



## Classical World-Systems Analysis, the Historical Geography of British North America, and the Regional Politics of Colonial/Revolutionary New York

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### Abstract

*A less-appreciated aspect of earlier or “classical” works of world-systems analysis (WSA), in particular that of Braudel, Frank, and Wallerstein in the 1970s-80s is the examination of why the thirteen North American colonies that became the United States split from Great Britain. Specifically, why did some of Britain’s North American colonies revolt in the mid-1770s, but not others? Why were some colonists pro-independence while others preferred remaining within the empire? Classical WSA suggested regional differentiation among colonists, and later works in the WSA tradition have examined these divisions in British North America, particularly within individual colonies, based on both larger divisions in the world-economy and localized core-periphery structures. Yet classical WSA’s analytical questions about British North America’s independence movement have been more directly addressed by historical geographers. This paper synthesizes classical WSA with works on the historical geography of British North America, and then examines the synthesis in light of colonial New York and its political-economic geography of several distinct regions, each with varying economic and political interests vis à vis the British Empire and the question of independence.*

**Keywords:** North American independence movement, Historical geography, Regions in the world-system

A less-appreciated aspect of classical works of world-systems analysis [WSA] (e.g. Braudel 1984; Frank 1975; 1978; Wallerstein 1980; 1989) is the examination of why the thirteen North



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American colonies that became the United States split from Great Britain. Comparatively, why did some of Britain's North American colonies revolt in the mid-1770s, but not others?<sup>1</sup> Why were some colonists pro-independence but others content to stay within the empire? These questions still resonate, given that U.S. independence was a necessary (if not sufficient) precondition of its core emergence and ultimate rise to hegemony (Bunker and Ciccantell 2005: 136-89).

Later works in the broader WSA tradition have identified regional divisions in colonial North America, particularly within individual colonies (e.g. Driscoll and Kick 2013; Dunaway 1994; Hall 1989; Leitner 2016; Smith 1987). While these works identify socioeconomic structures based on both larger divisions in the world-economy as well as localized core-periphery relationships, they do not necessarily focus on the given colony's internal politics *vis à vis* independence. In fact, it appears that classical WSA's analytical questions about the North American colonial independence movement were more clearly addressed by historical geographers (Hornsby 2005; Meinig 1986; 1989).

This paper synthesizes classical WSA with this later historical geography of 18<sup>th</sup> century British North America and the Atlantic World to help us better understand colonial New York's path toward independence from Britain, and in turn to also improve classical WSA's understanding of the 1770s-80s British North American Revolt. Located in the middle colonies (Bonomi 1973; Zuckerman 2006), parts of New York resembled New England with its egalitarian yeoman agriculture (see Map 1). However, because of more favorable soil and climate, there was more of a focus on cash crops, like in the southern colonies; indeed, parts of New York produced cash crops on much larger farms using tenant labor and African slaves (Chase-Dunn 1980: 194-95). Other parts of the colony were also maritime-focused, while fur trading was a going concern in and around Albany well into the 1700s (Leitner 2013). The colony's main port, New York City, was located where the Hudson River flowed into the Atlantic Ocean. Formerly the Dutch colony of New Amsterdam, it had been part of the capitalist world-economy since the mid-1600s (Wallerstein 1980: 236; but cf. Burrows and Wallace 1999: xvii, 24-26). Though dominating the colony in many respects, it also depended on the farmers and fur traders in its hinterland (Matson 1998).

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Map 1: The Colony of New York, October 1691 – July 1764



Map created with QGIS vers. 2.16.1-Nødebo. Main data source: Newberry Library Atlas of Historical County Boundaries (<http://publications.newberry.org/ahcbp>)

Per Bonomi, this economic diversity resulted in a colony with relatively equal merchant and landed elites (1971: 57). Neither group dominated New York politically, unlike merchant-dominated Massachusetts, the planter-dominated southern colonies, or proprietary colonies with a single dominant family, like Pennsylvania and Maryland (Beeman 2004; Murrin 1980: 383-88),

or New York itself until about 1690 under the Duke of York (Ritchie 1977). Though linked by intermarriage and cross-sectoral investments—with successful merchants buying land and certain large landowners trading their agricultural produce (Countryman 1992: 13-14; Leitner 2016: 229-37)—these differing regional economies within colonial New York nonetheless prompted divergent economic and political interests *vis à vis* the empire. This redounded to its revolutionary politics: mid-1770s observers noted New York's disunity on the independence issue, whereas Massachusetts and Virginia were both predominantly pro-independence (Champagne 1964: 33). Yet just enough of New York (ca. 60 percent; Burrows and Wallace 1999: 219) was pro-independence, enabling it to be visibly part of the revolt, and to ultimately keep it (mostly) in one piece as it became one of the United States. We will explore how and why this happened, in light of a synthesis of “classical” WSA interpretations with later historical geography of British North America's revolt against the Crown.

### **Classical World-Systems Analysis of the British North American Colonial Revolt**

While neither Wallerstein, Braudel, nor Frank published a major study of British North America's colonial revolt *per sé*, they all paid some attention to it in their canonical works of WSA, given its role in Britain's hegemonic era, the United States' future ascent to both core and hegemonic status, and the evolution of the capitalist world-economy more generally. Each took a somewhat different approach, reflective of their differing intellectual styles, but together these works provide a world-systemic overview of 18<sup>th</sup> century British North America.

#### **Frank: The Loss of Mercantile Privilege**

Following from Adam Smith's contemporary analysis of the New World Euroamerican colonies' uneven development, Frank (1975; 1978) argues that the northern British North American colonies—lacking an export staple yet also being a good market for English manufactures—were compelled to make up their trade deficit with Britain by trading with the Caribbean, Africa, and the Mediterranean (1978: 193-97). Involvement in “mercantile capitalist development” was the northeastern colonies' “peculiar privilege” *vis à vis* other British colonies, as a *de facto* junior partner to the Western European colonial powers (1975: 453; 1978: 193-94). For Frank, this privilege was in fact key to northeastern British North America's colonial economic development and leadership of the ultimately successful bid for independence, as well as its postcolonial core emergence and eventual hegemony (1975: 453; 1978: 194). More specifically, the northern colonies (particularly New England) were aided by British mercantile regulations and attempts to produce naval stores, allowing development of a “principal motor” of economic development and capital accumulation based on shipping, fishing, and the high-profit trades (furs and African

slaves), rather than reliance on independent small/subsistence farming and internal/domestic manufacturing (1975: 454-55).

Frank sees British North America's revolt in context of the 18<sup>th</sup> century British-French-Spanish "rivalry in the construction of empire and accumulation of capital," especially the French desire to catch up with Britain (1978: 203). For their part, the British North American colonists' proximate motivation was the post-1763 economic depression, exacerbated by taxes and new mercantile regulations; these especially affected the commercial classes in New England and the middle colonies, along with the Virginia planter class (1978: 199-200). The regulation with the greatest political impact was the 1763 Proclamation Line that prohibited colonial settlement west of the Appalachian Mountains. Though it allowed a certain amount of fur trading, the proclamation "tilted the political balance" in British North America toward fur traders and away from settlers (1978: 200). In turn, the fur traders tended to stay loyal to Britain, and those regions where they concentrated "formed the nucleus of present-day Canada" (1978: 200-01).

