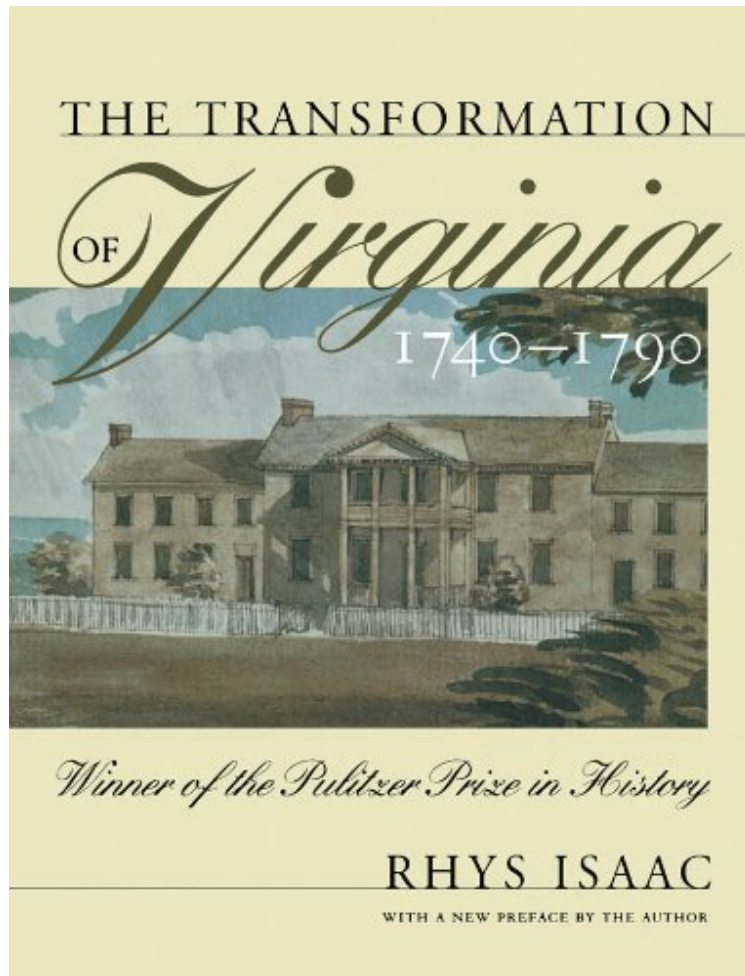


[Mobile ebook] The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790 (Published by the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture and the University of North Carolina Press)

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Rhys Isaac

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Rhys Isaac : The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790 (Published by the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture and the University of North Carolina Press) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790 (Published by the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture and the University of North Carolina Press):

9 of 9 people found the following review helpful. Vicissitudes!!!By JC DavenportVicissitudes, is such a lonely wordEveryone is so untrueVicissitudes, is hardly ever heardBut mostly what I need to read this bookYeah I know it

didn't rhyme. For a "layman" history buff like me, this book is rough but rewarding waters. Especially since I likely am a descendant of some of the people described (um, the lower end of the social ladder). So I had to frequently look up words like vituperation, scurrility, plebeian, erudition and (I'm so ashamed) vicissitudes. But it was very much worth it because I got (after I looked up them there words) what now seems an essential understanding of Virginia and our country's beginning - probably much more relevant than my exciting revolutionary war books . . . But now that I've read some of the negative reviews here, I can understand that it's probably a "pain" to read if you're being made to read it. To you guys I say . . . truth is where you find it so get over it and read the book. 18 of 18 people found the following review helpful. A riveting account of a double revolution in early America

