

Augustan Stability and the Making of a Ruling Class

- a. Augustan age = British poetry and politics of mid-18th century
 - b. The Age of Augustus was an imperial age; aristocrats of Britain saw themselves as a definite ruling class (control as courtiers, H. of Lords, patronage, and pocket boroughs)
 - c. Class often defined in terms of economics (wealth or relation to ownership of means of production): can also be defined in terms of relation to the wielding of power
 - d. As Parliament sessions became more regular, Parliament became the main avenue to political power (not the Court, not the localities)
 - i. change in meaning/features of elections before and after Septennial Act (1716):
 - ii. Results?:
 - (1) pocket boroughs
 - (2) rotten boroughs
 - (3) MPs increasingly interested in career advancement
 - (4) Unreformed England as an *Ancien Regime* explain
2. A Disjointed Empire
- a. Stuart Visions of Empire
 - i. East India Company, chartered by Elizabeth, 1600
 - ii. Royal African Company, directed by James duke of York
 - iii. New York → Dominion of New England
 - b. Regions
 - i. West Indies (jewel of the first empire)
 - ii. American mainland
 - iii. Africa and Asia
 - c. Wars
 - i. 9 Years
 - ii. Spanish Succession
 - iii. Jenkins' Ear/Austrian Succession
 - iv. 7 Years/French and Indian
3. Old Corruption I: Walpole as Prime Minister
- a. South Sea Bubble and Rise
 - i. Origins: South Sea Co. formed 1711, a Tory/landed interest response to the Whig/monied interest Bank of England
 - ii. Bubble: South Sea Co. stock rises with new scheme of new stock to be issued based on market values; thus, if stock market value rises, less stock issued for same money
 - iii. Crisis and Walpole: resigned position in government in 1717; only returned June 1720; had not organized scheme and tried to buy stock in Aug. (but banker would not let him)
 - b. Management of King, Lords, and Commons
 - i. Prime Minister?; Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer = money positions, but not sole source of power
 - ii. attacked in Gay, *The Beggars Opera*
 - iii. management of:
 - (1) Commons—placemen and wooing the country gentleman
 - (2) Lords—Church patronage and new titles
 - (3) King(s)
 - iv. Assessment: Old Corruption or Origins of Stability?
4. Old Corruption 2: The Fall of Walpole
- a. War of Jenkins's Ear
 - i. smuggling (and mercantilism)
 - ii. boarding of Capt. Robert Jenkins' ship, 1731 (Spanish coast guards looking for contraband/cash—off Jamaica)
 - iii. legacy: control house of Commons, control bills of spending, control the government (something that later George III, with lack of training in the British system [at least practical training] did not learn)

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- b. Pitt and the Pelhams ("the Patriot" versus the "Old Corps" Whigs, 1740s-1760s)
 - i. Whig oligarchy or the Robinocracy continued
 - ii. from "that horrid electorate" to "conquering America in Germany"
 - iii. Pitt and the Seven Years' War