The Crises of the Late Seventeenth Century

Chapter 2.5
War and Rebellion

• The late 17th century was a period of political unrest in colonial North America.
  • Wampanoag Natives under the leadership of Metacom (King Philip) grew frustrated with continued English expansion into their territory and eventually a very bloody and brutal war broke out in 1675 with New England’s settlers. (*King Philip’s War*)
    • The Puritan settlers saw the war as a sign of God’s displeasure with them and set out to purge Puritan society of all “evils”
  • In the Chesapeake – expansion also led to a violent outbreak between settlers and natives in 1676 known as *Bacon’s Rebellion*. While Bacon drew some support from the upper class settlers displeased with the governor, most supporters were from the lowest class (indentured servants and slaves) who were promised by Bacon extermination of the natives and the distribution of land to all.
    • The rebellion hastened the shift away from the use of indentured servants toward the use of slaves as a source of labor and an intensification of laws regulating the lives of slaves.
    • Economic incentives such as decreasing prices of slaves and lower mortality rates made the purchase of slaves more economical.
KING PHILIP’S WAR, 1675–76

- Travels of Metacom (conjectural)
- Major Indian attack on English
- Major English attack on Indians
- English offensives, 1675–77
- Mohawk offensive against New England Indians, winter 1676–77
- Indian captives sold to slavery in West Indies
- Important Indian settlements
- Important English settlements
- Present state boundaries

Metacom fails in mission to make Mohawks allies, Dec. 1675–Jan. 1676

Wampanoags attack and evacuate, July 1675
Metacom returns and is killed, Aug. 1676
The Dominion of New England and the Glorious Revolution

- King Charles II died without an heir, so his brother James II (The Duke of York) took the throne in 1685.
  - James hoped to take greater administrative control over the English colonies in the Americas. He reorganized the northern Colonies into a new administrative and political entity – the Dominion of New England by suspending their legislatures, revoking their charters, and raising taxes to pay for royal administrators.
  - James sought to strengthen his power at home, in England, as well. He bypassed Parliament on many decisions and increased toleration for Catholics and Dissenters through royal decree (James himself was Catholic).
  - After James dissolved Parliament for refusing to assent to higher taxes, The Glorious Revolution installed William III (The former Duke of Orange) and James’s daughter Mary II on the throne.
  - The Glorious Revolution ushered in the passing of the English Bill of Rights and fueled uprisings across the English colonies to reinstall local colonial legislatures.
The Salem Witchcraft Hysteria

• The upheaval of the Glorious Revolution, tensions along the English/French colonial border, and warfare with Native tribes led many New England residents to feel that Satan was plotting to destroy the “city upon a hill.”

• Residents of some New England towns and villages began to look inward for possible signs of the devil’s work.
  • A series of witchcraft accusations struck the town of Salem and other neighboring towns in Maine (then part of Massachusetts).
  • The accused tended to be women, particularly older women who did not live in male-headed households. Women who failed to fit the model of the pious, submissive female, ruled by a benevolent patriarch (an ideal that Puritans esteemed) were most at risk.
  • The witchcraft hysteria comes to an end as accusations are leveled at more prominent individuals. Legal reforms (especially the refusal to use spectral evidence) attempted to make sure that such an event would not occur again.
“Mary Walcott ‘taken into fits’.” 1876 Illustration.
Questions:

• What were the main causes of Bacon’s Rebellion?

• What economic and demographic forces contributed to the emergence of slavery in the Chesapeake region?

• What was the Glorious Revolution?

• What role did conflicts with Native Americans play in the crisis of the latter part of the seventeenth century? (King Phillips War, Bacons Rebellion, and Salem)?