apparently handled products and supply, and a group called the auditors who handled claims against the Company, rather than auditing the books in the modern sense. In addition, there were to be four Courts for the transactions of “greater weight and importance.” These came to be called Quarter Courts: Hillary Term, Easter, Trinity, and Michaelmas. Although there is nothing like a modern company’s chain of accountability, after the Charter of 1612 we see more differentiation in the structure of the Virginia Company, with many more people assigned specific roles. In addition, the officers of the Company were to appoint a council for the colony in Virginia and disciplinary action against mutineers and miscreants was in the hands of the Company.\(^{188}\)

In addition to the lotteries, the Third Charter authorized the Company to sue subscribers who had defaulted on their subscriptions. Company records are still very sketchy during this period, but documents outlining a suit signed by the King against twelve subscribers for the sum of thirty-seven pounds each appeared in November and December of that year.\(^{189}\) The suits moved through court fairly quickly, but each defendant had the opportunity to reply to charges and inevitably some countersued, claiming they had been promised more than they could ever receive. The process quickly became tedious and must have consumed very close to as much money as the Company could hope to recover, since the total of the twelve suits was less than five hundred

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\(^{188}\) Third Charter of Virginia; March 12, 1611, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/17th_century/va03.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/17th_century/va03.asp).

pounds. At this point the question must have occurred to someone in London: why keep the Company going? Scrap the colony, private companies cannot afford colonies, at least not a wilderness colony like this one. Surely by 1612, both English merchants and English gentry – and certainly English tradesmen – understood the concept of cutting one’s losses. Hold one big lottery to pay the debts and bring everybody home.

But in 1612 there was a brand-new reason to keep the colony going: tobacco. One of the several memorable passengers on the Sea Venture was John Rolfe. In 1612, Rolfe introduced seeds of Nicotiana Tabacum into Virginia, according to most sources obtained from what is now Trinidad and Tobago. How tight was communication between the tobacco experimenters and the Company men in London? Unknown, but it does raise the question of how Rolfe could have got the seeds in secret – or got them at all. Once the English made landfall in Virginia, Spain threw resources into her Florida colony. Andrews pointed out that it had become difficult for Spain to maintain control of areas remote from their bases and there was an increasing English and Dutch presence in the south-eastern Caribbean and the coast of South America. Spain did not secure Tobago until 1614. But although the claim is sometimes made that Rolfe travelled in the Caribbean, the area was hardly an English tourist destination. Whether he went there in person or just knew somebody who did, Rolfe must have been connected with the Anti-Spanish faction in England or at least with the seamen who plied those routes.

Then, however he acquired them, there is the problem of how Rolfe could have stored the seeds. All seeds need to be stored cool and dry to prevent premature germination and rot. If Rolfe got the seeds in England, one winter in Bermuda was probably cool enough, although the dry part would have been problematic. (Salt water immersion is also not recommended for seed storage.) If he acquired the seeds personally in a prior journey to Tobago, then they would have had to last for at least another year to cover the trip back plus the winter and spring in England. Of course, none of the above is impossible. The seeds could have been carefully wrapped in oilcloth and then in other protective material and kept as cool as possible for two or three years.

If there were enough of them, then only a few need actually germinate to put the owner in the tobacco business.

One possibility may be that Rolfe found *Nicotiana Tabacum* growing in Bermuda—but he does not seem to have brought tobacco expertise with him, so how did he know what to do with it? The problem is extremely frustrating because, although we know that John Rolfe was born in Norfolk, England and we know he established *N. Tabacum* culture in Virginia, in between those two events we know almost nothing about the man who, almost singlehandedly, changed the Virginia colony from a not particularly well-run project into a functioning society with a stable revenue stream. *Nicotiana Tabacum* was not native to Virginia. Like the colonists themselves, somebody brought it there in order to make money out of it. And, unlike practically all of the Virginia Company’s efforts both before and since, that one worked.

According to Ralph Hamor, the colonists had only the sketchiest of ideas about how to plant, nurture and harvest tobacco, but they seem to have made at least a limited success of their first crop.¹⁹¹ Money from the London Lotteries kept the colony supplied while they cleared and planted, and refined their curing and packing techniques for the London and Amsterdam markets. In the meantime, Rolfe did something else that made Virginia tobacco a success: he married Pocahontas. With those two acts, Rolfe relieved the pressure on the struggling colonists. The tobacco crop gave the colonists a source of cash. But in order for that to be more than a trickle of trade goods for the supply ship sailors, the colonists needed several years to clear enough land to grow enough tobacco to produce a steady income, and to turn around the colony’s reputation as a money loser so that it could begin to attract investment again. Rolfe’s marriage insured that the Indians would give the colony those years. It needed them.

Governor Dale, a cautious and conservative man who, until he was replaced by Yeardley in 1619, single-handedly held up the tobacco boom by requiring that the Company employees plant corn on two of the three acres of their allotments.¹⁹² After a full decade, the colony was still struggling just to be a colony. Judging by the explosion

¹⁹² Hume, 332.
of tobacco growing that followed, Dale’s general caution and tough rules probably helped the tobacco project in the long run by increasing the sustainability of the colony.

However, we saw from the “Customs Entries from Virginia and Bermuda” that Virginia was shipping tobacco by 1614, barely long enough after the start of Rolfe’s experiment to successfully package a crop of any size. The pudding tobacco in particular seems to be more than could possibly have been produced under Dale’s cautious rules. The Spanish threat notwithstanding, *N. Tabacum* seeds came from the Caribbean and a likely source for the pudding tobacco is also the Caribbean. The possibility contains the seeds of change. Although Rolfe must have had some contact with the Anti-Spanish faction, hidden in the introduction of Virginia’s only profitable crop was a shift away from competition with Spain. Tobacco did what James could not: produced a shift in English investment and foreign policy from the raiders to the traders.

3.5 The Great Land Grab

Beginning in 1614, original surviving servants began completing their indentures. Although the headright system had not officially begun, the Company gave them grants of land for the obvious purpose of keeping them in Virginia. If nothing else, they supplied continuity to the colonial project and their experience could not be duplicated by new arrivals from England. The land cost the Virginia Company nothing, although there was an obvious potential for conflicts with Native Americans. However, after a period of from five to seven very hard years these colonists apparently regarded Virginia as theirs for the clearing and they began spreading out, upstream and away from the Fort at Jamestown – and not coincidentally, toward a better water supply. It is possible that the seasoning mortality began to drop during this period for precisely that reason. The former servants did not work on Company land; they grew tobacco because they could; and those who could began making independent deals with merchant shipping. In other words, they were in business for their health and some of them began making money.

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Their presence in Virginia helped the Company indirectly by increasing the colonial economy, but they did not make the Company any money.

Beginning in 1616, dividends came due to investors from the enormous 1609 membership list. How deep was the hole that the Company had dug for itself? Although the names on the Charter of 1609 are an index of the scope of the subscription drive, they are not a complete or a closed list. Rabb estimated at least six hundred fifty subscribers from the 1620 Report, presumably counting Livery Company members individually and including more recent subscribers, for a total cash infusion of £10,000. They did not all subscribe at the same time, but they were all expecting a payout, not another subscription. In particular, wealthy merchant investors and some of the larger Livery Companies were a serious problem. They were owed money and they were in a position to make life unpleasant for the Company management. While there was still income from the Running Lotteries, by 1616 it was completely absorbed in supplying the colony and paying down debt. To maintain solvency and good relations, the Company offered proprietorships, called “hundreds” to select very large investors provided that they, or somebody, would clear and work the land.

Hundreds were a subdivision of counties in England, historically based on the notion of one hundred families or ten families that tithed (10 X 10). In Virginia, the Hundreds were proprietorships and they were much larger in acreage and sometimes in population than their counterparts in England. Hundreds could keep the profits of their own tobacco, provided only that they were not buying and reselling their neighbors’ tobacco. They also got blocks of seats in the colonial assembly. One of the best known is Martin’s Hundred, a proprietorship at the confluence of the James and the Appomattox Rivers issued to a group of London investors headed by a recorder of the City of London. Martin’s Hundred was subsequently wiped out in the Massacre of 1622, but until then it was an important contributor to colonial development. Since the only measurable thing between increased tobacco profits and the present state of the colony was uncleared land, this was an attractive alternative to fighting over meagre or nonexistent dividends in

194 Rabb, Enterprise and Empire, 59 – 62.

court. It is difficult to say who came up with this plan. Smythe was still Treasurer and Sandys still Assistant. Sandys was oriented toward building a colony and Smythe was a marketing genius, as we have seen. It may have been an example of true team work in the relationship. In any event, the scheme worked in two senses: it immediately pacified the most powerful of the Company’s investors and its success gave birth to the headright system two years later. And, as might be expected from previous imaginative schemes, it had a serious downside for the Company. Production and profits began to shift away from Company control and into the hands of independent proprietors and landowners.

In 1616, John Rolfe, Pocahontas, their infant son Thomas, and a small retinue of Indians left Virginia to visit London at the expense of the Virginia Company. They stayed seven months, long enough for Pocahontas to become very ill and to die before she could return to Virginia. Young Thomas also became very ill. Although he survived, he was considered too sick to travel and was left in England with Rolfe’s brother’s family. Rolfe returned to Virginia in 1617, without his family and possibly with a much diminished fantasy that Englishmen and Native Americans could peacefully and respect fully coexist. But the visit had far more significance than either personal or ideological disasters for the Rolfe family and their neighbors in Virginia. The visit had a very limited public relations success, partly due to the Virginia Company’s refusal to spend money; and partly due to the anomalous political and social status of an ‘Indian Princess’ in seventeenth century London. It is possible that any vision of actual flesh and blood Virginians would have damaged a public relations campaign built on fantasy, but the cheap way the Company ran the visit resulted overall in a loss of confidence and left some very real political issues unresolved.

The Virginia Company seems to have hoped that Pocahontas’ visit would improve their relations at Court. However, there were two sets of problems with this. The first was Pocahontas status. She was an Indian princess, but what did that mean? This was clearly not a state visit in the sense that a visit from a princess of Spain would have been. She was John Rolfe’s wife and so presumably assumed her husband’s status with her marriage. Rolfe was not a peer, not a knight and not even an Esquire. Also, there was clearly no large dowry involved in the marriage. The Virginia Company paid four pounds a day for the Rolifes’ expenses and they stayed at an inn, not at any of the
Company officers’ homes. John Smith, attempting to make Pocahontas’ visit a success, wrote to Queen Anne that John Rolfe could not afford to dress his wife suitably for Court. Hume also cites a letter from John Chamberlain to Dudley Carleton stating that Pocahontas was “tricked out” in fine dresses and referred to her as “that Virginia woman.” The passage devoted to Pocahontas followed several elaborate descriptions of banquets held both by royalty and for royalty by lesser members of the nobility. Clearly Pocahontas and the Virginia Company could not compete financially in that social milieu and clearly, having failed to do so, they became merely a kind of curiosity or London sideshow. The visit may have been intended to impress London merchants, but merchants were fully aware that the Indians offered nothing in the way of trade. It now appeared that they posed no particular threat to England, either. In this, the Virginia Company and their investors and colonists were tragically wrong.

There was a much worse consequence of the botched London visit than a loss of status with merchants and investors of London. Pocahontas’ companion, Tomocomo, was deeply offended by the poor lodgings, the lack of a Court reception, and the general lack of respect accorded the Indian visitors who had come so far and at such great cost to themselves. He seems to have been fully aware of the Indians’ status as sideshow for London society and unlike Pocahontas, who probably understood it well enough, Tomocomo survived the journey and returned to Virginia. There was no immediate political response among the Native Americans of Virginia to the report of Pocahontas’ death. Partly, people waited to see if the child lived. Then, there was no immediate response to the increased English presence due to the institution of the headright system. And there was no immediate response to the death of Powhatan and the assumption of leadership by Ocachancanough. But there was an accumulation of effects. If the investors of London discovered that they did not have to worry about the Native Americans in Virginia, the Native Americans of Virginia discovered the Londoners’

196 Hume, 338.
poisonous disrespect. They did have to worry about the Englishmen in Virginia and some of them began to do so.

In 1618, the Virginia Company began the headright system: a patent for fifty-acre tracts was awarded in exchange for paying the passage of a colonist. If you paid your own passage (and were prepared to settle), you got fifty acres. If you paid for yourself and one indentured servant, you got one hundred acres. Original colonists who had paid their own way or completed their service received hundred-acre tracts. The headright system had a profound effect on the fledgling colony. The practice shifted the cost of transporting indentured servants and shifted the cost of supplying the colonists to new investors. It must have reduced the Company’s operating losses and it certainly helped the colony. The next four years saw considerable colonial growth and expansion, but not in an organized way and not in a way that made money for the Virginia Company. For example, Yeardley’s commission and his instructions as governor set up the Governor’s Land of 3,000 acres and Company Lands of an additional 3,000 acres. “Because our intent is to ease all inhabitants of Virginia forever or all taxes and public burdens. . .”198 It appears that government would be required to support itself, presumably by growing tobacco. By the end of the period, the Company was maintaining colonial administration and the fort, but the only money it made came from tobacco grown on Company land and money from the Running Lotteries.

3.6 The Magazine

To counteract this leaching of future resources and to take the kind of advantage that they understood, Smythe, his close associate Alderman Robert Johnson, and a few other merchant investors formed a semi-autonomous subsidiary that they called the Magazine sometime in 1617. The Magazine was a trade monopoly and its job was simple: it made money out of shipping supplies to Virginia and shipping tobacco back to England. Even though the owners of the Magazine were Virginia Company stockholders and even officers, the Magazine’s profits did not go to Virginia Company subscribers. Books were completely separate. The Virginia Company did invest in the Magazine, and

thus made some profit from it, but there was certainly potential for a conflict of interest.\textsuperscript{199} There was also potential for some real benefit to the colony. The Magazine could check that what had been promised to the colony was actually delivered. It could also work to standardize the tobacco weights and quality. Virginia tobacco was still trying to carve out market share in England and standardization of product would have been a useful selling point. Complaints from colonists that the Magazine paid low prices for tobacco and charged high prices for supplies suggest that these potential benefits were slow to materialize.

The conflict of interest and the complaints of the colonists about the Magazine may have been what sparked Sandys, Southampton and the Ferrars to try to take control of the Virginia Company from Smythe. It is quite possible that Smythe initially let them because the Magazine was more profitable than the Virginia Company. Typical of Smythe activities, records are scant and the Virginia Company under Sandys called for an audit of the Magazine books in 1619.\textsuperscript{200} In July of 1619, in a general meeting held at Smythe’s house, the auditors reported that Alderman Robert Johnson while Deputy of the Virginia Company and Director of the Magazine in May of 1617, had taken £341 13s 4d of Company money and used it to buy goods for shipment to Virginia and “returned in his account for the gain of £85 8s 4d.” The wording implies that Johnson’s and the Magazine’s accounts were not entirely separate, either. In addition, Johnson is accused of selling tobacco grown on Company land and putting the proceeds of £176 into the Magazine’s coffers. The meeting decided to accept services, specifically shipping to the colony, in lieu of part of the misappropriated tobacco funds, and to pursue the rest at a later meeting. Prior to 1619, the Magazine is referred to sometimes as the Old Magazine. What the Sandys faction now undertook was a reorganization of the Company, beginning with the Magazine.

The Virginia Company issued a thoroughly businesslike document outlining the operations of the new Magazine. The owners of “hundreds” might trade with whomever they liked. Everyone else was to trade with the Magazine, tobacco or any other crop (a

\textsuperscript{199} Records of the Virginia Company of London, Volume I, July 13 1619, 244.  
\textsuperscript{200} N. W. Stephenson, “Some Inner History of the Virginia Company,” William and Mary Quarterly Number 22.2 (October, 1913), 91 – 92.
wistful note crept in here) for goods or bills of exchange that could only be redeemed in England. The best tobacco would get three shillings per pound, second best would get eighteen pence. Any lesser quality would be “burnt before the owner’s face.”201 There is a fragment of a letter to Governor Argall, tentatively dated 1618, from a tobacco grower who complained that he had been promised three shillings per pound, but instead received two shillings three pence. In both 1618 and 1619, two shillings three pence, or twenty-seven pence, was the price listed in the London Port Books. That was the high price. Tobacco prices only went downhill from there. It is possible that some shippers were paid three shillings even if most were not and the price from the London Port Books was an average. It is about equally probable that nobody’s tobacco ever quite measured up to three shillings.

Old or new, the Magazine sparked complaints about high prices for tools and supplies and in particular the poor quality of supplies for new arrivals. One complaint claimed that growers “had to work old land” because they did not have access to tools. Perhaps as a result of failed promises and high supply prices, the Magazine was wildly unpopular both with small growers, who had to ship with it, and to the larger planters on the Council who saw more profit in making their own arrangements. There does seem some benefit to the Company from the Magazine, even if the Virginia Company never did make much money from it: the problems and expenses in shipping could be better controlled. Some of them would be anyway, since the ships were now trading, not deadheading, but quality and quantity of supplies would be less of a headache and less of a loss.

3.7 Labor

There was another hidden operating cost to the Virginia Company’s catch-as-catch can financing that became more visible during this period and that is the Company’s investment in colonists. Volume III contains a document listing charges for transport and for provisioning for one year after arrival of thirty-five men. The charges include keeping them for up to twenty-eight days before departure, presumably while the
men and the ship’s crew gathered and provisions were loaded, although it also would have been an effective quarantine. The total charges come to £657 9s 4d. Virginia Company subscribers are to be assessed fifty shillings per subscription to cover these costs, with abatements for large shareholders such as Lord De La Ware. The men are to be paid ten shillings on arrival.

Although there was enough money budgeted for all thirty-five men to survive the passage and get paid, the Company does seem to be protecting itself against the possibility of a high passage mortality. If all thirty-five men survive their passage and their first year’s seasoning, the Company will have paid £18 15s 10d per man for the first year. Average pay for a day laborer in England in 1615 was 3.953d/day. If the laborer worked six days per week, fifty-two weeks per year, then a yearly wage was £5.1389. The day laborer’s wages may also have included some food and/or shelter, but it is difficult to imagine the total exceeding ten pounds per year. In the case of skilled labor, pay averaged 5.454d per day, for a yearly cost of slightly over seven pounds. Although again, some non-cash benefits may have been involved, it is difficult to imagine them totaling ten pounds a year. By contrast to the initial cost of transporting and maintaining workers through their seasoning, a comparison of wages for a master carpenter in Virginia with a skilled craftsman in England in 1621 shows the English master carpenter making 5.571 shillings per day, while the Virginia master carpenter made three shillings with food thrown in and four without food.

The wage comparisons may help explain at least some of the difficulty in attracting “artificers” to the colony. The Company paid top dollar to ship colonists, but paid artificer colonists less than the going rate for their work once they arrived. The one advantage the colonists had over their counterparts back in England after 1612 was the chance to make a little money growing tobacco. Dale correctly assumed that they would not grow corn if they could grow tobacco. Colonists faced the same problem the Company did: corn was overhead; tobacco was profit. On March 6 1620, William Weldon, in a Letter to Sir Edwin Sandys complained that his men did not receive

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adequate provisions and when told they were not supposed to plant tobacco, complained bitterly that they had no other way to support themselves.203

But in 1618, all thirty-five arrivals were unlikely to have survived both passage and seasoning. Suppose that all thirty-five survive the passage, but the seasoning mortality was eighty per cent as is suspected for this period, then every colonist who died raised the per capita cost to the Company of each survivor. At a twenty percent survival rate, someone paid five times for each survivor past the first year for a total cost of a little over ninety-three pounds apiece. If the money for the supplies was paid up front and the meal, cloth, and shoe leather already provided, then the budget was not helped by the high death rate. The cost of getting seven men (twenty percent of thirty-five) through the first year was the same as provisioning all thirty-five. Since nothing appears in this budget for the survivors after the first year, we cannot count as savings the food uneaten or the shoes unworn.

The question arises, could the Company not have waited to put up money until after they saw the number of survivors? The most probable answer is no. The Company would have had to put up cash for the passage expenses and the money when the men arrived in advance – that means paid to the captain of the ship and spelled out in a letter to the Council also carried by the ship’s captain. Of course, the money might well have and apparently sometimes did disappear once it got to Virginia. In the case of men who did not survive their seasoning, the money and goods most assuredly did disappear, but that did not mean that the Virginia Company was saved the expense. In February, 1617/1618, then Governor Argall ordered the Captain of the Kiquotan not to allow his sailors ashore because “when the sailors heard of a man’s death they embezzled their goods sent ‘em.”204

At first glance, the supplies and shoe leather for the first year would be a different matter. Bulk shipment of grain and cloth would make it harder to tell if there were any fudging or pilferage in transit. And unfortunately, the Company also seems to have had trouble policing its supply line. But even a well-secured shipment only got supplies as

far as Virginia. As we will see, the large planters and their friends in the Council took responsibility for distribution of men and supplies, and took their fair share off the top. John Pory wrote to Sir Edwin Sandys that there was justification for sending “the greater part” of the men on the *Bona Nova* to “old planters” instead of putting them to work on Company land. The old planters could handle fifty men for the critical first year of the seasoning. He suggests that seasoned men would later be more use to newcomers – who themselves had barely survived their seasoning. Morgan regarded this message with justifiable cynicism, noting that the same planters regarded the supplies on the same shipment as inadequate for all the new arrivals. The old planters got the first men off the boat, and the supplies to feed them, because they had the most clout with the Virginia Council. They said where the men went and Pory notified the Company where they had gone.

There is still another aspect to these labor costs. Indentured servants were not day laborers. Indenture was treated legally and socially as a kind of apprenticeship and 2.818d/day was considerably beyond the cost of an apprenticeship in England. In fact, the apprentice’s family sometimes paid for a particularly desirable apprenticeship and the apprentices themselves seldom earned regular wages, at least until very late in their service. According to Wallis, apprentices were not typically trained first and put to work later, but performed unskilled and menial tasks for their masters early in their service. Training was conducted concurrently with work, and increased in sophistication and intensity only after the apprentice had demonstrated some reliability. The reason is simple: if an apprenticeship were terminated early, it would be difficult for the master to recoup the cost of any training. Considering indentured servants as a kind of apprenticeship, servant costs in Virginia were very high compared to costs in England. But what really put the labor costs through the ceiling was the seasoning mortality. If the Virginia Company was going to produce anything other than tobacco that would be competitive in the English market, those costs would have had to come down.

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By 1618, the Virginia colony had begun gain a little. Tobacco was moving, servants arrived and were assigned, and colonial prospects had begun to improve. However, 1618 marked the outbreak of the Thirty Years War on the continent. The prospect of war with Spain made some people in Virginia nervous, because the colony was not really prepared. It seems to have made others eager for a return to the raiding of the last war. In the Spring, the Treasurer arrived in the colony. In theory, she had been fitted for a fishing expedition. In fact, she had been fitted for war in the Caribbean. Then Governor Argall sent her off with a cover story about goats and the Azores. In 1619, a Dutch ship, name never recorded, appeared in the Chesapeake with news of the Treasurer; they had met up but then become separated. The Dutch ship dropped off twenty African slaves in exchange for some supplies. We do not know what happened to the Africans, since the colony had none of the social structures necessary to maintain slave labor, but the Treasurer seems all too understandable. Argall’s faction in London, anticipating war with Spain, had done a little advance raiding in the Caribbean.\textsuperscript{208} Eventually, Sandys reported the incident to the King. There is no way to tell if it took him more than a year to find out, or if it took him more than a year to tell the King. Either way, the incident left a large rift in the Company leadership that ultimately exploded in the final faction fight of 1623.

By 1619, interest in the Virginia Company on the part of London merchants and investors had begun to stall. For merchants, land was not a preferred return on investment. 1619 was also the last year of the Virginia tobacco exemption from tonnage and poundage. These factors, coupled with the success of the headright system and the unpopularity of the trade monopoly brought to a head the faction fight that had been growing since the beginning of the colony. The result left Sir Edwin Sandys and Henry Wriothesley, Third Earl of Southampton, and their gentry supporters in control of the Virginia Company and saw Sir Thomas Smythe and other big merchant investors moving on to the East India Company. Sandys’ party’s victory has been a great boon to historians. From 1619 until its final demise, the activities of the Virginia Company were dutifully and exhaustively recorded. King James, all too familiar with Sandys’ opinions on free trade and free speech in the House of Commons, was displeased by the change in

\textsuperscript{208} Hume, 358 – 359.
leadership in the Virginia Company and apparently attempted to force Smythe’s reinstatement. Smythe did return to the Company, although never again as Treasurer. To forestall further objections from the Crown, Henry Wriothesley, Third Earl of Southampton was elected Treasurer instead of Sandys. Southampton was an intelligent and resourceful man and a benefit to the Virginia Company, but it is Sandys who has traditionally received credit for the management changes that now began.

