

The Formalizing of Sport and the Formation of an Elite: The Chesapeake Gentry, 1650-1720s*

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Between 1650 and the 1720s, the lives of Chesapeake colonials changed in profound ways. The population of the land surrounding the Chesapeake Bay in Virginia and Maryland increased more than ten-fold, from about 16,000 to nearly 180,000.¹ Black slaves replaced white indentured servants as the bulk of the labor force. Colleges and schools rooted, and provincial newspapers appeared. Great houses began to emerge where one-room dwellings had stood, and prearranged horse races entertained all ranks and races.

Importantly, too, a native-born upper rank evolved. Particularly along the major rivers that flowed into the Chesapeake—the Patuxent, the Rappahannock, the Potomac, the James—men born in Virginia and Maryland acquired large amounts of land, as well as power and prestige. Such men began and remained a minority, never constituting much more than five percent of the white population. Still, they emerged as provincial leaders, and their impact on Chesapeake life was dramatic. They affected nearly every aspect of life in the region, from landholding to electioneering, from legal representation to sporting pursuits.

Timothy Breen has discussed the significance of some forms of competitive recreations among these provincial “gentlemen.” As the rank emerged, he contended, sport contests, particularly those involving gambling, translated fundamental values—pride, materialism, contentiousness, display. Their most visible public contests, the quarter mile horse races, even “strengthened the gentry’s cultural dominance.”² His conclusions suggest, in short, that a rela-

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1. Everts B. Greene and Virginia D. Harrington, *American Population Before the Federal Census of 1790* (New York, 1932), 123-24; Richard Walsh and William Lloyd Fox, eds., *Maryland. A History* (Annapolis, Md., 1983), 39; Edmund S. Morgan, *American Slavery-American Freedom. The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (New York, 1975), 404; Jim Potter, “Demographic Development and Family Structure,” in Jack P. Greene and J. R. Pole, eds., *Colonial British America. Essays in the New History of the Early Modern Era* (Baltimore, 1984), 134-39.

2. T.H. Breen, “Horses and Gentlemen: The Cultural Significance of Gambling among the Gentry of

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tionship existed between the particular forms of sport in which the gentry engaged and their emergence as a distinct rank. Breen did not, however, fully explore that relationship, nor did he locate gentry sporting life within the profound changes occurring in the Chesapeake.

This paper, then, extends Breen's analysis. The formation of a provincial elite and its formalizing of a distinctive sporting life involved two stages. Between the 1660s and the 1680s, the first stage, the economy and the colonial legal system stratified Chesapeake society in general and sporting opportunities in particular. The second stage spanned the final years of the seventeenth and the initial decades of the eighteenth century when a minority of native-born colonials acquired the land, the slaves, and the horses that enabled them, the "gentlemen," to emerge as a provincial upper rank. Simultaneously, the large landowners defined new ways of behaving in activities that had been and remained relatively common. In racing, hunting, and gambling games, the Chesapeake squires projected "right" actions to guide the competition and display their prowess.

The connection between the formation of this colonial upper rank and its particular sporting style was not a coincidental one. The evolution of the gentry involved the altering of social relations, the conduct of which depended upon the men's use and expansion of the region's material culture. Especially land and labor, but also housing, clothing, and sport, in short, underlay the reformation and redefinition of the relationships that transformed the Chesapeake from a relatively open society to a hierarchical, biracial one.³ As a part of the material culture, then, sport mediated social relations. Particularly after the 1680s, the sporting pursuits of the large landowners enabled them to extend relations among themselves, with British gentlemen, and with other colonials that helped to secure their status and to stabilize Chesapeake society.

I

In the third quarter of the seventeenth century, distinctive gentry forms of sport simply did not exist in the Chesapeake. There were, of course, a few gentlemen; and in this country that was "not only plentiful but pleasant and profitable," as the Englishman John Hammond wrote in his travelogue in 1656, such men could indeed find "recreation." But so could others among the "sober, modest persons" who comprised the bulk of the Chesapeake population.⁴ As was land, hunting in particular was available to many. By 1666 George Alsop,

Virginia," *William and Mary Quarterly* 34 (April 1977): 239-57; quote, 257.

3. This connection between material culture and social relations has been made most clearly by Gary Carson, Director of Research at Colonial Williamsburg, in "The American Consumer Revolution in Eighteenth-Century America" (Paper presented at the U.S. Capitol Historical Society Symposium, "Of Consuming Interests: The Style of Life in the Eighteenth Century," Washington, D.C., March 1986). My explanation also draws from Raymond Williams. *The Sociology of Culture* (New York, 1982); idem, *Problems in Materialism and Culture* (London, 1980); and Thomas J. Schlereth, ed., *Material Culture. A Research Guide* (Lawrence, Kans., 1985). Schlereth defines material culture as "that segment of humankind's biosocial environment that has been purposely shaped by people according to culturally dictated plans" (p. 5).

4. John Hammond, "Leah and Rachel, Or, the Two Fruitful Sisters Virginia and Maryland" (1656), in Clayton C. Hall, ed., *Narratives of Early Maryland. 1633-1685* (New York, 1910), 297, 299, 295.

an indentured servant, noted that the abundance of game and free time, especially in the winter, enabled other bound laborers like himself to hunt in Maryland. "Every Servant has a Gun, Powder and Shot allowed him" observed Alsop, "to sport him withall on all Holidayes and leasurable time."⁵ As the Dutch traveler Jasper Danckaerts recorded a decade later, the prey colonials sought included "so many ducks together . . . (that) the water was so black with them."⁶

Two interrelated factors underlay this opportunity in hunting, which as sport had been the domain of the privileged in the old world. First, wildlife was abundant and unfenced; second, few, if any, British rank-associated constraints applied to new world hunting. The material conditions and the weakness, or absence, of traditional social relations also affected the practice of games, although not precisely in the same way. Contests like ninepins, bowles, and cards required equipment that few planters or servants owned; and patronage of games, the other side of British rank relations in sport, did not develop.⁷ Consequently, games playing, like hunting, was undifferentiated, in terms of rank. But opportunities were also limited. Gambling games occurred primarily in the ordinaries, the taverns. In these establishments that were licensed for "convenience & entertaynm^t," the owners permitted, and sometimes provided, the equipment and the credit essential for gambling.⁸

The material conditions and social relations that made hunting relatively common and restricted games playing prevailed during what Russell Menard has characterized as the "age of the small planter."⁹ Not until the middle of the seventeenth century had all of the "right" conditions-migrations of families and servants who could expect to complete their terms, political stability, and economic expansion-combined to produce the first real period of security in the Chesapeake. Land was available to those who escaped early death, and the proportion of middle-size holdings (500-700 acres) to either the very small or the very large ones increased, as did per capita wealth. Housing was fairly uniform, and one-room dwellings were the norm. Household goods were simple and neither numerous nor fashionable. A feather bed was a luxury; a china tea set, virtually unknown. Clothing did not yet distinguish the small

5. George Alsop, "A Character of the Province of Maryland" (1666). in Hall, ed., *Narratives of Early Maryland*, 357.

6. J. Franklin Jameson and Bartlett B. James, eds., *Journal of Jasper Danckaerts, 1679.1680* (New York, 1913), 123.

7. Chester Kirby, "The English Game Law System." *American Historical Review* 38 (January 1933): 240-62; Robert W. Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations in English Society 1700-1850* (Cambridge, 1973).

8. Shortly after migrations to the colonies began, the Councils and Assemblies licensed ordinary keepers. Prospective taverners consented not to "suffer any evill Rule or Ord." See, for example, William Hand Brown, et al., eds., *Archives of Maryland* (Baltimore, 1883-), 41:47-48. No comprehensive examination of the seventeenth-century tavern exists, but estate inventories and legislative/court records provide fragmentary information about what taverners owned. For general descriptive comments on the colonial taverns and the activities, see, Philip A. Bruce, *Social Life of Virginia in the Seventeenth Century* (New York, 1907); Jane Carson, *Colonial Virginians at Play* (Williamsburg, 1965); Mary Newton Stanard, *Colonial Virginia, Its People and Customs* (Philadelphia, 1917); Julia C. Spruill, *Women's Life and Work in the Southern Colonies* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1938).

9. Russell R. Menard, "Economy and Society in Early Colonial Maryland" (Ph. D. diss., University of Iowa, 1975), 268.

planters from either their servants or the few well-to-do landowners and merchant-planters who lived and traded among them.¹⁰

This “age of the small planter,” however, was actually short-lived. In the late 1660s the economy began to contract. Tobacco prices fell, and increased productivity and declines in the cost of production no longer sufficed to offset lower prices. Fewer families migrated from England, and the number of servants decreased. Criminals, debtors, and other English poor, rather than yeomen and skilled workers, constituted much of the servant population, always the largest portion of immigrants. As a result, by the mid-1680s the social structure of the Chesapeake was more stratified than it had been in 1650.”