### **Braudel: Colonial Merchants vs. Metropolitan Merchants**

Also inspired by Adam Smith, Braudel argues that New World colonies lacking an export staple and large slave labor force may have been poorer and neglected by the metropole, compelling them toward self-sufficiency, but in turn making them much less subservient to metropolitan power than the plantation slavery-dependent colonies, with their greater security needs (1984: 400-03). New England, led by Massachusetts, was chief among these "rebel colonies" in British North America (1984: 409). Yet even the subservient colonies—dependent on metropolitan protection, capital, and markets—were chafed by mercantilist trade restrictions and the severe lack of currency (1984: 400-02). More significantly, expanded trade gave the colonies an independent currency source allowing local merchants to accumulate considerable wealth. This contributed to growing tensions between colonial merchants and metropolitan capitalists (1984: 402-03).

For Braudel, the real origin of the thirteen colonies' revolt against Britain was their mid-18<sup>th</sup> century growth spurt (1984: 405). The increased prosperity drew a steady flow of immigrants, including English workers, Irish peasants, Scots, Scots-Irish, and Germans, who were either indifferent or hostile to the English, which Braudel posits as likely contributing to revolutionary sentiment (1984: 405-06). Ethnic diversity was more prevalent in the colonies north of Maryland with their smaller farms, than those in the south, with a large population of African slaves and plantation agriculture. Braudel sees this general north-south distinction as a major structural feature in U.S. history, though he admits to a more complicated agrarian reality, what with slaves and several very large landholdings in the northern colonies and smallholders in the upland interior south (1984: 407-08). While he also argues that the thirteen colonies' economy was predominantly

agricultural, the rebellion's main driver was the northern colonies, led by New England, with their growing maritime and mercantile activity (1984: 409).

Braudel also agrees with Smith on the American Revolution's main causes: the British North American colonies were free "to manage their own affairs...in everything except their foreign trade" which was routed through London, including their credit sources, and legally restricted their trade to the British Empire (1984: 409). New Englanders particularly chafed against these regulations, given their trade-dependent economies. Even within mercantile strictures, New England merchants (and soon those of New York and Philadelphia) had structured both British North America's intercolonial coastal trade and that between Britain's mainland and Caribbean colonies to their advantage, in turn also promoting northern colonial industry: shipbuilding, textiles, rum distilling, and various phases of iron production (1984: 410). Soon enough the northern colonial merchants established non-British transatlantic trades; but London was still their main credit source, claiming a substantial portion of the profits. Further, key British interests, among them London's large merchants, saw the American colonies as a burgeoning rival whose prosperity was inverse to Britain's, resulting in retaliatory trade measures. These were exacerbated by the post-1763 attempt to have the North American colonies pay the costs of the Seven Years' War, which in turn resulted in colonial boycotts of British goods (1984: 410-12).

### **Wallerstein: Mercantile Conflicts and Colonial Diversity**

For Wallerstein, British North America's post-1763 "settler decolonization" followed victory over France in the Seven Year's War, with Britain soon at odds with its mainland colonies over how to split the spoils, at least among the elites (1989: 193). In particular, the British government wanted the colonies to pay for the costs of empire via new taxes (albeit usually repealed after concerted colonial opposition) and more vigorous enforcement of pre-existing mercantilist regulations (1989: 203). It also prohibited settlement, land speculation, and typically rapacious private fur trading with native peoples west of the Appalachian range, to forestall any further violent and expensive Euro-indigenous conflict. The Crown instead sought to access natural resources from the trans-Appalachian territory by via peacefully trading with the region's indigenous people, much like the French had done (1989: 202-03).

The subsequent dozen years' policies increased ideological tensions, which Wallerstein, like Braudel, sees rooted in British North America's economic growth post-1720, and especially post-1745 (1989: 203-04). By the mid-1700s, North American colonial wealth concentration prompted "a sharpened rivalry" between British and colonial American business interests (1989: 196, 202). Again, this rivalry became more acute after the French could no longer threaten the colonies,

combined with a post-war economic slump that hurt almost all North American economic sectors; exacerbated by new imperial taxes, it provided an impetus to revolt (1989: 198, 204, 206).

Within British North America, post-1763 economic and political crises also exacerbated relations between small farmers and elite planters, while the major American colonial seaports saw increasing inequality between 1765-75, which later added an arguably social revolutionary aspect to the 1775-83 independence war (1989: 199-200).

But as Wallerstein acknowledges, “the groups ready to pursue their grievances with the British government did not win out everywhere”: in turn, the key question is why did only thirteen of Britain’s 30 post-1763 American colonies revolt while the other 17 remained loyal (1989: 210). In a preliminary attempt at an answer, he cites Canadian historian J.B. Brebner’s point that the geographically marginal colonies of Georgia, Vermont, Maine, and Nova Scotia were rather less in favor of revolution, though all but Nova Scotia joined the United States—Nova Scotian loyalism due more to its sparse settler population on an exposed peninsula (1989: 211). The Caribbean colonies remained loyal largely thanks to a boom in sugar exports during 1763-75 and Parliamentary acceptance of the fact that much of its trade was contraband, i.e. the Free Port Act that allowed Britain to profit from trading with Spanish and French Caribbean colonies, without incurring the political/administrative costs of having to maintain them (1989: 212). And as recent additions to the Empire (1763) with non-Anglo settler populations whose politics differed from most British Americans, loyal Quebec and East Florida were each a “special case” (1989: 210).

In mainland British North America, Wallerstein posits three zones of “those cool to revolution”: (1) the socially-conservative middle colony coastal regions; (2) the inland frontier settlers from Georgia to Vermont, many of who wanted the British government to regulate land speculators based on the coast; and (3) cultural minority groups, themselves often on the inland frontier, in particular the Scots, Irish, and Germans along the Pennsylvania-Georgia axis, as well as various religious minorities (1989: 237). He acknowledges these groups had divergent reasons for not supporting independence, and by way of a more general formulation quotes historian R.R. Palmer, “the patriots were those who saw an enlargement of opportunity in the break with Britain, and the loyalists were in large measure those who had benefited from the British connection,’ or at least...who saw no reason to presume they would benefit from the break” (1989: 238).

### **Synthesizing Classical WSA with the Historical Geography of British North America**

Classical WSA on 18<sup>th</sup> century British North America’s socioeconomic structure and its impetus toward anti-colonial rebellion alludes to a never fully explicated spatial analysis (cf. Wallerstein 1980: 8-9), though a spatial structure of core-periphery-semiperiphery clearly underlies WSA (Agnew 1982: 160-64; Flint and Shelley 1996: 497). As a prominent American historical

geographer commented (in partial reference to Wallerstein), “it is difficult to show how the world is organized and operates as a set of spatial systems” (Meinig 1989: 186). To that end, a more explicitly geographical WSA soon appeared (see Flint and Shelley 1996 for review), as well as historical geography influenced by WSA.

One of those WSA influenced works was Meinig’s (1986) synthetic historical geography of pre-1800 North America, “probably the first major work to provide a [regionally] partitioned model of colonial life” (Zuckerman 2006: 312). Meinig identifies six major mainland North American colonial regions ca. 1750: Canada, Greater New England, the Hudson Valley, Greater Pennsylvania, Greater Virginia, and Greater South Carolina (1986: 249-54). He also develops a continuous multi-nodal core-periphery model of the Atlantic World ca. 1750 by means of a graphical transect. Commercial, political, and social systems are each on their own axis from Europe to North America and divided into ten spatial locations from east to west: center, hinterland, Atlantic port, outpost, Atlantic Ocean, colonial port, colony, frontier entrepôt, outposts, Indian core area, and production hinterland, with the European center’s power inversely related to distance (1986: 258-67; 1989: 187-89).

