



美国文化

American Culture: An Introduction 简介

马宏宇 编著

大连海事大学出版社

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前 言

多年前的一次课间闲谈,萌生了编写此书的想法,在历经多年的教学积累后,这种想法愈发强烈,思路也愈发清晰。随后,在上海外国语大学专题研究期间,又进行了大量的阅读,并在后来的工作学习中逐渐积累了有关美国的多方位、多层次的资料,最终形成了此书的书稿。

本书由十五章构成,其中包括美国简史(The Origins of American and Its Development),美国政治制度(American Political System),美国宗教(Religion in America),美国人的价值观(American Values),美国精神(The American Character),美国文学(American Literature),美国的科技(Technology in America),美国教育制度(Education in America),美国校园生活(Campus Life in America),美国社会生活(Social Life in America),美国社会习俗(Social Customs in America),美国的非言语交际(American Nonverbal Communication),美国的社会问题(Social Problems in America),二十一世纪的美国(American in the 21st Century),美国的主要节日(American Holidays)。本书简明扼要地介绍了美国的多元文化中的严肃类话题,诸如:历史概况、政治制度、民族特色、多种宗教的并存、美国人的价值观、社会问题、美国的教育制度,美国最新的科技发展动态及其二十一世纪所面临的挑战,又在比较轻松的话题中介绍了美国的社会生活、习俗、家庭结构、休闲娱乐、非言语交际等日常生活中喜闻乐见的文化现象。

本书旨在向非英语专业或相当水平的读者介绍发展中的美国及美国社会人文,帮助他们比较系统地了解美国文化、了解西方社会人文概况,并借此扩大视野,提高文化素质,在经济全球化的浪潮中,更快更好地适应日益频繁的跨文化交际活动。

本书在出版过程中得到大连海事大学外国语学院相关领导的大力支持和鼓励,在此,表示由衷的感谢!

海事大学出版社的编辑和审稿人员为本书的出版倾注了大量心血,还有为本书进行版式和封面设计以及排版等工作人员都给本人留下深刻印象,在此一并表示感谢!

因时间仓促,本人水平有限,加之许多问题仍处于发展变化之中未形成定论,虽殚精竭虑,书中错误和不足仍在所难免,恳请读者不吝批评指正。

马宏宇
2013年12月

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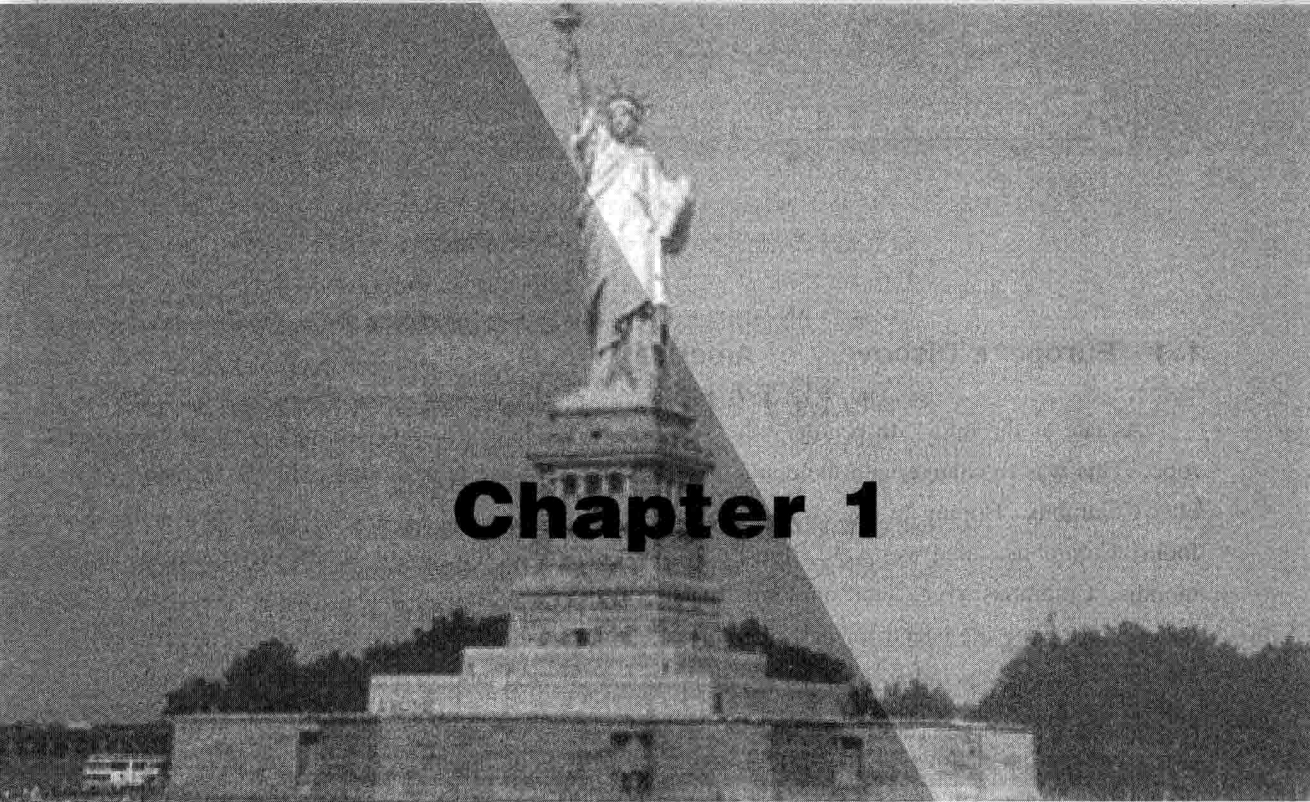
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Chapter 1

