

Colonization

Expectations and Results

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Edmund Morgan's book *American Slavery, American Freedom* states that the "major part of the colonist's work time" was intended to be used in the generation of "promised riches" for exportation back to England, which is not too great a departure from Hakluyt's original plan.¹ In this paper I will argue that Virginia's development from Hakluyt's vision came about from a shift in economic priorities and focus as part of a move from an unstable frontier colony to a more established and stable colony. To do so I will first look at Hakluyt's vision for the colonies, then how the colonies failed to meet these expectations, and finally how the colonies changed and adapted to the conditions of the New World. Hakluyt and Morgan's writings demonstrate change by economic and social factors built on the evolution of labor in Virginia, from planned exploitation of natives to indentured servants to slaves.

Before beginning I will evaluate my sources. The two sources used for this paper are Richard Hakluyt's *Discourse on Western Planting* and Edmund Morgan's *American Slavery, American Freedom*.² Hakluyt's writing is a primary source written in an attempt to convince the monarch and investors to launch an expedition to the Americas. As a result, he twists or outright fabricates information to make his proposal look better. It is an assessment of how Hakluyt wants the expedition to go, not a record of actual occurrences, which further skews his statements. However, it is still a perfectly viable source despite these limits, since my argument revolves around the differences between Hakluyt's predictions and Morgan's analysis of what happened.

1 Edmund Sears Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2003), 87.

2 Richard Hakluyt, "A particular discourse concerning the great necessity and manifold commodities that are like to grow to this Realm of England by the Western discoveries lately attempted, written in the year 1584," National Humanities Center, 2006, excerpted from David B. Quinn & Allison M. Quinn, eds. *Discourse of Western Planting* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1993)..

As a secondary source, Morgan's book is written largely to argue that slavery "created" the American ideal of freedom and shows the progression of that. It is a record of actual occurrences from the perspective of a historian. Due to this, Morgan's writing is a reliable source of information.

To begin, Hakluyt believed that colonization was necessary in order to provide England with a means of countering Spanish holdings in America. He writes that "all other English trades are grown beggarly or dangerous" due to their proximity to Spanish territory, where a wreck or other accident would lead to the Spanish seizing the ship and its goods along with the men crewing it.³ Since this is clearly untenable in his eyes, he proposes that they should turn the tables on the Spanish, setting up "two or three strong forts" along the coast of the Americas to intercept Spanish fleets coming from the New World.⁴ His final main point regarding the Spanish presence is that they are spread thin and have not conquered or befriended all the natives in the areas they hold.⁵ As a result, if England were to launch her own colonization attempt they would be able to potentially remove the Spanish from some of their holdings and even the field more between England and Spain.

Hakluyt also frames his expedition goals as a religious mission to convert the natives and thereby save them. He views the natives of the Americas as ripe to be taught the Protestant faith, again in conflict with the Catholic Spanish crown and the Pope, stating that they will "Enlarge the glory of the Gospel and from England plant sincere religion."⁶ This thought of teaching the natives English religion was motivated by the hostility between the Catholic Spanish and Protestant English, since by spreading their brand of Christianity they would hold more religious sway in the continued cultural wars. However, Hakluyt did not originally provide for sending priests and bibles with the expedition, instead adding such concerns later on, which implies that religion was more of a front than an actual reason for the expedition to the Americas.⁷

Hakluyt's final main reason is that the establishment of a British presence would give new opportunities for trade and wealth to grow, enriching England in the process. A major part of his desire for a colony is that the trade routes "cuts not near the trade of any prince," and provides a "safe passage" to bring goods back to England from afar.⁸ The benefit of this is that trade cannot be intercepted by the enemies of the English crown if it is coming from the ocean rather than near the coast, along with Hakluyt believing that the Americas had vast untapped wealth in the form of gold or other natural resources. A point of note is that the *Discourse* also contains a plea to the "noble man...gentleman...merchant...citizen...countrymen" who would "offer of himself to contribute," implying that Hakluyt believed that the new lands would be so

3 Hakluyt, *Discourse*, 1.

4 Hakluyt, *Discourse*, 2.

5 Hakluyt, *Discourse*, 3.

6 Hakluyt, *Discourse*, 7.

7 Hakluyt, *Discourse*, 10.

8 Hakluyt, *Discourse*, 7.

lucrative and enticing that everyone would want to go.⁹ He also mentions in the same lines that it would be a good way to rid England of unemployed poor people.

In regards to these poor people, Morgan demonstrates that the poor and desperate were largely just shipped off to the colony or placed into indentured servitude to serve as a labor force for the newly established colonies. This was a direct result of Hakluyt's desire to make the colonies an extension of England's economy and even more diverse; by sending over only skilled workers, such as goldsmiths and perfumers, Morgan points out that once they found they had no work they would not take to the fields, but rather simply loaf around until they did have work to do that was not beneath their class.¹⁰ This led to the Virginia company requesting inmates, criminals, and anyone living destitute on the streets to be shipped to the colony as a labor force.¹¹ However, the lack of work for specialists meant that the colony could not fulfill Hakluyt's original goal of skilled workers trading goods back to England.