Regional differences entailed that “not all the parts of British America and not all the British Americans in any one part chose to identify with this new geopolitical creation,” the United States (Meinig 1986: 307). Similarly, the metropolitan core had its own geopolitical priorities: Britain’s strategy was to hold the more economically valuable colonies (the Caribbean sugar islands, Newfoundland fishery, and the Canadian and Hudson’s Bay fur trades), ultimately relinquishing the 13 revolting colonies (1986: 383-84).

Following partly from Meinig, Hornsby (2005) seeks to understand the structural fault lines behind British North America’s late 18<sup>th</sup> century fracturing. Hornsby works within the geohistorical construct of the Atlantic World, the predominant heuristic among historians of the colonial Americas and their connections with Europe and Africa (see Blakemore 2016). Yet he “focuses on connections and flows” (2005: 2), in harmony with Tomich’s (2004) world-systems critique. Per Tomich, most work in the Atlantic History tradition is too agent-focused, neglecting the structures that enable and constrain historical agents (2004: 103). Tomich’s early modern Atlantic is “a specific historical region of the capitalist world economy” created by the “establishment of material and social interdependence between geographically distinct zones” in Europe, Africa, and the Americas, linked by a network of ports and their agro-extractive hinterlands, between which flowed various raw materials, foodstuffs, manufactured goods and labor (2004: 104, 110-111).



Hornsby (2005) identifies a similar model for Britain's North American and Caribbean colonies. He divides Britain's American colonies into three spaces: (1) the British Atlantic, an "oceanically oriented periphery" or "maritime empire," of fish-producing Newfoundland, the Caribbean sugar islands, and fur-trading Hudson Bay—all sources of high-value staple goods that generated immense wealth for British commercial interests; (2) the American Frontier, a "territorially oriented periphery or settler empire" that comprised most of Britain's mainland North American colonies between Maine and Georgia; and (3) the mainland colonies' "continental staples and port towns" on or near the coast, linked to both the continental interior and Atlantic trade networks, which "served as the point of connection, articulation, and friction" between the oceanic and territorial peripheries (2005: 5-6, 226).

Hornsby locates the most significant divide between the Atlantic Staple colonies and the port town-Continental Staple regional complexes. The Atlantic Staple colonies had a sparse European settler population, single-commodity economies, and were highly dependent upon Britain for support and trade relations; while the Continental Staple regions were more diversified, more populous, and had mutually supportive port towns. Mainland colony elites had connections to both Atlantic trade and the continental interior, which gave them greater economic independence than Newfoundland or Caribbean elites (2005: 226). The merchant and planter mainland elites took advantage of backcountry economic opportunities and translated this economic success into political power. Dominating the various colonial assemblies, they "increasingly saw themselves as equal partners with London in the running of the British American empire" and also clashed with the appointed British governors over taxation and colonial government finance (2005: 226-27; cf. Beeman 2004: 4-15). Governors in turn exploited geographical and sectoral divisions among middle colonies elites, siding with one group or another to solidify their power (Bonomi 1973: 85).

Coastal elites were also at odds with the inland Agricultural Frontier's small farmers, whose relative economic independence allowed for a more egalitarian backcountry society and prompted a desire for more responsive and democratic government (2005: 226-27). This harmonizes with Wallerstein's observation of three mainland North American regions with colonists who were less enthusiastic about independence from Britain (1989: 237). These regions cut across colonial borders: the socially conservative areas along the middle colonies' coast; the inland frontier areas from Vermont to Georgia; and areas of ethno-cultural and religious minority groups, typically also inland, from Pennsylvania to Georgia. Wallerstein sees these groups as either having benefited from the empire or at least having been satisfied with the status quo, whereas those favoring independence sought greater opportunities outside imperial strictures (1989: 238).

Following from Wallerstein (1989: 237-38), in WSA terms, those who were attempting or advocating core-type productive activities ultimately tended to favor independence; while other interests that were more dependent on British markets and/or military protection preferred remaining within the empire, effectively a periphery (or at best semi-periphery) of the metropole. Again, Wallerstein sees this as having happened both between colonies (i.e. 13 that revolted vs. 17 that did not) and within colonies (i.e. he identifies various loyalist-tending regions within the colonies that otherwise revolted). However, he does not fully divine why this split occurred within a given colony; nor how a colony split like that would hold for independence (or not). In fairness, this is not necessarily his concern; classical WSA was trying to explain larger structures and processes than occur within a given colonial social formation. Nevertheless, classical WSA's basic insights harmonize with those of historical geographers more focused on explaining particular types of British North American colonies.

Though Meinig (1986; 1989) was more explicitly influenced by classical WSA, Hornsby's (2005) synthesis is more incisive, arguably more flexible, and explainable in WSA terms. Hornsby's oceanic periphery / maritime empire / "British Atlantic" extractive staple exporting colonies in the Caribbean, Hudson Bay and Newfoundland, were ideal-typical peripheries, relying variously on seasonal and/or coerced African and/or indigenous labor for primary production with only sparse European settlement. His second space, mainland British North America's territorial periphery/settler empire/American Frontier was partly comprised of peripheral regions, particularly where slave labor was used to produce export staples (e.g. cotton, tobacco, sugar). But there were also large areas of smallholding, subsistence-oriented/local trading farm families that were not typically producing for distant export markets, with the potential for an economy driven by "an internal dynamic of population growth and geographic expansion" (Hornsby 2005: 179), one of the routes to eventual core emergence (cf. Leitner 2016; Post 2009: 471-74; Vickers 1996). Perhaps these smallholders were cool (or more often initially indifferent) toward the idea of political independence, but they were already tending toward a sort of economic independence.

Hornsby's third space, the coastal "continental staples and port towns" was a meeting point between the other two spaces and the metropolitan core. Though subservient within the imperial context, Frank, Braudel and Wallerstein all point out that the port towns (chiefly Boston, New York and Philadelphia) were marked by relatively rapid capital accumulation and certain types of core-type productive activities, which metropolitan interests at times attempted to restrict.

Synthesizing classical WSA with the historical geography of the British Atlantic world therefore provides a means for better exploring some of what classical WSA surmised about which colonies opted for independence in the late 1700s, as well as operationalizing Tomich's (2004)

WSA critique of Atlantic history. We will now apply this approach to colonial New York by way of example.

### **The Spaces of Colonial New York**

#### **Port Town, Continental Staple, Agricultural Frontier: New York City and Hudson Valley Wheat**

Hornsby explicitly identifies the Hudson Valley as an Agricultural Frontier, marked by small farmers seeking freehold settlement and at least a measure of household self-sufficiency, located mostly west of the river, as well as the few remaining large estates mostly on the eastern bank (2005: 148-53). An upriver location from New York City made the Hudson Valley its literally direct tributary and main market for its produce. Grain, especially wheat, was the main export crop, for both the estates and the freeholders. Hornsby also mentions grain as one of the Continental Staples that was not necessarily exported to Britain (in colonial British American wheat's case, the main markets were Southern Europe and the Caribbean), allowing for greater regional economic independence, in particular for the merchant elites of the port towns who profited from the staple trades (2005: 124).