The Origins of American and Its Development

The United States is a constantly changing country. Only in the mid – 20th century has it achieved a position of worldwide prominence. Since it is such a relatively young country, even modern American history is relevant to what is commonly referred to as “American Origins”. American history does not simply begin on July 4, 1776. Its intellectual, political, economic, and cultural foundations were slowly laid for centuries prior to 1776, in both North America and Great Britain. A proper, though truncated, study of American history must begin with the initial European presence in North America. Of course, this chapter is not meant to be a substitute for a complete study of American history, and readers are encouraged to consult more complete works of American history. Only certain events that truly define the American character will be covered in detail. Thus, for example, the colonial development, the war of Independence, and the Civil War will be treated in more detail than the War of 1812 and the U. S. involvement in World War I.

This chapter is to give the reader a sense of how the United States has evolved into what it is today. This will entail a general overall view of the important events and trends in American history.

1.1 Europe's Discovery of America

As late as the mid-15th century, the Western Hemisphere was virtually unknown to Europe. This was to change with the epoch-making voyage of the great Italian explorer Christopher Columbus. Hoping to discover a shorter, hence more lucrative, sea route to China and India, Columbus sailed westward from Europe in 1492 under the flag of Spain. After several months, Columbus struck land on a small island in the Caribbean, which he named San Salvador. Mistaking the island for part of India, Columbus called the native inhabitants Indians. Far from discovering India, however, Columbus had located land in the Western Hemisphere and turned the eye of Europe to the "New World". After Columbus' return to Europe, the two great marine nations of the time, Spain and Portugal, began competing for economic domination in the Americas.

A period of fierce economic competition with Portugal followed, as well as brutal subjugation of the native inhabitants. Inevitably, Spain gained dominion over most of the Americas. This domination lasted nearly one hundred years, until 1588. In this historic year, the English navy defeated the great Spanish Armada. This defeat signaled the decline of the Spanish Empire. Great Britain gained control of the main Atlantic sea routes, and began to replace Spain as the major force in North America.

1.2 The English Colonies

The first permanent English settlers in North America began arriving early in the 17th century. Private companies typically sponsored these settlements; such companies were hoping to gain profits in resource-rich North America. In 1667, Jamestown, Virginia became the first successful English colony. Early years at Jamestown were "rough-going" and the majority of the original 100 colonists died within the first year. The aid of the native Americans, who gave the colonists food in the first harsh winter, was crucial to the early survival of the colony.

Alienation and discrimination were what the Indians received for their generosity, as the colonists took what land they desired by force. The Indians did not yield passively to such treatment, and Indian retaliation threatened to destroy the young colony until a precarious pe-

riod of peace developed early in the 1720s. More than anything, what saved Jamestown was the highly successful cultivation of tobacco. First planted in 1612, tobacco fetched high prices in Great Britain, and soon virtually all the colonists cultivated the plant.

As the Jamestown colony managed to survive and prosper, another group of Englishmen headed for North America. This group of persecuted English Calvinists, became known as the Pilgrims. They yearned for religious freedom, and after receiving financial support they left for North America in 1620 on the Mayflower.

After an arduous voyage, they landed on the Massachusetts coast and founded a settlement at Plymouth. Despite a perilous first winter, the summer brought good crops, and in the autumn more settlers arrived. That same fall they gave thanks for their success by holding a huge feast, from which comes the American holiday of Thanksgiving. Instrumental to the colony's success was the aid of certain Indian tribes who taught the colonists how to cultivate certain crops. The settlers' relations with other Indian tribes, however, were less than cordial.

Soon, other English colonies were established in steady succession, perhaps the most successful one was the Massachusetts Bay Colony founded in 1630 by a group of "pure" English Protestants known as the Puritans. So successful was this colony that it spawned a number of offshoot colonies in Rhode Island, Connecticut and New Hampshire.

Maryland was first settled in 1634 and became a bastion of religious freedom. In the 1660s King Charles II of England granted land charters to eight of his favorite subjects and the colonies of North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia were born. Later in the century, the colonies of Pennsylvania and Delaware were founded by the pious and visionary William Dutch traders, but the English remained adamant in their claim to the entire east coast. In the summer of 1664 three English warships arrived at the New York coast and snatched the colonies into British hands.