Sandys implemented changes that kept the Company going, if not exactly solvent. He used the headright system to pursue a colonization strategy: the Company sent three hundred ten colonists in the next year. This move expanded the Company’s land holdings. Sandys also set aside land for the “Publick” or “Comon” land, land for a colonial governor, and proposed a land set-aside for a university. He intensified diversification attempts. The colony survived on tobacco, but the Virginia Company grew mulberry trees for silk culture and experimented with viticulture. An iron works was attempted using local bog iron.

This last was not as fantastic as it sounds. Bog iron had been exploited many times in Europe, production problems and possibilities were well understood, and the iron in Virginia was good quality. In 1620, a shipment of 1,000 men for the colony included skilled iron workers. The iron works site at Fall Creek was wiped out in the Massacre of 1622, but it was later rebuilt and continued operation for more than a century. The iron works should have been a great boon to the colony. Even if it only produced nails, they were urgently needed and would thus not have to be shipped from England. Typical of Virginia Company adventures, the problem was that setting up an iron smelter takes skilled labor a long time and, while it would clearly have benefitted the colony, was not in itself likely to be profitable either to individual operators or to the Company. It was overhead. Sandys’ strategy of using the headright system to develop and diversify Company land might have helped the colony, but could not make money for the Company.

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In acknowledgement of the increasing colonial success, and to forestall legal conflicts with the proprietorships of the Hundreds, in 1619 the Virginia Company sent out a colonial law code that it called “codes of conduct,” and the first colonial General Assembly met that year. In exchange for this increase in the complexity, and hopefully stability, of colonial society, Sandys attempted to renegotiate the Virginia tobacco tariff exemption with Cranfield and with the King. He was only partly successful. Virginia tobacco lost its exemption, but the King outlawed tobacco growing in England, Wales, and Ireland to reduce home competition. John Pory wrote to Sir Dudley Carlton on September 30, 1619, “All our riches for the present do consist in Tobacco wherein one man by his own labour hath in one year raised; to himself to the value of £200 sterling.”

In 1620, the Company under the Sandys-Southampton leadership began hearing concerns about the well-being of new colonists. The issue was a serious one because very high seasoning and passage mortality were definitely slowing colonial development. To address this, the Company issued instructions that each of the four Burroughs, James City, Henrico, Elizabeth City, and Charles City, should build what they called guest houses, secure housing for new arrivals. Apparently, they did not make much progress because the Privy Council later ordered “Guest houses to be built for the sick and strangers” in 1623.

3.8 June 22, 1620 “Notes on the State of Virginia”

“Notes on the State of Virginia” is a state of the Company report seemingly written with a good deal of pride. The opening pages sound a lot like a combination of *A True Relation* and *A True Declaration of the Estate of the Colonie in Virginia*. It opens with the same idyllic sounding description of the resources of Virginia. Those descriptions are not far off – seventeenth century Virginia was rich in lumber, furs, fish,


and had good soil for agriculture. There was no gold, but there was bog iron. There was no westward water passage but there were rivers for transport. The report goes on to list all the stockholders and the money they have paid in. It defines the duties of company officers, explains grants of land to shareholders; explains the headright system; describes the Company or “publick” lands and projects the number of tenants and servants that the Company will ship and how they will be provisioned. Although completely innocent of double-entry bookkeeping, it is a combination prospectus and business plan – at least the nearest thing to a business plan that the Virginia Company ever produced. The irony is that this comprehensive plan was written in 1620, thirteen years after the first three ships made landfall in the Chesapeake and six years after the first Virginia tobacco appeared in the London Port Books. The document says nothing at all about tobacco and does not list the income from the running Lotteries. In fact, it does not list any income at all, only potential that someone might exploit.213

“Notes on the State of Virginia” was probably a showpiece for the Sandys-Southampton leadership and probably intended to advance talks about a tobacco contract. If it was intended to promote further investment, the timing was very bad. War on the continent had destroyed any chance of an alliance with Spain and left James’ daughter Elizabeth and her husband Frederick war refugees. Unwillingly, but needing the funds to protect his daughter and son-in-law, hoping a show of strength would suffice to keep England out of war, James called another Parliament in 1621. Cranfield had been attempting to revive the sale of monopolies while Parliament was not in session. That did not mean he worked in secret, it meant neither Cranfield nor the King wanted another free trade discussion in Commons since both monopoly rents and trade with Spain were important sources of revenue for the Crown.

Parliament voted a strong general support for the war effort, but instead of a specific sum of money, began debating the “Dearth of Money” problem. England was in the grip of a serious recession. Sandys, as leader of the opposition and supporter of free

trade, proposed that the root of the problem lay in money going to the Spanish trade that once returned bullion, but was now a drain on the English economy.

Among its achievements, the Parliament of 1621 investigated and uncovered the fact that the Lord Chancellor, the former Sir Francis Bacon, had taken bribes. Worse, Commons’ continuing investigation of monopolies brought to light the possibility that the King’s favorite, George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham had been enhancing his income by selling access to the king. James was willing to sacrifice Bacon, who was at least honest enough to admit that he had erred and gotten caught. The Duke of Buckingham was another man and another matter. Sandys and Southampton were arrested, probably at Buckingham’s behest. Both were later released after an outcry from Parliament, but a nervous Buckingham now posed a direct threat to the Virginia Company. James, still edgy with Sandys’ strong position in the Virginia Company, irritated by the discussion of the economy and free trade, and generally annoyed with Commons, struck back.

A month after the Commons debate, James I suspended the last of the Running Lotteries, apparently responding to a request from Commons brought to him by Lionel Cranfield. The reason claimed was mismanagement and corrupting influences. Probably both were at least partly true. While the Running Lotteries were held with the full and typically enthusiastic cooperation of local officials, there were no independent checks on the flow of lottery money, the fairness of the drawings themselves or on the value of prizes actually awarded. If the lotteries themselves were not corrupt, they brought plenty of opportunities for corruption with them.

Apparently, no one could quite yet hear it, but this was the first tolling of the death knell for the Virginia Company. While it had been some time since any individual Lottery had returned large sums, taken together they were one of the very few Virginia Company undertakings that brought in revenue. Sandys had listed Lottery profits in his Treasurer’s Report of 1620 at £7,000 and had projected £8,000 for 1621. It was the Lotteries that paid for the expansion of Company land and diversification projects, very much Sandys’ pride. Without the lotteries, the Virginia Company had to make money

from tobacco grown on its 3,000 acres, or expand the acreage through the headright system, the same way everyone else in Virginia did. Since the Company was also expected to maintain some semblance of colonial administration, this put them at a distinct competitive disadvantage.

It also put the Virginia Company on a collision course with the King. Even though the tobacco market was less vulnerable to recession than other luxury goods, in 1621 the loss of any income was not good news and it is a little puzzling why Sandys, still very much a force in the House of Commons, did not fight harder to keep the Running Lotteries. He may have been embarrassed by them. Some members of Commons declared that the original Proclamation had forbidden them to speak against the Lotteries. Sandys identified the success of his Company with the success of ‘his’ colony and, of course, with free discussion. Or Cranfield, whom he still trusted, may have persuaded him that the King did not like them (a little while later telling the King that Commons did not like them). It is entirely possible that Smythe’s merchant faction wanted their Magazine back and was attempting to destabilize the Virginia Company. In any event, the loss of lottery income was a blow to the Company.

There was more follow up to the debate in Commons over the economy. The Privy Council, concerned that his Majesty was not getting his customs from Virginia tobacco, and suspecting that the Magazine took commodities to foreign countries – that probably meant Amsterdam – ordered it to cease that practice. All tobacco and anything else from Virginia was to first be landed in London. The Magazine had four months to comply.216 Since the order was promulgated after Michaelmas, and the additional four months runs into 1622, it seems fair to assume that the 1621 prices and volumes are already in and what we can see from the London Port Books fluctuations is the following.

In addition to the increase in production from the successful implementation of the headright system, the new Magazine was in full operation by 1620 and that helps account for the staggering 160% increase in volume over 1619. A 1619 Court – the same one that exposed Johnson’s book shuffling – also noted that the Customs was demanding

12d instead of the 6d in the Book of Rates. The Company decided to petition the Treasury. Since they were trying to negotiate an extension of their original tax break, this complicated the Company’s bargaining position. The King refused the extension but added that they should have what had originally been agreed upon: 6d from the Book of Rates and their tax break through March of 1619 (Old Style, 1620 New Style).

However, in 1620, Virginia tobacco had to pay tonnage and poundage, which was 6d for leaf tobacco, for the first time in addition to the King’s imposts. The price dropped from twenty-seven pence to twelve pence, a decrease of 56%. Effective after 1620 – in the 1621 season – the Contract negotiated by Sandys whereby Virginia tobacco paid only one shilling duties in exchange for the outlawing of tobacco growing in England let the price float back up. However, it still represented a substantial tax burden over 1619 levels and the Magazine and the Hundreds presumably attempted to compensate for this by shipping tobacco to Amsterdam the following year, 1621. Volume dropped to 1619 levels. When Cranfield detected the shift, the Privy Council ordered that all goods shipped from Virginia be landed in London first. If all went well and everyone obeyed the law, 1622 should have seen stabilized prices, even if they were adversely affected by the ongoing recession, and an increase in volume to the 1620 level or beyond.

One of Cranfield’s policy changes in Crown finance was to revive the selling of monopolies. This policy had been bruised in the Commons debate; monopolies were listed as one of the causes of the dearth of money. They suppressed trade. However, it had several advantages that Cranfield, with his experience in Customs, would have appreciated and known how to exploit. In 1620, he opened negotiations with the Virginia Company for a tobacco monopoly, a concept that Sandys as a firm proponent of free trade must have found especially galling. The Company was offered a fixed rent, the same as if they had been tax farmers. This Sandys turned down, but not easily, since the discussion now moved to valuations of different grades of tobacco. Next, Cranfield proffered an arrangement that would have required them to take responsibility for importing Spanish tobacco. This Sandys declined on the grounds that would require
special expertise which the Virginia Company did not have.\textsuperscript{217} The negotiations never resulted in agreement and eventually the contract discussion was dropped.

Everything did not go well in 1622. The Massacre resulted from unfortunate developments in colonist-Indian relations that had one source in Pocahontas’ ill-fated trip to London in 1616/1617. Her Indian escort Tomocomo returned to Virginia to describe his visit, including the very large number of Englishmen and what he considered an inadequately respectful reception for representatives of a great chief. Tomocomo’s negative comments were not well received by Powhatan. However, just as the Virginia Company’s penny-pinching combined with Pocahontas’ vulnerability ‘revealed’ to Londoners that the Indians of Virginia did not need to be feared or placated, Opechancanough saw that the English were a much bigger threat than he had previously thought and needed to be dealt with while that was still possible. Powhatan died in 1618, just as the headright system initiated a period of rapid colonial expansion. This period saw not just an increase in people, but an increase in cleared land with tobacco fields and structures that made it unsuitable for hunting, and an increase in ship traffic and general despoiling of fishing areas. It must have really looked as if the English were trying to turn Virginia into another England – which many of them were – and Tomocomo’s horror stories of London would come true. Powhatan had been unwilling to lead his people into war when he was old, but his heirs had no such reservations.

The Indians struck in March of 1622. They killed settlers, destroyed plantations, burned the iron works, and attempted to take the fort at Jamestown. In that they did not succeed. Jamestown was warned, by one or more Indians and at least one planter spared by an Indian. Enough people made it into the fort and armed themselves to halt the attack. Destruction was not complete even in the outlying plantations, but it was bad enough. Overall, the colonial population was reduced from about 1,400 to just over 1,000. It was a very serious setback for the colony and appeared to require a strong response in order to prevent a second attack. The surviving colonists raided and burned Indian villages and crops in furious and indiscriminate retaliation, striking friend and foe alike. They alienated tribes on the Eastern Shore that had not followed Opechancanough.

Although they were able to kill very few Indians, they did reduce the local food supply for both Native Americans and Englishmen sufficiently to put themselves in danger by the following winter.  

In London, the full consequences were slow to unfold, but the Massacre was a disaster on multiple levels for the Virginia Company. First, it had to expend resources to protect the colony. Company records claim that ten ships were sent out that spring, but only two of them seem to have arrived. The Company sent out commissions to each of the Hundreds to lead a militia and asked England for an armed regiment. The English government sent no troops, but they did contribute old and substandard arms, including long bows, reasoning that the long bows might be of use against the Indians. The Company requested, and apparently got, credit for a supply of gun powder.

In the Fall, concerned that the situation did not seem to be improving very fast, the Company sent out two more ships, the Seaflower and the Abigail, but once again bad luck, and perhaps a bit more bad management, undercut the effort. The Abigail was already loaded with colonists paid for by the planters and subsidiaries such as the Society for Martin’s Hundred and with the supplies they might need, when word of the Massacre began to circulate through the passengers. The Abigail’s captain became impatient and, afraid of running into bad weather and perhaps also of losing his passengers, took off for Virginia. Most of the supplies, including much needed grain and the longbows which were supposed to be stored in Bermuda, were finally loaded aboard the Seaflower. Thus, the Seaflower set out later than the Abigail and only made it as far as Bermuda where a careless smoker in the gunnery room blew up the ship. The wreck is still at the bottom of St. George’s Harbor. The Abigail made it to Virginia with no knowledge of what had happened to her sister ship. In fact, it was months before anyone in either Virginia or London knew what had happened to the Seaflower.

Loading the Abigail with colonists to replace people killed in a massacre before the colony was secure against a repeat attack seems a bit beyond business as usual, particularly in view of the outcome of the third supply expedition of 1609. But that was

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218 Hume, 379 – 381.
219 Hume, 381.
220 Hume, 378 – 379.
221 Hume, 380.
just exactly what was done. And to understand why *Abigail* sailed when she did, remember that the future colonists, at least those who did not change their minds about going to Virginia, would all be eating the ship’s supplies as long as she stayed in port waiting for *Seaflower* to load. Depending on the details for each passenger, the Company, Martin’s Hundred, the captain or all three would have lost money on the delay.

Of course, the *Seaflower* never arrived and the English in Virginia no longer had any access to Indian corn. It might have been a very hungry winter, especially with the new arrivals, but worse was yet to come. The *Abigail’s* passengers were sick. The source was claimed to be ‘bad beer’ but beer is not contagious however bad it might otherwise be, and something aboard the *Abigail* was extremely contagious. When the new colonists arrived, they spread illness all over Virginia. Hume estimates that the 1,000 survivors of the Massacre were cut in half “by the *Abigail’s* bounty.” 222 In view of the high death rate from the seasoning that still dogged the colony, it is ironic that the English, probably not for the first time, imported a disease into Virginia that killed their own. Once again, the Virginia Company had gone to great expense, but to limited and frustrated purpose.

1622 brought other trouble in the form of a suit in Chancery by John Martin of Martin’s Brandon Plantation. Martin, notorious for fighting with practically everybody over practically everything, claimed that he was owed five hundred acres per share for an investment of £70, approximately 2,800 acres. 223 The Company vigorously denied Martin’s claim and subsequently won in open court, but in this case the litigious Martin had a moral claim to go with his bad temper: he was an “ancient planter,” a member of the original expedition and had spent the previous fifteen years struggling to establish his property and his niche in the colony.

On a trip to London in 1616 – 1617, Martin had been in contact with Smythe and Johnson and conversations with him about supply problems may have encouraged the original Magazine. They did result in Martin receiving privileges well beyond the typical Virginia landowner, specifically original jurisdiction over any persons he imported to

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222 Hume, 382.
work his land. Unlike the five hundred acres, Martin was able to document this claim, but the Company disputed the document, pointing out that the Quarter Court did not meet on that date and that only a Quarter Court could issue such a document.\textsuperscript{224} Although the process was long and noisy, the compromise reached between Martin and the Virginia Company can be summed up fairly simply. Martin returned his original charter, which did not promise him five hundred acres per share but did promise him original jurisdiction, to the Company, who in their turn issued Martin a charter that promised him one-hundred acres and similar jurisdiction. This gave Martin a legal claim to the all-important proprietorship and control of his labor force, at the cost of considerable acreage from his bogus – or anyway undocumentable – earlier claim.

There are several Martin’s in the history of the colony. This one may be master of Martin’s Brandon plantation – not the same as Martin’s Hundred. He had certainly been to Virginia, although he may have been in London when he wrote the document. His geography and descriptions of many Indian towns is detailed and covers a wide area. He might have assembled other descriptions, but the results probably would have been less coherent or more localized. The document speculates about how to militarily occupy Tidewater Virginia as far as the fall line and conquer and rule the Indians, thus guaranteeing the security of the colony. John Martin has clearly imagined a royal colony on the Spanish model and even though he was probably in London rather than Virginia when he wrote it, Martin undoubtedly reflected the sentiment of many colonists. His effect in London is debatable. The King never sent troops, but the idea of a royal plantation must have seemed quite attractive.\textsuperscript{225}

Martin was not at all impressed with the Sandys – Southampton faction and in particular with Sandys’ programs of developing the Company lands and attempting to reform the Magazine. His opinion about how to run the colony was well expressed in the following tracts. John Martin, “How Virginia Might be made a Royal Plantation”


December 15, 1622 and “The Manner How to Bring the Indians into Subjection.” Both are strongly in favor of military intervention in colonial affairs, the one to settle the Indian threat, but the other apparently to maintain discipline in the workforce.

Martin also apparently truly believed the Sandys-Southampton faction were cheating him. Nevertheless, his suit has some of the earmarks of blackmail, especially after word of the Massacre arrived. The Virginia Company had always been very good at public relations, even while their weak financials made them an increasingly unpopular investment. Here was Martin, an unsatisfied investor and an experienced and committed colonist wanting more land in Virginia. If he did not get it, he might tell somebody important, or there would be bad press. In the General Court meeting of October of 1623, Martin voted to surrender the Virginia Company’s charter. His vote was disputed but duly recorded. When Martin returned to Virginia after the demise of the Company, he went with a letter enjoining the Council of Virginia to give him fair treatment. It is likely that the Smythe faction wanted Martin as their man on the ground and wanted to make sure he would not be interfered with. It also seems possible that they did not especially want Martin in London much longer.

The Company’s next task was somehow to keep going until the tobacco crop of 1623 came in with substantially increased expenses and substantially reduced income. Company income was definitely down. Price’s data shows 33,431.9 pounds of tobacco for 1622. At first glance, this seems a high output for a colony on the brink of destruction, but we need to remember two things. First, the Eastern Shore Indians did not attack the local colonists so there was still quite a lot of tobacco grown in the Chesapeake in 1622. Second, if the Massacre had not happened, we would expect the output to increase to at least 1620 levels, owing to the order from the Privy Council that all Virginia tobacco be landed in London. If 1622 had been a normal year, Virginia growers would probably have gritted their teeth, shipped to London, and paid their taxes. And,

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the Company records indicate that they had expected a very good year. Minutes of Court meetings and a seemingly endless stream of letters to important subscribers after the massacre repeat requests for extra time to repay loans or to meet ongoing obligations. Since everyone in London knew about the massacre and the Company was clearly struggling, most of their creditors forbore to make matters worse, at least in 1622. The lull was temporary.

1623 brought an explosion of challenges to everything that the Sandys-Southampton faction had tried to do for the Company. Martin’s suit was settled, although apparently not to his satisfaction. He received a new patent that included original jurisdiction over his labor force, but for the original one hundred acres per share. Captain John Bargrave had previously brought suit against Smythe and Alderman Robert Johnson in Chancery Court over what he regarded as unfair dealing by the Magazine.229 Apparently, Chancery was not impressed with his case and in 1622, Bargrave found himself facing a countersuit. The Company was invited to join the countersuit, by whom it is not clear from the minutes. They declined.230 Although at least some of the Company must have been fully aware of Magazine practices and shortcuts, they distanced themselves from Bargrave. Even though the Company had not joined the countersuit, Alderman Johnson verbally attacked the Company at the next meeting and was asked to apologize.

In the midst of the suits and countersuits, a former Governor of Bermuda, Nathaniel Butler, reported on the state of post-Massacre Jamestown in a document he titled, “Unmasked Face of Our Colony in Virginia.”231 According to Butler, it was not a pretty face. The Company complained that the Report described Virginia in November, not its best time of year, and complained about damage from the Massacre that no one as yet had the resources to manage or repair. However, when the Report reached the King, the Company’ rebuttal evoked some all too understandable skepticism. The damage done

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by the Massacre and by the *Abigail* passengers had been reported in London, but the chief problem described by the Butler report was the unpreparedness for a Spanish attack. Sandys’ report of the incident with the *Treasurer* had brought the possibility of independent colonial relations with Spain into sharp focus. In November of 1622, the Company had decided to proceed against Argall, but it was slow going because Argall had powerful backers.

There were too many attacks and too many counterattacks. It was difficult to tell them apart. Two powerful factions, Smythe and the Riches, plus an alliance of merchants with backing in the House of Lords, and with financial backing from the far more successful – if far less innovative – East India Company, now combined; not this time to take control of the Virginia Company, but to destroy it.232 Letters of complaint and some memoranda between Rich and Johnson refer to records from the Smyth era that no longer exist, but the assumption seems to be that with the Company out of the way, the new coalition could get a trade monopoly with the colony. The dialogue makes it clear that the Company’s enemies were more than willing to use past abuses against current management, no matter whose abuses they actually were. The ferocity of their effort is a backhanded tribute to the success of Sandys, Southampton and the Ferrars. The only thing they were really doing wrong was that they were not making money. Merchants in the new coalition undoubtedly assumed that they would get a new contract with a monopoly from the King and Ditchfield prepared a document that reads remarkably like the contract subsequently abandoned by thePrivy Council.233

Orders came from the Privy Council on April 17 to appoint a Commission to look into the Butler Report and the repeated faction fighting.234 The Commissioners included Sir Thomas Smythe, Gorges, Wolstenholme, Argall, Thomas Gibbs, Samuel Wrote, and John Pory. Sandys complained bitterly that the judges and prosecutors were the same men. The Commission sought testimony and proposed negotiations, but even in the presence of the King at their first meeting, the two factions could not stay in the same

234 Calendar of State Papers, Colonial, Apr 17, 1623.
room without insult and at least verbal abuse as the following excerpt from a letter from courtly gossip-monger John Chamberlain to his friend Dudley Carleton shows.

A great faction fallen out in the Virginia Company. Earl of Southampton, Lord Cavendish, Sir Ed. Sackville, Sir John Ogle, Sir Edwin Sandys, being the heads on one side; on the other are the Earl of Warwick, Sir Thos. Smythe, Sir Nath. Rich, Sir Henry Mildmay, and Alderman Johnson. On Monday [14 April] they were before the King with their accusations and allegations, when Sackville carried himself so insolently that the King "was fain to take him down soundly and roundly," but hears he made his peace the next day by means of the Lord Treasurer. 235

Unwilling to see a repeat of the verbal abuse of the first meeting, the Commission demanded the Company documents which Southampton initially refused to give up, in the meantime copying everything – possibly why we now have some of the records we do. The Commission succeeded in sequestering the Company’s books for two weeks, at which time the Company petitioned the King who ordered them returned. 236 In the meantime, the Privy Council proceeded to issue instructions “for the relief” of Virginia, requiring the Company to, among other things, build forts and guest houses; and in preparing to send new colonists, the Virginia Company was instructed to put people before profit. 237

The Smythe faction must have been getting at least a little nervous by this time at the attention the state of the colony was getting and the extensive Company records of ships and supplies. Some of the Company’s countercharges might have come to seem convincing to the Commission, particularly on the heels of Bargrave’s suit. The Sandys faction on the other hand, waged a ferocious fight to stay in charge of the Company, refusing to return their patent (charters) until the Company had voted whether to do so at the next Quarter Court. Predictably, at the Quarter Court the Company voted No. James

236 Calendar of State Papers, Colonial May 22, 1623, 206.
237 “Rules set down by the Lords of the Privy Council for bettering the government of Virginia,” Calendar of State Papers, Colonial, July 2, 1623.
was furious and the Privy Council ordered Sandys and Southampton under house arrest, to prevent them from attending Court meetings and using Company resources on their own behalf. In November, James took the matter away from the Commission and stopped the haggling in the Privy Council.