The gradual differentiation of Chesapeake sporting life rooted in these altered economic and demographic circumstances. As the economy began to weaken in the 1660s the legislatures—the agencies traditionally responsible for ordering and re-ordering social behaviors—attacked one ubiquitous and fundamentally economic endeavor in British sporting experience. This was gambling, or gaming—betting with money or goods—that had long been “unlawful.”¹¹ However, not since martial law had prevailed in Virginia had statutes been so specific, even discriminatory. In 1663 the Maryland Assembly cited the “many & great greivances that have happened unto many Mastrs . . . by the infidelity of their Servts” as the reason for suppressing gambling among these non-propertied colonials.¹² By 1668 the Virginia burgesses identified the taverns as the major haunts of persons who neglected “their callings” and “mispent their times.” This body consequently limited the number of taverns and eventually prohibited ordinary keepers from extending credit to laborers and non-freemen.¹⁴ In the 1670s Maryland also limited the number of taverns.¹⁵

The Assemblies apparently intended to restrain the actions of only certain

10. Ibid., 79, 84-85, 243-48, 263-67, 444-45; Paul G. E. Clemens, *The Atlantic Economy and Colonial Maryland's Eastern Shore. From Tobacco to Grain* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1980), 48-49; Lorena S. Walsh, “Survitude and Opportunity in Charles County, 1658-1705,” in Aubrey C. Land, Lois Green Carr, and Edward C. Papenfuss, eds., *Low, Society, and Politics in Early Maryland* (Baltimore, 1977), 123; Russell R. Menard, Lois Green Carr, and Lorena S. Walsh, “A Small Planter's Profits: The Cole Estate and the Growth of the Early Chesapeake Economy,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 40 (April 1983): 191; Gloria L. Main, *Tobacco Colony. Life in Early Maryland, 1650-1720* (Princeton, 1982); Henry Glassie, *Folk Housing in Middle Virginia* (Knoxville, Tenn., 1975), 75; Darrett B. and Anita H. Rutman, *A Place in Time. Middlesex County, Virginia 1650-1750* (New York, 1984), 67-69, 188-91; Morgan, *American Slavery-American Freedom*; David Galenson, *White Servitude in Colonial America. An Economic Analysis* (Cambridge, 1981), 49.

11. Menard, “Economy and Society,” 324, 414-17, 429-35, 445-47; idem, “Population, Economy, and Society in Seventeenth-Century Maryland,” *Maryland Historical Magazine* 79 (Spring 1984): 86; Clemens, *Atlantic Economy*, 48-52; Wesley Frank Craven, *White, Red and Black. The Seventeenth Century Virginian* (Charlottesville, 1971), 5; Walsh, “Servitude and Opportunity,” 127.

12. William Strachey, comp., David H. Flaherty, ed., *For the Colony in Virginia. Lawes Divine, Mord and Marriall*, etc. (1612; reprint, Charlottesville, 1969), 32, 34, 79, 84; Susie M. Ames, ed., *County Court Records of Accomack-Northampton, Virginia, 1632-1640* (Washington, D.C., 1954), 60-61; William W. Hening, ed., *The Statutes-at-Large. Being a Collection of All the Laws of Virginia (1619-1792)* (Richmond, 1819-1823), 1: 114, 123, 126-27, 144, 173, 261, 2: 44-46, 268-69. See also John M. Findlay, *People of Chance. Frontiers of Gambling and Society in America from Jamestown to Las Vegas* (New York, 1986), 11-43.

13. *Archives of Maryland*, 1:500-01.

14. *Virginia Statutes*, 2:268-69; 3:4446, 361-62.

15. *Archives of Maryland*, 2:434-35, 7165-68.

colonists during the 1660s and 1670s. The laws identified one particularly vulnerable segment of the population, men without property. These were men whose indebtedness diminished not only their own chances of success but also those of their masters and the taverners. Such colonials did not have a voice in the law-making process, but their daily actions-and debts-could affect the fragile economy of the Chesapeake. Consequently, a situation similar to that in England when the Poor Laws were enacted appears to have existed. Chesapeake society, like early seventeenth-century British society, had to be protected from the waste and inefficiency of the propertyless. The propertyless, too, required an imposed economic discipline-and protection from themselves.¹⁶

The Assembly acts did not, however, speak specifically to gambling among men of property. Landowning colonials continued to gamble and to contract debts, both in sporting and non-sport endeavors, as court cases of the 1670s confirm. In Maryland the plaintiffs in these legal suits were winners of uncollected wagers rather than constables or other officers of the law. The victorious bettors could indeed sue, but they did not always reclaim the debts owed. In 1671 Edward Steevenson initiated a claim against John Drywood for "1200 pounds tobacco & Caske." Drywood's lawyer asked for a delay in the trial so that he could locate "a statute of England that Play debts about the value of 40s (shillings) is not pleadable" for his client's defense. The judge granted the delay and never did render a decision on the plea." In another suit the next year, a defendant maintained that a debt (200 pounds of tobacco) in question "was a wagger at a Horse Rasse and therefore Not Acconable." The plaintiff failed to prove to the satisfaction of the court the contrary, and the judge ordered the suit to be abandoned.¹⁸ In both cases the defendants were men of property who apparently understood English conventions differentiating "play" debts from other forms of debt, a distinction accepted by provincial courts. They were also direct participants in the action, a factor absent in another court case in which a justice ordered a defendant, who also did not invoke the play debt argument, to pay a debt incurred at a horse race.¹⁹

That the courts treated play debts differently from other debts in the early 1670s is clear. Precisely why this difference emerged and what immediate and specific effect it had are less clear. For certain, play debts derived from British law and gambling practice. They also were applied to a society that lacked a fully formed social hierarchy with traditional, built-in social brakes on sporting

16. Joyce Oldham Appleby, *Economic Thought and Ideology in Seventeenth-Century England* (Princeton, 1978); Peter Mathias, *Transformation of England* (New York, 1979), 137-45; Lawrence W. Stone, "Social Mobility in England, 1500-1700," *past and Present* 20 (April 1966): 16-55; E. E. Rich, "The Population of Elizabethan England," *Economic History Review* 2 (1949-1950): 249; Peter Clark and Paul Slack, *English Towns in Transition 1500-1700* (London, 1976); Buchanan Sharp, *In Contempt of Authority: Rural Artisans and Riot in the West of England, 1586-1660* (Berkeley, 1980).

17. *Archives of Maryland*, 54:499.

18. *Ibid.*, 54:550-51.

19. *Ibid.*, 54:594, 599. Another case from the same period appeared in the Accomack County, Virginia, records. This involved "a very very Man," Thomas Davis, who had lost 500 pounds of tobacco or stock as the result of a race loss. The play debt distinction did not appear in the course of the court's discussion. However, the court did request a decision about the legality of the wager from the governor, suggesting that the justices may have considered the English precedent. January 16, 1666, Accomack County, Orders, 1666-1670.9.

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practice. Consequently, by invoking the play debt distinction, provincial justices and the men who initiated and defended the suits—all of whom were men of property—may simply have attempted to translate gaming debts into social distinctions.

However, it seems reasonable to suggest that the play debt distinction was first and foremost an economic measure. The Chesapeake economy was tenuous; but because it was bound to the international scene, colonials could do little directly to stabilize their positions. They could, however, eliminate one source of economic flow by restricting recovery of debts incurred at “play.” As the colonial economy entered a no-growth and, eventually, a depression phase in the late 1670s and 1680s, then, the courts excluded play debts from those that could be recovered by the litigious men of property. Again apparently, the maneuver worked. Although few court records exist, they suggest that cases involving gambling debts during the late 1670s and 1680s were rare, although probably not because the colonials suddenly and simply ceased to gamble. In fact, gambling cases do exist in the records from the 1690s. Consequently, one may suspect that only men who could have afforded to lose the irrecoverable play debts may have chosen to wager significant sums. Others, if they wagered at all, limited their bets. Conceived of in this context, the play debt distinction was a response to economic conditions but one that had social implications. It accomplished what the laws of the 1660s and early 1670s restricting the actions of the propertyless had not done: it mediated relations among men of property in the Chesapeake. The play debt distinction separated small and marginal planter-gamblers from their wealthier neighbors.

Court suits of the 1690s support this explanation. They also signal another phase in the stratification of the Chesapeake gambling scene. No longer did either plaintiffs or magistrates invoke the play debt distinction. The sums debated before the juries were greater than they had been: 4000 pounds and forty shillings in one case, 1500 pounds of tobacco in another, five and six pounds sterling in a third, and 1000 pounds of tobacco and twenty shillings in a fourth. At a time when the average yearly tobacco harvest may have ranged between 1500 and 3000 pounds, these wagers represented significant investments. Further, the men involved were not men of mere property but men of substantial property and with prominent names: Randolph, Cocke, Eppes, Kenner, Gardner, Baker, Humphrey, and Steward.²⁰ These cases suggest boundaries around gambling actions that were not evident earlier. The boundaries, in turn, were predicated on the existence of at least three economically-based groupings: the propertyless, planters with small and/or marginal hold-

20. August 22, 1695, Northumberland County, Order Book, 3678.1698, pt. 2, 707-08; January 1694, 643; W. G. Stanard, “Racing in Colonial Virginia,” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 2 (January 1895): 296.298; April 7, 1693, Westmoreland County, Order Book, 1690-1698.92. I have found no estimate of average tobacco production per acre or per plot for 1680-1690. For the 1640s Edmund Morgan concluded that 1500 pounds constituted an optimal harvest; for Maryland common planters prior to 1770s (by which time agriculture had clearly diversified), David Percy offered a production figure of 2,000-4,000 pounds. The range offered in the text is based on these figures. See, *Morgan, American Slavery-American Freedom*, 142; David O. Percy, “Agricultural Labor on an Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake Plantation” (Unpublished paper presented at the 45th Annual Conference on Early American History. Baltimore, Md., September 1984), 13.

ings, and those landowners whose incomes more than covered their wagers. In the case of gambling at least, the "age of the small planter" had apparently come to a close.