Though these colonies exhibited different economic and religious characteristics, there existed one all-important common feature: all of the colonies were populated by an unassailable majority of Englishmen. Thus, they harbored English traditions and customs, whether the colonists were in New Hampshire or Georgia.

Most important of these traditions and values were self-reliance and the desire for liberty. Clinging to their rights as freeborn Britons, colonists expected their due protection under the Magna Carta and the Common Law. Possessing a great degree of freedom in forming their colonial governments, the colonists lived and prospered, on the basic British political traditions; subsequently forming their own kind of constitutional government, with a stronger representative system and greater guarantees of personal liberty.

Four fundamental facts distinguished the colonial political system from the British system. The first was the great value put on written charters and constitutions as guarantors of individual liberty. The second was the almost constant conflict between legislatures and governors, and the third was the control of appropriations by legislatures as opposed to governors. The fourth distinguishing characteristic of American colonial life was the remarkable spirit of religious toleration; this allowed people of differing religious sects—though nearly all Christian—to live and work together without the deleterious effects of religious violence. This toleration greatly facilitated the prosperous growth of the colonies.

The Middle colonies consisted mainly of numerous small farms. A more tolerant and open society, these colonies were perhaps less intellectually endowed than those in the North, but less religiously rigid. In the Southern colonies, even more differences were apparent. Almost exclusively rural, the Southern colonies consisted largely of great plantations, which were the property of a single wealthy landowner. Producing large amounts of grain, cotton and tobacco, which it exported to Europe, the South long maintained its predominantly rural character.

The great economic success of these plantations was due mainly to the exploitations of African slaves. First brought to Jamestown in 1619, nearly half a million slaves inhabited the American colonies by 1770. Though slavery existed in all of the colonies, only in the South did it become such an integral part of the economy. Although industrialization and the moral opposition of the religiously pious made slavery less attractive in the North, the Southern colonies continued to militantly advocate the institution of slavery until the mid-19th century. This Southern militancy inevitably led to the catastrophic American Civil War.

1.3 Tightening British Control and Colonial Resistance

The great economic success was due mainly to the exploitations of African slaves. First brought to Jamestown in 1619, nearly half a million slaves inhabited the American colonies by 1770. Though slavery existed in all of the colonies, only in the South did it become such an integral part of the economy. In British eyes, the American colonies existed to serve the economic interests of the parent country, and for the first 150 years of colonial existence, the colonists, feeling immensely dependent upon Great Britain, bowed to her with humble respect. By the mid-18th century, however, it seemed that Great Britain might need the colonies more than the colonies needed Great Britain. By 1760, the American colonies were a rich region with more than 1,500,000 people. In addition, the colonial army had played an indispensable role in the British defeat of France in the French and Indian Wars of the 1750s.

As Great Britain felt the colonists' dependency and respect towards its decline, it decided to tighten its control over the colonies. The British Parliament had already enacted legislation that limited the right of the colonies to engage in trade with other nations, thus ensuring Great Britain an abundant supply of relatively cheap colonial products. Colonial merchants begrudgingly accepted this legislation, despite the adverse impact it had on their economic opportunities.

Colonial merchants, however, adamantly refused to accept legislation passed by the British Parliament in the 1760s. The Sugar Act^[1] of 1764 and the Stamp Act^[2] of 1765 increased the taxes of American colonies, greatly harming colonial economic interests. Outraged by the legislation, many colonists protested and pledged to disobey the Acts. "No taxation without representation" became the popular rallying cry of the protesters. They felt it was illegal to tax the colonists because they had no representatives sitting in the British Parliament. Resistance to these laws proved so fierce that the British Parliament felt obliged to repeal the Acts to appease the colonists. But the seeds of anti-British feeling had been firmly sown.

Great Britain was scandalized by what it perceived as an ungrateful colonial attitude toward the parent country. To teach the colonies a lesson, it passed the Townshend Acts^[3] of 1768, which imposed import duties on a variety of products. The colonists again protested vigorously and organized an effective boycott of British goods; these protests again proved successful, as the British Parliament repealed the Townshend Acts in 1770.

For some radically-minded colonists, however, this was not sufficient, they began to advocate complete independence from Great Britain and tried to recruit other colonists to their cause. Though most colonists were unhappy with Great Britain's recent actions, they could not conceive of complete independence from the parent country. Further British legislation in the 1770s, however, changed many minds.

1.4 The Road to Independence

In order to help save the struggling British East India Company from bankruptcy, the British Parliament enacted the Tea Act of 1773, which made tea easier to sell in the colonies, but preserved the dreaded tea tax. This Act led direct to one of the most famous events in American history. On December 16, 1773, a radical Bostonian Samuel Adams and his supporters, dressed as Indians and boarded an English merchant ship. They then proceeded to dump the cargo of tea into the Boston Harbor to the enthusiastic applause of bystanders. This act of open rebellion soon dubbed the Boston Tea Party and infuriated Great Britain. To pun-