The King’s Bench issued a writ of *quo warranto* charging the Virginia Company with “usurpation of privileges” in November of 1623. Opening arguments were heard, then the suit was postponed until the following year in order to get additional testimony from the colony. The Court was inundated with conflicting reports of Virginia: from the Virginia Company they received reports of a prosperous and successful colony and from the testimony of Johnson and Butler they heard of disaster and decay. In December, the Court ordered the Virginia Company officers named in the charge to pay for their own defense and not to charge subscribers. The Court clearly wanted to keep the Company intact and to clear out the “usurpers” of privilege, Sandys and Southampton.

At first glance, it is difficult to see what relevance any of this had to the charge of “usurpation of privileges.” However, when the charters of 1609 and 1612 from which the Virginia Company derived its current privileges were issued, Sir Thomas Smythe had been Treasurer of the Company. He was ousted by the Sandys – Southampton faction in 1619 and in 1620. Cranfield, representing the King, began negotiations with Sandys and the tax farmers, first for a contract and two years later for a monopoly. The negotiations stalled over the tricky subjects of the King’s and Customers’ share. They never produced a final document, which might have legitimized the Sandys-Southampton control of the Company. Indeed, the King did not want Sandys in control of the Company and was angered and insulted by the Company’s choice of officers, even though – or perhaps especially because – they had been duly elected. Without that piece of paper, control was theirs only as long as they could keep it. Evidence of bad governance, conditions in the colony for example, was *de facto* evidence of illegitimate government. The Company defended itself by comparing what they had done with the old patents of 1606, 1609, and 1612, claiming the privileges of those three documents, which from the 1609 Charter onward included electing their own officers. It was a passionate and even intelligent

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effort, but it was weak. If they could not govern then they should not govern. They were usurping the privileges of government.

The usurpers themselves might have claimed, and probably privately discussed, counter charging that Smythe, Argall, Martin, and their various backers had been the ones to degrade conditions in the colony and even to risk incidents with Spain. They had usurped privileges for their private profit but, while this was factually correct and thoroughly documented in at least two cases, it probably would not have worked. Argall was Governor of Virginia when he provisioned the Treasurer. He was already back in London when the incident came to light. Sandys’ decision to inform the King about the Treasurer could not have undone that fact, only brought it to the inconvenient notice of the King. The Company had been very slow to investigate and charge Argall for any of the problems he caused in Virginia. As far as Smythe’s fund raising practices, his policies regarding Virginia and the subsequent depredations of the Magazine, Smythe was head of the Company for over a decade and Sandys was a faithful deputy. In other words, pursuing this line of argument in court would have made Sandys, Southampton, and the Ferrars look either incompetent or complicit. It would have made them look like thieves fighting over the loot. By default, the Warwick – Rich – Smythe coalition succeeded in attributing their own destructive policies to their enemies. In April, the King forbade the House from debating the issue, probably to forestall any attempt by Sandys to publicly present his side of the story. According to James, Commons should not debate the issue because Virginia had not been conquered by England. It was a nice return, twenty years after, on Sandys speech rejecting Union because the English Parliament could only rule England. In May of 1624, the Virginia Company’s patent was revoked by the king and the Virginia colony became a royal proprietorship.

The former Commissioners now proposed a new tobacco contract with themselves as managers in “Considerations touching the new contract for tobacco.” James, however, seems to have had something more like the Charter of 1606 in mind, with a council that reported to him and had considerably less autonomy than the Virginia

Company had enjoyed. The Council of Virginia was not officially informed of its change in status until the following year, in the meantime continuing their recovery from the disasters of 1622. James appointed Francis Wyatt Royal Governor and sent one hundred armed men to help protect the planters against the Indians “without distracting them from their labors.”

While the Council of Virginia had not supported or wanted the dissolution of the Company, the colony prospered as a proprietorship. James’ policies amounted to a kind of *Laissez Faire* on the issues of shipping, marketing, and supply, including the supply of servants. They thus favored planters who already had good merchant connections and incidentally allowed the Dutch an opening to service newer, smaller, planters. This last was not a matter of policy, but a failure of enforcement. It did, however, help the colony.

The proprietorship also created another opening. Sometime in the second half of the 1620s the Great Migration out of England began and the death rate from the seasoning began to drop. The Virginia colony grew dramatically during this period. This supports the idea that either the Magazine or the Virginia Company itself contributed to the seasoning death rate – not that it would have been zero, but that their policies had made it worse. Also by the early 1630s, the Dutch were buying tobacco and selling manufactured goods in the Chesapeake. The Dutch, however, did not sell servants’ contracts. They did sometimes sell slaves.

As we have seen, the Virginia Company had serious management problems that directly and often negatively impacted the Virginia colony. They never did adequately police their supply chain, substantially increasing the colonists’ hardship and probably the seasoning death rate as well. Ironically, many of the things Sandys – Southampton did were intended to bring some of the abuses under control. Perhaps their greatest problem was their most obvious success: the continually rosy picture of the colony that they successfully presented to the London public. When the hardships emerged in public, they shocked everyone. That the Company had not made huge profits that management had then diverted to their own pockets probably enraged Smythe, Johnson, and Rich even more.

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What drove the final nail into the Company’s coffin is still a matter of speculation, but both Hume and Brenner agree that the Smythe – Rich – Warwick faction wanted increased profit on the one hand, and were still worried about being caught raiding in the Spanish main on the other. The Sandys faction had made serious enemies including overseas merchants, members of the peerage, at least one “ancient planter” (Martin), and finally the King. The King forthrightly hated tobacco and the Company never succeeded in diversifying colonial products. The Virginia Company initially received Crown legitimation because it suited the King’s policy with regard to Spain, then the dominant economic and political power in the Atlantic world. When the economic situation in Europe grew complicated and the threat from Spain was replaced by concerns about recession, support for Virginia tobacco grew politically problematic. James revoked the Virginia Company charter and made the successful colony a successful Crown proprietorship. Diversification efforts ground to a halt. James still hated tobacco, but if his colony produced income for the Crown, he could cope with that. Nor did he think it necessary to turn the management of his colony over to the consortium of merchants and their aristocratic backers that had helped bring down the Virginia Company. On his death, the proprietorship passed intact to his son, Charles I. James did to the Virginia Company what he had learned to do with Parliament: he sent it away.
Table 3.1 Wheat Prices at Oxford

The table below gives the average price in shillings for one Winchester Quarter of wheat (approximately eight bushels) at Oxford for the years listed. Data is from Global Price and Income History Group.

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<tr>
<td>1632-1633</td>
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<td>39.97217</td>
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<tr>
<td>1643-1644</td>
<td>37.40967</td>
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Table 3.2 Spanish Bullion Imports

The table below gives Spanish bullion imports for successive twenty-year periods.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Silver/lb</th>
<th>Gold/lb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1591 - 1610</td>
<td>10,826,768</td>
<td>119,132</td>
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<tr>
<td>1611 - 1630</td>
<td>9,542,709</td>
<td>28,041</td>
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<tr>
<td>1631 - 1650</td>
<td>5,397,020</td>
<td>6,136</td>
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CHAPTER 4 NETWORKS OF PRODUCERS AND CONSUMERS

4.1 Problems of Tobacco

This chapter will focus on the tobacco producers in both England and the Chesapeake. Some of the differences seem minor. Despite the differences in strains of tobacco, *Nicotiana Rusticana* in England and *Nicotiana Tabacum* in the Chesapeake, growing, transporting, and marketing it presented some similar problems to both sets of producers. There was one enormous difference that effected all solutions: growing tobacco in Gloucestershire was illegal and all practical solutions had to take this into account. There was another important difference. Because Gloucestershire was a settled and productive society long before the introduction of tobacco, there were at least a few other options for Gloucestershire citizens. For an extreme example, if someone really did not like their choices in England, they could emigrate, first to London or Bristol and then to Virginia. It was an unknown that might offer a chance at greater rewards for doing what they had struggled with in Gloucestershire. An estimated 120,000 English men and women did exactly that, many of them from the poorer counties around the upper Severn. In the Chesapeake, tobacco growing was not just legal, it was what everybody did. In theory, if you got to Virginia and couldn’t make a go of tobacco, you could ship for home. But, as we shall see, return passage could be harder to fund than the voyage out. In the meantime, England was not only suffering from all that had made prospects unattractive initially, political stresses increased dramatically across the period, finally exploding into civil war.

Growers on both sides of the Atlantic found that tobacco was hard on the soil and in some ways, hard on the people. It required a lot of attention to prevent insect damage and to keep the plants from bolting to seed before the flavor developed in the leaf. The flavor was effected by excess manuring, but the soil required revitalization in order to keep on producing. While both societies had to reserve enough productive land to feed

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themselves, the problem of sustainable tobacco production called forth very different solutions in the Chesapeake than in Gloucestershire. Thomas Jefferson, discussing land use in the Piedmont with George Washington, wrote “Manure does not enter into this [cost calculation], because we can buy an acre of new land cheaper than we can manure an old one.”\textsuperscript{245} Jefferson also wrote about rotating corn, grain, and pasture, not just putting everything into tobacco. He took land use practices and crop rotation very seriously. But unlike Gloucestershire growers, growers in the Chesapeake had the ready option of clearing new land and many in the seventeenth century seem to have been more concerned with capturing market share than with sustainable agriculture. The headright system encouraged this approach, assigning fifty acres of new land to whoever paid the passage of a new colonist. Cattle were relatively rare until 1624, when settlers built a palisade across part of the peninsula between the York and the James to protect their livestock from Indians.\textsuperscript{246}

In Gloucestershire, land was expensive and, due to fluctuations in the local economy, labor was usually relatively cheap. Gloucestershire growers manured their fields extensively. However, after 1619, Gloucestershire growers faced the very serious problem that their product was illegal. It is possible to hide a small tobacco crop after harvest, but there was no way to hide a tobacco field from a hostile observer should there be any. The whole society had to agree to raise tobacco, just as the Chesapeake had done; but Gloucestershire growers’ only hope of protection was from local government with a stake in tobacco profits. The Crown, and later the Commonwealth, was completely opposed to what they were doing. As the Gloucestershire economy became more dependent on tobacco, relations between local and national government, already strained by religious, political, and economic issues, became distorted by issues of legitimacy. Of course, the local government was no more united than the national one. A united national government might have been able to isolate the illegal growers and finally eliminate the problem. Instead, people beggared by contractions in the cloth trade


or dispossessed by the disafforestation movement found jobs in the county gentry’s tobacco fields. This in turn effected the composition and leadership of the militia and the sheriffs – the enforcement institutions – as well as the local courts. Across the decades from 1619 until 1642-43, it was the national government that became isolated in Gloucestershire, not the tobacco growers.

Both societies faced problems in distribution and marketing. For both, the big market was in London. For Chesapeake growers, the transportation problem appeared to be simple. They need only put their product on board a ship and, with any luck at all, it would subsequently arrive in London. The problem was that the ship had to traverse 3,000 miles of ocean and the people running the ship expected to make a profit. In addition to shipping costs, there was the previously discussed tax burden at London customs. After the shipping costs and import taxes, the retail sellers also had to make money in the London market. As we have seen, this amounted to considerable downward pressure on prices paid to Chesapeake growers. In response to this pressure, some merchant shippers invested in Chesapeake plantations and some growers invested in shipping. They did not cut out the middleman, they integrated the supply chain. Many were able to use family connections for the required initial investment capital. This practice favored large planters and shippers over small ones. The process of consolidation was slowed somewhat by the Dutch, who became preferred shippers for many growers, to the extreme annoyance of London merchants. Dutch shippers were credited by the colonial government with keeping Chesapeake growers – financially speaking – afloat during the Civil War, a fact that apparently had no effect on the subsequent passage of the Navigation Acts.247

Again, Gloucestershire growers faced the enormous problem that theirs was a criminal enterprise. Getting the tobacco out of Gloucestershire should have been easy. The Gloucester market was large and well known. Long before the advent of tobacco growing, buyers came to Gloucester for wool, wheat or local produce in their respective seasons. From Gloucester, tobacco could follow a traditional route for farm produce from the market in Gloucester, down the Severn to the Bristol Channel, then eastward

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along the south coast. Getting it to the London market was more complicated. It could not legally pass London customs and smuggling involved paying off older, better established smugglers. Of course, small quantities could be disguised as other produce, at least in the Outports where taxmen were cheap and had no love for London. It is certainly possible that illegal Gloucestershire tobacco was used to cut smuggled Spanish tobacco in Plymouth or South Hampton, allowing the smugglers to charge Spanish tobacco prices for an adulterated product. However, the smugglers still faced the problem of getting their product to the big London market while avoiding the customs warehouses and the London docks.

There were, of course, overland routes to London. While there was no inland water route to London from Gloucester in the seventeenth century, and English roads of the period were notoriously unsuitable for bulk transport of heavy goods such as iron or coal, there was road traffic in produce, fells, light manufactures, and people. The Great Bath Road supported carriage traffic as early as 1612 when Robert Cecil used it to travel from London to Bath for treatment of his illness. Overland transport offered a considerable advantage to illegal tobacco transport: there were no check points or customs where the product could be discovered and confiscated. In addition, overland routes put the traveler in contact with small, local and retail markets such as alehouses and chapmen. Transporting Gloucestershire tobacco overland did not just cut costs, it cut out middlemen and thus tended to increase profit margins.

Before the eighteenth-century advent of tollways and canals, there are only anecdotal records of individual journeys. There are no data lists as there are from some of the ports. However, indirect evidence for the complexity and functionality of the developed system of regional communications and markets lies in the emergence of complex, typically disrespectful, and certainly equally illegal strategies for dealing with serious economic and political problems, such as loss of jobs in the wool trade and the rise of forest enclosures. The riots of the Western Rising in response to the collapse of


wool, the popularity of the subversive antics of Lady Skimington, and a variety of tactics for opposing forest enclosure are all evidence for strong regional communication networks.\textsuperscript{250} The physical means of communication were individuals traversing the generally poor roads of the region and meeting at market fairs or alehouses. While we cannot document the paths followed by either the ideas or the tobacco, we know that both travelled, because both turned up far from their origins.

There were advantages to not being on a frontier. When tobacco cultivation was introduced into Gloucestshire it was a functioning society, albeit a poor one, with legal and cultural traditions and community resources to keep people going when times turned tough. There was a functioning currency, although not nearly enough of it, and there was a legitimate and usually at least overtly respected government able to enforce legal contracts in a cumbersome but functioning court system. However, “functioning,” “legitimate,” and “enforce” turned out to be subject to change without notice. Crown finances and Parliamentary politics, with some assistance from two very serious recessions during the Thirty Years War, combined first to impoverish and then to alienate and outrage many citizens of the region, including both laborers and gentry and frequently including local officials. Gloucestshire was a poor county. Counties farther to the west with less diversified economies had been hit much harder by the collapse of the wool trade, but Gloucestshire saw the effects in increased numbers of beggars and men looking for work: and multiple families, desperate for shelter, crammed into cottages intended for one.\textsuperscript{251}

Beginning in the late 1620s, the Crown stepped up forest enclosures. The Crown’s right was protected by well-established law, but it was opposed to the equally old traditions of allowing neighbors to gather wood or fatten their pigs in the forest. Local courts proved ineffective in enforcing forest enclosure. Everyone knew everyone else, and there was a tendency to regard the perpetrators as victims. Attempted prosecutions sometimes provoked violence that in turn required additional enforcement. In response, the Crown shifted prosecution efforts to the Star Chamber. Because the Star


Chamber was a national court, the change of venue offered the advantage of judges who were not related to the defendants. But, this inevitably increased local support for the rioters and escalated conflicts, sometimes resulting in a requirement for additional prosecutions.252 Thus, tobacco growers in Gloucestershire, where many people were poor and sometimes seemingly everyone was doing something illegal, were simply another part of the community opposed to some piece of Crown policy. They did not have to grow tobacco in secret or smuggle their crop to market. Their neighbors knew what they were doing and the reverse was equally true.

Strictly speaking none of the above were examples of ideological conflicts between supporters of the King and supporters of Parliament. The Protestation, a loyalty oath to the Church of England circulated in 1641, was never returned from Gloucestershire. But ideological commitment or not, two examples of what the Crown claimed as privilege came directly out of the pockets of people of Gloucestershire: tobacco and forest products. Both were critical to the Gloucestershire economy. By the time civil war came to Gloucestershire, the Crown had already lost everything but the actual battles.

In theory, Virginia colonists were free men and were constrained and protected by the same Common Law as their opposite numbers in Gloucestershire. Virginia had a Royal Governor appointed by the King, as well as a Governor’s Council and House of Burgesses. However, the actual functioning of the proprietorships of large planters and their relations with the Council, coupled with the constant threat of Indian conflict, left servants and even small landowners with far less protection from abuse and exploitation by large planters than their counterparts in England.253 London was the legitimate and universally recognized source of English government, but London was the hub at the other end of a three thousand mile spoke. The Virginia Assembly was made up of planters who might or might not wish to take on other planters in a labor dispute with their servants. We have seen some of the damage that lack of infrastructure intangibles did in the development of a functioning society in the Chesapeake. In the 1620s and 1630s, during a period of very high immigration, Virginia society remained remarkably

252 Allan, “The Rising in the West,” 77 – 79.
253 Morgan, 126.
stable, but in some ways rather simplified. If there was less civic strife, it was partly because there were fewer options. You grew and sold tobacco or you did not survive in Virginia. The survivors turned out to be pretty tough. The big issue that finally brought small planters into conflict with the Virginia Council and Governor was inadequate protection for continued expansion into Indian territory – the need for new tobacco land – not labor or land use conflicts with the old planters themselves.

Well-developed communities or not, there is evidence that many English men and women were attracted to the prospect of life in the colonies. In 1980, Henry A. Gemery attempted to calculate totals for what is sometimes known as the Stuart Migration [to the colonies]. In the almost complete data vacuum of transport records from the British Isles, Gemery researched and modelled colonial records and concluded that between 1630 and 1700, 378,000 people left England, Wales, and Ireland for the colonies; most of them, approximately 210,000, during the period from 1630 – 1660. Gemery did not trust even the sketchy colonial data available before 1630 and his decision made sense in terms of colonial development. There were fewer transport and destination options available to would-be emigres before 1630. Not all of the transports were voluntary, although we will see that many were. But although no one person or even a single group could possibly have brought about that massive migration, the numbers reveal a profound rejection both of Charles I’s period of “Personal Rule,” and the subsequent Civil War and Protectorate. More than 200,000 men, women, and children voted with their feet – or more precisely, with their sea legs – to get as far away from the British Isles as they could while still remaining English, Welsh or Irish. Fewer than half that many could later be located in colonial records of North American and Caribbean colonies.254 We will examine Gemery’s modelling of transport and seasoning mortality in more detail in the section on Virginia. It is worth noting at this point that the Bristol Servant list does not begin until 1654, and the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database does not attempt to record servant transports at all. We have only guesstimates of who stayed and who went.

4.2 Gloucestershire

By the seventeenth century, Gloucestershire was a mixed agricultural economy of pasture and feed, plus some orchards and vegetables. This kind of mixed – use farming and pasturing agriculture did not suffer as dramatically from enclosure under the Tudors because there were fewer large fields of common arable land adjacent to a village that an ambitious squire might be tempted to enclose. During periods when wool and dairy prices were high there was the ongoing temptation to increase pasturage to the point where the land did not produce enough feed for either people or their animals, necessitating cash outlays and sometimes resulting in meagre Christmases.255 What may have helped save Gloucestershire from the extremes of too much pasturage conversion or too much enclosure was considerable variation in the land itself, from forests to grazing, to arable, with sandy patches, with woods or rocky outcroppings interrupting what might elsewhere have been the sweep of furrows. Overall, most land in Gloucestershire was more suitable for pasture and some of it was made difficult to plow by heavy clay soils. Upland soil was sandy, but suitable grazing for sheep.256 Local agriculture had long since adapted to this variety. Depending on their location, Gloucestershire farmers raised sheep or cattle; they maintained orchards and fattened pigs in the forest; and they grew vegetables and grain. Farm land in Gloucestershire was divided into relatively small plots with regular rotation of usage. For example, a year or two of pasturing manured land that might then be plowed for vegetables the following spring. Because of the variations and because an owner’s plots were not necessarily contiguous, a culture of negotiation and compromise had taken root. Although there was not much manufacture, the variety of agriculture across the county meant that there was a small but relatively steady demand for labor. When one crop had been harvested, it was time to plant another, or to shear some sheep just a little way down the road.257

According to Thirsk, Gloucestershire, including the East Vale of Tewkesbury where tobacco was first grown, had a history of a poor but stubbornly independent

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yeomanry, and local gentry were oriented toward their community rather than toward the more prosperous members of their class nationwide. However, as Bristol and London merchants earned money and bought estates from which they expected an income, the number of absentee landlords in the county increased. Absentee landlords tended not to have strong relationships with their neighbors or very much concern with the development or even basic maintenance of their property as long as rent was paid on time. This meant that the community as a whole was poorer, but it also meant that it was more self-reliant, seeking innovative solutions to its ongoing problems. Some of the solutions were not very attractive. For example, particularly after tobacco was introduced, sub-letting cottages to two or three families of laborers allowed the estate manager or even some of the nominal renters to pay their own rent and spend their days about their own business.²⁵⁸ Tobacco was a natural for this county. It was labor intensive in an area where there was plenty of underemployed labor; it made money in an area where there was very little money; and it allowed the growers to maintain their much-prized independence. The problem in the beginning was that almost nobody in Gloucestershire had available investment funds to begin the tobacco experiment.²⁵⁹

4.3 Stratford’s Tobacco Project

John Stratford and Henry Somerscales were Londoners apparently among the readers of C. T.’s 1615 pamphlet although there is no evidence that they worked together or even knew each other before 1618.²⁶⁰ Stratford was a Gloucestershire native and a London Salter who had already leveraged his success in that lucrative but otherwise not particularly exciting business into experiments with flax and soap. Soap requires oil and England produced very little vegetable oil in the seventeenth century, at least before experiments with flax and rape seed. Soap production thus required some connection with overseas merchants. One way or another, by the time Stratford became interested in

²⁶⁰ C. T., *Advice on Planting Tobacco in England and how to bring it to color and perfection, to whom it may be profitable, and to whom harmful, The vertues of the hearbe in general, as well as the outward application as taken in Fume. With the danger of the Spanish tobacco.*
tobacco he had connections in several businesses, and for the tobacco project was probably the partner in charge of London marketing.261

Somerscales was a lawyer admitted to Gray’s Inn in 1605. After that initial success, not much has survived concerning his law career. He apparently came from a gentry family with a lot of sons and not much money. Somerscales was apparently the partner in charge of growing and curing the tobacco, but where he learned anything at all about tobacco is almost perfectly obscure. It could have been from another family member.262 According to Thirsk, Henry’s father Robert Somerscales was involved in several tobacco experiments and, although the first name is left blank, a Somerscales is mentioned twice in the Records of the Virginia Company: once in May of 1619 with a plan for growing tobacco in England, which moved the Company to get all such projects suppressed; and later with a £15,000 project he claimed would improve the curing of Virginia tobacco. The second proposal was approved and the Company agreed to allow Somerscales to present his project to the subscribers to see if they would like to invest. Apparently not many did because the money never materialized.263 The question is, where did Somerscales père or fils learn how to plant and cure tobacco?

The answer may very well be London. Certainly, the expertise was no longer hidden beyond the Atlantic horizon. The Privy Council complained in 1619 that there was a good deal of tobacco growing in the gardens around London, and by that time the Dutch were in full commercial production in the gardens around Amsterdam. Probably the Privy Council was more concerned about the balance of trade than they were about the morals of Londoners.264 What the Privy Council’s complaint implies is that Somerscales’ acquisition of tobacco expertise is far less mysterious than Rolfe’s acquisition of tobacco seeds nine years earlier. In London at least, the professionals had lost control of the game. Tobacco culture seems to have been well established, at least in the London area, and Spanish and Virginia tobacco could no longer satisfy the market,

either because of availability or because of price. Presumably either Robert or Henry Somerscales was part of an amateur effort and had merely been a bit more creative than most. However he acquired the knowledge, Henry Somerscales supplied the tobacco expertise and John Stratford supplied business and marketing management. The pair went to work.