The surplus capital in this case was accumulated from the labor of the various agricultural producers. To that end, the city merchants frequently struggled with Hudson Valley farmers over produce price and quality. In brief: wheat and flour production became colonial New York's predominant export during the late 1600s-early 1700s, thanks to Caribbean plantation colonies' demand, simultaneous with declining fur production (Burrows and Wallace 1999: 122; Kammen 1975: 169-70; Norton 1974: 101). The colony's increased wheat production was mostly from the Hudson Valley, particularly small- and medium-sized independent farmers on the Hudson's west bank who responded to a combination of Caribbean demand and the increasing availability of manufactured consumer goods, which in turn stimulated their own demand for cash, though they were otherwise rather self-sufficient (Matson 1998: 111-12; Wermuth 2001: 31-32). East of the Hudson, the large estate owners had their tenants and slaves grow export crops as a matter of course, in particular wheat, exchanged for needed hard currency (Kammen 1975: 174; Kim 1970: 597-99; Matson 1998: 110-12).

To ensure a steadier and higher quality grain supply, wheat exporting New York City merchants demanded and initially received trade and processing monopolies from the colonial government, along with quality control legislation as early as the 1670s, and New York City's designation as the colony's official foreign trade port in 1684. As the large city-based exporters feared, New York's grain-producing farmers, rural millers and shippers resisted, with various of

the city's monopolies and inspections laws repealed and re-instated over the ensuing decades (Kammen 1975: 106; Matson 1998: 95-106, 230-39).

By the 1720s, Hudson Valley farmers were subject to both declining wholesale agricultural commodity prices in Europe and merchants' markups on consumer goods—the latter of which put many rural New Yorkers into serious debt (Matson 1998: 229). In turn, farmers were able to negotiate higher prices, likely aided by the Hudson Valley's lagging population growth and agricultural output through the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century (Hornsby 2005: 153; Matson 1998: 230-31).

Rising provincial prices during the Seven Years' War (1756-1763) led farmers, millers, and river transporters to raise their rates, which cut city-based export merchants' profits and drove many smaller export merchants out of business, as the cost of New York flour and wheat was still low in the Caribbean, while Caribbean sugar remained expensive (Matson 1998: 274-75). Export merchants were now in a bind: they were in a *de facto* state of interdependence with Hudson Valley farmers and “could neither forcibly extract surpluses from nor terminate exchanges with the interior” (1994: 409). More generally, the Hudson Valley had become “a staple producing center whose people were concerned with the total development of the region,” while New York City merchants were more concerned with external trade (Bonomi 1971:101-02; also Wermuth 2001; Vickers 1996).

Arguably then, this was a conflict between a colonial mercantile export elite content to exploit a peripheral region, and the colonists of that region who aspired to and were working toward something better for themselves. The latter were aided by cross-regional class alliances (of sorts). While the Hudson Valley's large landowners had varying views on independence, among the smaller farmers, despite the nagging conflicts, interdependence with the city's smaller merchants who connected the colony's agricultural producers with other colonies and the Caribbean, led both toward a desire for independence from Britain, based on “hopes for domestic self-sufficiency and colonial self-reliance” (Matson 1998: 309-10). For their part, the larger merchants, particularly those engaged in transatlantic trade, were more inclined to remain part of the empire. Indeed, the larger New York City merchants admired the imperial model, having themselves become a formal colonial *entrepôt*, “in emulation of London's place at the center of a powerful empire”—which, ironically, would lead at least some of them to consider independence eventually (Matson 1998: 168-69).

### **An Inland Port Town and its Atlantic Staple Hinterland: Albany and the Fur Trade**

Colonial Albany's economy was more dependent on the fur trade than agriculture (Norton 1974: 43). The Dutch founded it as a fur trade post in the 1610s, largely because its location at the confluence of the Hudson and Mohawk Rivers would give them control over most upriver trade to

the interior and vice-versa (Norton 1974: 45). Soon enough it became New Netherland's (and after 1664, New York's) "frontier entrepôt" for the fur trade, making it as well a key geopolitical locale and formal indigenous-European meeting place (Meinig 1986: 128, 210, 251, 260). At least partly to compensate for New York City's exclusive port privileges (Kammen 1975: 106-07), Albany's entrepôt role was officially codified during the 1670s-80s, ultimately giving its traders a monopoly over the British colonial northern and western fur trades (Norton 1974: 44-49). Like New York City, it received its own periphery, a relatively vast area from which raw goods would flow, for the most part supplied by indigenous labor.

Located at the confluence of two major rivers, Albany was itself a vital port (cf. Price 1974: 139-40), with access to both the Atlantic seaboard and indigenous peoples' trade networks that extended deep into the continental interior via the Great Lakes (Jennings 1984; Leitner 2013; see Map 1). Yet like the rural Hudson Valley to its south, it too was literally tributary to New York City: though the latter's formal status exacerbated their economic rivalry (Ritchie 1977: 56), Albany's (legal) exports were typically shipped down the Hudson River and would have had to pass through New York City, regardless of colonial regulations (Meinig 1986: 260; Norton 1974: 84). Albany was therefore something of a nested entrepôt, in that its fur exports did not have direct access to metropolitan markets (cf. Driscoll and Kick 2013: 2). Most of Albany's fur merchants used the pelts acquired from indigenous traders to pay debts to New York City merchants, who in turn sold some furs to colonial hat manufacturers, with the rest exported to England for manufactured goods in exchange (Norton 1974: 83). During the late 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, colonial New York's fur trade evolved into a "consolidated network of furs, ships, and credit," dominated by a group of large colonial fur merchants (working with even larger London merchants) who attempted to control the fur market (Norton 1974: 85-88, 114-20).

Albany merchants in turn used their illegal Montreal trade to subvert New York City and London merchants. This was especially the case post-1701, when the Haudenosaunees (a/k/a the Iroquois League, their main indigenous fur suppliers) signed a treaty to share hunting territory in what became Ontario and Michigan with French-allied indigenous peoples, in turn giving Montreal merchants first access to furs that would otherwise have mostly gone to Albany (Leitner 2013: 279-80). But better English manufacturing gave Albany merchants access to cheaper trade goods, while the generally-ice free Hudson gave them nearly year-round Atlantic access, albeit through New York City (Jennings 1984: 284; Norton 1974: 122). With indigenous porters moving the goods between the two cities, by 1720 the Albany-Montreal fur trade was valued at £10-12 thousand per year (Jennings 1984: 82), and in the late 1720s was declared legal by the British government (Bonomi 1971: 94; Egnal 1988: 57). In terms of Hornsby's argument about the friction

between continental (expansionist, territorialist) and oceanic (staples-producing and overseas trading) spaces in the British Atlantic world (2005: 5-6, 226), colonial New York merchants (particularly in Albany) favored peace with France to maintain their Montreal trade, while the landed interests tended to be more imperially-oriented, a difference that was most obvious in New York's politics during the 1720s-40s (Egnal 1988: 51-67; Norton 1974: 77, 155-94).