Whether the stratification of gambling translated into equally stratified or reduced opportunities for all or even most forms of sport in which gambling occurred, is uncertain. The records simply do not exist. However, for at least one sport, horse racing, the years between the late 1660s and the late 1680s certainly did not result in substantial changes in form or in expanded opportunities, especially in what would have become more nearly inter-rank contests. Like games, racing had been relatively infrequent and undifferentiated for more than half of the century.²¹ But, in at least one locale, a county court redefined who could legally race together. In 1674 the York County, Virginia, court heard arguments about the legality of a match initiated by James Bullocke, a tailor, who had run his mare against a horse owned by "Mr." Mathew Slader. The court ruled against Bullocke because it was "contrary to Law for a Labourer to make a race, being a sport only for Gentlemen." The justices also criticized Slader, although not because he had raced against the tailor. Having run his horse "out of the way that Bullock's mare might win," Slader was censured for "an apparent cheate."²² Besides acting to curtail the freedom of action of a propertyless man, the court had ruled, once again, against the lack of restraint evidenced by a man of means.

This court case may have involved a unique public display of legal rank discrimination in a Chesapeake sporting event prior to the 1690s. No other case of this nature has surfaced; and given the vastness of the colonies in which the still irregularly run horse races occurred, one must doubt whether officials could have effectively enforced the "only for Gentlemen" law during the latter half of the century. Another factor, too, may have prevented repetitions of the Bullock case: few colonials owned horses. Estate inventories registered in Maryland during 1674-1675, the same time as the York County case, suggest that even the probability of laborers and small planters racing against large landowners was small. Of a total of 217 horses registered in 105 estates, the wealthiest twenty percent of the decedents (estates of more than £415) owned slightly more than half the horses. The poorest twenty percent registered only eight of the 217 horses, and nearly eighty percent of the colonials at the lower end of the economic scale owned no horses at all. Middling rank estates, a full sixty percent of all estates (valued within the broad range of twenty-one to 415 pounds sterling), held the remainder of the horses.²³ Further, the Assemblies in both Maryland and Virginia had begun to curtail the stock that was most

21. This is not to say that colonials had not raced horses in the earlier decades of the century. However, with the small population and the marginal number of horses, no real pattern of racing appears to have developed prior to the 1670s. See Roger Longrigg, *The History of Horse Racing* (New York, 1972), 105-06; John Hervey, *Racing in America* (New York, 1944), 1:14-17.

22. September 10, 1674, York County Deeds, Orders, Wills, 1672-1694,85. See, also, Stanard, "Racing in Virginia," 294; Hervey, *Racing in America*, 1:17.

23. Inventories and Accounts, 1, pt. 1, 1674-1704, Maryland Hall of Records.

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available to the poorer settlers, the inbred and undesirably small horses that roamed the land and created “detriments.”²⁴

As had been the case with gambling, the economy and the invocation of British legal precedents apparently combined to define who could and who could not race together. In fact, the economy-contracting as it was—seems to have been the primary factor in the tiering of Chesapeake society and its sporting life after 1660. Men without property were the first to find their opportunities restrained. More gradually and later did economic conditions and court decisions affect men with property. Particularly for marginal planters (estates valued at £100 or less), few horses and the irrecoverability of play debts had probably diminished their abilities to compete against their wealthier neighbors by the 1680s.

II

By the late 1680s and the early 1690s the differentiation by rank in sporting contests had become stark. For certain, what had been anticipated in the York County court case and in the play debt distinction matured: separate events, sporting contests arranged by and for a minority of Chesapeake inhabitants. By 1691 Sir Francis Nicholson, the governor of Virginia, had organized contests at the annual St. George’s Day celebration for the “better sort of Virginians onely who are Batchelors,” and he offered prizes “to be shot for, wrestled, played at backswords, & Run for by Horse and foott.”²⁵ Probably more common than major public events like these were contests at individual plantations. Particularly after the turn of the century, wealthy landowners swam, held running and walking races, skated on frozen rivers, fished, fenced, and protected stumps in an embryonic form of cricket.²⁶ At his Westover estate on the James River, William Byrd II even made his wife “out of humor by cheating her” at piquet.²⁷ Men like Byrd also spent hours and even nights, as Timothy Breen has already detailed, wagering among themselves on their skills in various games.²⁸

24. *Virginia Statutes*, 1:128, 271. 2:35-37; *Archives of Maryland*. 7:275, 277, 292, 2%. 302-03, 338, 480-81. 13:13, 549-50.

25. Francis Nicholson, “Proclamation About the College and Orders for Prize Games for Bachelors,” in “Extracts from Records of Surry County,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 11 (October 1902); 86-87. See, also, Robert Beverley’s criticism of Nicholson’s arrangement in Louis B. Wright, ed., *The History and Present State of Virginia* (1705) (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1947). 97-98.

26. Beverley, *History of Virginia*, 308-10; Stephen Bordle, Letterbooks 1727-1735. Maryland Historical Society, MS-81, January 22, 1728, February 15. 1728. February 22, 1729; Louis B. Wright and Marion Tinling, eds., *The Secret Diary of William Byrd of Westover*. 1709-1712 (Richmond, 1941). 25, 114, 120, 123, 144, 151-58, 257, 434-35; Louis B. Wright, ed. *The Prose Works of William Byrd of Westover* (Cambridge, Mass., 1966), 73, 291; Durand of Dauphiné *A Huguenot Exile in Virginia; or, Voyages of a Frenchman Exiled for His Religion, with a Description of Virginia and Maryland*. Gilbert Chinard, ed. and trans. (1784; reprint, New York, 1934). 148; Richard S. Davis, ed., *William Fitzhugh and His Chesapeake World, 1676-1701* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1963), 384; Edward P. Alexander, ed., *The Journal of John Fontaine. An Irish Huguenot Son in Spain and Virginia, 1710-1719* (Williamsburg, 1972). 87, 121; Richard L. Morton, ed., *The Present Store of Virginia* (1724) (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1956). 70, 87; South River Club Collection, Maryland Historical Society, MS-771; Catesby W. Stewart, ed., *Woodford Letter Book, 1723.1737* (Verona, Va., 1977), 229.

27. Wright and Tinling, eds., *The Secret Diary*. 75.

28. Breen, “Horses and Gentlemen,” 239-257.

Throughout this array of forms, the particular motives varied—from improving or maintaining one’s health, to entertaining guests, to providing an outlet for friendly rivalries—but the performances were usually closed affairs. Separate events were the base, the “given,” of the evolving gentry’s distinctive sporting life after 1690.

The men who participated in these contests were, along with the British civil servants in their midst, the first and second generation Chesapeake-born “gentlemen.” Some, like Robert Carter of Corotoman in Virginia, were descended from minor English gentry who had migrated after mid-century and acquired some political offices and several thousand acres of land. A few, such as Edward Lloyd of Maryland, came from merchant families and had gained prestige and property as factors in family businesses or as independent traders. Still others emerged from the ranks of common planters and indentured servants.²⁹

Some of these men reached their majority in the late 1680s and the 1690s when the colonial economy was stagnant and the political climate was ripe for native-born leaders. Robert Carter, the largest landowner in Virginia, was twenty-one in 1686, and William Byrd II reached that age in 1694. Both men inherited what for the time were relatively large amounts of land. Because of their abilities, decisions, and good fortune, however, they were able to acquire much more. Carter inherited 1000 acres in 1669; when he died in 1729, he owned nearly 300,000. Byrd transformed his inheritance of 26,000 acres into 139,000 acres at the time of his death in the 1740s. Besides accumulating large amounts of land, tracts ranging from several thousand to Carter’s atypical sum of 300,000 acres, the native-born squires also diversified their holdings and acquired important local and provincial offices. They engaged in mining, merchandizing, and, especially, the practice of law. They also held colonelcies in the county militias, justice of the peace and vestry positions, Assembly and Council seats, and tax and quitrent collection posts.³⁰

29. Louis B. Wright, *The First Gentleman of Virginia. Intellectual Qualities of the Early Colonial Ruling Class* (San Marina, Calif., 1940), 4,6-7,42-43,236-37; Walter Ray Wineman, *The Landon Carter Papers in the University of Virginia Library. A Calendar and Biographical Sketch* (Charlottesville, 1962), 40; Wright, ed., *History of Virginia*, xiii-xv; Menard, “Economy and Society,” 263; Clemens, *Atlantic Economy*, 124,25; Clifford Dowdley, *The Virginia Dynasties* (Boston, 1969), 13; Aubrey C. Land, *The Dulanys of Maryland. A Biographical Study of Daniel Dulany, the Elder (1688.1753) and Daniel Dulany, the Younger (1722-1797)* (Baltimore, 1955).