By JRonEighteenth-century Virginian gentry had established a society, complete with imported styles and articles of British dress and life, which set them apart from commoners, but, which never quite equaled life in England. Within 50 years, more egalitarian religious upsurges and a political revolution challenged the great-family society and altered its social functioning. Rhys Isaac's *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790*, chronicles and analyzes the legal, religious, and cultural battles for societal control between members of the Virginian plantation elites and those popularizing forces that, in the end, dislodged many of the institutions--minus slavery--that reinforced exclusive dominance within in eighteenth-century Virginia. The indispensable contribution of *The Transformation of Virginia* is its suggestion of a "double revolution in religious and political thought and feeling" (5). The work begins with a discussion of the gentry dominating all levels of society. Middlings and members of the lower class deferred to more elite members of society. The first part of the book introduces the reader to natural and physical structures of the elites' dominance. The great house, the county courthouse, and the church, served as emblems of plantation power. The great men conducted business at each of these brick structures that endorsed their control. The Anglican Church reinforced for the deferential system and provided a hallowed venue to display the social hierarchy. Isaac calls upon the physical construction and layout of church structures as evidence of their support for the gentry's control. The rich talked business before church; they processed into and recessed out of church while others gazed from their seats; and they sat in special seating, while the Anglican liturgy "asserted the hierarchical nature of things" (64). The Anglican system gave local vestrymen power over clergy, who came from outside, and it empowered them to regulate parish life. Clashes between clergy and vestries and confrontations between Anglicans and Presbyterians over preachers' licenses led to legislative battles and anticlericism in the 1740s and 1750s. The New Light Separatist Baptists descended upon Virginia in the 1760s from New England. They brought with them an austere lifestyle, and offered commoners "a close, supportive, and orderly community" (164). When describing the beginnings of Baptist life in Virginia, Isaac employs terms like "respect," "equality," "fellowship," and "faith," in contrast to descriptions of Anglican Virginia with words like with "formal distance," "hierarchy," and "ranked". Not only were Baptist members "poor and unlearned," and in some cases slaves, but the ministers who started these groups were often "men of little learning". The Virginia Baptists and their leadership possessed similarities in class and education levels with post-Revolutionary Baptists and other denominations who would later use what Nathan O. Hatch's *The Democratization of American Christianity* terms "religious populism" to spread Christianity across America. Despite the gentry's attacks of being "poor and illiterate," the Baptists' effectiveness to draw to themselves all sections of society, including some gentry, threatened the traditional community structure. Isaac underscores that "the cohesive brotherhood of the Baptists must be understood as an explicit rejection of the formalism of traditional community organization" (166). The rise of the Baptist popularity in Virginia coincided with a general crisis of British authority throughout the American colonies, particularly highlighted by colonial responses to the Stamp Act of 1765. The Methodist movement took hold in Virginia during the 1770s at the climax of patriot fervor. The religious and political movements shared similarities in gaining support: "the use of popular assemblies for arousing collective emotions and for intensifying the involvement of plain folk" (264). A major distinction, however, existed. "Where evangelism began as a rejection and inversion of customary practices, the patriot movement initially tended toward a revitalization of ancient forms of community" (265). During this revolutionary period, Virginian gentry, who had long viewed themselves as models of England, found themselves impelled to defy British authority by popular forces from within communities they once dominated. Isaac's book is a brilliant account of how religious dissenters and political patriots changed the social landscape and structures within eighteenth-century colony Virginia. However, these promoters of religious equality and political liberty could not break the bonds of Virginian slavery. Antislavery movements increased following the Revolution; yet, "republicanism worked to formalize a deep division by excluding the slaves to whom its membership and its promises did not extend" (321). Despite the book's at times awkward and disjointed flow--the result of tying together collected essays published as a monograph--*The Transformation of Virginia* provides the scholar, undergraduate, and general reader a riveting display of changes that occurred during fifty crucial years in the life of the Commonwealth--and the nation.

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Profound analysis of fundamental social change

By Jon L AlbeeI first read this book years ago, not long after it was published in 1982. Back then I didn't appreciate the depth of its scholarship or the importance of its thesis. If you've not read this book, but you've found time for Wood and Bailyn and Greene and Ellis, you need to add this one to your library. Let me remind potential readers that this book came off the presses in the early 1980s, before we had such canonical classics as *Pursuits of*

Happiness (Greene), *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Bailyn) and *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (Wood). This book began a dialog in late American colonial history (Atlantic Studies) that we are still having today: How much did the Revolution change British America? Isaac says, profoundly. He uses Virginia as his canvas not so much because the ideas don't apply elsewhere (they do), but for the reason that the changes were more visible in the archival and archeological material in Virginia than (perhaps) anywhere else. Isaac observes the life of Landon Carter and his family--Carter was one of the "greater gentry" of the Virginia plantation owners--through the period noted in the book title, 1740 to 1790. The reader will discover an anxious and creeping progress toward irrelevance for Carter and his family's priorities. As the Revolution approached and popular government replaced elite government, poor old Landon Carter wondered what would become of him, his family and his traditions. This is a study of social transformation, not of political transformation. The book is considered an "anthropological" study in that it seeks to present the relationships the (European) people of Virginia shared with their churches, schools, plantations, slaves, land, laws, AND governing bodies as the Revolution blazed a trail from patronage to popularity. It happened in two steps: The political Revolution created a government independent of Great Britain, but the social revolution created a civil society rich with institutions independent of landed gentry, rich merchants, and educated clergy... or did it? The beginning of American democracy is presented vividly to the reader right here! In Virginia, yes, but also in Massachusetts, New York, and Pennsylvania.

In this Pulitzer Prize-winning book, Rhys Isaac describes and analyzes the dramatic confrontations--primarily religious and political--that transformed Virginia in the second half of the eighteenth century. Making use of the observational techniques of the cultural anthropologist, Isaac vividly recreates and painstakingly dissects a society in the turmoil of profound inner change.

One of the best--and most provocative--books written on colonial Anglo-America over the past decade. "Times Literary Supplement" A gracefully written evocation of eighteenth-century Virginia culture. "American Historical "[A] gracefully written evocation of eighteenth-century Virginia culture. "American Historical "One of the best--and most provocative--books written on colonial Anglo-America over the past decade. "Times Literary Supplement" [A] gracefully written evocation of eighteenth-century Virginia culture. . . . The book convinces us that close attention to commonplace events and their settings by someone of Isaac's ability will give us fresh access to long lost worlds.-- American Historical One of the best--and most provocative--books written on colonial Anglo-America over the past decade, it must be the starting point for all further work on the subject. Equally important, [Isaac's] efforts to demonstrate how historians can profitably employ some of the tools of symbolic anthropologists . . . deserve close inspection.--Times Literary Supplement From the Inside Flap Winner of the 1983 Pulitzer Prize in History, this book recreates and analyzes the dramatic political and religious confrontations that transformed Virginia in the second half of the eighteenth-century.