Simultaneously, Albany was becoming a diversified urban center: by 1700, its merchants were shipping lumber, wheat, and other grains produced in the Hudson-Mohawk region (Bielinski 1992: 266-68), a trend that continued into mid-century as fur declined in importance (Norton 1974: 150, 171-76). After 1720, Albany merchants still in the fur trade imported their goods directly from England, rather than via the city's large merchants (Bonomi 1971: 95-101; Norton 1974: 175-81). Despite formal subordination to New York City, Albany became a regional entrepôt due to its location and its merchants' fur trade with the Haudenosaunees and Montreal (Meinig 1986: 126). Its increasing economic diversity and attendant prosperity led Albany residents—especially merchants—to favor independence from Britain in the 1760s-70s (Countryman 1981: 126; Kammen 1975: 359; Meinig 1986: 251), as did the smaller New York City merchants, engaged in intercolonial trade (see above). Over the course of the 1700s, these interests began to see an economic future beyond that of an agro-extractive periphery (cf. Matson 1998: 309-10), which led them to see the advantages to being outside of the British Empire.

### **Agricultural Frontier and Continental Staple Regions: Long Island**

Even closer to New York City on Long Island's western half (see Map 1), Kings (Brooklyn) and Queens Counties (along with Richmond County/Staten Island) were considered the city's initial agrarian periphery. Close to lower Manhattan, and marked by a similar ethnic diversity, their economies were in turn long dependent on the city's export markets and thus upon British imperial protections (Burrows and Wallace 1999: 219-20; Countryman 1981: 105-06). This was not least because of farmers' increasing use of slave labor, especially in Kings, to produce wheat, corn, tobacco, and cattle (Burrows 2005: 21-23; Pappas 2005: 83; Tiedemann 2005: 43). Based on location and economy, western Long Island was effectively part of Hornsby's Mid-Atlantic Agricultural Frontier (2005: 148-64), along with the Hudson Valley—the key difference being that the Hudson Valley, though trading with New York City, was less tied to the city than was western Long Island. It was quite formally peripheral, marked by production of cash crops for export at least partly using coerced (indeed, enslaved) labor (cf. Wallerstein 1989: 234-35); and comfortably ensconced within the British Empire, which provided an export market and military security.

By contrast, Suffolk County residents (on Long Island's eastern half; see Map 1) chafed along with those in the Hudson Valley and Albany against both low prices fetched by their agricultural

produce in New York City's markets and various regulations imposed by the colonial government (Matson 1998: 228; also Ritchie 1977: 120, 170). Suffolk's ethnic English population typically identified more with New England, many having originated there (Bonomi 1971: 22-25; Meinig 1986: 101, 245; Staudt 2005: 75n3); while its farmers and merchants exchanged grain, livestock, and whale oil for manufactured goods from Boston and Connecticut, as well as New York City (Matson 1998: 79, 98; Ritchie 1977: 29). If traded legally, Long Island's New England-bound products went through New York City, a "costly and circuitous routing," especially for those at the island's east end (Bonomi 1971: 82-83n36; Kammen 1975: 112). Eastern Long Islanders tended to trade with Boston, depriving New York City merchants of these markets and their commodities for trade to Britain (Kammen 1975: 163; Starbuck 1878: 29). Attempting to end this illegal trade, New York's governor closed Long Island's ports in 1687 (Matson 1998: 99-102); though later re-opened, they were heavily taxed (Kammen 1975: 164). To the extent that New England's merchants represented the leading economic sector of mainland British North America, *pace* classical WSA (see above), and in turn were among the leaders of the later independence movement, it follows that eastern Long Islanders' identification and trade with the New England ports put them among those ultimately favoring independence.

Additionally, independent small farms comprised what was arguably Suffolk's major economic sector: at the end of the colonial period, the majority of its 13,000 inhabitants were white yeomen farmers (along with some 1,500 enslaved Africans and a few hundred Native Americans; Staudt 2005: 64). Fishing was another important sector; indeed, colonial Long Island's most important extractive industry had been whaling. With forward linkages into whale oil production and horizontal linkages into barrel making for oil storage (Kammen 1975: 173), whaling was a Continental Staple akin to the New England cod fishery that Hornsby (2005: 73-88) reviews. Yet for all its promise of eventual core emergence, it was still subject to regulations and laws favoring New York City interests, and formally subordinated in 1714: whalers were forced to export their catch through the city, which engendered resentments similar to those of Hudson Valley flour millers, among others in New York's outer counties (Matson 1998: 258). Though trade regulations on Long Island whaling were eased in the late 1710s (after an appeal to the Board of Trade in London; Starbuck 1878: 24-30), smuggling was nonetheless rife on Long Island by the mid-1700s—indeed, Long Island Sound had been one of the colony's main smuggling conduits since at least the 1670s (Matson 1998: 84, 207, 214). It was symptomatic of Long Island's nested dependence, in relation to New York City and for colonial New York within the British Empire.

Enlightened imperial action temporarily circumvented any early impetus toward independence. Eventually compelled to make up smuggling's lost tax revenue, imperial authorities

put a customs office in Montauk, at Long Island's far east end in 1721 (see Map 1), allowing for direct trade exclusive of New York City (Bonomi 1971: 83n36, 100). Post-1721 then, eastern Long Islanders began to identify more with other commercially oriented interests in the colony's far southern counties of Kings, Queens, Richmond, and New York City (Bonomi 1971: 100). Over the next half-century or so, Suffolk's residents apparently "remained aloof and more concerned with agricultural pursuits and the weather than with political strife," their relative contentment with being imperial subjects (or at least, relative disinterest in independence) only being upset by Parliament's Coercive/Intolerable Acts in 1774 (Staudt 2005: 65).

### **Continental Frontier/True Backcountry?: Tryon and Charlotte Counties**

Until late in the colonial era, New York's far backcountry was largely controlled by a powerful confederation of Native peoples, the Haudenosaunees, who, as noted above, played a vital role in the Euro-indigenous fur trade (making it arguably part of Hornsby's Oceanic Peripheral space; 2005: 5) and served as a buffer versus the French and their indigenous allies (Jennings 1984; Richter 1992). Post-1763, many Europeans and Euroamericans—including British military veterans, Scottish immigrants, New Yorkers, and New Jersey Presbyterians—settled in Albany County's far north and northeast (along the Albany-Montreal trade route), including the western portion of what eventually became Vermont; this area became Charlotte County in 1772 (see Map 2; Huey 2005: 199; Kammen 1975: 295-96n). Its late-colonial creation precludes Hornsby mentioning it as one of his three great agricultural frontiers of southern/eastern New England, the Mid-Atlantic Colonies, and the Southern Backcountry (2005: 126-79). Though in part settled by those from the New England and Mid-Atlantic Agricultural Frontiers, Charlotte County was arguably most like the Southern Backcountry (Hornsby 2005: 164-75), as it was part of that far inland area stretching from Nova Scotia to Georgia, (re)populated by mostly Euroamerican small farmers (Kulikoff 2000: 150-63). Using the Regulator movement in North Carolina as his primary example, Wallerstein (1989: 237) sees these frontiersmen as essentially loyalist, looking to the Crown to protect them from land speculators. Though land speculation was rife in Charlotte County, the Euroamerican population was not necessarily loyalist.