Stratford leased land in Winchcombe only a few miles from where he had been born. He locked in four-year leases and paid high prices, £80 an acre in one case. He made sure the project had good land, too, cutting down an orchard in one place and plowing up good grazing in others. Ploughing up grazing land in Gloucestershire required formal agreement from the landowner and usually a bond, not just a nod from a tenant eager for a little side income. Thus the leases were not only expensive, they involved a great deal of negotiation and persuasion. In total, Stratford leased one hundred acres in 1619. Somerscales oversaw the planting, tending, harvesting and curing and the project brought in a bumper crop its first year. Although Somerscales seems to have tried to keep his craft a secret, by the time the tobacco was ready for harvest the project had the nearly breathless attention of the entire county, particularly its gentry who were probably busily planning the revitalization of their own fortunes.265

They would not have the opportunity to make their fortunes legally. As noted above, the idea of growing tobacco in England had come to the attention of the Virginia Company earlier that year and Sandys and Southampton easily recognized the difference between a little London home-grown and a project of the scale and scope of the Stratford – Somerscales undertaking. They quickly appealed to the Attorney General. Tobacco growing was subsequently proclaimed illegal in England, Wales, and Ireland and Stratford’s bumper crop was the last legal tobacco grown in Gloucestershire.266 Stratford did his best to break the pricey leases, but the fully engaged Gloucestershire gentry fought him to a standstill in court. To pay his debts and his rent for the next three years, Stratford grew flax on some of the land. Homegrown flax probably angered his former associates in the import business, but it seems to have worked out well for Stratford. He

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266 Calendar of State Papers Domestic Series, James I. 1619 – 1623, December 30, 1619.
cleared his financial obligations and made new associates in Gloucestershire who also had connections in Virginia, to which he subsequently emigrated.\footnote{Thirsk, \textit{The Rural Economy of England}, 300 – 302.}

Stratford’s was not, however, the last tobacco grown in Gloucestershire. Even taking English weather and market unpredictability into account, it was simply too profitable a project to abandon. Consider the following. In a reasonably good year, a grower could expect a yield of around four hundred pounds of tobacco per acre. If the wholesale price was two shillings per pound, the grower could get £40 per acre for his tobacco, but this would not leave much profit after labor and rent were paid. If he could get three shillings a pound, then he would start to make a little money, and at four shillings per pound he would be making an enviable profit on every tobacco acre.\footnote{Thirsk, \textit{The Rural Economy of England}, 270 – 271.} Four shillings sounds strangely high after the struggles of Virginia growers to keep the price at twenty-seven pence, but retail prices typically went much higher. Note also that Stratford’s initial commitment to one hundred acres could have meant a crop of as much as 40,000 pounds, not quite double the entire Virginia declared product of 22,000 pounds for the 1619 growing year. Since Stratford was from London and his connections were in London, he probably sent his tobacco to London, very possibly down the Severn and then by ship from Bristol. The first year’s crop was legal, so he would have had no difficulty obtaining a cocket. It is entertaining to imagine the frustration of the London tax farmers when the huge mass of untaxable tobacco arrived at the London docks.

Somerscales may have thought he was keeping his growing and curing methods a secret, but he was not actually growing most of the tobacco himself, merely overseeing the process. He used local labor, people who watched what they were doing very carefully. The resourceful and independent gentry and yeomanry then pooled their knowledge with that of their now experienced laborers, and despite two years of discouragingly bad weather, tobacco growing spread throughout the county and eventually into Wiltshire and Worcestershire. It should be understood that Gloucestershire tobacco was never competitive in quality with either Virginia or Spanish leaf. For one thing, it was probably a much harsher variety, \textit{Nicotiana Rusticana} instead of \textit{Nicotiana Tabacum}. For another, Somerscales’ growing secrets, as they appear to
have been reflected in Gloucestershire practices long after he had left town, conflict with several of C. T.’s recommendations, particularly on the subject of the use of manure. C. T. was apparently well aware of how sensitive the flavor of tobacco was to the soil in which it was grown. He advised not manuring for two years before planting; not to let the soil become too rich; and under no circumstances should the farmer plant cabbage the year before planting tobacco. It would adversely affect the flavor of the crop. 269

C. T.’s recommendations on manuring were not just ignored by Somerscales and other growers, they seem to have been flouted. Thirsk cites a complaint that the land used for tobacco was over-manured and rendered unsuitable for other crops. 270 This may have been at least part of Somerscales’ secret: to get even the hardy Rusticana to grow at all in England required a lot of prompting from good fertilizer. To get a second crop from the same land required a lot more fertilizer. In the much better documented Virginia experience, after the third year, neither tobacco nor anything else would grow on that land for the next ten years. Tobacco completely exhausted the soil. In Virginia, thanks to the headright system, planters had the option of getting more servants to clear new land, and growing what corn they could on old land.

How far did growing spread in Gloucestershire, and was it an actual increase in tobacco acreage or did it involve the abandonment of exhausted land? In 1627, the Privy Council issued a warrant to suppress tobacco growing in or around thirty-nine towns in Gloucestershire, seventeen in Worcestershire, and one in Wiltshire. If the Privy Council’s informants were accurate, tobacco growing had spread quite far and covered substantial acreage. 271 Ongoing objections to Gloucestershire tobacco from the national government indicate that tobacco continued to be grown in Gloucestershire, even while it spread through other English counties. The liberal use of manure and the well-established traditions of crop rotation suggest that English growers got more use out of their land than their Virginia counterparts, even though tobacco cannot be planted over and over in the same little acre. Once again, we do not have a good estimate of land use allocation for the period in question, but the ongoing weakness of the economy in general

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269 C. T., Advice on planting tobacco in England.
271 Harris, 24.
and continuing contraction of the wool trade in particular make sense out of a real expansion of tobacco land during the 1620s and 1630s. Faced with a “dearth of money,” it must have been hard to stare down the temptation to plow good grazing land and replace it with a reliable cash crop.

In May of 1625, Henry Somerscales briefly emerged in a new role in the tobacco business: enforcer. Somerscales claimed to have drained his estate in developing tobacco, which had then been declared illegal. In an apparent attempt to restore his fortunes, Somerscales had obtained a warrant from the Council to seize illegal tobacco “for the King’s use.” His petition to the Privy Council asked for a moiety (unspecified percentage) as compensation. Neither the chronology nor the location of his operation is clear. The petition also does not specify whose tobacco Somerscales had seized. He might have thwarted discovery by seizing his own. A moiety, after all, is better than none.272

4.4 The Consumers

Who was smoking all this tobacco? In 1981, Wrigley and Schofield published population estimates based on baptisms and deaths collected from parish records. The data was used to calculate English birth and death rates before the first census, then aggregated to back project population estimates. In other words, how many people would have had to have been born and survived to reproduce in order to produce the English population in the first census in 1801, given available resources? Because the modeling touched on the twin tender subjects of human fertility and Malthus, there have been several interesting challenges to their broader formulations and some of their conclusions. However, the work still gives the best, for some periods the only, good guestimate of seventeenth century English population. Because the data was crowd sourced from local historians and most of the records come from the home counties, not much information is available from certain regions. Unsurprisingly, the West Country

272 Calendar of State Papers, Domestic: Charles I, 1625 – 1626, May, 1625.
counties figure prominently among the missing. The biggest problem, however, is London.273

London was the capital, the cultural, economic, and political center. London was the big market. By the end of the sixteenth century, it had overtaken Bristol in economic significance and it continued to grow in size and importance across the seventeenth century. It grew much faster than the overall population of England and by the early 1700s, it had also surpassed Paris. According to an earlier work by Wrigley, the population of London nearly doubled between 1600 and 1650, from about 200,000 to about 400,000. Although Gemery’s work on migration was not completed until much later, Wrigley assumed high values for London net migration that were subsequently corroborated.274 To simplify, large numbers of people went to London and many others left. The net in-migration was positive and so substantial that the city grew fast despite the high mortality. Not only was the turn-over fast, while they were there, the migrants constituted a young and rather rootless population. Horn compiled evidence that more than sixty percent of male emigres were between the ages of twenty and thirty-four.275 Without knowing the distribution within each of Horn’s categories we cannot calculate an average age for the sample with precision. However, averaging the midlines of the three largest categories suggests that the average age of male emigres was just under twenty-four years old.276 The data set is very small compared to Gemery’s estimate of the total number of emigres, but it supports and strengthens our intuition that the young, male, and restless were most likely to try life in the big city. Not everyone left for the colonies, of course. Enough stayed to double the population. As a result of this population churning, that is both the high turnover and the net large increase, the London market was so big that inconveniences and risks in transport had to be addressed by English tobacco growers. They could not afford to ignore it.

Once in the big city, they discovered a whole new set of problems. Poor as their villages and counties may have been, they held some of the amenities of community:

275 Horn, 30.
276 Table 2.
networks of friends, family and even occasional employers. The London migrants must have quickly discovered that everything in London had to be done from scratch, from networks of friends to a secure place to sleep, and that it all cost money. If they did not already know about it, the newly minted Londoners soon discovered tobacco, stimulant and appetite suppressant, and survivors worked out what they could afford and where to buy it.

But in London markets as in Gloucestershire fields, English tobacco growers encountered stiff opposition from established interests. Clearly, not all London merchants were enthusiastic about the influx of migrants and the demands for cheap groceries, ale and tobacco they brought with them. Early in his reign, Charles I received a petition from “apothecaries, grocers, and other retailers of tobacco in and about London” claiming that “Lewd persons, under pretence of selling tobacco, keep unlicensed alehouses, and others barter with mariners for stolen and uncustomed tobacco.”

The Crown subsequently attempted to regulate the alehouses, but this consisted mostly of not allowing overnight lodgers and not allowing tobacco sales by the alehouses. A transient population soon worked out their own solutions to both problems.

Later in the year, Charles issued a Proclamation complaining that the price of tobacco was kept affordable to the poor by selling small quantities (comparable to selling individual cigarettes on the street), and through selling smuggled and adulterated tobacco. We do not know what “smuggled” means in this case. It may refer to the still substantial quantities not paying import duties or it may refer to increasing Gloucestershire production. “Adulterated” suggest both may have been the case. Smuggled, higher quality imports are adulterated with relatively inexpensive English tobacco. Either way, the Proclamation makes sense in terms of the demographic data we have been discussing. The London population was swelling fast. Many of the newcomers were on their way to the colonies. A migrant population would have only

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278 Harris, 30.
279 Harris, 10 – 11, 12 – 13; 22.
small amounts to spend at any one time and would be most interested in small amounts of tobacco.

As we shall see, Charles also inherited weaknesses in enforcement. Alehouses were an important resource for the London migrants and an important retail outlet for tobacco. Alehouse licensing began under Edward VI and continued through Mary and Elizabeth. A license required that the alehouse “be of good character” and while nothing like the modern health services existed in Tudor England, consistently poor product quality was legal grounds for revoking a license. Initially, regulation was the goal, not suppression. Licensing was farmed, just as customs was, and the Crown collected a flat twenty per cent of the fees. Alehouses did not serve wine and beer was not exported, so none of the import and export duties applied. Toward the end of Elizabeth’s reign, increasing Puritan influence in the countryside generally meant fewer licenses and stricter enforcement. It seems likely that the Puritans would have preferred to suppress the alehouses altogether, but lacked political support.280

Beginning with James I, stricter regulation with rising fines and fees became the norm. Partly, this was because tobacco was now available in some alehouses and while James might wish to continue making money from the imposts, he had no qualms about suppressing use among the alehouse classes. The “Articles of Direction Touching Alehouses” first published in 1608 and amended in 1619, were intended to reduce the number of alehouses and generally to restrict their social impact. For example, no lodgers were allowed for more than a night and a day. The 1619 Articles added that alehouses could not sell tobacco. James may have found the initial lack of effect of his proclamations puzzling and frustrating. As noted in Chapter 1, the enforcement apparatus of the modern state needed to back up privatized revenue collection was simply not there. Taxes, as opposed to the imposts, fines, and fees we have been discussing, came from Parliament and each county had its local militia, known as Trained Bands, that enforced collections when called upon to do so. Proclamations were enforced by Justices of the Peace.

Enforcement of all kinds had become increasingly lax under Elizabeth, who called Parliament as little as possible. To reverse this trend, James ordered all Justices of

280 Harris, 4 – 6.
the Peace to meet more conscientiously in their regular Quarter Sessions and added Special Sessions specifically to take up issues of public drunkenness, alehouses, laborers, rogues, and vagabonds. Attendance was required. This worked out to intervals between sessions of about six weeks, far more time and attention to social problems than the poorly paid and sometimes volunteer Justices had been accustomed to spending. The Crown blamed alehouses for the spread of tobacco use. The Proclamation blamed justices for allowing these practices in unlicensed alehouses, although what effect licensing the premises would have had on an already illegal trade taking place there is not specified and is hard to imagine.

Ever in search of new sources of revenue, Charles I took a closer look at retail tobacco. His first attempt outlawed Spanish tobacco and required a special tax stamp on Virginia tobacco. His new regulations on alehouses were clearly intended to increase revenue rather than virtue. None of the above worked, at least not in London, probably due to the same enforcement problems that had plagued his father. Londoners who could afford it wanted Spanish tobacco; poor migrants wanted cheap tobacco; and nobody else seemed to notice or care whether Virginia tobacco had a stamp on it.

4.5 To Market

Not all the alehouses were in London. Alehouses increased as enclosures increased because an increasingly landless and seasonal work force needed inexpensive food, shelter, places to socialize, and a jar of ale. While alehouses were probably the last point of sale for Gloucestershire tobacco, that did not mean that growers went from alehouse door to alehouse door. Market fairs were the obvious first stop for growers, and Winchcombe in the heart of tobacco country had a market. It was not a large market, apparently serving about 30,000 acres of producing land. This was certainly convenient. It meant that it was less than forty miles to market for most growers, and a lot less for some of them. True, it was a poor county and a poor market. Laborers looking for

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281 Harris, 8 – 9.
283 Harris, 24 – 5.
284 Everitt, 497.
jobs were more likely than buyers looking for tobacco, but Winchcombe and other markets like it in tobacco country must have been pick up points for a variety of buyers. Some would have been the ubiquitous chapmen looking for product to sell to the alehouses or to divide into small quantities for individual sales. Others were big buyers, who may also have been chapmen in other seasons, looking for quantity to combine with more expensive import varieties that could be sold in the big markets.

Since one of the selling points for English tobacco was its low price, it seems unlikely that there were more than two middlemen between grower and user. Not only would the necessary profit for each intervening layer add to the price, but each transfer point meant additional vulnerability to people who might need to be paid off. Up until 1654, fines were the only penalties, which meant in practice that growers were in the same relation to county Justices of the Peace and sheriffs that importers were to tax farmers, except that the Justices had a much greater stake in the prosperity of the area, suffered much less oversight, and were frequently much poorer than tax men in London or the major outports.285 Fines were easily dealt with in the usual manner, first by under-declaring the amount confiscated which reduced the fine, then by selling what was supposed to have been confiscated and destroyed, which paid the fine.

Establishing good market connections for an illegal product was not trouble free. In one respect, Gloucestershire growers needed a closed market. Because their tobacco passed no ports and paid no taxes, the price was free to float up to whatever the market would bear, plus a small outlay for fines dealt with above. Since all the Gloucestershire growers knew each other, or at least knew where all the others were, and all of them were equally illegal, price wars were in nobody’s interest. It seems unlikely that any such attempt took place more than once. But where and what were the markets that paid so well for Gloucestershire tobacco? The Privy Council warrant cited above goes on to complain that growers “... having gathered their tobacco, daily bring it to London by secret ways, and sell it for Virginia and Bermuda tobacco.”286 Bulk transport from Gloucestershire to London would have been difficult overland and both expensive and risky by ship, due to the necessity of avoiding confiscation at the port. Besides, growers

286 Cited in Harris, 24.
did not want to receive wholesale prices for their tobacco. The advantage of the London market was that they could get higher retail prices.

Did Gloucestershire tobacco travel down the Severn to the Bristol Channel and then via the coastal trade to London? Particularly if the English tobacco were used to adulterate more expensive imports, that at first seems a plausible theory. The elaborate smuggling traditions of yore needed only a little reworking. The same people who were still smuggling Spanish tobacco could easily mix it with the cheaper Gloucestershire tobacco. There are two glaring problems with this scenario. The first is the General Farm of the Customs. If the English tobacco were mixed with the Virginia or Spanish tobacco before it passed through London customs, then the duty would be applied to all the tobacco, in effect raising the price of the English tobacco, plus the increased amount of tobacco would pay increased tonnage and poundage and imposts. It would not help if only half the mixture were declared, whatever was declared would still be more expensive. The whole point of mixing imported tobacco with home-grown was to mix it with something that did not have to pay those duties. It was simply silly to take it out of the country and back in through London customs. If they did use sea transport, they probably did not ship directly to London or possibly not to an outport at all but connected to land transport somewhere on the south coast. This is plausible, at least for tobacco from the Gloucester market. Gloucestershire tobacco could be mixed with undeclared Spanish tobacco near, say, Portsmouth and the mix be transported overland to London.

Gloucestershire tobacco could also have been disguised as miscellaneous produce. Ships in the coastal trade regularly carried large, mixed loads of hides, grain, vegetables, metals, and light manufactures. Willan found examples of tobacco pipes shipped between south coast ports in the 1620s and 1630s, and of tobacco, possibly Spanish tobacco, inbound from Bristol. In the bustling coastal trade, it would have been easy enough to disguise English tobacco as something for which a cocket was readily available.

287 Harris, 22.
There are two problems with this scenario. One was the competitive relationship between Bristol and Gloucester for international port status discussed in Chapter 1 that made an illegal partnership unlikely. Why would Bristol help Gloucester smuggle tobacco? Add to the problem of competing seaports the nature of Spanish tobacco importing/smuggling, which had not been a monopoly since Elizabeth’s war with Spain. There were still a large number of small players, anyone of which might pose a danger to anyone of the others, irrespective of their regular ports of call.

The other problem is easier to calculate but it also raises as many questions as it answers. According to Sea-Distances.org, there are approximately 536 nautical miles between Bristol and London. At an average speed of ten knots, the journey requires two days and six hours.289 The estimate does not include time waiting out storms, time waiting for favorable winds, nor time waiting for tides to get in and out of ports safely. It also does not include any time to load or offload. For small coastal carriers, ten knots was probably too high an average speed, and two days was probably at least three or four days. As the crow flies, London is only a little over one hundred miles from Bristol. Adding in some twists and turns for a journey over seventeenth century roads still only results in 117 miles. Gloucester is even closer to London, a little over 90 miles. At five-to-one ratio of distances, the over-land route begins to look very attractive. Unfortunately, there were several problems with overland routes. The journey almost certainly took more than three days. Any pack or wagon animals had to be fed and allowed to rest. Under some weather conditions, the roads might be impassable. And of course, there was the issue of security.

The study of traffic on the land routes and inland waterways prior to the eighteenth-century development projects is rife with speculation and discussion going back some years.290 What does emerge is that there is plenty of evidence both that the roads were terrible and that they were in regular if frequently unenthusiastic use. Pocahontas’ ship landed at Plymouth and she went by carriage to London – why, nobody

289 https://sea-distances.org/

knows. Perhaps her husband wanted to show her his country. Sir Robert Cecil travelled by road from London to Bath and back again more than once, finally dying en route in 1612 in a desperate attempt to reach the waters that had never quite healed him. Certainly, no farmer whose crop must pay his rent or taxes can afford idyllic isolation.\textsuperscript{291} Thirsk claimed that sheep and fat ware were walked from Siddington near Cirencester to London – the fat ware makes sense since it is bulky and cheap, but the sheep are a little puzzling.\textsuperscript{292} They must have been mutton on the hoof, otherwise why not shear the sheep and walk the wool? Overall, the road situation was bad enough that fresh produce was only transported relatively short distances, to London from the home counties for example, and from areas with good river transport.

One way to discover where the best roads might have been to look at where the roads are now. On the map, Winchcombe seems rather isolated, but local growers could take their product to Cheltenham. From Cheltenham, they could travel a lane that is now the A40 to Oxford, which had a very large market, and if that did not satisfy, they could either take the route that is now the M40 to London or connect with the Isis, which flows into the Thames. Or, they could travel the reverse of the path taken by Essex’s army going from London to Gloucester in September of 1643. The army skirted Oxford to the north and entered Gloucestershire at Stow-on-the-Wold. It was probably not necessary for tobacco carriers to sneak around Oxford, but if an army could travel that route, there must have been a relatively passable series of roads.

Unfortunately, records of tobacco prices at Oxford do not begin until the eighteenth century, after growing is supposed to have finally been suppressed in Gloucestershire. That does not mean that tobacco was not traded there, but if it were a major site, we should expect to see Virginia or Spanish tobacco prices. It seems most likely that this was not a major market for Gloucestershire product, because it was not a major tobacco market at all.\textsuperscript{293}

Gloucestershire and Wiltshire growers could also take their product farther south to Reading where the tobacco could go by boat down the Thames. There is no tobacco

\textsuperscript{291} Fussell, 77.
\textsuperscript{292} Everitt, 508.
\textsuperscript{293} Global Price and Income History Group, Available at http://gpih.ucdavis.edu/.
data for Reading either, but as the century advanced, towns like Reading and Oxford with year-round river transport increasingly acted as collection points for the exploding London market. River transport is possible from higher up, but there may be seasonal problem with water levels. When the roads were dry and in reasonable condition, the rivers were dry and thus less useable.

There is one further advantage to overland transport: the meandering routes went through many towns, some with markets and some with alehouses along the way. If a peddler bought tobacco in, say, Gloucester intending to transport to London, he could have made the journey at least partly pay for itself by selling a little product at each stop. Anything left for the London market was nearly pure profit. It is possible that such a peddler might have encountered an overzealous Justice of the Peace while selling small quantities to the poor, but this was more likely to be a minor additional expense than an encounter with criminal justice. Neither straight nor fast internal road and river transport was necessary to transport Gloucestershire tobacco and the period in the eighteenth century when roads were improved and waterways were dredged coincides with the inexplicable vanishing of Gloucestershire tobacco. In the seventeenth century, it was “secret ways” all the way.

Once English tobacco was declared illegal in 1619, their most profitable course was to market their crop by bypassing some of the traditional routes and selling directly to illegal retail outlets such as alehouses. In fact, London retailers, not the smugglers, were the most likely candidates for tobacco adulterators. They could buy English, Spanish or Virginia tobacco wholesale or retail at the best price they could get and produce the mix that sold best. Increasingly shrill Proclamations across the 1620s and 1630s suggest that the Crown was aware of the problem and coming under increased pressure from merchants to do something about it. Clearly, retail regulation was having limited effect.

In 1636, Charles issued a proclamation concerning Gloucestershire tobacco. The Proclamation differed from the typical one concerning tobacco in this period in that it was not directed at customs, ports or retail sales, and did not offer rewards for enforcement. Sir Richard Tracy, Sir John Tracy, Timothy Gates, and the Bailiffs of
Tewkesbury were ordered by the King to pull up the Gloucestershire tobacco crop. They were not offered a commission or other incentive, as would have been customary in cases of confiscation. According to Thirsk, the Tracy family like many Gloucestershire gentry, was heavily invested in tobacco growing. The King’s Proclamation was ordering them to hurt their own or family members’ projects, which they were presumably reluctant to do. Why were those specific names in the Proclamation? Why not just the bailiffs, or bailiffs and justices of the peace?

The question also arises: why Tewkesbury? Although it was very near the site of the first tobacco grown in Gloucestershire, by 1636, tobacco had spread throughout Gloucestershire and into two neighboring counties. However, Tewkesbury was the site of an estate of Lionel Cranfield, former head of the Great Farm of the Customs, former Lord Treasurer, and since 1622, First Earl of Middlesex. As head of the Great Farm of the Customs, Cranfield had supported outlawing tobacco growing in England. As Lord Treasurer, he had fully supported forest enclosures. Gloucestershire’s mixed economy had escaped some of the worst effects of field enclosure, but it suffered badly from disafforestation. Local people had become accustomed to gathering wood and grazing sheep or pigs in the Forest of Dean, including portions of Cranfield’s estate. If enforced, disafforestation ended an important set of resources for the county’s poor. Additionally, many of the people most effected were well aware of the anti-enclosure and anti-disafforestation riots collectively known as the Western Rising and were also well aware of ongoing enforcement problems. The program was extremely unpopular and local bailiffs and justices were as reluctant to enforce the disafforestation laws as they had been to enforce laws against growing tobacco.

Some of the gentry were also illegally hunting the Earl’s deer with the tacit cooperation of the gamekeeper, Sir Richard Tracy. Gloucestshire gentry were thus doubly compromised on important issues of local law enforcement. Cranfield attempted

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294 Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, Charles I. 1635 – 1636, June 19th, 1636.
298 Beaver, 188 – 190.
to prosecute illegal poachers and wood gatherers with, apparently, mixed success. By the mid-1630s, he was undoubtedly also aware of Gloucestershire tobacco. He thus seems a very likely source for the shift in direction of the King’s Proclamation from merchants and markets to growers, for the specific focus on Tewkesbury, and for the list of names of the gentry who had frustrated him. The Tracys, Gates, and the unfortunate bailiffs faced the choice of defying the King openly or risking armed confrontation with their neighbors and even with other family members.