One of the major departures from Hakluyt's original goal was the lack of religious presence. Since survival was such a concern in Virginia, religion was not the foremost issue the colony faced.¹² Warfare with the natives, harsh conditions and a lack of preparation killed large amounts of the prospective colonists, forcing the colony to import additional labor and continuing to ensure that the goal of converting the natives to Christianity remained far away. Without good relations with most natives initially, and outright hostility at times, along with the colony itself not being able to guarantee that they had a pastor, religion fell by the wayside as a goal of the expedition. The initial goal of using the natives as a workforce was also not realized as people began to view the natives as obstacles to be removed rather than another civilization to work with, further straying from the initial goals laid out by Hakluyt.

As the religious aspect waned, the settlers began to view the natives with suspicion and took more and more land from them. Prolonged warfare with the natives and a deep suspicion of them completely eroded the original idea of "Good Indians" providing a buffer for the colony against hostile natives.¹³ This is significant because events such as Bacon's Rebellion came about as a reaction to native presence and desire to eradicate them. This continued a trend of treaties with the natives either being disregarded or broken out of distrust or outright hatred, leading to a resurgence of hostilities.¹⁴ Bacon's stance on the natives was not uncommon, with much of the populace joining him in his rebellion expressly to go fight the natives, demonstrating that the general view on the natives had evolved from one of enlightenment, civilization and teaching to one of oppression and destruction.

Instead of enlightenment, the settlers began to work on agriculture, both for survival and for profit. Tobacco was a highly profitable crop and helped solve the colo-

9 Hakluyt, *Discourse*, 6.

10 Morgan, *American Slavery*, 85-86.

11 Morgan, *American Slavery*, 86.

12 Morgan, *American Slavery*, 101.

13 Morgan, *American Slavery*, 255.

14 Morgan, *American Slavery*, 251.

ny's first difficulties with finding labor. Demand for servants was incredibly high, even during the periods when food was hard to come by, as a direct result of tobacco and the prices it would fetch on the market.¹⁵ This tobacco boom enticed people to sail across the ocean to the colony and provided a labor force of men looking to get rich once they were freed from servitude. However, tobacco took up such a focus that people would not plant the food they needed to survive, instead only planting tobacco.¹⁶ This is particularly at odds with Hakluyt's idea of what the colony should have been; rather than producing its own food and providing abundant resources for skilled artisans to work, the artisans could find no labor and the colony dedicated its entire time to the production and sale of tobacco. Even when something was supposed to be set up, such as ironworks, everyone sent to work it would shift to growing tobacco instead.¹⁷ This widespread farming demanded people to work the fields and represented a great shift in focus for the colony.

This shift finally culminated in the widespread adoption of slavery in Virginia. Slavery had become more and more attractive as lifespans increased in the colony, especially with the conditions of servitude in the colony's early years being closer to slavery than England would normally permit.¹⁸ In turn, this led to there being "more of the rich and fewer of the not-so rich," especially as it became more profitable to buy slaves instead of hiring indentured servants.¹⁹ Slavery was slowly phased into existence as lifespans increased and it became more profitable to enslave a worker rather than hire him for a term of years.²⁰ Additionally, the flow of people from England to the colony was slowing down over time, as Bacon's Rebellion and less overpopulation in England made moving across the ocean less enticing.²¹ This lack of new labor provided further impetus to transition to slavery. The expansion of slavery allowed the masters to keep a population of working age in the fields as the older workers exited their prime working age along with female slaves giving birth to children who were then enslaved, allowing masters to purchase less slaves.²² This was greatly helped by the fact that slave traders carried a much higher ratio of women than the amount that willingly came to the colony in its early years.²³

The colonies changed greatly over time, especially regarding labor and living conditions. Hakluyt's appraisal of the New World was highly optimistic and idealized, and therefore did not survive settler's first contacts with Virginia. The colonies therefore had to adapt to the New World, shifting the colony away from a focus on extracting gold and generating specialist work to a focus on tobacco and agriculture.

15 Morgan, *American Slavery*, 108.

16 Morgan, *American Slavery*, 109.

17 Morgan, *American Slavery*, 109.

18 Morgan, *American Slavery*, 296.

19 Morgan, *American Slavery*, 341.

20 Morgan, *American Slavery*, 297.

21 Morgan, *American Slavery*, 299.

22 Morgan, *American Slavery*, 310.

23 Morgan, *American Slavery*, 310.

They accomplished this by harsh servitude and slavery, creating a stratified society where the working class was held in contempt below everyone else and divided based on race. Overall, the great difference between Hakluyt's vision for the colony and the end result is that Hakluyt's original idea was to use the natives as the colony's workforce, while the final result was a system of slavery directed against Africans rather than native Americans.