Map 2: The Colony of New York, March 1774 - March 1775



Map created with QGIS vers. 2.16.1-Nødebo. Main data source: Newberry Library Atlas of Historical County Boundaries (<http://publications.newberry.org/ahcbp/>)

Typical for British North America, governors in both New York and New Hampshire used Vermont land grants for political patronage, with much of the land then bought up by speculators, who in turn sold to smaller proprietors (Kulikoff 2000: 154). Widespread disputes over land titles resulted (Bellesilles 1987: 899-900; Huey 2005: 199-204). Complicating matters, Charlotte County and New Hampshire overlapped, and New York had earlier established Cumberland

(1766) and Gloucester (1770) Counties on land even further east, where New Hampshire claims were firmer (see Map 2). Many of Cumberland and Gloucester's Euroamerican settlers identified even less as New Yorkers, exacerbated by New York's inefficient and corrupt legal and administrative oversight (Bellesilles 1987: 900-01; O'Callaghan 1851: 529-1034).

Land disputes in the three counties had something to do with inhabitants' choice for independence or not (see below). Further, many who wanted independence also wanted their own state separate from New York (Countryman 1981: 156). Charlotte, Cumberland and Gloucester Counties were all much more remote from New York City than even the northern Hudson Valley (O'Callaghan 1851: 938). More typical for one of Hornsby's Agricultural Frontiers, "enmeshed in an internal dynamic of population growth and geographic expansion" (2005: 175; cf. Vickers 1996), the region's Euroamerican settlers had no direct need of a port town and its services, nor the government that it represented, and were more radical and democratic than most New Yorkers (Bellesilles 1987: 912; Countryman 1981: 157-59). Ultimately pro-independence, they also separated from New York and founded the State of Vermont (Onuf 1981).

Tryon County, in New York's far northwest, was hived off from Albany County in 1772 (Olshan 2015: 206; Venables 2005: 179; see Map 2). Euroamerican agricultural settlement in Tryon focused on the Mohawk Valley, and was arguably part of Hornsby's larger Continental Agricultural Frontier (2005: 175-79). However, while Hornsby's agricultural frontiers were relatively egalitarian (2005: 174), Tryon was controlled by "an oligarchical hierarchy which ruled...in despotic fashion," led by Sir William Johnson, who petitioned for the new county's creation in order to both reign in any independent settlers and circumvent New York's other elites (Olshan 2015: 205, 207). It also had a more direct imperial tie than other parts of New York's new backcountry, as well as both formal and informal connections to the Haudenosaunees. Johnson, an Irish colonist with significant family ties to the British Empire, had settled the region in 1738, aided by both land gifts from and good relations with the Mohawks, the Haudenosaunees' easternmost nation (Venables 2005: 181).

By 1775, just over 90 percent of Tryon's approximately 5,500 inhabitants were Euroamerican, with the rest Mohawk. About 20 percent of the Euroamericans were Johnson tenants, the Johnsons serving as local representatives of British imperial interests in close alliance (indeed, intermarried) with the Mohawks (Egnal 1988: 54-55; Mullin 1993; Venables 2005: 181-83), who Sir William nonetheless took advantage of in his capacity as New York's Indian Affairs Commissioner (Olshan 2015: 213-16). Opposed to the Johnsons were independent small farmers and traders typical of Hornsby's agricultural frontier, whose security and general interests were typically ignored by imperial authorities, particularly during the decades of recurring warfare with

the French and their indigenous allies; those favoring independence therefore tended to be long-term Tryon residents not directly involved with the Johnsons (Venables 2005: 180).

During this time, the Tryon smallholders had nonetheless been trading grain and other crops via local traders as early as the 1730s (Olshan 2015: 75-76). By the 1760s, they were also selling wheat, butter, and pearl ash at both Albany and New York City (Venables 2005: 182). For their part, the loyalists “tended to be directly tied to Crown employment” via their connections with the Johnson clan (Venables 2005: 180). Tryon’s inhabitants were therefore connecting more to larger networks in the world-economy: the smallholders into regional (and ultimately by extension, intercolonial/international) exchange networks; while the Johnson’s “retainers” were part of the British Empire’s political/military network (cf. Leitner 2013). Their differential interests presaged the coming clash.

### **Revolutionary New York’s Regional Politics**

Colonial New York arguably contained all of Hornsby’s (2005) British American regions, which in turn had varying orientations toward the world-economy and, in turn, populations that tended differently on the independence question (Wallerstein 1989: 238). The manors largely east of the Hudson, and on western Long Island, were part of the cash crop producing “Continental Staple Region,” and directly tied to the colony’s main port, New York City. With its politically powerful merchant interests and a variety of urban workers engaged in a variety of industrial pursuits, the city was becoming a *de facto* core to these essentially peripheral producers. West of the Hudson and on eastern Long Island were “Agricultural Frontiers” of independent smaller farmers: focused on self-sufficiency, they also traded locally and supplied foodstuffs to the Caribbean colonies via New York merchants. The fur-producing upper Hudson and Mohawk Valleys, and the Long Island whale fishery, were arguably part of the “Atlantic Staple Regions”: peripheral producers connected to Britain via at least one colonial port (Albany and New York City for the inland fur trade; New York City and/or later Montauk for eastern Long Islanders). The very late colonial period even saw the beginnings of a true backcountry in New York’s far reaches; it was a variant of Hornsby’s Agricultural Frontier, but also contained elements of Atlantic Staple regions, via the fur trade.

When it came to the independence crisis and subsequent struggle of the 1770s-80s, this geopolitical structure of independence-leaning nascent core regions juxtaposed to loyalist-leaning peripheral producers did not resolve itself along such neat lines. About 60 percent of the colony’s nearly 170,000 people in the 1770s were pro-independence, opposed by no more than 15 percent hardcore loyalists; yet there were definite areas of loyalist concentration (Burrows and Wallace 1999: 219). Until May 1775, New York City was the colony’s center of opposition to British policy, while also home to numerous loyalists of all socioeconomic stripes (Champagne 1964: 26-

29; Countryman 1981: 116). Perhaps half of New York City's merchants were loyalists, as was most of its Chamber of Commerce (Burrows and Wallace 1999: 220). The urban/rural split was exacerbated by Britain's victory over France, nascent world-economic hegemony, and post-1763 attempts to rationalize the Empire. In the decade preceding the revolt, the city's economy weathered recession, new imperial taxes, and restrictive legislation, while rural New York's economy was relatively prosperous and secure, due to indigenous peoples' displacement/genocide and the neutralized French threat; land speculation; an increase in mining and rural manufacturing; and local manufacturing encouraged by the nonimportation movement against Britain. All this in turn slowed the development of pro-independence radicalism in the outer counties (Egnal 1988: 143; Kammen 1975: 358-59; Tiedemann and Fingerhut 2005: 7). Pro-independence Whigs in rural New York were especially concentrated in Orange, Ulster, Albany, and Tryon counties (see Map 2), a broad region of smallholding farmers (Kammen 1975: 365).

Loyalists were proportionately higher in Kings, Queens, and Richmond counties (Kammen 1975: 365): again, their farmers' close trading links with the New York City export merchants gave them a reason to stay within the British Empire (Countryman 1981: 105). Of the three, Kings was the most openly loyalist; besides its focus on export cash crops produced by African slave labor, which tied it closely to the imperial political economy, its ethnic Dutch majority was satisfied with the status quo, having been mostly left alone by colonial authorities (Burrows 2005: 21-23). In Queens, loyalists typically outnumbered Whigs two-to-one, though the majority of its residents were neutral: small farmers whose primary concerns were soil quality, weather, and crop yields, not how the empire was managed (Tiedemann 1984: 58-70; 2005: 44; also Kim 1993: 872). Even after fighting commenced in April 1775, loyalists were still a majority in Kings and Richmond, with local majorities in parts of Queens, Westchester and Albany counties (Bielinski 2005; Burrows 2005; Judd 2005; Pappas 2005; Tiedemann 1984; 2005).