No follow-up to the Proclamation appears in the Calendar. We do not know if any tobacco was pulled up in Gloucestershire in 1636 or not. In 1642, Cranfield’s estate was vandalized and 600 of his deer were butchered and left on the forest floor. The following year, his tenants refused to pay their rent, but civil war was sweeping England and there was no one to make them.299 Gloucestershire tobacco growing continued.

4.6 Cromwell and English Tobacco

Modern armies cannot be allowed to support themselves by looting, particularly in the case of civil war in their own country. In order to insure eventual peace, they need to be paid by the victorious state. The early Stuarts experienced repeated difficulties funding the expanding English state’s financial needs in the teeth of Parliamentary opposition to increased taxation. Once Cromwell sent Parliament home, he faced the same problem. Sensibly, he did not assign himself privileges such as ship monies or a forced loan that Charles had adopted during the period of Personal Rule and that had proved to be red flags to London merchants. Even though the King’s word had traditionally been the guarantee of repayment, the good credit of the English state ultimately rested with Parliament because Parliament had the power to tax. The Lord Protector’s word was less compelling, not because he would not repay loans, but because he might not be able to do so without calling a Parliament. While the Instrument of

299 Beaver, 216.
Government assigned customs duties to pay military costs, imposts on tobacco and currants were not adequate by themselves.\textsuperscript{300}

While legally customs were still farmed, in practice the state could no longer afford to give up the revenue to the farmers, nor did it trust them. This meant that the short-term loans from the Great Farm that kept the early Stuarts solvent were less readily available. Lending to the state became more attractive when the military adopted a strict First In First Out repayment schedule. Ultimately, Cromwell was forced to rely on individual financiers such as London merchant Martin Noell who had both sufficient resources and sufficient lines of credit to lend to the state and make a profit doing so. Noell was rewarded with an administrative position that, in effect, allowed him to manage his own and public money more or less interchangeably as his judgement dictated. Far from abusing the position, Noell reorganized the disorderly finances of the former Stuart state. Eventually, Noell became interested in tobacco revenue and persuaded Cromwell that the Gloucestershire growers must be shut down.\textsuperscript{301}

The following well-known story seems anti-climactic after what we have seen of English tobacco country. However, it is a logical political and financial development of all the forces we have been discussing. Disappointingly, Gloucester’s stubborn defense and Gloucestershire’s importance to an early and important Parliament victory did nothing to loosen the prohibition against tobacco growing in England once the war had been won. Gloucestershire representatives in Parliament argued their case, but encountered no sympathy for tobacco among the men who had cancelled Christmas. In 1651, Gloucestershire was granted a waiver to bring in an already planted crop, but each year after that, at least before Cromwell sent it home, Parliament passed new laws and fines against growers. Cromwell’s struggles first with Virginia and then with the Dutch, plus the possibility that the Stuart sons might invade from the west gave Gloucestershire some temporary high-level protection from any serious attempt to suppress English tobacco.

As before the war, the problem was local enforcement. London had to rely on justices and sheriffs whose loyalty might be to Parliament, but whose neighbors grew tobacco. Finally, in July of 1658, Cromwell sent Cornet Joyce, an experienced military officer with impeccable political credentials to end tobacco growing in Gloucestershire. Joyce put together what he probably thought was a good show of force, thirty-six horsemen and some foot soldiers, and approached Cheltenham. His was clearly more an expression of seriousness than a full-fledged military operation. Growers around Cheltenham were ready and waiting with a much more serious show of force: an estimated two hundred men and women, many of them armed, and a rumored additional hundred men on the way. The fact that the men were armed suggests very strongly that at least some of them were the local law enforcement the government had earlier found ineffective – precisely the reason Cromwell had sent Cornet Joyce. Joyce had to withdraw in order, as he put it, to avoid bloodshed, and Cromwell did not send the army back. The situation was obviously just too touchy.302 Cromwell died two months later, leaving the problem of Gloucestershire tobacco to his successors, as it had been left to him.

The Restoration apparently brought no immediate change to Gloucestershire’s defiance of tobacco law, although it did see a realignment of forces that may have been the beginning of the end. In the summer of 1660, the Merchant Venturers of Bristol instructed their MP to join with the merchants of London in petitioning for new laws against the growing of English tobacco.303 In 1662, the instructions were refined to include applying the current tax on Virginia tobacco toward suppressing English growing.304 The political alignment between London and a major Outport would have been unusual earlier in the century.

The joint effort was subsequently successful in reaffirming the illegality of Gloucestershire tobacco, but how successful it was in getting rid of the stuff is brought into question by a memorandum of 13 February, 1664. Apparently, some Merchant

304 “Petition Against English Tobacco 26 February 1662,” Hall Book I, 337.
Venturers had together contributed £300 to the efforts of the Gloucestershire Sheriff and Under Sheriff to stamp out Gloucestershire tobacco. The Memorandum was enquiring as to the fate of that investment, given that there seemed to be no shortage of Gloucestershire tobacco.305

4.7 Virginia

Beginning in 1618, the headright system developed and shaped the Virginia colony. The system was simple: anyone who paid a colonist’s passage received fifty acres. If you paid two peoples’ passage, you received one hundred acres, and so forth for any number you could afford and the ships could carry. The system was a brilliant solution to the Virginia Company’s financial troubles: the land cost them nothing, at least not in money, and the increasing colonial population was a mark of success. The more people planted, the more successful the plantation.

In Virginia, large numbers of immigrants were needed to clear land and plant tobacco and large numbers were continuously needed because of the very low survival rates in the early years of the colony. As we have seen in Chapter 2, immigrants to Virginia faced tremendous hardship in transit and on arrival. Gemery’s numbers seem a little shy when stacked up against the experience of the Abigail’s survivors. The survival rate is a problem, not because it retarded tobacco production – a few hundred more colonists could always fix that – but because it kept the colony mired in the stage where it had to be continually resupplied from the mother country, both with colonists and with the basic supplies to sustain them. A producing colony is not necessarily the same as a self-sustaining colony.

Virginia growers were legally required to sell to the London wholesale market. There was a big market entry fee, the import taxes, and prices were generally outside the control of growers, but once there the product was as good as sold. The trick was to get it across the Atlantic. Because there were no local markets and little opportunity to bargain, successful Virginia growers were merchant planters who took control of their own shipping or who had family in England to act as their factors. They cut out

305 “English Tobacco 13 October, 1664,” Hall Book I, 337.
merchant middlemen in order to maximize their profits. From the standpoint of Virginia planters, tobacco was put aboard ship and then it disappeared. Bills of exchange kept track of the money owed the tobacco grower, but usually, cash was not returned to the Chesapeake. Instead, the factor in London would sell the tobacco and use the proceeds to buy items that the grower had requested. As a result, there was very little circulating money in the Chesapeake and few places to spend it if there had been. Instead, there were complex series of credit arrangements using tobacco as a \textit{de facto} currency, between London and growers and between merchant planters and smaller planters. Taxes, fines, and fees were paid in tobacco. The three-thousand-mile link to London was essential. There were no alternate routes. But the end result was a kind of hub and spoke arrangement that was sometimes accompanied by considerable social isolation within the colony. There were no large land battles in Virginia during the Civil War. When Cromwell attempted to take control of the Chesapeake colonies he first embargoed shipping and then, when the embargo proved too expensive to his own government, he fought and won the First Anglo-Dutch War, in the process eliminating some very robust shipping competition.\footnote{John R. Pagan, “Dutch Maritime and Commercial Activity in Mid-Seventeenth Century Virginia,” \textit{The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography} 90.4 (Oct., 1982), 495.}

Virginia was a producing colony shortly after 1612. But the headright system, that was so much a part of colonial success, left problems in its wake. Planters began claiming tracts of land along the rivers that they were not yet able or willing to use, in order to have it available when their original tracts became exhausted, or in order to sell it a new arrival. According to Morgan, the practice was to clear a few trees, perhaps build a hut, and turn loose a few hogs. The land was theirs. After 1640, upward mobility of new immigrants had noticeably declined, because new arrivals could not get good land, or if they did, it cost much more than the passage of a servant.\footnote{Morgan, 218 – 219.} Despite the huge acreage of the Chesapeake, after 1640, upward mobility among poor immigrants and former servants was severely restricted, due to the lack of availability of land.

Menard’s essay, “The Chesapeake Tobacco Industry, 1617 – 1730,” attempted to correlate prices, production and per capita production for the colonial workforce and for
the colonial population.\textsuperscript{308} This would reveal overall productivity and tell us about the effectiveness of colonial production techniques as well as how competitive that Virginia tobacco would be in the long term Atlantic market. It would also, if we had reliable census data, reveal something about the sustainability of the producing population. According to Menard, productivity was subject to cyclical variations that correlated with price and available labor. As we have already seen from examining the London data, his essay effectively refuted the charge that prices fell when planters over-produced. Both prices and volumes recorded at London were subject to political manipulation, which corroborates Menard’s basic thesis. He suggested that planters cleared new land when an indentured servant workforce was available and when it looked as if doing so would repay the additional investment in labor. Menard’s population graph used a non-linear vertical axis that once again had the effect of producing a graph that looked like a ‘natural’ increase. His own arguments show that it was not, and his arguments from the data are what is most interesting. He is interested in the relationship between tobacco production, prices, and immigration.

Population data from the early period is best described as sporadic and unreliable. There is data for “tithables,” that is persons subject to the head tax, which covers working age males and all adult slaves, but it gives only hints as to the relationship between the workforce and the general population. Menard collected data from Virginia and Maryland surviving tax rolls and used a method for determining conversion factors from workforce to general population developed by Edward Morgan: conversion factors are calculated using a combination of census and tax data from the eighteenth century, then projected backwards.

Beginning in 1624, 800 Virginia taxables were recorded. The number increases slowly to 3,110 in 1634 when 2,526 Maryland taxable persons suddenly swell the rolls.\textsuperscript{309} A portion of Menard’s tabulated data, from 1624 to 1633, appears in Appendix I. Menard’s table did not list the conversion factors used, but applying the conversion factor of 1.49 that Menard apparently used for 1624 data produces calculated total population


\textsuperscript{309} Menard, “The Tobacco Industry in the Chesapeake,” 157.
estimates that steadily drift away from Menard’s table entries for population. The conversion factors re-calculated from listed population totals are in the right-hand column of the table. Those are the ones that Menard clearly used. The change in conversion factors is not very great and it does appear consistent until 1633 when apparent data entry problems throw the whole table off, but it also raises questions. The first problem is that conversions based on the more extensive eighteenth century data vary wildly, perhaps reflecting changes in collection and tabulation techniques and perhaps reflecting more fundamental problems in colonial society. They also vary from one region to another in the same year. In 1700 in Maryland, the conversion factors varied from 2.26 to 3.22, and in Virginia in 1699, from 1.86 to 3.30. With total workforce estimates for both Maryland and Virginia of greater than 30,000, this means we might be missing quite a few colonists in at least some areas or have over-estimated the presence of supporting families and networks in quite a few others. It does make sense that the ratio of the total population to the work force changed as the population became self-sustaining, and also that the labor force became an increasingly smaller percentage of the total population. But, even if the eighteenth-century data was more robust than it appears to be, eighteenth century relationships are derived from a period when the colonies were self-sustaining. The smooth back-projection thus obscures precisely what we are looking for in the seventeenth century: the point when a second generation of Virginians appear.

However, some families did immigrate to the Chesapeake, and by 1640, at least some colonists must have been born in the colony. David R. Ransome analyzed passenger lists, one for the *Bona Nova* for 1619 and another for 1621, and a third for the *James* in 1622. Ransome’s point was that many of the colonists we know about in this period were volunteers, including whole families; that shipping to Virginia had become at least a reasonable gamble; and that their variety of qualifications did make many of them quite suitable for colonial development. This did not make them the best land clearers or tobacco producers, as many planters understood perfectly. As Ransome pointed out, one of the loudest complaints about the suitability of new arrivals, a letter from John Pory

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310 Menard, “The Tobacco Industry in the Chesapeake,” 117.
to Edwin Sandys, was intended to justify giving new servants to some of the old planters for their first year’s seasoning instead of sending them to work on Company land. The old planters wanted young male servants. They did not want families with children. Planters’ short-term economic interests were opposed to building a sustainable society. Virginia Company policies were only partly to blame for this. While John Martin of Martin’s Brandon Plantation engaged in an angry and protracted struggle with the Company over his proprietorship, one of his goals was to have first jurisdiction over his labor force. It is difficult to imagine that he wanted to treat his servants better than the rest of the planters in Virginia, and much more likely that he wanted no interference with squeezing a little more work out of them.

Given that the immigrant work force apparently had quite a bit of age and gender diversity, why was growth so slow? Ransome concluded that the immigrants to Virginia were not as much different from immigrants to New England as had earlier been supposed. Gemery published comparisons of colonial populations between New England and the southern colonies, that was Maryland and Virginia in 1630 and 1640. The growth curves are quite different. New England population grew from 1,800 in 1630 to 13,500 in 1640. Thus, 86% of the 1640 population had arrived or been born in the preceding ten years. Chesapeake population in was 2,700 and in 1640 it had grown to 8500. Only 68% of the 1640 population had arrived in the preceding decade. Even though the Chesapeake had a larger population to start with, it was quickly surpassed by New England. The Chesapeake only began to catch up in 1700. The climate and biosphere, coupled with the presumed differences in immigrants, are usually blamed for this.

A key factor in understanding the life of the colony was the “seasoning,” the first year of a new colonist’s life in the environment of Virginia, when he or she was most likely to die. In 1671, then Governor Berkeley agreed to the usefulness of slaves in a letter to the Crown, “provided they survive their seasoning. . ..” but goes on to say that

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312 ROVC, cited in Ransome, 447 – 452.
313 Gemery, 212.
the mortality rate among new colonists was much better than the early years, “when not one of five escaped the first year.”

The colonists who met them at the dock were hardly welcoming; the purpose in purchasing a contract was exploitation of contract labor. Virginia Company correspondence with the Virginia Council called for the construction of “guest houses” to house new arrivals while the colony could sort out what servants went where. Apparently, they made no progress because one of the improvements proposed by the Privy Council after the King revoked the Company’s charter was the construction of guest houses.

Why did the planters – John Martin was hardly the only one – stick with squeezing an immigrant work force instead of dedicating more resources to food production and infrastructure development? The falling prices in London explains many individual choices. The only way to survive and prosper in Virginia was to sell tobacco and the best way to do that was to maintain good connections with London, not with ones’ neighbors. Resources had to be dedicated to reducing shipping costs and increasing productivity. The planters had almost no control over the London prices, and the only control they had over productivity was to acquire and clear more land. The ideal population for sustainable colonial growth was quite different from the ideal population for tobacco expansion.

In the Chesapeake, the immigrant death rate was high because they were new immigrants. Some planters, with cover from the Virginia Council, cherry-picked the best servant laborers for the jobs they had, leaving more diverse and in some ways more vulnerable immigrants to find their fifty acres if they had paid passage or to adapt to their new master if someone had paid theirs. Of course, the workforce marched off by John Martin and his fellow planters was also vulnerable, due precisely to their separation from any social support. So, their death rate was very high, which in turn required planters to acquire new servants. As we have seen when analyzing the Virginia Company, the overall cost of servant passage was very high to the Company if only one in five survived the first year. But each individual planter who bought a servant’s contract only paid for that one servant and only lost the whole cost of the contract if the servant died the instant

314 Cited in Gemery, 188.
after contract purchase. That probably seldom happened. Even if it did, he simply bought another one, thus paying twice, but not five times. This is really a Tragedy of the Commons type of problem. As long as the seasoning death rate remained high, the overall cost to the colony in terms of both productivity and sustainability was still five to one, but each individual planter could improve their own chances best by lowering their portion of the cost rather than by lowering the overall cost; which would in any event have been much more difficult.

Survivors and finally their children faced a highly competitive and fundamentally isolating social environment. In some ways, this is a markedly different set of processes then those we saw in Gloucestershire, where social networks served tobacco production and vice versa in a society subject to great divisive forces. In the Chesapeake, the isolating forces were built in to colonial growth and the survivors faced increasing class differences between the established planters of the Tidewater and the newer, poorer, smaller plantations of the Piedmont, as well as between servants and masters. According to Morgan, no servant who arrived after 1640 ever became a burgess.315

4.8 To Market

Selling tobacco to London had the virtue of simplicity: strictly speaking, the individual planter had only to get his product to dockside. There was one caveat: money changed hands in England, not in Virginia. Bills of exchange had been used for a long time by the large merchant houses in the medieval Mediterranean to avoid high-risk transport of bullion or specie. For the system to work properly, there had to be both money and markets at both ends of the journey. The goods were exchangeable for cash at one end and the bills were exchangeable at the other. In that context, bills of exchange had the effect of keeping the cash in the payer’s hometown, maybe even in the payer’s family. When the payee returned, he had Bills of exchange useable in his hometown. Allied businesses at both locations prospered in their respective markets.316

315 Morgan, 248.
Used as they came to be in trade between England and Virginia, when one party is an agricultural producer and the other is a merchant, the agricultural producer is dependent on the merchant, not just to sell the tobacco, but to buy needed supplies and/or take care of previous financial obligations. The merchant took the tobacco to London and left a promise to pay with the grower. Once the tobacco got to London, the merchant sold it and either the merchant or a factor collected the money for the tobacco and bought items on the planters ‘wish list’. These might include cloth or even dishes, and frequently included tools which, of course, were not manufactured in the colony. The merchant then returned with the items and compared them to the planter’s bill of exchange. Depending on London prices, usually the planter made very little profit and sometimes was in debt at the end of the exchange. But suppose he had a big windfall and profited enormously that year. The merchant would not have brought money, he would have extended credit. If trade had been a fully two-way street, that credit could have been exchanged for cash, but the merchant was not bringing trade goods back. He had already spent the planter’s money in London. So, the credit went on the books for next year’s exchange.

In fact, there was so little money in the Chesapeake that tobacco became the medium of exchange. All burgesses’ and governors’ salaries were paid in tobacco, as were all fines and fees. This situation must be assumed to have contributed to the lack of cities of any size in the colony, even into the eighteenth century. It must also be assumed to have left the colony extremely vulnerable to any upsets in commerce – for example, changes in the London market or three Anglo-Dutch wars in half a century. Practically all the Stuart monarchs at one point or another pressured the colony to diversify or complained that it had not, but there was no way for it to do so. The lack of specie and the falling price of tobacco led to inflation in the colony’s money supply (tobacco) and forced every planter, like so many desperate counterfeiters, to produce more and more.

Among other things, Virginia spent far more on government than the New England colonies. In the absence of specie, tobacco was the means of exchange and determined the salaries: 6,000 to 20,000 lbs apiece for the Speaker and three clerks. Each county paid a per diem for their representative of 160 lbs a day. The increasing availability of tobacco and the steadily falling price undoubtedly contributed to the
inflation, whereas in New England the scarcity of coin caused men to be stingier with their representatives.\textsuperscript{317} Even poll taxes fell unevenly on different Virginians. The representatives and members of the government did not pay poll taxes, they received stipends, and somehow the next government came from the same group as the last one, which did not include recent immigrants. Thus, the newest class of freeholders paid far more than the established planters in the Tidewater – and for less political access.

4.9 The Dutch and the Civil War in the Chesapeake

Large, successful Virginia planters were those with close ties to merchant shipping, sometimes in partnership and sometimes as part ship owner. Families such as the Perrys maintained close ties with brothers and cousins in London – both business ties and family correspondence. The primary business of the Virginia branch of the family was tobacco production, but they also participated in shipping and marketing decisions. For families like the Perrys, ties to London were not just spokes, they were network connections. They did not only ship their own tobacco, they also shipped their smaller neighbors’ crops, thereby defraying expenses of their own shipping. These merchant planters were in competition, not just with English merchants, but with the Dutch, who attempted time and again to break into Chesapeake tobacco transport with only limited and short term success.\textsuperscript{318}

The Dutch had some important advantages over English shippers. They typically did not take Virginia tobacco to London as English law required, they took it to Amsterdam. Amsterdam import duties were much lower, and the Dutch favored a ship called the \textit{fluyt} that was perfect for the Chesapeake: a ship designed for cargo with a relatively shallow bottom that could still manage Atlantic crossings. Cheaper shipping and lower taxes allowed Dutch seamen to offer better prices to Virginia growers, and even if the prices were not much better, they gave Virginians a choice. The problem the Dutch had in the Chesapeake was that there was no central pick up point. Every planter with acreage on a river had their own dock and planters too small or far away to have

\textsuperscript{317} Morgan, p. 208.
their own used their nearest large neighbors. To acquire the tobacco, Dutch shippers had to cruise up and down the rivers of the Chesapeake, looking for sellers whose crop was ready. In 1636, a Dutch merchant named Devries concluded that business in the Chesapeake could only be managed by someone with a house in the Chesapeake.\(^{319}\)

The Dutch benefitted greatly from unrest in England and from the English Civil War. Falling prices across the 1630s were followed by a serious disruption of shipping when war broke out. One Dutch merchant family did establish a base in the Chesapeake and became a major tobacco exporter across the 1640s. The Dutch had good credit networks as well and could pay cash if required. The colonial government, as dependent on tobacco income as everyone else in Virginia, declared their particular loyalties but were unable to enforce English policies. The practice of looking the other way was not confined to a few planters, but included burgesses, councilors, and governors such as William Berkeley. Although we probably have them to thank for the absence of London tobacco records, the Dutch performed a valuable service to the colony during the chaotic years of the civil war.\(^{320}\)

Ironically, Indian wars that began in 1644 and lasted for more than a year also benefitted Dutch merchants in the Chesapeake. 1644 was nothing like 1622 in either surprise or severity, but the growing rifts in the English state left the colony with no one to turn to for help, including the Puritan New England colonies. Dutch shipping aided the colonists with acquiring much needed supplies. Although some London merchants were unhappy with the arrangement, Parliamentarians and Royalists in the colony had to agree to a policy of free trade in order for all of them to survive. Dutch families who had bought land in the Chesapeake could not practically be excluded from any such arrangement. They were the people in the best position to offer help to the struggling colony.\(^{321}\)

Parliament was not really strong enough during the 1640s to enforce policy in the Chesapeake, even when it was actually sitting, but there were plenty of colonial merchant shippers in London with Parliamentary connections who did not let their religious

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\(^{320}\) Pagan, 488 – 490.  
affiliations stand in the way of their colonial trade prospects. In 1645, while most of London’s attention was concentrated on Naseby, a coalition of London merchants led by Maurice Thomson attempted to take over the East India Company by the brute force method of establishing parallel routes and colonies in the Indian Ocean beginning with Madagascar. The Madagascar attempt was not successful, but by the end of the decade they had established some market connections in India, some friendly ports in West Africa, and had strong connections with Caribbean sugar planters.322

Thomson and his associates had also been a strong presence in the tobacco and colonial supply trade since the late 1630s, but in that region they had stiff competition both from Virginia merchant planters and from the increasingly successful Dutch. They were actually creating a worldwide network of sorts, but their attention seems to have been wholly focused on elevating their status within the overseas merchant community of London. Like Cranfield in the Forest of Dean, they expected to exploit resources in remote locations for their benefit in London society. In this attitude, they were only slightly ahead of their time. With a victorious Parliament, they were now both a commercial and political force to be reckoned with and, after the execution of Charles I, they turned their attention to trading prospects in the Atlantic colonies.323

When news of Charles’ execution reached Virginia, Governor William Berkeley first declared the colony for Charles II. He was one of the architects of the free trade colonial policy that had helped the colony survive the war and the Indian uprising, but now that coalition was torn apart. Berkeley may have found it hard to imagine that Charles II would not be victorious, which he ultimately was but not for another decade. In the meantime, Cromwell unwisely ordered an embargo of Chesapeake shipping hoping to force the colony to surrender. Initially, the same tactics that had helped Virginia planters during the war seemed to be working and Cromwell felt the pinch first, both in finances and in political relations with the merchants of London, particularly those who had family or other connections with the Virginia merchant planters. Of the fifteen ships he sent to enforce Commonwealth law, only four actually made it to Virginia.