30. Philip A. Bruce, ed., “Will of John Carter,” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 2 (October 1894): 236; Carl F. Cannon, “Robert (‘King’) Carter of ‘Corotoman’”(M.A. thesis, Duke University, 1956), 27, 49, 56,63,70-74; Wright, *First Gentlemen*, 249; Wright and Tinling, eds., *The Secret Diary*, xii; Main, *Tobacco Colony*, 263; Clemens, *Atlantic Economy*, 134-35; Jack P. Greene, “Foundations of Political Power in the Virginia House of Burgesses, 1720-1776,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 16 (October 1959): 485-506; idem, *The Quest for Power* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1963); Fairfax Harrison, *Virginia Land Grants* (Richmond, 1925), 93,104; Stewitt, ed., *Woodford Letter Book*, 2 I; Stephen Saunders Webb, “The Strange Career of Francis Nicholson,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 23 (October 1966): 513-46; Lois Green Can and David W. Jordan, *Maryland’s Revolution of Government, 1689-1692* (Ithaca, N. Y., 1974); Daniel Blake Smith, *Inside the Great House. Planter Family Life in Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake Society* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1980); Carole Shammas, “English-Born and Creole Elites in Turn-of-the-Century Virginia,” in Thad W. Tate and David L. Ammerman, eds., *The Chesapeake in the Seventeenth Century: Essays on Anglo-American Society* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1979), 274-96; David L. Jordan, “Political Stability and the Emergence of a Native Elite in Maryland, 1660 to 1715,” in *ibid.*, 243-73; Jack P. Greene, *Landon Carter: An Inquiry into the Personal Values and Social Imperatives of the Eighteenth-Century Virginia Gentry* (Charlottesville, 1965); Gerald W. Mullin, “The Plantation World of William Byrd II,” in Timothy H. Breen, ed., *Shaping Southern Society* (New York, 1976), 156-84; John C. Rainbolt, “The Alteration

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The distinctive sporting style of these large landowners derived from sports rooted in British and Anglo-American culture. As did other men at home and abroad, the gentry competed in traditional “natural” contests such as horse races, athletic events and field sports, and household and tavern games. For certain, however, not every form of sport that existed in the Chesapeake engaged the large landowners; and what the provincial squires did not do serves as a starting point for describing their sporting style. They did not, for example, participate in either fist fighting or cudgelling, which was a duel between men who attacked each other with stout sticks held horizontally until one of them could no longer continue.³¹ Nor, as William Byrd suggested, did men like himself engage, at least publicly, in the “unmerciful sport” of fire-hunting, a form in which both the hunted and the hunters suffered.³²

Such a sport, the owner of Westover maintained, was more appropriate for the “barbarous” than for one such as he. What made it so were the manner of performance and its outcome. Fire-hunting began as hunters torched the brush and trees that harbored a herd of deer. In what was really an “unfair way” of sporting, Byrd continued, the fire burned inward, ringing the “poor deer” and causing them “extreme distress.” With such a contrived and even destructive advantage, the hunters slaughtered the deer enmasse. For their cruelty, however, the marksmen were occasionally rewarded with more than large quantities of game: they were “hurt by one another when they shoot across at the deer which are in the middle.” In all, Byrd concluded, “‘Tis really a pitiful sight.”³³

To men of Byrd’s stature, the actions that constituted the event and the outcome mattered. Fire-hunting was unfair and cruel; and cudgelling and fist fighting were, if not explicitly contrived and unfair, at least brutal and inherently less orderly than were other forms of recreative combat. Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century courtesy manuals classified such sports as plebeian, and none of the activities engaged the large landowners. Further, in sports in which they did compete, the gentry attempted to reduce the unfairness, disorder, brutality, and excess that could, and sometimes did, appear. Genteel racemen covenanted for “faire Rideing,” and either winner or loser could prosecute an opponent who cheated or rode disgracefully.³⁴ Affluent participants expected

in the Relationship between Leadership and Constituents in Virginia, 1660 to 1720.” *William and Mary Quarterly* 27 (July 1970): 411.34.

31. This is not to say that gentlemen and would-be gentlemen did not box. Gentry records, however, reveal none of the brutal and harmful physical combats practiced by common planters. For mid-eighteenth century descriptions of cudgelling and a form of mass boxing, see Alexander Hamilton, Letterbook of Dr. Alexander Hamilton, 1739.43, Letter V, October 20, 1743, Box 2 DP, Dulany Papers, Maryland Historical Society, MS 1265; William H. Kenney, *Laughter in the Wilderness* (Kent, Ohio, 1976), 208.09; Carson, *Colonial Virginians at Ploy*, 164-65. For a fine analysis of brutal physical combats in the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, see Elliott J. Corn, “The Manly Art: Bare-Knuckle Prize Fighting and the Rise of American Sports” (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1983) and “‘Gouge and Bite, Pull Hair and Scratch’: The Social Significance of fighting in the Southern Backcountry.” *American Historical Review* 90 (February 1985): 18-43.

32. Wright, ed., *The Prose Works*, 139, 299.300.

33. Ibid: See, also, Alexander, ed., *Journal of John Fontaine*, 113.

34. April 1. 1698, Henrico County Records, 181: Stanard, “Racing in Colonial Virginia,” 296.97. By this time, the expectation of fairness had probably been a part of racing for a few years; covenants, however, do not appear to have been made much earlier.

“Decency and Sobriety” from spectators.³⁵ A landed hunter “regretted” when his party “butchered” a quantity of prey greater than it was “able to transport,” for “this was carrying out sport to wantonness.”³⁶ Even in gambling, when a locally influential man like Major Ben Robinson of Caroline County found himself in debt because of “his gaming and idleness,” he committed himself to clearing “his old scores” and to refraining from such excess in the future.³⁷

“Faire Rideing,” “Decency and Sobriety,” and moderate hunting and gambling characterized desired performances, a set of “right” actions, that appeared in gentry sporting performances after 1690. During the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when sport forms were fluid, these “right” actions defined sporting competition. “Faire Rideing,” for instance, mandated behaviors that no rule book or tradition insured. The term specified no whipping, no forcing an opponent off the path, no false starts at a time when the rules and conventions that ordered and differentiated competitive recreations, both from one another and from other forms of action incorporating the same movements, were few and unstandardized.³⁸ Race covenants, therefore, actually convened the contests and bound participants to an accepted manner of riding. They distinguished riding for sport from other equestrian activities, just as the limits on game distinguished recreative hunting from wanton slaughter.

As prescriptions for desired performances, the “right” actions actually translated a set of expectations, a set of ideal, valued qualities. Nearing or anticipating a code of conduct, this set of “right” actions incorporated three elements. As the race covenants and the phrase “Decency and Sobriety” suggest, one of these qualities was orderliness, itself a pre-condition for competition in sport and for a stable, governable society. The Chesapeake upper rank defined regular, controlled actions-ordered actions-in and about the sporting scene. They did so by agreeing about the manner of racing, discountenancing “all Immorality” among spectators, and competing in relatively well-ordered forms of sport.³⁹ Rather than pursuing activities with ill-defined numbers of participants

35. *Virginia Gazette*, November 19, 1736. William Byrd once refused to allow his “man” to attend a horse race “because there was nothing but swearing and drinking there.” Wright and Tining, eds., *The Secret Diary*, 75.

36. Wright, ed., *The Prose Works*, 278-79.

37. *Ibid.*, 373-74.

38. For the most complete description of sport forms, rules and conventions in England at this as well as earlier and later times, see Joseph Strutt, *The Sports and Pastimes of the People of England* (1801; reprint, Detroit, 1968). Also, Cyril H. Hartmann, ed., *Games and Gamesters of the Restoration: the Compleat Gamester by Charles Corton, 1674 and Lives of the Gamesters. by Theophilus Lucas, 1714* (London, 1930); Lilly C. Stone, *English Sports and Recreations* (Charlottesville, 1960); Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations. esp. chps. 1-2*; Longrigg, *History of Horse Racing*. Not even horse racing was practised in precisely the same manner in both Britain and the colonies. By the late 1660s racing at Newmarket occurred over a distance of four miles, but Chesapeake racing would not be distance racing until after thoroughbreds were imported in the middle third of the eighteenth century. Even at that time and later, however, Chesapeake racemen did not precisely copy British race practices.

39. *Virginia Gazette*, September 30, 1737. For a discussion of a more narrowly conceived code, a code of “honour” evident in duelling among eighteenth-century British gentry and nobility, see Donna T. Andrews “The Code of Honour and Its Critics: The Opposition to Duelling in England, 1700-1800,” *Social History* 5 (October 1980): 409-34. Dickson D. Bruce, Jr. and Bertram Wyatt-Brown have established the significance of honor in duelling among nineteenth century Americans. See Bruce, *Violence and Culture in the Antebellum South* (Austin, Tex., 1979), 73; and Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor. Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (Oxford, 1982).

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and outcomes, such as fisticuffs and cudgelling, the gentry fenced in pairs, played established card and dice games, and raced over pre-determined distances.