According to Countryman, each of Ulster, Orange, and Suffolk Counties, with populations mostly in favor of independence, had an "economic life...much less tied to the market" (1981: 107). Orange and Ulster each had a Hudson River port, but with economies marked by smaller, more self-sufficient farms (Wermuth 2001: 45-67; 2005: 128), thereby were less dependent on exchange with the larger imperial economy. Similarly, for Suffolk through at least the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century: despite strong ties to pro-independence New England, its residents were more focused on their day-to-day concerns and remained largely aloof from the burgeoning revolutionary ferment until 1774 (Staudt 2005: 64-65). Yet for the same reasons, Burrows and Wallace argue Suffolk became overwhelmingly patriot when it did partly because of its New England ties; but also, because its Euroamerican population of mostly small farmers was largely *not* producing cash crops

for export, and was much less dependent on slave labor (1999: 220). Therefore, Suffolk farmers had fewer stakes in maintaining access to imperial markets and the British state's coercive power to keep slaves (or tenants) in line, than the residents of Kings or certain of the eastern Hudson Valley landlords. Long Island's loyalists were most noticeable in areas noted as least ethnically English, where enough persons had done well under British imperial rule and feared establishment of a majoritarian sociopolitical system (Burrows and Wallace 1999: 220), as Wallerstein (1989: 237) suggests.

Countryman terms the remaining five counties (New York, Westchester, Dutchess, Albany, and Tryon) as those of conflict (1981: 104). By the 1770s they were more populous and growing faster than Kings, Queens, Richmond, Suffolk, Orange and Ulster; though like the three loyalist-tending counties around New York Harbor (Kings, Queens and Richmond), there was more long-distance trade, whether urban (New York City and Albany) or rural cash crop production on the large estates of Dutchess, Westchester, and Albany Counties. In turn, their economies were more cash-oriented, which caused economic inequality in the towns between large merchants and artisans, and in the countryside between landlords and tenants, contributing to long-running conflicts leading up to the revolution (Countryman 1981: 103-10; also Bielinski 2005: 157; Judd 2005: 108). In contrast, Kim has pre-revolutionary Westchester's population as basically apolitical, primarily comprised of "affluent middling sorts" (including the tenants on the county's two large manors) who focused on livestock farming and supplying food to New York City (1993: 872). On the eastern Hudson Valley estates further north, he posits similarly, with most farmers focused on day-to-day life, largely ignoring esoteric theoretical questions and "politics without immediate local implications and material benefits" (Kim 1982: 328-29, 346; also Humphrey 2004: 245). Yet in the revolution, many Hudson Valley tenants, particularly those of market-oriented landlords who charged high rents, chose the opposite political tendency to their landlords (i.e. loyalist landlords vs. patriot tenants; patriot landlords vs. loyalist tenants) with the hope of gaining a freehold after the war (Countryman 1981: 118-20; Humphrey 2004: 250-51; cf. Lynd 1961: 336-37).

The big landlords were about evenly split between independence and loyalism (Countryman 1981: 15-31, 114; Kim 1982: 330; Wermuth 2005: 128-29). Those closer to New York City, whose estates produced cash crops for overseas export, and who were also at least somewhat leery of changes in land tenure, tended toward loyalism; yet other big landlords, particularly those further upriver who favored territorial expansion, held for independence, though not for any major changes in the political-economic status quo (Countryman 1981: 114-15, 164-66, 195-220; Egnal

1988; Lynd 1961). The British wartime occupation of southern New York led many tenants (particularly those with pro-independence landlords) to avow loyalism (Kim 1982: 345).

Tryon County saw a starker version of this landlord-tenant dynamic. The more radical of its pro-independence inhabitants profoundly resented the dominant loyalist Johnson family and its Mohawk allies. The result was an extremely violent revolutionary-era struggle that all sides arguably lost: the Mohawks and many loyalist settlers lost their land, but the surviving patriots lacked population, capital, and the wherewithal to take full advantage of postwar economic opportunities (Venables 2005: 183-91; also Countryman 1981: 150). New York's other late-colonial Continental Frontier backcountry counties (Charlotte, along with Gloucester and Cumberland) had a rather different experience. Though ethnically- and religiously-diverse overall, with settlers from New York, New Jersey and New England, Huey finds that particular ethnoculturally homogenous communities tended to support a given side, whereas heterogeneous communities tended to divide over the war (2005: 204-05). Specific choices about independence or not also partly derived from a settler's prior residence, inasmuch as some were attempting to get away from those they disagreed with (Huey 2005: 205-06). Prior residence often determined post-independence loyalty toward either New York or Vermont (see Map 2).

### **From Divided Colony to Factionalized State**

Again, Hornsby argues that the British Atlantic's expansion resulted in conflict between its three spaces and its eventual splitting, with the mainland port towns and their adjoining continental staples regions, along with the interior territorial periphery, separating from the Atlantic staple regions and the metropole in the 1770s-80s (2005: 6, 204, 227-32). From Hornsby, and at least partly in line with Wallerstein (1989: 238), those colonial New Yorkers with significant interest in transatlantic trade with Britain and the British Atlantic colonies tended to prefer staying within the empire, and were located largely in or near New York City, the colony's main port. Loyalists outside the city included a few of the Hudson Valley's larger landlords, particularly those closer to New York City and the Johnsons in the Mohawk Valley. Yet many less-propertied New Yorkers were also loyalists (see Countryman 1981: 116-18): e.g. the Johnsons' tenants; tenants of pro-independence landlords who sought a freehold; and certain ethnic minorities (e.g. Catholics and German-speakers) who feared persecution under any new system, as Wallerstein (1989: 237) also suggests. On balance, inland small farmers (and arguably those on eastern Long Island) tended toward independence, along with smaller merchants and urban artisans. These fault lines, which had some geographical basis, arguably provided the makings of a permanent division, especially considering Britain's military control over the colony's southern counties throughout most of the war. So what kept New York from permanently splitting?

There is a *prima facie* answer, containing a more complex truth. As Countryman (1981: 283ff) points out, ultimate U.S. victory obviated loyalism and the chance that New York could truly fracture like the larger British Atlantic world (Hornsby 2005: 204-38), primarily because British military and government officials departed in 1783 and the occupied southern district rejoined the rest of the state. The British military's occupation of New York City and the colony's southern counties supported New York loyalists (Tiedemann and Fingerhut 2005: 224). At the same time, cross-regional alliances tied together New York's pro-independence coalition. These included groups wanting relief from imperial regulations and possibly a more democratic social structure: New York City artisans in the Sons of Liberty; the city's smaller and middling merchants; the smallholding farmers of Orange and Ulster Counties on the Hudson's west bank; along with insurgent tenants in Dutchess and Albany Counties who wanted their own freeholds. Yet there were also expansionist elites, who argued that mainland British North America's political-economic prospects were constrained by London's imperial policy (especially post-1763), and would be better served by independence (Egnal 1988).