323 Brenner, 175 – 180.
But, the execution of the King had an effect of its own. The Dutch were good
Protestants, and might have been supposed to align themselves with a victorious
Parliament; but although they were not sympathetic with the beheading, this did not
translate into enthusiastic support for Charles II, either. A Royalist colony in the
Chesapeake could expect no help from Puritan New England, and Barbados to the south
was already negotiating surrender. Eventually, Berkeley surrendered the governorship to
Richard Bennet, one of the surviving councilors sent on the original fifteen ships to
negotiate Virginia’s surrender. Berkeley and his council drove a hard bargain: Virginia
maintained the free trade policy developed in 1644; everyone kept their land patents,
regardless of religious affiliation; and although Berkeley in theory went into exile, in fact
he went no further than his estate at Green Spring.324 Compared to England across the
preceding decade, the whole transfer of power was extraordinarily civilized.

4.10 The First Anglo-Dutch War

Although the Virginia surrender of 1652 included a free trade agreement for the
colony, The Navigation Act of 1651, which mandated that all colonial trade be carried in
English vessels, was in force at the time and there was plenty of political and merchant
muscle in London with an interest in seeing enforced. English colonial shipping,
including Virginia merchant planters, qualified under the Act, but Dutch merchant
planters in the Chesapeake did not, even if they owned land. The concept of
naturalization did not exist. They were Dutch and the English colonies could not legally
trade with them. In addition to the trade issues, some factions in Parliament were
increasingly restless over what they considered Dutch support for the exiled Stuarts.
Probably the largest factions in the Dutch Republic simply did not want to be part of the
English civil war and post-war political scrambles, but this did not endear them to a
victorious Parliament intent on establishing their legitimacy in the eyes of a suspicious if
not overtly hostile Europe. Conflicts over Dutch trade and shipping escalated with the

324 Pagan, 493.
passage of the Navigation Act. The Dutch protested that they had a right to trade, but the English increasingly heard only threats of support for the Stuarts.325

Unfortunately for the Commonwealth, as had been amply demonstrated by the surrender, the English could not count on effectively blockading or embargoing the Chesapeake in order to enforce the Navigation Act. If they sent a sufficient naval force to the colonies, they left themselves exposed to much nearer and stronger enemies: Spain, France and increasingly, the Dutch. Nor would success in driving the Dutch out of the Chesapeake have satisfied the English. They wanted the Dutch out of the English Channel. In addition, Thomson’s London merchant faction wanted a bigger piece of Chesapeake trade, not a trade shutdown. War with the Dutch who still had a powerful and ferocious navy, was therefore more realistic and more satisfying to the English than any more conservative negotiations or attempts to discipline their own colonies could have been. Victory would have the added benefit of securing disputed fishing rights in the North Atlantic. The English went back to war, this time at sea.326 The war lasted less than two years and the English succeeded both in securing their home waters and in finally driving Dutch merchants out of the Chesapeake.

Religious or political convictions notwithstanding, many in the Chesapeake were very sorry to see them go. Large merchant planters could still compete in shipping with the new London merchants, but they no longer had the option to take their trade to Amsterdam and were thus subject to English taxes. Smaller planters were squeezed hard by the new merchant traders and suppliers, both in the case of prices for their tobacco and prices for the manufactured goods they often so urgently needed.

However, the decade of war appears to have accomplished several things. Tobacco producers large and small prospered during the civil war, fundamentally due to the lack of attention they received from the metropole. Even though immigration appeared to drop off in the 1640s from its previous high, there seems to have been enough labor to continue, not just to grow tobacco, but to expand tobacco lands. This suggests that the seasoning mortality did drop off to the twenty percent level as Gemery

326 Groenveld, 567 – 570.
thought. It also suggests that the colonial population was at least close to being able to reproduce itself; although if immigration had completely halted, we would probably have seen a population dip. We are now in a position to answer the question: when did a second generation of Virginians appear? The best answer so far is that they appeared in the civil war and surrender. Evidence for their appearance is hard to find in the numbers but not hard to find in their behavior. A large group of people in a profoundly isolating culture, many of whom had far closer ties to London than to each other, managed, not just to survive, but to negotiate a future for themselves and their colony.

4.11 Conclusion

This chapter compared two seventeenth century tobacco producing cultures on opposite sides of the Atlantic: Gloucestershire and the Chesapeake in the reign of Charles I and the Civil War. Although the product and some of the problems were very similar, solutions differed dramatically, due primarily to cultural, legal and political forces, rather than to geography. On both sides of the Atlantic, tobacco looked like a chance to make one’s fortune and escape poverty – or at least put off its worst effects for a little while. Tobacco supplied a livelihood for large and small landowners and for the servants and beggars they employed.

Gloucestershire was clearly the most developed and settled society and should have had advantages, both in developing agricultural methods and enriching their society. Tobacco was an important cash crop, but after the Crown declared tobacco growing illegal in England, growers at were at odds with the state. This made them vulnerable to enforcement efforts as well as to possible conflicts within the county and generally distorted social relations in the county. Although tobacco growing was quite widespread, forest enclosures and other social upheaval increased political and economic stresses. Gloucestershire gentry whose sympathy for the poor effected by disafforestation might otherwise have been quite limited, were opposed to the interests of Crown and peerage that threatened their livelihood. Beaver quoted a letter to Lionel Cranfield from his estate manager describing the county as extremely volatile, “the turning of a straw would set a
whole county in a flame.” As their subsequent actions in the Civil War and Interregnum make clear, Gloucestershire growers felt that they had to defend their fields – not just their way of life, but their living and their society, against a greedy Crown.

Transportation to market presented some challenges for Gloucestershire growers. Shipping from Gloucester down the Severn to the Bristol Channel, and from there to London, should have been easy. However, they could not land their tobacco at London customs, because it was illegal. A cocket would have done no good, even if they could have persuaded someone to issue it. This must remain speculative, because there are very few records of the internal movement of goods in the seventeenth century, but their best option seems to have been overland carriage. This transportation method had the added advantage of putting them in contact with retail customers along the route. Despite Charles I’s efforts to suppress retail sales as well as English growing, English tobacco found a ready market in the booming migrant population of London, some of which was probably enroute to the Chesapeake.

Just comparing the political and social features of life in the Chesapeake makes Chesapeake growers look – a little passive, perhaps – until we remember what they had to go through to get there and what they actually had to do to bring their crop in. The Chesapeake seasoned its immigrants, all puns intended. According to Gemery, who cites William Berkeley as one source, passage and seasoning mortality dropped dramatically after 1630. The survivors attempted to build a legacy, but most do not seem to have been committed to building a society. The relative social isolation of Chesapeake planters has often been compared to the village life in New England. Chesapeake growers’ tightest connections were with London, three thousand miles away. Their connections with their neighbors were more competitive and more problematic. The headright system promoted colonial expansion, but did not reward good land use and agricultural practices. In the end, the system threw the colonists into conflict with Native Americans, but not before they had spread out, leaving swaths of cleared and unmanured land behind them.

In some ways, the Civil War seems to have brought out the best in Chesapeake colonists. Hit by an Indian uprising in 1644, a time when England did not have the resources to help, Dutch shippers and planters in the Chesapeake pulled together with

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327 Beaver, 189.
both Royalist and Parliamentarians to get Chesapeake tobacco to European markets, arrange credit, and produce supplies. Free trade became the colony’s policy. Of course, 1644-45 are among the missing years from the tobacco series, so we do not know how much tobacco went across the Atlantic. However, we do know that the colonists attempted to maintain good relations with the Dutch under Cromwell.328

Even though tobacco was legal in the Chesapeake, some growers seem to have had difficulty getting any advantage from this situation. Price manipulations implemented at London customs did not benefit growers, they benefitted merchants and the Crown. Although making tobacco growing illegal in England was intended to protect and promote Virginia, physical hardship in the colony, sometimes coupled with exploitation of servants, meant that most Virginia growers found it difficult to benefit. The price of Virginia tobacco in England was manipulated for the advantage of the Crown and for merchants who never held a hoe, never mind grew a single tobacco plant. Virginia tobacco was convenient, at least as long as the price did not get too high. Gloucestershire growers probably got better prices for their tobacco, but because their product was illegal, their society was thrown into conflict with the national government and found it difficult to benefit from the hard work imposed by tobacco growing.

328 Pagan, 492.
Table 4.1 Workforce Data and Population Estimates in the Chesapeake

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<th>Maryland Taxables</th>
<th>Total Taxables</th>
<th>Calculated Population</th>
<th>Total Population from Table</th>
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Table 4.2 Ages of Male Emigres from England to the Chesapeake

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<th>Midline of Age Group</th>
<th>Average</th>
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<td>10</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<td>17</td>
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<td>20-24</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>27%</td>
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<td>22</td>
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<td></td>
<td>23.875</td>
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<td>25-29</td>
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CHAPTER 5 TIPPING POINT AND EPILOGUE

5.1 The Labor Force

For the first three-quarters of this work, the labor force in the Chesapeake was mainly indentured servants, and the labor force in Gloucestershire was independent landowners and hired labor as needed. As we have seen, tobacco on both sides of the Atlantic was in the hands of small and medium sized growers for more than half a century. It was their whole livelihood in Virginia and their cash backstop in the more diversified Gloucestershire. However, the political economy of England slowly shifted across the reign of the first two Stuarts and the Interregnum. Changes in the economy and the relationship of merchants and landowners to the Restoration state meant small landowners were under increased economic pressure. Tobacco prices continued falling and merchants were interested in increasing the return on their investment. Macaulay described the period as one in which English merchants and bankers were seeking opportunities to invest their excess savings.329 The resultant impact on the workforce in the Chesapeake was the increase of slave labor, not because Chesapeake planters needed slaves, but because merchant shippers needed the Triangle Trade. Increasingly, the Chesapeake tobacco colonies became part of that trade, and in England, the Merchant Venturers joined forces with London merchants to attempt once again to eradicate Gloucestershire tobacco.

This chapter will discuss the change in the Chesapeake labor force from indentured servants and other, mostly voluntary, immigrants from England to a workforce composed primarily of enslaved Africans and exam classic theories about why the change took place. It will then look briefly at the effects of Restoration London tobacco and coffeehouse culture on developments in the political economy, on colonial merchants, and English tobacco markets.

The elements on that list are connected. The men in those smoke-filled coffee houses were not the Caribbean slave raiders of the earlier generation, but some of them

were investors in the colonial trade and thus quite familiar with the Caribbean labor force. They were more likely to be concerned with how to make money from the slave trade than with any moral challenge it might present. They were not monopolists, but they were not free traders in the sense that Edwin Sandys had once argued for in Commons. Although they fought against the monopoly of the Royal African, it was because they recognized two things: it was inadequate to supply the labor needs of the growing sugar colonies; and it put money in the pocket of their political enemies, the Stuarts. Regarding the colonial trade, they were mercantilists: they wanted state protection in world markets that servicing English colonies now required, including the slave markets of West Africa. Their politics and business interests were closely intertwined and when it proved difficult to influence the Stuarts, they fomented revolution and took over the state, molding it in their own image. With the end of the Royal African monopoly, they were “free to enslave.”

The slave trade with Africa was not a necessary development for continued grower prosperity in the Chesapeake. Although there were clearly some very deep problems, Chesapeake society worked well with immigrant servant labor, as the work of Russell R. Menard and many others repeatedly showed. Counterintuitively, and in the teeth of its earlier success, the tobacco colonies of the Chesapeake did switch to slave labor in the latter part of the seventeenth century and Menard looked for causes among planter preferences and practices. His data showed both servants and slaves in the Chesapeake by mid-century, with servants clearly predominating until the end of the 1670s. His analysis suggested developing problems in the second half of the century with servant availability and price. This corresponds well with Gemery’s data indicating that emigration peaked and began to fall off after 1660. Menard asserted that planters, faced with falling tobacco prices, made rational choices in pursuit of increased productivity. They increasingly switched to slave labor. However, clear connections proved elusive. There are several problems with the idea that slave labor improved productivity, which this chapter will explore in some detail. But, the problems with Menard’s conclusions did not arise because there was anything wrong with his data or

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with his assessment of planter preference. Without the *Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database* and other economic data gathered in recent decades, Menard was not in a position to evaluate the impact of the factors in wider Atlantic markets on events that he studied in the Chesapeake. Compared to developments in Atlantic commerce, Chesapeake planter preferences had only a limited impact on the Atlantic slave trade and thus on the price and availability of slaves.

In order for their operation to be profitable, Atlantic merchant shippers needed a cargo in both directions. Once tobacco production developed in the early Virginia colony, they could make money going both ways: charging for people and supplies going from east to west, and for shipping tobacco on the way back. Tobacco production increased dramatically as the century advanced, but the profits from people traffic did not keep pace. Mercantilist theory was still in its infancy, but trade was quite well understood. Mercantilism asserted that the colonies supplied the raw materials and agricultural products, in this case tobacco, and the metropole supplied manufactured goods. Unfortunately, there was not enough demand for English manufactures in the Chesapeake for their trade to be a profitable one for merchant shipping. Even the establishment of the Barbadian sugar colony in the 1640s did not significantly expand the colonial market for manufactures. In fact, the market for English goods shrank when small white landowners were forced out by large slave worked plantations.331

The introduction of the Triangle Trade with one point of the triangle on the west African coast changed that. English merchant shipping could load trade goods in England, exchange them for slaves in Africa, and transport the slaves to the sugar colonies of the Caribbean. They could then return to England with a cargo of sugar.332 Initially, these routes were developed by individual traders who did not typically have the resources to be competitive on the African coast. The Royal African Company could bring more resources to bear on the problems of slave acquisition. In no other sense was it innovative. It was an attempt by the later Stuarts to guarantee market share in a highly competitive but clearly profitable market.

332 Eric Williams, 52.
Chesapeake society was already divided into the Tidewater planters with relatively large land holdings and newer colonists with smaller holdings moving up into the Piedmont. The former had access to dedicated merchant shipping that helped them maintain an acceptable profit margin in the face of falling tobacco prices. Until English victory in the First Anglo-Dutch War, both groups had probably been able to rely on alternative Dutch shipping with better prices due in part to lower Dutch taxes. Of course, the absence of London Port Books for the Civil War and Interregnum means that we cannot be sure how much tobacco was shipped to London; nor is it easy to tell which Chesapeake growers supported which side and whether they adjusted their tobacco shipments to reflect this. Whatever price breaks had come from Dutch buyers, they probably mattered more to small growers. At the beginning of the Restoration, the Tidewater planters clearly regarded themselves as on the winning side. Former Royal Governor William Berkeley was quickly reinstated and the colony’s charter renewed. There is still no London volume data until 1669, but there are two indices of Chesapeake tobacco success. One is the high volumes beginning in 1669 that presumably did not appear out of nowhere, and the other is the booming retail market in the London coffeehouses of the Restoration. Chesapeake tobacco was pipe tobacco and the London coffeehouse crowd were pipe smokers.

However, although Virginia tobacco was a success, and the tobacco colony was certainly a success, individual planters were struggling. Their success depended more and more on the success of English merchant shipping, and returns on merchant shipping that depended solely on hauling servants to the Chesapeake and returning tobacco to England could no longer compete with the return on investment of the African trade. Both Chesapeake planters and the English merchants serving them were trapped: the planters had to use English shipping and with tobacco at less than two shillings per pound, and servant transport prices still less than £6, neither shippers nor growers could make a good profit on the transaction.

A download from *The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database* shows a dramatic increase in slave imports after 1676. Although there were slaves in the Chesapeake, most growers seem to have been relying primarily on their own or indentured servant labor through the 1660s. The change in slave deliveries to the Chesapeake labor force appears
abruptly and rather late in the century. It may be a real change in merchant and/or planter practices, or it may be an artifact of data collection problems. Either way, the numbers clearly do not tell the whole story by themselves.

This was the basis for Stephen Saunders Webb’s idea that slavery was imposed on the tobacco colonies after Bacon’s Rebellion by the greedy and power-hungry Stuart Crown intent upon militarizing both English and colonial society, and simultaneously interested in making a profit from its projects. According to Webb, societies with a few large landowners were perceived as easier to control than societies of small independent landowners, who might wish for a greater say in local and national politics. Slave owners in particular may be quite vulnerable to the possibility of slave rebellions and thus be more dependent on a strong government. In *The Governors General*, he posited that the Stuarts introduced garrison, or militarized government throughout Restoration England under the guise of coastal defense, then focused on the Chesapeake. In *1676: The End of American Independence*, Webb identified the sharp increase in the use of slave labor with the aftermath of Bacon’s Rebellion. While Bacon himself was never a servant, many of the men he led had been. They may or may not have been much competition for the Tidewater planters, but their many grievances posed a political threat. Webb was not just advancing conspiracy theories. He found garrison government involved centralization of power, with a concomitant loss of autonomy on the part of communities in the Chesapeake, the Caribbean, and in the west of England, including Gloucester.333 His theory about the switch to African perpetual, chattel slavery in the Chesapeake correspond well with the later *Database*. The problem with Webb’s thesis is that it is possible to impose slavery, but not possible to impose slaveholding. Being the master is voluntary.

Opposed to this thesis is Russel R. Menard’s idea that planters who could do so made a series of choices in the interest of their business that eventually resulted in increasing use of slaves. Menard’s thesis may usefully be called a rational choice thesis. He posits rational actors, sometimes necessarily operating with incomplete information,

but aware of their own self-interest and able to act on their own behalf. His ideas arise from impressive research and determined analysis, and he does not jump to conclusions. Webb’s strength is that he considered colonial development in light of complex and deadly politics in the metropole, which was, after all, the legitimate government of the Chesapeake colonies.

Demonstrating that there was a profound change of some sort and that it took place late in the century is not difficult with the Database. Table IV shows slave disembarkations in the Caribbean and in all Mainland North American colonies for the seventeenth century. Looking at totals for the second half of the century after regular deliveries to the Chesapeake began reveals that almost forty times the number of slaves were delivered to the islands of the Caribbean than to all colonies on Mainland North America. Table I shows slave disembarkations in Maryland and Virginia increasing dramatically after 1676. Clearly something happened in Atlantic slave markets across the second half of the seventeenth century. The increase in slave disembarkations in the Chesapeake was part of that something. Chesapeake changes are not big enough to affect the Atlantic market, but the other way around is all too believable. If slaves were needed in the Chesapeake, they were available in the Atlantic. The question is, were they needed?

The fact that slavery already existed elsewhere in the Atlantic world does not imply any necessity for Virginia to adopt it. Like addiction, slavery is not contagious. A human being must buy another human being from a third human being. The sale must be legal and enforceable and the subsequent master-slave relationship must also be enforceable. While there were slaves in the Chesapeake – and we do not know how many were there, only how many were delivered – how did a slave workforce displace the older and previously highly successful institution of servant and free immigrant labor in the Chesapeake? Typically, tobacco does not make the same kind of demands on the labor force that sugar makes, nor does it reward the same economies of scale. This work has previously identified tobacco cultivation with cultures of independence and even rebellion. Tobacco enabled a certain degree of grower independence due to market expansion and ultimately to price inelasticity. However, the advantages of tobacco were not sufficient to withstand the profound changes in English politics and English markets.
in the second half – and particularly the last quarter – of the seventeenth century. The success of tobacco and subsequently of Virginia tobacco meant that growers came under pressure from much larger forces, some of which their society ultimately proved unable to manage.

This chapter will consider how a society based on legal and voluntary contractual relationships, under pressure from profit-hungry and politically powerful London merchants and an increasingly tax-hungry Crown, coupled with internal colonial pressures from desperate small growers and angry Native Americans, ‘tipped over’ into a slave society; one wherein production was based on a coerced labor force that did not immigrate voluntarily and was not entitled to either land or contract once it arrived. The works of Russell R. Menard, Edmund S. Morgan, Stephen Saunders Webb, and Eric Williams, despite their disagreements, are all critical to understanding this change. The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database provides important insights, not into the use of slaves once they arrived in the Chesapeake, but into increased slave traffic in the Atlantic. The Database allows us to place planter choices in the context of Atlantic markets. Although, the increased slave traffic took place with the full knowledge and connivance of the English government and its merchant supporters, slavery remained illegal in England, and no slaves were imported. In this context, the ideas of John Locke on slavery may give some insight into the political economy of the slave trade.

5.2 The Chesapeake

The discussion of the Chesapeake in Chapter 3 focused on the politics and social relations that led the colony to commercial success and helped it survive the severe political and economic upheavals of the 1630s, 1640s and 1650s. By offering fifty acres of ‘free’ land to anyone who would pay the passage of a colonist, the headright system of 1618 contributed to the size and character of the tobacco workforce, and ultimately the character of the colony itself. Most of the colonists were not coerced beyond the necessity to earn a living in problematic times. They emigrated voluntarily, then did their best in Virginia. Their best produced a successful colony as well as some successful individual tobacco growers. Some immigrants brought family and servants with them
and some immigrated as servants. Servants who survived their indenture could pool resources with other former servants, perhaps some of whom had managed to make and hang onto some money. In some cases, credit might be available from former masters. They acquired and cleared land. If their first year was a good one, they might contemplate acquiring a servant to work for them. As we have seen, that story is highly idealized, but it worked well and often enough to drive colonial expansion through successive waves of immigration. Life was hard, but at least until mid-century, land ownership and the financial independence that came with it were well within reach. Map I shows the index of its success: colonial territorial expansion across the critical decades. As we have seen in Chapter 3, that expansion came at great cost to the immigrant labor force: an estimated twenty percent survival rate in the early years of the colony, rising to an estimated eighty percent survival rate once tobacco production was well established. These mortality rates do not include deaths in transit. Far more people left England than survived to prosper in the tobacco colony.

Russell R. Menard attempted to show that slavery was a rational choice on the part of planters, due to the rising price and decreased availability of servants coupled with the continued downward pressure on tobacco prices. Planters were subject to shrinking profits and they saw slavery as a way to increase productivity. Ultimately, falling tobacco prices made slave ownership essential in the late seventeenth century Chesapeake. There is at least one grain of truth in this. Tobacco planters certainly made rational choices in order to maximize profits and to protect and enhance their life-styles, and they certainly were confronted by falling prices. But even though they could tell whether or not they had not made enough money to meet expenses, we should not assume that productivity calculations were at the center of their business model. As Solow pointed out, the questions in a census arise from the social constructs of the census taker. Productivity calculations became critical in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries when businesses began calculating the costs and benefits of automation. The calculation is a simple ratio. The numerator is product produced and the denominator is labor costs to produce it. As we have seen, Chesapeake planters attempted to increase

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production when confronted with shrinking profit margins. That is, they attempted to increase the numerator. Unlike automating a factory, they needed two things in order to do this: land and labor. Even with judicious manuring and rotation, they could not keep planting tobacco over and over again on the same piece of land. Neither increasing nor decreasing the size of the labor force, per unit of planted tobacco land, would do anything to change that. Although we do see periods of labor shortage in last half of the century, the point at which adding laborers no longer increased the tobacco harvest came fairly quickly. As long as the cost of a servant covered the cost of additional land, the servant was the rational choice for tobacco growers.

But planters did have to control production costs. Did the choice of slaves over servants reduce labor costs, assuming access to land? Comparing costs turns out to be complicated, because slave labor included the cost of enforcement as well as maintenance. Assume that maintenance costs were approximately equal and compare enforcement requirements. There certainly was some cost to enforcement of servant contracts. Indentured servitude was no joke in the seventeenth-century Chesapeake and servants did run away from lousy treatment and sometimes attempted to take advantage of the death of masters or overseers. Morgan cites the case of a man, Thomas Loving, who married a rich widow. The widow’s deceased husband had not actually owned her estate, but held it in trust. Loving thus had no legal basis for his claim to manage it. When the London owner demanded Loving’s removal and the return of his property, the Governor of Virginia basically told him to come and get it. The Governor refused to move against Loving on the grounds that if the servants of the estate were left without a master the estate would be neglected and would quickly deteriorate.335

Arguments that emphasize the advantages of African slave ownership versus the holding of a servant’s contract tend both to overstate those advantages in a frontier setting and to underemphasize the punishments for servants. This practice tends to inflate the choices of slave-owners. For example, Morgan and others have argued that slave-owners could discipline their slaves more harshly and were not required to allow them as much rest time, either by law or custom. Morgan was describing actual conditions in the

Virginia colony. But he also noted that servants in the Chesapeake were treated far more harshly than servants in England. Increased brutality was already in effect. Logically, if increased brutality resulted in increased productivity, the work camps of the former Soviet Union known as the Gulag would have been best known for their astounding productivity. This was not the case. Unfortunately, there was already an increased necessity for discipline in the case of slaves. As we have seen, indentured servants had some incentive to work and to respond to discipline. The end of their indenture did not just mean they no longer had to stay with a boss they did not like. It meant that they could look forward to improved status and increased opportunities, perhaps the opportunity to acquire their own land and servants or to marry. Slaves required more discipline both because slaves were not familiar with the owner’s language and culture and because they had no motive to learn more than the most basic elements. As soon as they did learn the language, they discovered that they had nothing to look forward to but slavery for themselves and their children. According to Eric Williams, the real problem for slave-holding planters was that slaves notoriously under-produced compared to workers with something to look forward to – such as the end of their contract.