A second quality underlying the “right” actions was moderation. Moderation is a relative term derived from comparisons with contemporary non-genteel colonials and with the gentry’s peers and superiors in Britain, comparisons that some gentlemen occasionally made. It suggests the recognition and imposition of limits, limits beyond which “wantonness,” contrived competition, or debilitating debts occurred. A moderate sportsman was, in Robert Beverley’s words, “but a small Sports-man.” As a hunter, this Virginia planter-historian characterized himself as such because, needing game only to supplement his diet, he had killed fewer fowl than had his common planter neighbors.⁴⁰ Compared to their brethren in the mother country, even as gamblers gentlemen like Beverley were “small” sportsmen. They were, for certain, avid gamblers, perhaps in part as Breen has inferred, because gambling was a social glue.⁴¹ But the evidence does not suggest that their fondness for gambling led many to replicate Robinson’s actions. Particularly after the turn of the eighteenth century, few among the first two generations of Chesapeake gentry appear either to have wagered the sums that their contemporaries in Britain did or to have faced the debts and bankruptcies that threatened some of their sons and grandsons.⁴² Instead, Chesapeake squires wagered from several hundred to several thousand pounds of tobacco. In terms of early eighteenth-century specie, 200 and 2000 pounds of tobacco approximated from less than one pound to slightly more than eight pounds, respectively.⁴³ They also wagered a few shillings and five or six pounds in cash, but not the hundreds and thousands of pounds sterling put up by the aristocracy at the courts of the later Stuarts, amounts that reached the ranks

350-61. For a fine discussion of the desire for order in the mid-eighteenth century “Georgian” Chesapeake, see James Deetz *Of Small Things Forgotten* (Garden City, N.Y., 1977).

40. Wright, ed., *History of Virginia*, pp. 153-154. This sense of moderation may have extended as well to the care of their horses which gentlemen expected. Writing in 1721. James Hollyday threatened to prosecute his neighbor if “my horses come to any Damage.” Working on land owned by Richard Bennett, Thomas Rowland had seized Hollyday’s stock because it had roamed into his cornfield. Letter, James Hollyday to Thomas Rowland, November 21, 1721, Lloyd Collection, Maryland Historical Society, MS 2001. For a discussion of game as a supplement to diets of the region’s wealthy families, see Julia A. King and Henry M. Miller, “Rural Lifestyles in the Early Eighteenth Century Chesapeake: An Archaeological Comparison of Households in the Lower Potomac Region” (Unpublished paper presented at the 45th Annual Conference on Early American History, Baltimore, Md., September 1984). 32. See, also, Wright, *First Gentlemen*. 11.

41. green, “Horses and Gentlemen,” 257.

42. The losses of later-day gentry appear to have ranged from £500-2000 and up to William Byrd III’s largest single gambling loss of £10,000. Anon., “Journal of a French Traveller in the Colonies, 1765,” *American Historical Review* 26 (July 1921). 742-43; Jack P. Greene, ed., *The Diary of Colonel Landon Carter of Sabine Hall, 1752-1778* (Charlottesville, 1965), 2:638, 775, 870; Holder vs Hughlette, York County Land Causes, 16 June 1746, 1-7, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation Mfilm, M-1-14a; Louis Morton, “Robert Wormeley Carter of Sabine Hall,” *Journal of Southern History* 12 (August 1946): 356-58; Letter, William Nelson to Samuel Athawes, 16 May 1771, Nelson Letter-book, Virginia State Library MS; David Meade, “Recollections of William Byrd III,” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 27 (October 1929): 310. At a coffee house in 1712, William Byrd III played cards and woo forty shillings. Thereafter, he lost ten pounds sterling at dice and resolved to play at dice no more. Wright and Tinling, eds., *The Secret Diary*, 516.

43. These figures derive from Clemens, *Atlantic Economy*, 226. He identified the price for Talbot County, Maryland tobacco in 1720 as one pence. Prices fluctuated by county and by year; consequently a range rather than a firm amount can approximate gambling wagers. For the most complete data on the colonial economy, see John J. McCusker and Russell R. Menard, *The Economy of British America 1607-1789* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1985).

of the gentry at Newmarket during William III's reign.⁴⁴ At no time did a commentator decry, as John Evelyn had in the days of Charles II, the "Deep and prodigious gaming . . . vast heaps of gold squandered away in a vain and profuse manner."⁴⁵ Nor did anti-gambling laws in the Chesapeake cite the colonial large landowners directly, although Parliamentary actions during the reigns of both Charles II and Anne did address the landed elite in the mother country.⁴⁶

Precisely why the Chesapeake upper rank did not wager the large amounts found among Britons remains a question. Several factors apparently figured in what may have been a conscious decision not to bet inordinate amounts. First, these men operated on tobacco sales with which they balanced accounts; and debt was a fearful condition to men who "live in a kind of Independence on every one but providence."⁴⁷ Not until the late 1720s and 1730s did the economy stabilize, and, until then, "sotweed" revenues essentially financed necessities, especially land and slaves. Crop receipts did not cover luxuries, including large wagers, things that made one "too much of this world."⁴⁸ Second, these working squires who avoided conspicuous consumption, who wanted to be "not too gaudy or rich, yet genteel," had a moral sense that blended Enlightenment and Calvinist strains.⁴⁹ Men who desired ordered and moderate sporting competition, and a similarly characterized society, expected themselves and their children to be "well moral'd," to show "good morals and . . . agreeable obligeing behaviour."⁵⁰ Excessive wagers, in contrast, were evidence of neither. Finally, their economic condition and moral sense jointly shaped the third factor, the reality of their existence. Unlike their English brethren, the provincial upper rank possessed no birth-right to rank or status, and they existed in a colony where life itself was a gamble. Gambling for relatively small wagers, then, was a mechanism for dealing with the competitiveness of life, but one that did not threaten their own fragile internal relations or their economic and moral notions."

44. Roger Longrigg, *The English Squire and His Sport* (New York, 1977), 139-40; James Rice, *History of the British Turf. From Earliest Times to the present Day* (London, 1879), 1312.

45. Cited in Longrigg, *History of Horse Racing*, 56.

46. 16 Charles II. ch. 17; 9 Anne, ch. 14.

47. William Byrd II to Charles Boyle, Earl of Orrey, July 5, 1726, in "Virginia Council Journals, 1726-1753," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 32 (January 1924): 27; and Marion Tintling, ed., *The Correspondence of the Three William Byrds of Westover* (Charlottesville, 1977), 1:355. In an artful book, Timothy Breen has argued that debt became more critical as the eighteenth century progressed. *Increasing* debt, or at least the perception of increasing debt, challenged the major planters' autonomy and morality, catalyzed strained relations with tobacco merchants, and was a factor in the Revolutionary mentality. See, T. H. Breen, *Tobacco Culture. The Mentality of the Great Tidewater Planters on the Eve of the Revolution* (Princeton, 1985).

48. Louis B. Wright, ed., *Lettres of Robert Carter 1720-1727*. The Commercial Interests of a Virginia Gentleman (San Marina, Calif., 1940), 79-80. See, also, Main, *Tobacco Colony*, 167.239.

49. Cited in Dowdey, *Virginia Dynasties*, 153.

50. Fairfax Harrison, "The Will of Charles Carter of Cleve." *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 31 (January 1923): 39; Greene, *Landon Carter*, 2.

51. This conclusion synthesizes the arguments of Breen, "Horses and Gentlemen," 243, 256; Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia 1740-1790* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1982), 119; and Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor*, 344. Gambling may be central to the colonial sporting experience, but much more research is required in this and in other periods of American history as well. For a general survey that depends largely on impressionistic and secondary sources for the colonial period (except for the discussion of colonial lotteries), see Findlay, *People of Chance*, 11-43.

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The third element within the gentry's code of conduct involved a belief in the primacy of useful, productive action and a desire to avoid unproductive endeavors. Chesapeake gentlemen disliked idleness, the most unproductive state; and some of their sporting activities even occurred, according to Byrd, to "avoid the imputation of idleness"⁵² To Byrd and others, the primacy of productive activity was unquestioned, a dictum that applied both to the environment in which sport occurred and to men's actions. A deer park, wrote Governor William Gooch of Virginia in 1727, could be and was "turn'd to a better use I think than Deer, which is feeding of all sorts of Cattle."⁵³ Robert Carter applied the same line of reasoning to his workmen and his sons. On one occasion when two of Carter's Comish laborers claimed the right to certain holidays and free time on Saturday afternoon, Carter responded that:

You pretend to holidayes and what not; but I forbid it you and order him (overseer) to make you work dayly as the rest of my servants that are there do day by day . . .⁵⁴

At another time Carter reprimanded his eldest son John when the youth was studying in England because he seemed to prefer the "pleasures of the town" and was "so taken up with your diversions."⁵⁵

Carter's criticism of his workmen and his son suggests just how seriously he viewed proper conduct. In previous centuries in Britain, and even in later decades in the Chesapeake, gentlemen responded differently to servants' holiday expectations and to the diversions of their offspring than did "King" Carter. By the middle of the sixteenth century, the government in London had reduced the number of "holy days" from 217 to seventy-eight. Still, British laborers had continued to enjoy some of the holidays associated with the remaining holy days almost as a right. Then, too, genteel young Britons had pursued "pleasures of the town" as virtual rites of passage. Eventually, during and after the middle of the eighteenth century, both practices revived in the Chesapeake, even at various Carter plantations. In fact, Robert "King" Carter's own grandson, Robert Wormeley Carter, and his great grandsons, Landon and George, spent days and even weeks away from the plantation duties pursuing "pleasures" and "diversions."⁵⁶

For "King" Carter's generation, however, appropriate actions and the code that described them were serious endeavors. They affected both the structure and life scheme of the men's evolving plantation world, as well as the conduct of recreations. Order was a priority for those who were responsible for establishing and maintaining order in a fragile, developing society, and it was a pre-

52. Wright, ed., *The Prose Works*, 249.

53. Letter. William Gooch to Thomas Gooch. Bishop of Norwich, September 18, 1727, Letters of Governor William Gooch, 1727-1751, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation typescript.