However, re-attained geographic cohesion was complemented by a simultaneous social fracturing: many loyalists left New York with the British forces, settling in Britain's remaining North American colonies and contributing to significant economic development in their new homes (Hornsby 2005: 235). Former loyalists remaining in New York faced several years of both legal and informal persecution (Countryman 1981: 169-75, 285).

Further, there was a partial geographic fracturing: many of the small farmers who settled in eastern Charlotte County beyond Lake Champlain (see Map 2), had long agitated for separation from New York and its land-speculating elites (Countryman 1981:154-59, 283-84; Huey 2005; Onuf 1981: 803-05). After the war, they rejected New York to create the State of Vermont—"the one occasion in early America when agrarian rebels got what they wanted" (Countryman 1981: 284)—remaining formally independent of the United States until 1791 (Huey 2005: 215; Onuf 1981: 797). Vermont was geopolitically obverse to New York in the 1780s: while Vermont may not have needed New York City—its market(s), its port facilities, its tertiary services such as they were—at least some of the colony did, and the city's influence as a port and market grew stronger following independence (Burrows and Wallace 1999: 333-52, 429-51).

Given that pro-independence forces were themselves not ideologically uniform, political factions soon formed, both within New York and nationally; and early postwar differences over economic policy (e.g. whether to favor the landed and nascent capitalist elites; or small farmers, artisans, and mechanics) ultimately manifested in the Federalist and Democratic Republican parties (Merrill 1990; Murrin 1980). New York's increasingly conservative state legislature in the

1780s ultimately allowed some loyalist exiles to return, motivated by both their capital and mercantile acumen (Countryman 1981: 266-73, 285; 1992: 26; also Burrows and Wallace 1999: 273-74). This pragmatic acceptance of wealthier loyalists hints at the desire to exploit the United States' own burgeoning empire of sorts, focused on western settlement and the economic development of its continental interior (Frank 1978: 199-201; Hornsby 2005: 235-38; also Arrighi 1994: 58-76; Bunker and Ciccantell 2005: 136-58; Egnal 1988: 328-38; Meinig 1986: 341-67).

### Conclusions and Implications

Perhaps the simplest reason why colonial New York joined the revolt against Great Britain was that about 60 percent of its Euroamerican inhabitants favored independence (Burrows and Wallace 1999: 219). In turn, New York's pro-independence elements connected to a growing trans-colonial movement for independence that started coordinating its actions as early as 1765, particularly among the radicals (Maier 1972). These were groups within the thirteen colonies, particularly in New England and parts of the middle colonies, who were gradually building capacity to engage in core-like productive activities. Specific to New York, these included New York City's smaller merchants, artisans/mechanics and wage laborers, allied with independent small farmers particularly in the western Hudson Valley, and those elites who generally advocated territorial expansion. To secure their desired domestic political economy, they mobilized counter-hegemonic struggle in a larger cross-colonial alliance to challenge British dominance in North America. This struggle was linked to broader world-systemic dynamics, ostensibly succeeding because of French intervention, but arguably as much due to British reconsideration of its hegemonic standing in deciding how much to challenge the new world revolutionaries. In particular, India's availability to British capital and consumers obviated the need to hold on to the 13 rebellious mainland North American colonies (Arrighi 1994: 248-50; Wallerstein 1989: 138-40; also see Frank 1978: 147-66).

Yet the question remains: why did some interests in a given colony want independence while others did not. Hornsby's (2005) thesis is that British North America fractured into two basic parts, with the Agricultural Frontier opting for independence, joined by the Port Towns and their adjoining Continental Staples Regions. In world-systems perspective, while there was considerable peripheral production in these areas (specifically, plantation cash crops produced with coerced/slave labor; the Euro-indigenous fur trade), there were also considerable areas of self-sufficient small farms, and coastal urban areas containing prosperous merchants and nascent core production as well. The Oceanic/maritime peripheral regions on the other hand (the Caribbean, Newfoundland, and Hudson Bay) were much more dependent on the imperial tie *per sé*, and in WSA terms were almost entirely concerned with essentially peripheral productive activities (cash



crops produced by slave labor; Euro-indigenous fur trading; seasonal fisheries with minimal inshore processing). More generally in WSA perspective, Hornsby's thesis is about two basic types of colonial peripheral regions with different orientations, and heading in different directions, *vis à vis* their metropolitan core.

The political-sociological converse is Wallerstein's generalization about the level of support for independence relating to how much a given interest was constrained by (or benefited from) the imperial trading system and British economic and military power (1989: 238). Within colonial New York, the empire benefited those farmers close to New York City, particularly in Brooklyn, Queens, and Richmond Counties, and they tended toward loyalism. Yet other interests, chiefly smallholding farmers in eastern Long Island, Albany, and the western Hudson Valley who were not typically cash crop producers, wished to at least get out from under New York City's control, and ultimately London's as well. Even New York City had strong pro-independence elements—indeed, it contained the extremist patriots (Kammen 1975: 368)—particularly amongst its laborers, small manufacturers, and smaller/mid-sized merchants (trading with the other parts of British North American and the Caribbean), at least until its occupation by the British military in September 1776.

British capture and occupation of New York City actually allowed the pro-independence forces' moderate/conservative wing to dominate New York's revolutionary movement and allowed them to frame the state's first government (Kammen 1975: 368-69). The moderates were typically wealthier and propertied; they desired independence from Britain (or at least a more favorable arrangement *vis à vis* London), but not a social revolution or other more radical reorganization of New York's political and economic arrangements (Countryman 1981: 164-69; Lynd 1961: 331-32). Moderate dominance in turn affected policy decisions in the immediate post-war period: as Kammen points out, being pro-independence did not necessarily preclude a given New Yorker, particularly among the moderates or conservatives, from having strong commercial bonds with Britain, in particular reliance on English credit and the imperial trading framework (1975: 364-65). To that end, even after independence the need for capital and connections with Great Britain soon prompted the State of New York to both liberalize its treatment of former loyalists and repatriate individual loyalist exiles (Countryman 1981: 266-73).

Peripheral world-economic status constraining/compelling a formally independent polity also operated at the national scale. As the newly-independent United States had a large public war debt (Merrill 1990: 481-82) and was marked by large areas of peripheral economic activity (albeit with some locales of core production; Braudel 1984: 425-26), a trade relationship with Great Britain was rather quickly (re)established. Wallerstein in particular notes the mutual advantages to both

parties in doing so, given the existing commercial, social, and cultural networks and Britain's continued economic and military strength (1989: 83, 227-29, 251; also Braudel 1984: 426; Bunker and Ciccantell 2005: 149). Conversely, as many British notables (albeit not most politicians) realized post-1763, Britain could likely benefit from trade relationships with North America without having to maintain expensive colonies there (Wallerstein 1989: 83-84, 200-01). Or from a historical-geographic perspective, losing the large, sparsely populated space of North America's eastern third "had, in fact, shorn the British empire of its immense geographic anomaly" *vis à vis* its global orientation toward maritime commerce (Hornsby 2005: 234-35). While Britain was able to take advantage of that space even without formally controlling it, in turn, it provided the new United States with the territorial basis for its eventual hegemonic ascent (Arrighi 1994: 51-76; Bunker and Ciccantell 2005: 136-89).

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