Cultures at Jamestown – Comparing Cultures

Period Quotes

**Powhatan Indians**

For their apparel, they are some time couered with the skinnes of wilde beasts, which in winter are dressed with the haire, but in sommer without. The better sort vs use large mantels of deare skins not much differing in fashion from the Irish mantels. Some imbrodered with white beads, some with copper, other painted after their manner.

*John Smith*

But the women are always couered about their middles with skin and [are] very shamefast to be seen bare. They adorne themselues most with copper beads and paintings.

*John Smith*

They take most commonly a place about their houses to sett ther corne,…and in this place they dig many holes which before the English brought them scawels and spades they vsed to make with a crooked piece of woode beinge scrapped on both sides in fation of a gardeners paring Iron. they put in to thes holes ordinarily 4 or 5 currnels of ther wheat and 2 beans like Frenchbeans,…

*Henry Spelman*

Their buildings and habitations are for the most part by the rivers, or not farre distant from such fresh spring. Their houses are built like our Arbors, of small young springs bowed and tyed, and so close covered with Mats, or the barkes of trees very handsomely, that not-withstanding either winde, raine, or weather, they are as warme as stoves, but very smoky, yet at the toppe of the house there is a hole made for the smoake to goe into right over the fire.

*John Smith*

Their fishing is much in Boats. These they make of one tree by burning and scratching away the coales with stones and shells, till they have made it in forme of a Trough. Some of them are an eine deep, and fortie or fiftie foote in length, and some will beare 40 men, but the most ordinary are small, and will beare 10, 20 or 30. according to their bignesse. In stead of Oares, they use Paddles and stickes, with which they will row faster then our Barges.

*John Smith*

For fishing, hunting , and warres they use much their bow and arrows. They bring their bowes to the forme of ours by the scraping of a shell. Their arrows are made of some of straight young sprigs, which they head with bone, some 2 or 3 inches long. These they use to shoot at Squirrels on trees. Another sort of arrows they use made of Reeds. These are peeced with wood, headed with splinters of christall, or some sharpe stone, the spurres of a Turkey, or the bill of some bird.

*John Smith*
**Africans**

The men in this kingdom make good store of palm-cloth of sundry sorts, very fine and curious. They are never idle: for they make fine caps of needlework as they go in the streets.  
*Andrew Battel, “The Strange Adventures of Andrew Battell,” c. 1590*

There are many types of meat, such as domestic cattle that they raise as well as wild game that they take. There are an infinite number of cattle that are so large and fat they are surprising.  
*A European Description of Angola, 1590*

The Kingdom of Angola is wonderful populous, and rich in mines of silver, copper and most other metals.  
*Captain John Smith, “True Travels,” 1629*

The houses of these kingdoms … have only one story. They are round, made of stakes driven into the ground and on the outside … (covered) with a coat of clay mixed with straw. The roof is formed with pieces of palm or with other fine stalks that resist water.  
*Cavazzi da Montecucculo, 1665.*

The women do most of the work, like ploughing[hoeing] the land, seeding, and weeding, so that they provide sufficiently for their husband.  
*Pieter van Broecke, “Journal of My Voyage for the first time to Angola,” 1607*

The natives are very good fishermen and catch great numbers of fish.  
*Pieter van den Broecke, “Journal of My Third Voyage to Angola,” 1612*

… scores of palm trees which are very popular with the natives because of the wine, which is their principal drink. Furthermore the oil which comes from them is very medicinal, and they cook with it. With the leaves they cover their houses.  
*Pieter van den Broecke, “Journal of My Third Voyage to Angola,” 1612*

There are all sorts of animals such as sheep, goats, hart [type of deer], [African] buffalo, elephants, tigers, leopards, and other wild animals too. Chickens are not lacking here.  
*Pieter van den Broecke, “Journal of My Third Voyage to Angola,” 1612*
The greatest part of our building in the cities and good towns of England consisteth only of timber, for as yet few of the houses of the commonalty… are made of stone…

*William Harrison*

Their food also consisteth principally in beef and such meat as the butcher selleth, that is to say, mutton, veal, lamb, pork, …bacon, fruit pies, fruit, fowls of sundry sorts, cheese, butter, eggs, etc.…

*William Harrison*

The number of cars, drays, carts, coaches, more than hathe been accustomed, the streets and lanes being straitened, must needs be dangerous, as daily experience shows. The coachman rides behind the horses’ tails, lashes them, and looks not behind him…

*John Stow*

…the most beautiful frame of fair houses and shops that be within the walls of London….it containeth ten fair dwellings and fourteen shops, all within one frame.

*John Stow*