54. Cited in Dowdey, *Virginia Dynasties*. 355.

55. Wright, ed., *Letters of Robert Carter*, 99, 258-59.

56. Winton U. Solberg, *Redeem the Time. The Puritan Sabbath in Early America* (Cambridge, Mass., 1977), pp. 23-26; F. G. Emmison, *Elizabethan Life: Disorder* (Chelmsford, 1970), 229-30; Anon., "Journal of a French Traveller, 1765," 741.42; Josiah Quincy, "Journal of Josiah Quincy, Jr., 1773," *Massachusetts Historical Society Proceedings* 49 (June 1916): 467; Greene, ed., *Diary of Landon Carter*, 2:638, 775, 819-20, 850, 870; Morton, "Robert Wormeley Carter." 356-58.

condition for competition. Moderation appealed to the tradition of genteel sensibilities, which the large landowners in the Chesapeake assumed as their own, and it deterred the transformation of sport into acts of chaos and brutality. Finally, the priority of useful, productive activities-work before sport, useful competitive recreations before diversions or contrived contests-underlay the Chesapeake squires' efforts to gain and maintain land and influence as well as to avoid the debts and destructive sports that occurred among the British upper rank and among the common planters and others in their midst.

The gentry's sporting style incorporated one other facet of their existence. Unlike all other colonial endeavors, except manual labor, participation in many sports centered on the body and physical performance. It was this performance that colonials saw, even though such participation clearly involved mental decisions. It was this performance that the gentlemen's code of conduct governed. Physical actions were important and meaningful to the large landowners of the Chesapeake; and they did conceive of ideal physical performances in terms of an abstraction, as their comments about the activities of the small planters whom they observed suggest. On a surveying trip through the Roanoke River region in Virginia in 1728, William Byrd met Epaphroditus Bainton, a frontier planter, whom he admired. Bainton's accomplishments, recorded Byrd, included walking twenty-five miles "in a day" and killing more than 100 deer yearly.⁵⁷ In another case, Colonel Phillip Ludwell, the auditor of royal revenues in Virginia in 1710, expressed near-amazement at the feats of the wife of a planter in the Virginia-Carolina borderlands. This Mrs. Francis Jones "is very civil and shews nothin of ruggedness," Ludwell wrote, "yet she will carry a gunn in the woods and kill deer, turkeys, &c., . . . and perform the most manful Exercises as well as most men in those parts."⁵⁸ A third, and caustic, reaction appeared in the commentary of an Anglican minister, the Reverend Hugh Jones. Speaking about the common planters, Jones noted, they lead "easy lives" and "don't much admire Labour or any manly Exercise, except Horse-Racing."⁵⁹

What the genteel observer had focused on in the activities of contemporaries was a single element, an element that, if present, merited approval and if absent, criticism. Ludwell and Jones admired "manful" or "manly" exercise, a euphemism for a task requiring physical prowess. Combining strength, skill, bravery, and even gallantry, rowess encapsulated gentry physical performance expectations and was significant in practical and symbolic ways⁶⁰ On the one hand, a man without physical strength, stamina, and courage lacked the fundamental attributes for survival, let alone for the achievement of wealth and

57. Wright, ed., *The Prose Works*, 100.

58. Philip Ludwell, "Boundary Lill Proceedings, 1710," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 5 (July 1897): 10.

59. Morton, ed., *Present State of Virginia*, 48.

60. Clearly a masculine and military related concept, prowess seems to be essential to understand how and why physical performances were idealized at a time when the body itself was conceived of as little more than a housing for the soul. Rooted in ancient Greek and Renaissance thought, the concept of prowess was extolled in the courtesy literature and the subsequent civility manuals (see note 63 below). Prowess invoked manly valor, courage, physical skill, and strength. *Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford, 1933), 8:1531.

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power, in the late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century Chesapeake. Further, for men who suffered from gout and other physical ills in an age when the mortality rate was high and when medical treatment was elementary and occasionally traumatic, the development of prowess was, in the Lockean sense, a practical necessity.⁶¹ So Byrd, who suffered from gout, walked to “make a man of tolerable vigor an able footman” and swam to “restore our vigor.” The surveying party led by Governor Alexander Spotswood “exercised” itself in hunting bear in 1716. And in 1729 Colonel William Woodford accepted his son’s daily riding and fishing in the hopes that these would help the son “escape a Seasoning.”⁶²

Prowess was also an observable quality. It differentiated men, an important, although usually unstated, goal of men who were evolving as a native upper rank. Since the cult of courtesy had pervaded the British court in the sixteenth century, courtiers and civil servants had magnified the importance of prowess as a sign of ability, of potential, of achievement. Those who trained the physical and developed prowess, announced the literature, served the state and gloried in its greatness; those who lacked prowess were destined to anonymity, to the mass of humanity.⁶³ The sentiment was not lost in the Chesapeake. Both real life and the courtier manuals in their libraries transmitted the same message to the gentry and to would-be gentlemen.⁶⁴

Located both in experience and in rhetoric, then, prowess was a historical ideal whose significance remained intact for the large landowners of the Chesapeake. It helps to explain why Byrd scoffed at the brutal fire hunting, why Mathew Slader’s cheating earned the court’s retribution, and even why “natural” sport forms that highlighted the individual’s physical and mental capacities—racing, hunting, athletic endeavors, and even games of chance—predominated over both the brutal, plebeian forms of physical combat and the slowly developing “artificial” contests such as ball games between units of men requiring equipment like bats, wickets, and jacks. It also provided what the other components of the gentlemen’s sporting scheme, the code of conduct and separate events, did not fully establish: a clear rationalization and justification for participation in competitive recreations.

III

The evidence that allows one to describe the sporting style of the large

61. John Locke, “Some Thoughts Concerning Education,” in H. R. Penniman, ed., *Politics and Education* (New York, 1947); Dennis Brailsford, *Sport and Society, Elizabeth to Anne* (London, 1969), 185-97, 223-30.

62. Wright, ed., *The Prose Works*, 291, 397; Alexander, ed., *Journal of John Fontaine*, 104; Stewart, ed., *Woodford Letter Book*, 229.

63. See, for example, Sir Thomas Elyot, *The Bake Named the Governour* (1531), Henry H. S. Croft, ed. (London, 1883); Roger Ascham, *The Schoolmaster* (1570), Lawrence V. Ryan, ed. (Ithaca, N.Y., 1967); Sir Humphrey Gilbert, *Queene Elizabethes’ Academy. A Booke of Precedence* (1564), Frederick J. Furnivall, ed. (London, 1869); Henry Peacham, *Compeat Gentlemen* (1622), Virgil B. Heltzel, ed. (Ithaca, N.Y., 1962). See, also, Nancy L. Struna, “The Declaration of Sports Reconsidered,” *Canadian Journal of History of Sport* 14 (December 1983): 49; Roberta J. Park, “Strong Bodies, Healthful Regimens, and Playful Recreations as Viewed by Utopian Authors of the 16th and 17th Centuries,” *Research Quarterly* 49 (December 1978): 498-511; Brailsford, *Sport and Society*, esp. chps. 1-2.

64. Wright, *First Gentlemen*, 149-53, 206, 210, 335.

landowners of the Chesapeake is insufficient to connect this style to the evolution of an upper rank within a profoundly changing culture. That relationship emerges only from a reasoned dialogue with adjacent evidence, beginning with an answer to the question of timing. The years when the gentry formalized sport essentially “fit” between two other subperiods of less striking and less complex change. The first occurred prior to the late 1680s when the economy and the legal system combined to stratify Chesapeake society and its sporting life, a process that did not significantly affect the substance of sporting activities. The second occurred between the 1730s and the mid-1760s, as the sons of the original generations of landed planters essentially modified contest forms and embellished both the manners of performance and the social scene. By the middle of the eighteenth century, for instance, the provincial squires had replaced quarter mile sprints with lengthy thoroughbred matches, and they had added oval tracks and long tables and punch bowls at hunts. These changes, as well as the incorporation of sport contests with balls and banquets, enabled the Georgian sporting competitors to make different cultural statements than were possible or meaningful among earlier gentlemen.⁶⁵

Such mid-eighteenth-century changes were really elaborations on the original gentry’s sporting scheme. They were new fashions predicated on an older style, specialized places and forms that were components of the ongoing relocation of sport from work to leisure, a process that incorporated the original generation’s ideal of prowess and right actions.⁶⁶ The changes among the Georgian gentry also emerged when alterations, rather than radical change, in colonial life affected the region. Agricultural diversification, in- and out-migration, and the consolidation of power by the Assemblies did, of course, affect life in Maryland and Virginia,⁶⁷ but not to the extent that the introduction of slaves, the acquisition of extensive acreage and mercantile contacts, the adjustment of the sex ratio to near-equality, and the decline in the mortality rate had affected the late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century colonies. Such factors transformed the Chesapeake from a land of predominantly short-lived, white male small planters into a hierarchical, biracial, paternalistic plantation society in which families and markets were important.

A relationship between these early, broad cultural changes and the sporting

65. See, for example, *Maryland Gazette*, December 21, 1752, November 27, 1766; Edward M. Riley, ed., *The Journal of John Harrower, An Indentured Servant in the Colony of Virginia, 1773-1776* (Williamsburg, 1963). 65; Hunter Dickinson Farnish, ed., *Journal and Letters of Philip Vickers Fithian, 1773-1774 : A Plantation Tutor of the Old Dominion* (Williamsburg, 1943). 198, 201-03; John C. Fitzpatrick, ed., *The Writings of George Washington, 1745-1799* (Washington, D-C., 1931-1944). 29:295-96, 32:109, 37:194-95; Aubrey C. Land, ed., *Letters from America* (Cambridge, Mass., 1969), 54-55; Isaac, *Transformation of Virginia*. 88-114.