It seems intuitively obvious that enforcing slavery would be both more demanding and more expensive than enforcing servitude, although also that concrete detail would be difficult to come by. In 2001, Behrendt, Eltis, and Richardson attempted to calculate the “cost of coercion.” They published their results in an article that studied the cost of controlling slaves in the Atlantic transit, based on early eighteenth-century French records of the frequency of rebellion on slaving voyages. Available data included the size of the vessel and the composition of the transport: young, old, male, female, etc. The conclusions regarding cost are probably not directly applicable to seventeenth century English transport. Even percent of total cost is not directly applicable, because we cannot be sure of differences in crew levels, crew compensation or the costs of fitting the ships. However, some general observations would seem to apply and to be useful. Men were more likely to rebel than women, although women without children would participate in a rebellion by handing weapons to the men or attempting to trick the crew.

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336 Morgan, 126 – 127.
337 Williams,
Counter-intuitively, large ships experienced more slave rebellions than small ones. The researchers theorized that large ships sometimes took weeks longer to load, travelling up and down the coast to get the best cargo they could. This meant that the crew was less likely to maintain a high level of alertness and the slaves had more time to find and exploit opportunities for rebellion.338

The above suggests the possibility that, over time, a slave workforce would learn its masters’ weaknesses and engage in small or large rebellions. If more time and a predominately male workforce meant increased incidence of rebellion, then there were some very real costs of enforcement. Whatever seventeenth century English costs of coercion for transport were, they were incorporated into the cost of shipping and included in the initial slave purchase price. There was not a separate invoice for chains. Initially, slaves were more expensive than servants. However, planters who could afford slaves when the initial price seemed right rapidly discovered these other costs. While long term enforcement costs would be difficult if not impossible to directly quantify, they strongly suggest an additional and very sound reason for the slow switch to slavery as long as servants were available and could do the work. From the standpoint of enforcement, slavery was more expensive than indentured servitude.

Children are often counted as a financial advantage to the slaveholder, but slave children were a problematic asset in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries for the same reason that all children were a problem. Even assuming that they survived childhood and grew to be full-fledged members of the labor force, the process took many years. During that time, their parent or parents spent some time caring for them; somebody had to set aside food for them if not actually feed them; and they themselves could make only an attenuated contribution to plantation productivity. When the slave grew old, the process worked in reverse. They were able to work less and they required more care. Brutality and indifference could certainly mitigate these costs, but those came with a cost of their own. Other slaves watching the process would in turn require more discipline in order to maintain productivity levels. It was potentially a bad spiral, one that might end in an increased risk of slave revolt. Clearly, less productive members of a

slave family may increase the productivity of slave workers by giving them an incentive to avoid direct confrontations with masters. Equally clearly, there are additional costs associated with maintaining that incentive. Slavery was no magic bullet. If planters were truly making rational choices, then increased productivity could not have been the motivation.

The choice between slaves and servants was clearly not either/or. There were Africans in the Chesapeake, although we cannot be certain how many there were and whether or not they were slaves. The status of the 1619 arrivals remains far from clear. Even if they survived, there were no institutions in place to preserve or legalize chattel slavery, so presumably they were treated as servants. The ship does not appear in the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database, nor does the database record any other slave shipments to Virginia before the 1660s. But African slaves got to the colony somehow. Menard noted that twenty-three Africans appeared in a 1625 census. It is possible that they represented the survivors of the 1619 ship or their descendants, and equally possible that at least some were later arrivals. In Migrants, Servants, and Slaves, Menard also recorded ratios of servants to slaves found in Maryland probate inventories beginning in 1645. The results appear in Table I. Although servants clearly outnumber slaves before 1685, the ratios appear very modest. Most are less than two to one. 1645 saw an Indian uprising affect at least part of the colony, but otherwise does not appear to be any kind of statistical outlier. It looks like business as usual. It suggests that the high immigration of the 1630s had already receded; that there were people of African descent living and working in the colony; and that most were no longer considered just another type of servant. Problems of slaves and servants working together had already arisen, and there was some law distinguishing African slaves from other workers. For example, workers were taxable in seventeenth century Virginia and Black women were taxable, but English women were not.

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Menard assumed that any forces acting on the London tobacco market, such as increased taxes and increased demand would be reflected in the tobacco price and only thereby become a factor in planter decisions. Unfortunately, there was also a serious time lag. Growers could only plan cultivation for the following year based on price data from the previous year plus the availability of servants in the current year. Only those planters who had direct connections to merchant shipping could entertain any kind of market analysis or prediction; and neither of those fields were well developed in the seventeenth century on either side of the Atlantic. We can recognize planter necessity to make rational choices based on seriously incomplete information, but the continued downward pressure on tobacco prices does not correlate directly with planter choices concerning the labor force. It could only have functioned as a motivational factor, rather than a discrete element in a calculation. However, the close connections, frequently family-based, between large planters and merchant shipping meant that benefits from increased shipping profits could help to offset product losses. Slavery represented a rational choice for large planters, but not because of anything happening in the Chesapeake, but because of what was happening in Atlantic shipping.

Webb’s thesis arises from his attempt to directly integrate the politics of the metropole into colonial decisions and thus show why the switch to slavery in the Chesapeake happened when it did instead of earlier or later. The thesis has the clear advantage of timing. Slavery did not become the norm in the Chesapeake workforce until after Bacon’s Rebellion seriously disrupted colonial life and relationships, and forced a reconsideration of its colony on the part of the Crown. That reconsideration ultimately involved a loss of autonomy for the House of Burgesses and closer ties between the Crown and the Royal Governor. The thesis is further supported by militarization in England. The King’s younger brother, James Duke of York, modernized coastal defenses, including a new fort in Gloucester complete with military governor. As we have seen, Gloucester is not on the coast and, as well as holding out against Royalist forces in 1643, was the center of illegal tobacco growing in England that the Crown was still anxious to suppress. In this context, the Duke of York’s defense of coastal defenses appears somewhat disingenuous and Webb’s ideas concerning the power-hungry Crown would appear to have substantial support.
Webb’s thesis has some emotional appeal for American historians. It romanticizes Bacon’s Rebellion and puts the greedy bad guys, the English, on the other side of the Atlantic. Thomas Jefferson attempted to employ it in his first draft of the Declaration of Independence. It has one major flaw. Slavery has to be enforced and enforcement cannot be enforced on the enforcers. The enforcers, in this case the slave owners and overseers, have to be volunteers in at least the sense that indentured servants were volunteer immigrants. Webb’s thesis focused too much on Stuart agency and far too much on Stuart plots and plans. On the other hand, Menard’s rational-choice thesis failed to connect critical, concrete detail about what choices were available and how much they really cost with larger scale historical movements. Not all the factors emerged clearly, even from Menard’s sophisticated analysis. Planters did acquire at least some slaves. Morgan speculated that they were brought from Barbados, which implies that these planters had good merchant connections.341 Certainly planters could not afford to keep slaves as pets. They could only have been interested in acquiring slaves if there was some sense in which doing so met their labor force requirements. But because of the hidden human and financial costs of enforcement, cost and availability of servants do not seem to be a sufficient consideration by themselves.

Indentured servitude has been called a kind of term slavery, but traditionally and conceptually, it was more like an apprenticeship. In theory, it was a contractual relationship to which both parties agreed. The point was debated at length when the issue of voting rights arose in England in the 1640s. Were servants free and what did their contract mean? As far as the Commonwealth was concerned, the issue was settled by extending suffrage only to real property holders on the grounds that property holders could be trusted to vote in their own interest, but servants could not be trusted to vote against their masters or landlords.342 Of course, there was never any question of serfs having the franchise. The master – servant relationship is sometimes characterized as looking backward to serfdom. On an emotional level, it may well have been, but legally it was not. The serf had an independent relationship to the land that was legally and

341 Morgan, 305 – 306.
practically protected, albeit typically an unenviable one. The servant represented an evolution away from this protected relationship in large scale reassignments of productive resources, such as the enclosure movement, that created a class of landless laborers.

Colonial application forced the issue of legal status because contracts were frequently signed on the dock in England with the ship master, who then sold them to planters on reaching Virginia. Technically, this was not the same as selling the person, it was selling the debt for the passage, but the extra remove was all too likely to matter. Planters selected men or women off the ship just as they might have selected merchandize, then bought their contracts. As the century unrolled and the seasoning death rate dropped, more and more servants began to survive their indenture. The problem was that, as the seasoning death rate dropped, more servants survived their indenture than survived it with the means to acquire their own land. Thus, the practice that had initially proved essential to colonial growth ultimately created its own class of landless laborers similar to the one from which an earlier generation of colonists had been drawn.

Although this was clearly not the colony in the idealized picture presented earlier, it still did not look like a Caribbean slave colony. Most of the workforce were free men or servants. Most landowners still worked alongside their help in seventeenth century Virginia, at least during key points in the agricultural cycle. Those who hired overseers worked with the overseer. There were no men in white shirts standing around slapping their boots with a whip. However, the key difference between Virginia and a Caribbean slave colony is not the behavior of the landowner in between emergencies, but the fact that there were no slave markets in Virginia.

This is not just a function of the lack of cities or even large towns. Chesapeake society lacked the essential feature of all markets: a venue where traders can arrive at an exchange that both consider reasonable and can then enter into contracts with each other. The contracts must also be legal and enforceable in case either party defaults. It also means that the buyer must be assured that his purchase will have a readily calculated resale value and that this is also reflected in the price. The problems are particularly acute when the object for sale is another human being with no stake in the successful
outcome of the transaction. The slave market in Barbados was highly informal, at least in between slave ships, but plenty of slaves were bought and sold there. Everyone in Barbados who wanted to knew when the slave ships came in and planters could buy and sell slaves to each other in reasonable confidence of arriving at a reasonable exchange. None of the data collections we have so far encountered suggest that this was a feature of life in the Chesapeake before the 1680s. Slaves and servants had the same valuation for tax purposes: both were tithable.343 Beyond that, a regular price index does not seem to have been the norm.

The key to that difference is the regular arrival of slave ships in Barbados, and the regular setting of slave prices by Atlantic merchants. Between 1672 and 1698, the Royal African Company was a monopoly with exclusive rights to supply slaves to the Caribbean colonies and bargain with English sugar planters. The prices they agreed on became the market prices for slaves. Any sales that occurred when the Royal African did not make port in time, or when planters were unsatisfied with the cargo, were still based on those market prices. Prices were only partly determine by expected use value, but were also determined by expected replacement costs.344 According to the Database, there were few slave landings in the Chesapeake before 1676. Morgan suggested that Chesapeake slaves were smuggled and went on to theorize that only rich planters could afford them. As we have seen in the case of tobacco smuggling into England in the early part of the century, a few smuggled goods do not a market make.

Were there large-scale changes that affected Atlantic markets? The weather was a key influence on all Atlantic markets and the weather was particularly problematic during the last part of the seventeenth century. Weather historians date the period of global cooling known as the Little Ice Age from about 1300 to the middle of the nineteenth century. Changes are neither uniform nor linear throughout the Northern Hemisphere, but by the seventeenth century we have a sufficient written record over a wide enough area to paint an often frightening picture. The North Atlantic Oscillation (NAO) controls large scale weather patterns and, as the name implies, it is subject to seasonal variation and long-term reversal. A positive NAO refers to conditions of a persistent low pressure

344 Morgan, 300 – 302.
over Iceland relative to a high-pressure zone between Bermuda and the Azores. This results in ocean currents that warm Europe and extend the growing season. Throughout the Little Ice Age, the NAO was negative, with persistent highs over Iceland producing pronounced cooling and severe storms in Europe and the North Atlantic. According to Fagan, the storms that defeated the Armada in 1588 were caused by a negative NAO. They were followed in the 1590s by severe storms off the east coast of the British Isles and cold rainy summers that sharply reduced crop yields throughout the decade and disrupted trade across Northern Europe. The seventeenth century proved no better for the food supply, with grain yields remaining low and fishing problematic due to frequent and severe storms.345 We have already noted poor wheat crops across England in the early part of the century, when there were few, if any, colonial options. In addition, as the Little Ice Age advanced, the cod moved south in search of warmer water, repeatedly throwing the English and the Dutch into conflict over fishing grounds and over resources in the colonies of New England and New Amsterdam/New York that serviced the fishing fleets and North Atlantic traders.346

From 1645 to 1680 is the period now known as the Maunder Minimum: a time of dramatically reduced sunspot activity. Literally, less energy from the Sun reached the Earth during this period, resulting in cooling in the interior of the continental landmasses and adding to the climatic effects of the shifts in ocean temperatures and currents from the shift in the NAO.347 In spite of the overall reduced energy, the relatively warm subtropical regions of North America and the tropical regions of the West Indies maintained productive capacity.348 This gave their products a clear advantage in European markets. While the Maunder Minimum itself is not considered to have begun until after the establishment of the Virginia colony, and even after the introduction of slaves into Barbados, climate cooling coincides in the metropole with a dramatically increased

348 Fagan, 96-97.
demand for tropical products, particularly stimulants, which could now be supplied by English colonies. The English merchant community was happy to oblige. The result was a large and steadily growing stream of tobacco, sugar, and other stimulants such as coffee and chocolate from South to North. Data for the Virginia tobacco imports in the London Port Books reappears in 1669, although it remains sketchy. It clearly shows dramatic increases in tobacco volume. However, increased demand did not necessarily result in increased profits to growers. Only improved productivity kept Atlantic colonies competitive in a world market characterized by flat or falling prices, and improving productivity was difficult in tobacco colonies.349

Due to the demands tobacco made on the soil, increased productivity in the Virginia colony depended on access to both land and labor. The increased demand for colonial goods, including tobacco, forced two changes in the political economy: it increased the demand for new tobacco land, but it also changed the demand for labor. Tobacco cultivation does not benefit large labor gangs, but clearing fifty acres of old growth forest in a short period of time does benefit. There is one scenario that suggests possible Tidewater planter motivation for the switch from servant to slave labor. Even with only very incomplete records for Virginia, at least other than the Eastern Shore, we know that Map I gives a somewhat misleading picture of colonial expansion. Planters who could afford to import servants patented desirable tobacco land, not necessarily contiguous with their existing holdings. Often, particularly in the early days of the colony, they patented land for future clearing. While the general tendency was to spread upstream and to the west, this was not a seamless process. And while new arrivals or former servants tended to patent land on the frontier and thus supply a buffer zone between older planters and the Native Americans, this was not a process without conflict. Thus, a planter who had patented land for a future year’s clearing might easily find himself in need of labor that did not bring any more land with it. Planters with a large number of non-contiguous holdings needed to patent land to connect those holdings, but they also needed to clear it and to bring it under production as rapidly as possible. Otherwise, slave or free, they risked losing control of their labor force. That is, both in

the process of clearing more difficult holdings and in the process of consolidating holdings, a planter might require more labor than the servants who entitled him to those holdings could quickly or easily supply.

Further questions arise on the subject of availability when comparing the Table of Servants and the table of slave disembarkations from the *Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database*. The servants are from only one city, Bristol. Presumably, there were at least some immigrants from cities such as Plymouth, already with a long tradition of supplying the Chesapeake, and presumably a few from London. Thus, the Table can only be a partial list of servants shipping from England. Even so, servant emigres outnumber slave arrivals until after 1676. Of course, we do not know where the servants actually went, but shipping from Bristol and the south coast ports could carry servants one way across the Atlantic and tobacco back the other, afterwards picking up luxury or manufactured goods in London for the coastal trade. Neither source includes price data, but clearly servants continued to be readily available until very late in the century. Even without considering the costs of switching to and maintaining a slave society, price did not necessarily favor slave purchase as long as the cost of a servant remained the cost of transporting a servant and the purchase included fifty acres.

However, the headright system did hold one big disadvantage to established planters: servants who survived their indenture and found the means to acquire land became competition. Eric Williams asserted that precisely what made the servant a more productive worker, his hope for the future, made him a less desirable choice for planter purchase, at least on the islands of the Caribbean with limited land.350 As we have seen, land was far less limited in the Chesapeake. Even though the lack of roads put a limitation on distance from water transport, there was enough uncleared land that Jefferson could make his famous comment a century that it was cheaper to clear new land – and Jefferson was talking about slave labor. If we assume that planters made the choice of slaves in order to avoid competition, we are back with the thesis Menard attempted to refute: that planters’ overproduction dropped the price of tobacco. It does not matter to the thesis if there is one big planter or lots of little planters. The data support Menard,

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350 Williams, pp. 7 – 19.
even without a consideration of forces acting in London to distort the market and force down prices paid to growers.

Although Gemery found that emigration peaked about 1660, his data also found substantial emigration in the following decade.\textsuperscript{351} Apparently, servant immigration peaked in the first two years of the decade, before beginning to decline. However, the mass migration that characterized the earlier decades was clearly over. After 1660, England faced a population decline. Menard was convinced that rising wages in England after 1660 – in fact, across Europe – reduced the supply of indentured servants and increased their price. Wages in England did rise during the second half of the century, although the rise was slow and uneven according to the Global Price and Income History Group.\textsuperscript{352} The ratios of servants to slaves that Menard discovered in probate inventories shows a sharp peak about five years later, long enough for the immigration in the first half of the decade to take effect, and indirect evidence of improved survival rates. Overall however, it is difficult to correlate with changes in the Chesapeake labor market. Menard insisted that the supply of slaves was “undependable” in this interval, and not large enough to meet the planters’ expanding needs.\textsuperscript{353} While slave deliveries to the Caribbean outnumbered slave deliveries to Virginia by at least an order of magnitude throughout this period, the ships carrying in the Caribbean were of several assorted nationalities. Ships disembarking slaves in Virginia had to be English. The “undependability” that Menard refers to may problems with the English slavers, and particularly the fledgling Royal African Company, encountered acquiring slaves on the African coast. It was probably also true that what they did acquire went first to their Caribbean buyers. Only rejects were transported to Virginia. Slaves too sick to survive their seasoning would be considered undependable, as would the traders who brought them.

In order to show that the decrease in servant immigration was not a response to a decrease in planter demand, Menard showed that servant prices did not fall in the relevant period. Servant prices increased in 1650, then declined again until 1660 when they

\textsuperscript{352} GPIH England, 1209 to 2014, Clark
\textsuperscript{353} Menard, Migrants, Servants, and Slaves, 44-60.
started back up. Precisely during the period when the supply of slaves began to grow (after 1675-76), the price of servants reached new peaks and never returned to pre-Restoration levels. Presumably these prices were at least in part a response to rising wages in Europe. It seems reasonable to conclude that there were servants available, but the increased demand for tobacco coupled with increased servant prices meant that planters wanted more than they could afford. Among other things, this may have meant that they were forced to curtail expansion in a time of rising demand for their product. Menard asserted that even small variations in availability and price of servants would have adversely affected planters’ profit margins and that this, plus pressure from merchants, would have had a much more immediate effect than the large-scale changes that we see in the *Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database* would suggest. It is certainly plausible, especially given the close relationship between large planters and merchant shippers discussed in Chapter 3. Large planters would have had very good information about price changes and market conditions, much better than small planters getting their start hauling stumps in the Piedmont.

Were there large-scale changes that affected Atlantic markets? The weather was a key influence on all Atlantic markets and the weather was particularly problematic during the last part of the seventeenth century. Weather historians date the period of global cooling known as the Little Ice Age from about 1300 to the middle of the nineteenth century. Changes are neither uniform nor linear throughout the Northern Hemisphere, but by the seventeenth century we have a sufficient written record over a wide enough area to paint an often frightening picture. The North Atlantic Oscillation (NAO) controls large scale weather patterns and, as the name implies, it is subject to seasonal variation and long-term reversal. A positive NAO refers to conditions of a persistent low pressure over Iceland relative to a high-pressure zone between Bermuda and the Azores. This results in ocean currents that warm Europe and extend the growing season. Throughout the Little Ice Age, the NAO was negative, with persistent highs over Iceland producing pronounced cooling and severe storms in Europe and the North Atlantic. According to Fagan, the storms that defeated the Armada in 1588 were caused by a negative NAO.

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They were followed in the 1590s by severe storms off the east coast of the British Isles and cold rainy summers that sharply reduced crop yields throughout the decade and disrupted trade across Northern Europe. The seventeenth century proved no better for the food supply, with grain yields remaining low and fishing problematic due to frequent and severe storms.\footnote{Brian Fagan, *The Little Ice Age: How Climate Made History 1300 – 1850*, (New York: Basic Books, 2002), 44 – 73.}

We have already noted poor wheat crops across England in the early part of the century, when there were few, if any, colonial options. In addition, as the Little Ice Age advanced, the cod moved south in search of warmer water, repeatedly throwing the English and the Dutch into conflict over fishing grounds and over resources in the colonies of New England and New Amsterdam/New York that serviced the fishing fleets and North Atlantic traders.\footnote{Jeffrey W. Bolster, “Putting the Ocean in Atlantic History: Maritime Communities and Marine Ecology in the Northwest Atlantic, 1500 – 1800,” *The American Historical Review* 113.1 (Feb., 2008), 20-24.}

From 1645 to 1680 is the period now known as the Maunder Minimum: a time of dramatically reduced sunspot activity. Literally, less energy from the Sun reached the Earth during this period, resulting in cooling in the interior of the continental landmasses and adding to the climatic effects of the shifts in ocean temperatures and currents from the shift in the NAO.\footnote{Drew T. Shindell, Gavin A. Schmidt, Michael E. Mand, David Rind, and Anne Waple, “Solar Forcing of Regional Climate Change During the Maunder Minimum,” *Science* 294.5549 (Dec. 7, 2001), 2149 – 2152.} In spite of the overall reduced energy, the relatively warm subtropical regions of North America and the tropical regions of the West Indies maintained productive capacity.\footnote{Fagan, 96-97.} This gave their products a clear advantage in European markets. While the Maunder Minimum itself is not considered to have begun until after the establishment of the Virginia colony, and even after the introduction of slaves into Barbados, climate cooling coincides in the metropole with a dramatically increased demand for tropical products, particularly stimulants, which could now be supplied by English colonies. The English merchant community was happy to oblige. The result was a large and steadily growing stream of tobacco, sugar, and other stimulants such as coffee and chocolate from South to North. Data for the Virginia tobacco imports in the London Port Books reappears in 1669, although it remains sketchy. It clearly shows dramatic
increases in tobacco volume. However, increased demand did not necessarily result in increased profits to growers. Only improved productivity kept Atlantic colonies competitive in a world market characterized by flat or falling prices, and improving productivity was difficult in tobacco colonies.360

There is an additional factor to consider: money changed hands only in England. English merchants used credit in Atlantic markets and neither the North American nor the Caribbean colonies saw very much cash. Bills of Exchange had been used for a long time by the large merchant houses in the medieval Mediterranean to avoid high-risk transport of bullion or specie. In that context, they have the effect of keeping the cash in the payer’s hometown, maybe even in the payer’s family, like a high-potency brand name. When the payee returns, he has Bills of Exchange useable in his hometown. Allied businesses at both ends prosper in their respective markets. In the early modern period, English merchants began using Bills of Exchange and other simple credit instruments in the trade of agricultural products and textiles across Northern European markets. Used as they were in England, when one party is an agricultural producer and the other is a merchant, they have the effect of keeping the food producers at the bottom of the food chain. All of the cash stayed in London or Liverpool; whatever city handled colonial products. In the case of Virginia, a factor collected the money for the tobacco on the dock and bought items on the planters ‘wish list’ at retail prices. As a result, there was almost no money in the colony itself. In fact, there was so little money that tobacco became the medium of exchange. All burgesses’ and governors’ salaries were paid in tobacco, as were all fines and fees. This situation must be assumed to have contributed to the lack of cities of any size in the colony, even into the eighteenth century. It must also be assumed to have left the colony extremely vulnerable to any upsets in commerce – for example, three Anglo-Dutch wars in half a century. Charles II’s suggestion that Berkeley encourage diversification in the colony seems more than a little disingenuous, both in light of the ongoing political enmity between the Crown and the highly diversified New England colonies, and particularly taking account of the forced land repurchases in the tobacco colony. The lack of specie and the falling price of tobacco led to inflation in the

colony’s money supply (tobacco) and forced every planter, like so many desperate counterfeitors, to produce more and more.