66. The relocation of sport from work to leisure may be the critical underlying process occurring during the eighteenth century. See Nancy L. Struna. “Sport and the Awareness of Leisure” (Paper presented at the U.S. Capitol Historical Society Symposium. “Of Consuming Interests: The Style of Life in the Eighteenth Century,” Washington, D.C.. March 1986).

67. McCusker and Menard, *The Economy of British America*. 295-308; Richard B. Sheridan, “The Domestic Economy,” in Greene and Pole, eds. *Colonial British America*. 43-87; Jack P. Greene, “The Growth of Political Stability: An Interpretation of Political Development in the Anglo-American Colonies, 1660-1760,” in John Parker and Carol Urness, eds., *The American Revolution: A Heritage of Change* (Minneapolis, 1975). 26-52; John R. Murrin. Political Development,” in Greene and Pole, eds., *Colonial British America*. 432-45.

style of the gentry does seem to exist. The gentry altered their sporting practices most dramatically, formalizing specific contests and proper conduct, when relatively major social change occurred throughout the region. Raymond Williams has noted this relationship in other historical periods and cultures, and he has suggested a reason for the connection. Dramatic culture change, he has explained, involves fluid relations among people and between people and conditions. In turn, this fluid state presents numerous opportunities for the interaction of an activity such as sport with the broader society.⁶⁸ To late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century Chesapeake society, these theoretical statements appear applicable. Relations were fluid, and the gentry evolved as an upper rank by defining and stabilizing social relations through the material culture, especially land and slavery. What remains to be seen is how sport also mediated social relations and took its particular shape in the lifestyle of the gentry and the region.

The evolution of the large landowners and the definition of their sporting scheme involved three particular sets of relations. As the earlier discussion of gambling suggested, one included the men themselves, who were clearly contentious individuals. They competed for land, for offices, and in the Councils and Assemblies-sometimes among themselves, occasionally with others. However, they also had to cooperate with one another to consolidate their individual and collective positions and power. By 1700 they had achieved at least a near-balance between competition and cooperation, and they had begun to develop their sporting scheme, including its small-wager gambles. However, unlike economic and political contests that were defined by market conditions and traditional conventions and institutions, the sporting activities that the gentry inherited had few conventions and traditions-and even in Britain no governing bodies--to regularize and bind competition. Thus, "right" actions, which resulted as the gentry competed among themselves and as they observed the performances of others, convened and ended the competition and deterred "cheates." As did the small wagers, in other words, "right" actions kept sporting contests "competitive." The code also kept events ordered, moderate, and productive so that sport could translate ideals and values and thus exist as a shared activity for health, for enjoyment and entertainment, for displays of prowess, for the ubiquitous gambling.⁶⁹

The second set of relations involved the provincial gentlemen and those who provided the elite model: large landowners and merchants in the mother country. Numerous newly-regular connections between the provincial squires

68. Williams, *The Sociology of Culture*, esp. 57-86.

69. The evidence, or more accurately the paucity of evidence, suggests that genteel sportsmen generally did adhere to the intra-rank ordering in sporting competition. Except for a Ben Robinson or a John Carter, few gentlemen appear to have circumvented the rank's code of conduct. When a serious infraction did occur, as in the case of a broken race covenant-also occasional and seemingly patternless incidents-the courts adjudicated the dispute. On race covenants, see "Some Extracts from the Records of York Co., Virginia." *William and Mary Quarterly* 11 (January 1901): 178-79; August 29, 1694, Westmoreland County, Order Book. 1690-1698,146-146a: Stanard. "Racing in Virginia," 296; Carson, *Colonial Virginians at Play*, 105-06.

and their metropolitan brethren developed in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Affluent men of the Chesapeake sent their sons to school in England, imported household and agricultural goods, became land agents for British lords, and practiced a traditional British activity-sport. Besides testing one another in the tradition of separate events, the provincial gentry began to purchase English books and equipment, both of which simultaneously united them in old world upper rank traditions and provided them with the means of formalizing sport in the new world.⁷⁰ That specific forms of sport, especially horse racing and hunting, differed from what homeland sportsmen did apparently mattered little, if at all.⁷¹ The perception of Britishness was important. By 1724 Reverend Hugh Jones concluded that the emulation had succeeded: provincial gentlemen “behave themselves exactly as do the Gentry in London.”⁷²

The provincial gentlemen adopted one other practice from the British upper ranks just as a third set of relations, between themselves and their smaller planter neighbors and servants, was also changing. This was patronage, the practice of a gentleman supporting, arranging, even paying for the sporting pursuits of those about him.⁷³ The particular ways in which the large landowners supported and cultivated common planters and servants varied. In horse racing the gentry attended races among neighboring small planters in near-by fields; they granted the use of their lands for quarter mile sprints; and they arranged contests. Gentlemen also patronized members of the local community, be that of the immediate plantation or of the broader neighborhood, when life warranted celebrations in which sport was a focal activity. As they had for centuries in the mother country, Chesapeake harvest festivals and the shooting and athletic contests that accompanied them required the commitment of time and provisions by the large landowners. So, too, did the musters and other martial displays that occurred in the course of Chesapeake life. As commanders, the majors, colonels, and provincial governors arranged target, wrestling, cudgelling, and running contests. They also provided the prizes—rifles, swords, saddles, boots, and money.⁷⁴

Direct evidence about the precise effect of gentry patronage on relations with other colonials is virtually non-existent, and one is again left to consider the sequence of happenings within the broader society. One possibility begins with

70 See note 64 above, and Main, *Tobacco Colony*. 206-239.

71. Jack P. Greene has long contended that Chesapeake squires wanted to become as nearly as possible like their peers in Britain. For a discussion of the idealizing of metropolitan culture by colonials. see Greene, “Search for Identity: An Interpretation of the Meaning of Selected Patterns of Social Response in Eighteenth-Century America,” *Journal of Social History* 3 (Spring 1970): 189-220. But as Breen has suggested, the evidence about their sporting lives does not suggest that they consciously copied British forms and customs; “Horses and Gentlemen.” 242. n. 9

72. Morton, ed., *Present State of Virginia*, 32. 43.

73. G. E. Mingay. *English Landed Society in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1963); Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations*. 56-67. Malcolmson found patronage declining over time among eighteenth-century gentry in Britain, largely for economic reasons. This did not happen until the third quarter of the century in the Chesapeake.

74. Anon., “Narrative of a Voyage to Maryland. 1705-06,” *American Historical Review* 12 (January 1907): 334-35; William I Hinke. ed., “The Journey of Francis Louis Michel,” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*. 24 (April 1916): 129; Wright and Tinsling, eds., *The Secret Diary*. 414-15; Bruce. *Social Life*. 242.

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the decade and a half before 1690 when some degree of social unrest, a degree disputed among historians, surfaced in the Chesapeake. The disturbances and discontent took many forms and involved many people until the turn of the century, or shortly after. By that time, a more stable economy and the expansion of slaveholding, an increase in the number of women and families, out-migration, and the cooperation of royal governors and major planters had combined to reduce the internal tensions.⁷⁵ But the possibility exists that the patronage of common planters and servants by their wealthier neighbors and employers may have figured in the stabilizing process and in the relative stability of the early eighteenth century. Particularly after 1700 the large landowners patronized sporting events that occasionally had been scenes of drinking and fighting among the common planters, and they discouraged “all Immorality” at the gatherings. Further, as their own horse races regularized and neighbors gathered at what became local public events, the gentry had an arena in which they could display their own “right” conduct and reinforce actions with calls for “Decency and Sobriety.”⁷⁶

Gentry patronage also coincided with another development in the Chesapeake, one that affected provincial society in general and that the gentry may have encouraged for reasons other than internal peace. Among contemporary colonials, sport appeared more frequently than it had during the third quarter of the seventeenth century, a trend that gentry patronage certainly did not discourage or disrupt. The “natural” contests—horse racing, hunting, and shooting—engaged many members of Chesapeake society, particularly for entertainment. As Robert Beverley noted, even poor planters entertained others gladly, and if a “Churl” did not “comply with this generous Custom, he has a mark of Infamy set upon him . . .”⁷⁷ A part of this entertainment involved physical recreations—particularly shooting, but also swimming, hunting, and wrestling. Such practices occurred throughout the region; and even though they lacked equipment for games, common planters and laborers made sport with what was available. In the western plantations, one found large game that had all but disappeared in the east, and surveying parties encountered Indian

75. Menard, “Economy and Society,” 258-59; Edmund Morgan, “Slavery and Freedom,” *Journal of American History* 54 (June 1972): 20-21; Kenneth Lockridge, *Settlement and Unsettledness in Early America* (Cambridge 1981), 66-68; Gary B. Nash, “Social Development,” in Greene and Pole, eds. *Colonial British America*. 244-45; Webb, “The Strange Career of Francis Nicholson,” 527; Russell R. Menard, “Immigrants and Their Increase: Their Process of Population Growth in Early Colonial Maryland,” in Land, Carr, and Papenfuss, eds., *Low, Society, and Politics*, 98; Clemens, *Atlantic Economy*, 63-69; Lois Green Carr and Lorena S. Walsh, “The Planter’s Wife: The Experiences of White Women in Seventeenth-Century Maryland,” in Nancy F. Cott and Elizabeth H. Pleck, eds., *A Heritage of Her Own. Toward a New Social History of American Women* (New York, 1979), 25-57; Mary Beth Norton, “The Evolution of White Women’s Experience in Early America,” *American Historical Review* 89 (June 1984): 593-619.

76. Undoubtedly these races were small and clearly local affairs. No precise crowd figures exist, but given the extensive land surrounding a focal plantation and the county organization of the Chesapeake, these gatherings probably ranged from several hundred to a thousand people. However, a gentleman dealt directly and intimately with his neighbors and his county, rather than with all colonials and all regions.

77. Wright, ed., *History of Virginia*. 312.13.

influences and contests with the natives less evident elsewhere.⁷⁸ Despite continuing laws, too, gambling did not cease, nor did tavern visits. Horse racing became more common as the number of horses increased. Race paths and fields dotted the landscape, and Saturday had become a major race day.⁷⁹ By 1702 the Maryland Assembly believed that the “frequent” racing on that day contributed “very much To the Prophanacon of the Lords Day following,” and it condemned the practice. Ill-enforced and even offset by genteel support for the sport, such legislative actions did not, however, discourage the events⁸⁰ Facilitated as it occasionally was by gentry arrangement and approbation, sport existed in the Chesapeake as a medium of social exchange, a part of common parlance, a set of activities in which various ranks of provincials engaged.

The case of horse racing suggests that the gentry may actually have chosen to encourage the commonness of sport. The large landowners did, of course, patronize racing, and they did not enforce the laws concerning horses and gambling. From their positions as justices and because of the old precedent that had clarified racing as “a sport only for Gentlemen,” they could have attempted to exclude others. Exclusivity, however, simply never developed, for several reasons.⁸¹ In racing, exclusivity provided few, if any, practical advantages among men who were eminently practical. Maintaining racing only among themselves would, at the very least, have been an unrealistic goal, given that colonials were spread out over many miles. On the other hand, such a practice might have been counter-productive. Quarter mile racing was perhaps the most useful of Chesapeake competitive recreations for two reasons. First, the matches tested the prowess of man and steed, and the hardiness required in these races conditioned both the rider and his horse to the physical demands of plantation life and provincial travel. Second, and probably more important, as contemporary British racemen and Parliament believed and as provincial laws implied, race paths and fields advanced the goal of quality horseflesh.⁸²

78. Anon., “Voyage to Maryland. 1705-06.” 337; John Clayton, “Virginia Game and Field Sports. Description of them by the Botanist Clayton in 1739,” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 7 (October 1899): 174; Alexander, ed., *Journal of John Fontaine*, 87, 104. For wrestling as “diversion” at mid-century, see John W. Wayland, ed., *The Fairfax Line* (New Market, Va., 1925). 51. Estate inventories from Maryland, sampled in ten-year intervals from 1680 to 1730, revealed virtually no equipment specifically appropriate for sport. Inventories and Accounts, 1680, Liber 7,1690, Liber 11, HB no. C. 1700, Liber 57, Liber WT. 1710, Liber WB. nos. 3,4,5, 6, 7, 8; Inventories, 1720, Liber TB nos. 4, 7, 8, 1730. Liber EHC no. 10, Liber CC no. 11, Maryland Hall of Records.

79. In 1712/13 (old style) the Virginia Assembly noted and deplored the *increase* in horses; *Virginia Statutes*. 4:46-49. In 1728 the Assembly passed an anti-gambling act which encompassed virtually all previous acts and most activities; *Virginia Statutes*, 4:214-18. This act copied almost verbatim an act of Parliament; William Gooch, “Official Correspondence, 1727-1741,” PRO CO 511321, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation typescript, 1, June 8 1728. In 1733 the Maryland Assembly considered but did not pass a similar act to regulate “excessive and deceitful Gaming”; *Archives of Maryland*, 39:10. For a clarification of precisely whose gambling activities the legal authorities feared, see George Webb, *office and Authority of a Justice of Peace* (Williamsburg, 1736), 165.66. Discussions of middle and later eighteenth-century taverns and horse racing exist in Patricia A. Gibbs, “Taverns in Tidewater Virginia, 1700-1774” (M.A. thesis, William and Mary College, 1968); Allen E. Begnaud, “Hoofbeats in Colonial Maryland, *Maryland Historical Magazine* 65 (Fall 1970): 207-38; Fairfax Harrison, “The Equine FFV’s: A Study of the Evidence for the English Horses Imported into Virginia Before the Revolution,” *Virginia Magazine of Historic and Biography* 35 (October 1927): 329-70.

80. *Archives of Maryland*. 24-244, 275.

81. Breen apparently had another sense of this word in mind than do I. Although he called gentry races exclusive events, he did not suggest that others did not race.

82. Longrigg, *History of Horse Racing*. 48, 57-62; idem, *The English Squire*. 81-82. 138-39; Neil

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The gentry's encouragement of racing and horse breeding, their manipulation of the material culture, was socially significant. Although land and, gradually, chattel slavery were the pre-eminent factors in the creation of a native upper rank, they did not by themselves guarantee the rank's power and authority in a society that lacked a traditional landed aristocracy. In part at least, power and authority depended on the deference and the respect earned from inferiors and on the reputations recognized by governors who could grant political offices and responsibilities. Deference and respect, in turn, derived from appropriate performances in appropriate circumstances—superior performances and the performances of superiors in activities meaningful to many.⁸³ Sport in general and horse racing in particular became activities in which gentlemen could secure deference and reputations because, like land and tobacco and voting, they were common and appreciated by many colonials. Throughout the Chesapeake, colonists appreciated the prowess of the rider and his horse. Genteel riders, already set apart by extensive land ownership, augmented that distinctiveness by reaping indirect benefits of the contests—personal prestige, renown, enhanced reputations. However, separate events, rather than exclusive ones, were the key. And, as Breen has implied, horse racing was and remained the central event in the gentry sporting life.⁸⁴

It was so, of course, because it was common; and commonness may have been essential to eliteness, at least in the colonies where a native aristocracy had not existed. Indeed, it also may have been because many colonials had access to a shared material culture that a social system modeled on the closed, birth-defined hierarchy in Britain could not develop in the Chesapeake. For certain, however, because conditions and relations in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries were dynamic, those things that either were or became *relatively* common—especially land and, gradually, slavery—prominently figured in the evolution of regional stability by defining relations among the “ranks” that anchored society. Gradually, many whites achieved both, with property-holding existing as the essential feature of the hierarchical plantation society and, as Edmund Morgan has argued, slave-ownership serving as the

McKendrick, John Brewer, and J. H. Plumb, *The Birth of a Consumer Society. The Commercialization of Eighteenth Century England* (Bloomington, Ind., 1982), 318-19.

83. On land and slavery, see note 30 above, and Timothy H. Breen, “A Changing Labor Force and Race Relations in Virginia, 1660-1710,” *Journal of Social History* 7 (Fall 1973): 3-25; Morgan, *American Slavery American Freedom*, esp. 316-62; Russell R. Menard, “From Servants to Slaves: The Transformation of the Chesapeake Labor System,” *Southern Studies* 16 (Winter 1977): 355-90; Smith, *Inside the Great House*; Isaac, *Transformation of Virginia*, 13 1-35; David Galenson, “The Rise and Fall of Indentured Servitude in the Americas: An Economic Analysis,” *Journal of Economic History* 44 (March 1984): 1-26; Nash, “Social Development,” 245. Many secondary works on colonial politics cite the importance of deference, but the most helpful discussion is that by J. G. A. Pocock, “The Classical Theory of Deference,” *American Historical Review* 81 (June 1976): 516-23.

84. Breen, “Horses and Gentlemen,” 257; Isaac, *Transformation of Virginia*, 88-114. The Rutmans have also discussed the quality of one's performance and skills in the context of public work and status; see *A Place in Time*, esp. ch. 5. As are other aspects of my analysis, this paragraph bears the influence of Clifford Geertz and Victor Turner. See, Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York, 1973), esp 3-30, 412-53; Turner, *The Ritual Process* (Chicago, 1969) and *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1974). The nature and significance of symbols in eighteenth-century Chesapeake life has been most clearly addressed by Rhys Isaac and A. G. Rober. See, Isaac, *Transformation of Virginia*; and Rober, “Authority, Law, and Custom: The Rituals of Court Day in Tidewater Virginia, 1720 to 1750,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 37 (January 1980): 29-52.

basis for the white alliance that secured internal peace and perhaps even freedom.⁸⁵

By no means, of course, did sport affect Chesapeake society in the same way or to that extent that other components of the region's material culture, especially land and slavery, did. But as forms of sport gradually became more common over time, the competitive recreations that translated gentry values mediated social relations, especially the one that was critical to the evolution of the large landowners as an upper rank, that between the gentlemen and the common planters. A distinctive gentry sporting style, derived and formalized out of common, traditional experience, then, reproduced the paradox that characterized Chesapeake society in the eighteenth century. Like land and slavery, sport simultaneously linked and separated Chesapeake colonials.

85. Morgan, *American Slavery-American Freedom*, esp. 338-87.