As a result of the subsequent inflation, Virginia spent far more on government than the New England colonies. In the absence of specie, tobacco was the means of exchange and determined the salaries: 6,000 to 20,000 lbs apiece for the Speaker and three clerks. Each county paid a per diem for their representative of 160 lbs a day. The increasing availability of tobacco and the steadily falling price undoubtedly contributed to the inflation, whereas in New England a similar scarcity of coin caused men to be stingier with their representatives.\textsuperscript{361} The poll taxes fell unevenly on Virginians. The representatives and members of the government did not pay poll taxes, they received stipends. Thus, the newest class of freeholders paid far more than the established planters in the Tidewater – and for less political access.

The Tidewater elite did have access, if not to cash, then to other lines of finance and credit. Berkeley’s much-discussed trade in hides and furs with Native Americans, his family holdings in England, and his connections with the Restoration aristocracy that made him one of the Lord Proprietors of the Carolinas, all set him, and a few others like him, apart from the burgeoning numbers of restless former servants in the Chesapeake who were completely dependent on tobacco. According to Morgan, no servant who arrived after 1640 ever became a burgess and it is after 1660 that we begin to hear the most complaint about servants and former servants as idle and vagabond.\textsuperscript{362}

Adding to all the Virginia colonists’ difficulties discussed above were increased taxes after 1660. Charles II had issued patents to new allies in the House of Lords that covered land already held and cleared by the older planters of the colonial elite. Because of the haphazard clearing of new land and the unpredictable rate of new servant acquisition in the early days of the tobacco colony, many of the plots were non-contiguous. Sorting the mess might just have been possible with a fussy and detail oriented king, which Charles II most assuredly was not. The Assembly agreed to collect taxes to re-purchase their own land from the Crown. The taxes were, of course,

\textsuperscript{361} Morgan, 208.
\textsuperscript{362} Morgan, 248.
distributed over all the colonists, and thus added proportionally more to the lower social classes’ tax burden.

When James Duke of York appointed Edmund Andros Governor of his new colony of New York, he was continuing a policy of establishing military government rule throughout the British colonies and where possible or deemed necessary, in the British Isles. Andros’ strategy in New York was the formation of the Covenant Chain. The Five Tribes of the Iroquois, in an attempt to gain access to fur-hunting grounds, united and did fealty to the King of England (or rather, his envoy, Edmund Andros) The Covenant Chain was brilliant in conception. It increased Iroquois economic access to the Atlantic fur trade. It placed a large and potentially powerful collection of Native American tribes squarely on the side of the English in any international fight that might arise. It produced a source of revenue for Andros, to which he was legally entitled, and which kept his interest aligned with the prosperity of the colony’s. Unfortunately, the increased tension between the French allied-Algonquin and the Iroquois destabilized the entire western frontier of English North America. In New England, this resulted in King Philip’s War.363 In the Chesapeake, it resulted in Bacon’s Rebellion.

The facts of Bacon’s Rebellion are not in dispute. Bacon arrived in Virginia a free man with money, friends, and a wife with family connections to the Governor’s wife.364 Bacon, having purchased land and settled near the falls of the James, quickly discovered how hard life was in the foothills. His overseer was killed and his neighbors lost livestock. He was quickly selected as a leader by those neighbors, one who was strong enough to represent their interests against Berkeley and his council. The revolt spread throughout the colony, including into the Tidewater. High taxes and falling tobacco prices, coupled with a fear of Indians motivated many planters to either join the Rebellion or more likely, to fail to assist Berkeley. Although Berkeley reported that the Rebellion was not against one person but the whole Assembly, Bacon – he was after all a lawyer – took the precaution of having the Virginia Assembly authorize his militia to fight the Indians in defiance of Berkeley’s order. But Berkeley had already requested

help from the Crown and – Bacon’s authorizations notwithstanding – Charles declared all of the militiamen rebels and sent a large force of both men and ships to bring his colony back into line and his tobacco revenue back on stream.

Bacon died of a fever before Charles’ instructions arrived, but his followers were ruthlessly suppressed. Servants who had joined the rebellion were returned to their masters and disciplined – not necessarily in that order.\footnote{Oberg, 12-18.} Crown inquiry into causes of the rebellion resulted in Berkeley being recalled and replaced by a military governor. The forts were rebuilt with the colonists’ tax money and the powers of the colonial Assembly were sharply reduced, making it basically an advisory body to the Royal Governor. Bacon’s Authorizations ultimately provided the excuse for the Crown to restrict the powers of the Virginia Assembly. Political control was squarely settled on the executive. However, in the aftermath of the Rebellion, the per diem for burgesses was reduced to 120 lbs., in response, the Crown said, to planter demands.

The aftermath of Bacon’s Rebellion appears to have had some effect on Atlantic markets. Beginning the following year, slave disembarkations in the Chesapeake increased to 1,513 across the five-year period, an average increase each year of more than the preceding five years purchase. The following year, tobacco shipped to London increased modestly. In 1678, with time for the new help to arrive and be seasoned, there is a dramatic increase from 19,735,000 pounds to 22,455,000 pounds. The spike is not sustained, but we can probably safely infer that weather interfered. The overall trend in volume continued upward while prices continued their depressing wobble. Overall, pounds shipped to London continue to increase, although slaves disembarked in the Chesapeake dropped off sharply for the next five-year period before surging again in the 1680s. The surge in slave imports does not necessarily prove Webb’s thesis. It may only show that the Stuarts wanted their tobacco colony back in production and shipped slaves because that is what they had to ship. However, there are some numbers that suggest long-term change in the structure of the Chesapeake labor force. Beginning in the immediate aftermath of Bacon’s Rebellion, the number of servants embarking from
Bristol decreased slowly but steadily, and Menard’s probate ratios of servants to slaves from probate inventories began a slow slide only a few years later.366

Before Bacon’s Rebellion, the Tidewater planters had to worry about political and economic pressure from the lower classes – from people who wanted to better their positions in the colony. After the Rebellion, they had to worry about pressure from a slave population with which they were in a perpetual state of war. The changed situation resulted in a colony wherein a relatively small collection of large producers had a disproportionate share in the economic success of the colony and thus insured political access for their caste. The trends toward inequality before Bacon’s Rebellion hardened into the chief characteristics of the colony not long afterward. Webb noted that in Jamaica, the Crown had attempted to keep a citizenry of yeoman farmers, and posited that was in order to prevent powerful planter blocs that might threaten its control.367 The intention to develop a strong yeomanry seems a little subtle for the later Stuarts, but it is possible that the planter slave-owning class that developed in Virginia after Bacon’s Rebellion was a second choice for the Crown. However, it did guarantee colonial stability and thus Charles’ revenue. For their part, the Tidewater planters do not seem to have expressed much interest in Popish Plots, but after Bacon’s Rebellion many felt oppressed by the Stuarts and smarted at their own loss of freedom. They embarked on a series of initially defensive economic and political alliances that subsequently resulted in their support for the Whig cause in England in 1688. After 1690, the Royal African Company lost its royal protection. In response to increased planter demand for slaves, colonial planter support in Parliament deregulated the slave trade.368

5.3 Gloucestershire and London

The Restoration apparently brought no immediate change to Gloucestershire’s defiance of tobacco law, although it did see a realignment of forces that may have been the beginning of the end. In the summer of 1660, the Merchant Venturers of Bristol

366 Table I.
instructed their MP to join with the merchants of London in petitioning for new laws against the growing of English tobacco.\textsuperscript{369} In 1662, the instructions were refined to include applying the current tax on Virginia tobacco toward suppressing English growing.\textsuperscript{370} The joint effort was subsequently successful in reaffirming the illegality of Gloucestershire tobacco, but how successful it was in getting rid of the stuff is brought into question by a memorandum of 13 February, 1664. Apparently, some Merchant Venturers had together contributed £300 to the efforts of the Gloucestershire Sheriff and Under Sheriff to stamp out Gloucestershire tobacco. The Memorandum was enquiring as to the fate of that investment, given that there seemed to be no shortage of Gloucestershire tobacco.\textsuperscript{371}

The political alignment between London and a major Outport would have been unusual earlier in the century, even though rivalry between Bristol and Gloucester was not unusual. It is an indicator that the source of merchant wealth had shifted to supplying Atlantic colonies and now depended on the slave trade. Earlier, Bristol merchant prosperity had depended on supplying English manufactures and agricultural products to Spain. The new dominance of Atlantic trade and the increasing importance of the Chesapeake colonies to the success of that trade meant that the Merchant Venturers needed allies in London in order to maximize their own profits.

In London, the flood of colonial products to the metropole: coffee, chocolate, sugar, and the lucrative Royal monopoly tobacco, changed English business and political culture forever. The coffeehouse created a public space wherein political issues could be discussed independent of religious affiliation or even social background.\textsuperscript{372} According to Pincus, coffee houses grew in popularity and spread both in London and in the smaller cities throughout the second half of the seventeenth century. As prices of imported coffee, tea, sugar, and tobacco dropped, it became a cheaper way to spend an afternoon or evening with friends than a pub serving good English beer. It is difficult to overstate the


\textsuperscript{370} “Petition Against English Tobacco 26 February 1662,” Hall Book I, 337.

\textsuperscript{371} “English Tobacco 13 October, 1664,” Hall Book I, 337.

\textsuperscript{372} Steve Pincus, \textit{1688: The First Modern Revolution} (New Haven: Yale University, 2009), 80 – 82.
role of the coffee house in English politics during this period. It changed the way Englishmen did business and politics for ever. In addition to public and reasonably comfortable – albeit slightly smoky – meeting spaces, the coffeehouses supplied an unbeatable grapevine. International news was widely available in pamphlets and continental news repeatedly sparked discussion of England’s new role in Europe, now that Spain no longer posed a threat.373 Both national and international affairs supplied topics for gossip and the widespread – and high speed – acceptance of the Popish Plot makes sense in this context. Pincus argued that the relative “characters” of the French and the Dutch monarchies, not just their religious affiliations or economic successes, formed an important ingredient in the discussion and ultimately resulted in a switch in popular sentiment from anti-Dutch to anti-French.374

This switch ran counter to Stuart policy in the Atlantic. The Treaty of Dover aligned the English Crown with the French against the Dutch, in preparation for the Third Anglo-Dutch War. The secret version of 1670 contained a clause promising Charles’ conversion to Catholicism in exchange for Louis’ backing. The official version of 1672 contained no such clause and Louis’ support cooled noticeably. With or without French assistance, the Third Anglo-Dutch War was expensive. At stake was lucrative trade in the East Indies; fishing, trade and transport with American colonies and in the North Atlantic; and control of New Netherlands and Surinam. Furthermore, it was initially neither a clear victory for the British nor a vindication of Stuart naval policies. In October of 1673, with victory uncertain and negotiations with the Dutch stalled, Charles was forced to return to Parliament to ask for more ship money. The Lord Chancellor’s speech contains rousing references to England’s need (and in that company, right) to control of the sea.375 At the end of the War, the English did wring important concessions from the Dutch, but the monetary reparations barely covered the loss of support from the French. The war ended with a large debt of £1,000,000; according to Webb, almost a

373 Pincus, 1688, 384 – 385.
375 Journal of the House of Lords, Volume 12, 27 October, 1673.
third of the Crown’s revenue. This, coupled with the growing religious tension and the generally uncooperative weather, put the Stuarts in the market for good news.

It was hard to come by in London coffee houses and understandably the Stuart Court found the coffeehouse culture objectionable, market creation notwithstanding. In December of 1675, Charles’ Privy Council proposed to close the coffeehouses on the 10th of the following January on the grounds that they encouraged “The Defamation of His Majesties Government.” The Privy Council was promptly subjected to just the sort of public abuse that had motivated their objections in the first place. They were compared unfavorably to the King’s favorite spaniels and temporarily forced to back off. The Crown was subsequently able to force coffeehouses to be licensed and bonded, contingent on the good behavior of their patrons. The new licensure required that they not allow libel to be spread on their premises.

The smoke-filled rooms of Restoration London spawned a new breed of Englishman. Men like George Lloyd were shapers of the modern world. They did not ship to Virginia, they invested in shipping, then invented marine insurance to protect their investment. They developed capital markets and invested in the East India Company and the Royal African. Above all, this culture was intensely political. Both individual careers and important political movements bloomed in this new venue. Clearly, Virginia tobacco was at least instrumental in the creation of a viable political opposition to the Stuarts, but politics, like addiction and slavery is not contagious. How did the political economy in the metropole align with the political economy and social forces in the Chesapeake? The short answer is that they did not align well at all. Ashcraft’s *Revolutionary Politics and Locke’s Two Treatises of Government*, an encyclopedic discussion of Restoration politics and the work of John Locke, does not even index the word slavery. For example, of the eight Lord Proprietors of the new tobacco colony authorized by *The Charter of Carolina June 30 1665*, all but Shaftesbury were loyal to the Crown, despite disparate backgrounds and religious disagreements. As far as the

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378 Pincus, *1688*, 78 – 79.
political and financial players in the metropole are concerned, including investors in Atlantic markets, we can look neither at their positions in society nor at their political position to see how they regarded this issue.

However, there is one very clear statement about colonial slavery in The Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina: March 1, 1669, produced for the Lord Proprietors of the troubled Carolina colony by their talented secretary, John Locke. Having previously established freedom of religion, the Fundamental Constitutions gets down to the real-world business of colonial slavery. Paragraph One hundred and ten states: “Every freeman of Carolina shall have absolute power and authority over his negro slaves, of what opinion or religion soever.”\(^{380}\) The paragraph probably referred to practices of Mediterranean slavery in both Christian and Muslim countries that sometimes granted converts to the master’s religion their freedom, particularly in the case of Christian converts to Islam in Muslim countries and vice versa in Christian countries. This practice was by no means universal and pagan claims in particular were often ignored, probably because there was no particular political or military advantage to honoring them or penalty for ignoring them. In paragraph One hundred and ten, Locke is looking backward to medieval tradition and making sure that the thoroughly modern colonial proprietors will not be troubled by the religious alliances of a bygone era. He was making sure that their title to valuable property will not have to meet a religious challenge. Slaves are property – even if they turn out to have souls.

Locke was not being hypocritical, at least he would not have agreed with that assessment. The Fundamental Constitutions is entirely consistent with ideas concerning slavery and freedom expressed in The Second Treatise on Government. The only ontological or inalienable freedom that Locke recognized was freedom of conscience. Religion can only be voluntary and that must be respected. Everything else depends on one’s ability to defend oneself. No one can volunteer for slavery; the slave must have been defeated. If the victor has the real power of life and death over another, then the victor is entitled to get some work out of the victim before dispatching him. The relationship is risky. It is the only example of Hobbes’ war of all against all that Locke

\(^{380}\) John Locke, Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina: March 1, 1669. Available at http://avalon.law.yale.edu/17th_century/nc05.asp.
recognized; and in that limitation, we must recognize considerable progress toward a real humanism.\textsuperscript{381}

However, it is unlikely that the men for whom Locke wrote contemplated all the possible contradictions. They were deeply invested in colonial profits and colonial supply, including the slave trade, and in the flood of cheap products from Atlantic colonies that were enriching England. Inside England, free trade, particularly with regard to money and credit markets, made sense to them. In regards to colonial trade they were mercantilists. They were opposed to the Royal African because its protected status meant that they could not legally supply slaves to the colonies, and thus they were deprived of profitable cargo running from east to west. By the last decades of the seventeenth century, they identified their success with the successful deployment of a slave labor force in the colonies. The end of the Stuart monarchy signaled the end of the slave trade monopoly, but the slave trade grew. According to Pettigrew, The Royal African ended in three stages. It lost its Royal Governor when James II left London. In 1698, Parliament officially enabled English slave trading, but specified that traders owed a ten percent duty on all imports and exports. Since they could not import slaves to England, this implied a ten per cent duty on the colonial products they brought back, not exactly a boon to planters. After 1712, the slave trade was open to any English shipper, with no special duties to cover the goods delivered to the colonies.\textsuperscript{382} The increase in slave deliveries after 1688 is clear from both Table III and Table IV. The new Liberalism found slavery wholly acceptable.

5.4 Conclusions

Large scale climate change, specifically the persistent negative phase of the North Atlantic Oscillation coupled with continental cooling during the Maunder Minimum, sent northern Europeans scrambling in increasing competition for resources. As cold weather shifted fishing grounds southward, the Dutch and the English came into repeated conflict. In 1674, the English took final control of New York and Edmund Andros was appointed


\textsuperscript{382} Pettigrew, 5 – 8.
Royal Governor. He implemented a set of treaties with the Iroquois called the Covenant Chain that had profound and probably unintended effects in all the British North American colonies. In the Virginia colony, increased pressure on the frontier resulted in an uprising of the poorer white settlers who had been forced to the west in search of new tobacco land. When the former indentured servants of the Piedmont could not get assistance from Royal Governor Berkeley, they organized their own militia, attacked nearby Indian settlements, then held the Assembly at gunpoint until they received written authorization for what, in effect, they had already done. To protect its considerable financial interest in the colony as well as its political interest in maintaining control of its colonies, the Crown suppressed the Rebellion, replaced Berkeley with a military governor, and sharply reduced the powers of the Assembly. The aftermath of the Rebellion coincided with dramatically increased usage of African slaves in the Chesapeake. Because Andros was James Stuart’s appointee, because of the Stuart connection with the Royal African Company, and because of the Stuart project of militarization, Webb theorized that the switch to reliance on slavery would not have taken place without Stuart provocation, if not outright manipulation.

Webb’s thesis, that the switch to African perpetual chattel slavery in the Chesapeake had to be imposed by the Crown disregards forces inside the colony that were not opposed to slavery. Since these forces included the present and several future governors of the colony, they were clearly in a position to make their wishes known. The oppressed that Webb identified in 1676 were the planters of the Piedmont, most of whom were relatively small growers without special family or other connections to merchant shipping and some of whom were former servants. However, their leader, Nathaniel Bacon, was not a former servant. Bacon had family connections to Tidewater planters and to the Governor. He paid cash for his land and he also owned a few slaves. The central issue for Bacon and his followers was state protection for expansion into Indian lands. They were frustrated by Governor Berkeley’s policy of maintaining a lucrative trade in hides with certain tribes, and ultimately fell victims to Edmond Andros’ Covenant Chain. Webb is correct that the planters of the Piedmont were trying to maintain their tobacco farms and their independence in the face of serious political and economic challenges, and he is certainly correct that Crown colonial policy put them at
increased risk. He is also right about the timing of events when considered in the context of developing Atlantic markets. But all of the economic problems and contradictions posited by Menard were also embedded in the small planters’ position. Piedmont planters were angry about the lack of political access and the economic crunch of falling tobacco prices, but ultimately, they were less concerned with a larger share of colonial government than they were with a larger share of Indian land.

Menard’s thesis, that planters decided to switch from servants to slaves in pursuit of increased productivity made some assumptions about the relative costs and advantages of slavery. These are not born out by closer examination. The costs of enforcement contributed to the initial cost of the slave, but they also continue throughout the master-slave relationship. Increased discipline of slaves was not an advantage, it was a necessity. Slaves were notoriously less productive than free workers, and overall were arguably less productive than servants. Because buying a servant’s contract gave the planter the right to patent fifty acres of new land, servants were more productive for the colony. The problem with the headright system was that expanding westward risked confrontation with Native Americans. When Andros created the Covenant Chain, it disrupted Indian-settler relations along the entire western frontier of all the colonies and resulted in Bacon’s Rebellion.

To account for the dramatic increase in slave imports in the second half of the century, and particularly the increase to the Chesapeake after 1676, it is necessary to look at the role the slave trade played in Atlantic markets. Without the African trade, bilateral colonial trade would have been far less profitable. Even if England had developed a much better manufacturing sector in the seventeenth century, there simply was not a big enough market in the colonies. Merchant shipping was hugely invested in the slave trade, and benefitted far more than planters, even Barbadian planters. Tobacco planters were confronted with choices determined partly by wars, partly by weather, and partly by the merchants’ necessity to maintain their own profit margins. Merchant suppliers determined planter choices in regards to the labor force, not the other way around. The switch to African perpetual chattel slavery was neither a project goal nor a necessary outcome on either side of the Atlantic. However, it represented an acceptable lesser evil for powerful economic and political interests in both London and the Chesapeake.
Initially, tobacco cultivation saved the Virginia colony and at least briefly, the Virginia Company. The Crown protected Virginia tobacco with a tax exemption until 1619. This policy gave Virginia tobacco a market niche. The Company instituted the headright system that allowed small growers and indentured servants to thrive. Large-scale emigration from England to the colonies after 1630 helped the Chesapeake grow rapidly, even though the Virginia Company had collapsed. Planters who could do so formed connections with merchant shipping in order to offset the costs of transporting their product, while merchants invested in Chesapeake plantations. This process produced larger plantations, but new arrivals could still succeed. The Dutch provided shipping alternatives, and during the Civil War, Dutch shipping kept the colony in business. Under Cromwell, all shipping had to be English and the Dutch were largely driven out. After the Restoration, merchant shipping sought the more profitable triangle trade and the supply of servants began to shrink. With the headright system, planters could acquire new land with each new servant and there was no direct economic incentive to acquire slaves. However, political and economic instability in the colony, coupled with the Stuart project of militarization, resulted in Bacon’s Rebellion. In the aftermath, large numbers of slaves appeared in the colony and, while the headright system was still law until the nineteenth century, tobacco fields in the Chesapeake were worked primarily by slaves.

In Gloucestershire, tobacco appeared to hold some of the same promise that it had in the Chesapeake. Gentry and small holders switched to tobacco cultivation because it was a cash crop and held out hope that they could protect their land and status in the community. However, tobacco growing in England was declared illegal in 1619. This did not stop it; it continued and spread. However, the county, including both rich and poor, were now at odds with the Crown of England. When other economic pressures, notably the contraction of the wool trade and disafforestation, disrupted civic life, judges and bailiffs were caught in the contradiction. Either they were growing tobacco or they had neighbors who did and they were thus in a poor position to enforce laws against rioting and poaching. Increased tensions resulted in the illegal butchery of 600 deer on the estate of Lionel Cranfield, an earl associated with outlawing English tobacco and prosecuting squatters and wood gatherers in Dean Forest. The Civil War swept away any
vestige of legal action. Gloucestershire opposed the Royalist forces. This, however, did not help the with the Protectorate. At the urging of his finance minister, Martin Noell, Cromwell attempted to stamp out tobacco growing in Gloucestershire. A small force under Cornet Joyce was met by hundreds of armed growers prepared to defend their crop. Apparently, tobacco growing continued into the Restoration, but James Duke of York’s fort at Gloucester, coupled with a general strengthening of the national government, and a change in London culture to better regulated coffee houses, probably contributed to its final demise.

Thus, tobacco on both sides of the Atlantic held out the promise of success for small and independent growers, and ended by entangling them in morally problematic or sometimes outright criminal activities. Tobacco’s promise is attractive just because it is so concrete. As with all addictive drugs, tobacco has an inelastic price structure: its use increases in periods when it is readily available, but it does not recede when the price goes up. Instead, addicts find other sources – or other sources of the price – and the market continues to grow. There are disturbing contemporary echoes of the seventeenth century choices. While slavery is at least technically illegal in all the countries who signed the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, tobacco use is still spreading. It is no longer grown in England and very little is grown in the United States, but British American Tobacco (BAT) has a surprisingly similar structure to the seventeenth century institutions. BAT currently buys tobacco from growers in over one hundred countries. The growers may be large or small. As an extremely large buyer, BAT can dictate terms including growing methods, product quality, and price. The tobacco is processed in large factories. Typically, they are large employers in their respective regions. Tobacco production thus exerts a very strong economic impact wherever it is located and BAT makes sure that it exerts a protective political influence to match. In our time, the World Health Organization (WHO) has attempted to control the spread of tobacco usage into economically underdeveloped nations, because of the extreme health risks it poses in countries with a poor health infrastructure. Unfortunately, local usage tends to follow industry penetration. WHO recommends the same basic control strategies used by James I: anti-smoking propaganda and high taxes, with predictably similar results. BAT and other tobacco internationals have so far largely nullified the propaganda with expensive
lawsuits and the taxes encourage local smuggling. The governments and the tobacco industry have become partners in the control of legal growing and distribution, projects that tend to divert tobacco revenue from national health concerns.\textsuperscript{383} Empires rise and fall, but tobacco marches on.

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